2 October 1920

Dear Boy Blue,

Recently I promised you a letter-vacation. Well, the vacation is over. No doubt you would appreciate a longer one, but truly a week is just about six days too long for me. When I swear off, my intentions are always good, but you know yourself how the flesh lags behind the spirit in noble resolve. The only thing that ever makes me think of swearing off is a very, very long silence on your part, a silence of several months’ duration. I begin to think that at last I’ve said something in one of my letters that has shocked or hurt you or made you angry, and I try to recall everything I’ve said, which is obviously impossible when I say so much. Then it is that I resolve not to write, but after I’ve punished myself for a week, a comforting little thought begins to wiggle into my mind; it tells me that if you haven’t been shocked or hurt or angered by all that I’ve written in the past you aren’t likely to suffer any of those emotions from my present letters. Finally, I fall back on your oft-repeated request (or it is a command?) to “write often” and then I start in all over again just as I’m doing now.

At present, also, I don’t know but what you’ll be cross with me for using the London address. However, I feel like the small boy who stole the jam and who subsequently received a licking: he’d rather have the jam plus the licking than not have the jam. So I’ll steal the jam now, in other words write to London, and you can give me the licking when you come home. I’ll have had my jam anyway.

Pal, I spent the afternoon with a mutual acquaintance of ours who used to be at the Museum – I needn’t mention names. It looks as though financial good fortune may soon be hers but I can’t tell you anything about it or where she is because she asked me not to tell anyone. She will undoubtedly tell you herself when she sees you. I speak of her because I think I may have once misrepresented her to you. It is very true that she hasn’t guarded your secrets as a friend should but she at least appreciates how much you did in her behalf. She spoke beautifully of you and of your defence of her, saying that she would never be able to repay her debt to you. I want you to know, dear Pal, that she really is very grateful and if she has done you any harm by talking too freely about your personal affairs it was, I am sure, more through indiscretion and lack of reticence than through any desire to create mischief. She said that you had been just a friend, a big brother, to her and that your relation had been wholly devoid of any sentimentality. I think that today she spoke herself more truly than on former occasions so I’m telling you this to counterbalance what I told you last spring.

[Entire paragraph blacked out].

Sunday evening, 3 October

Dear Pal, Sunday evening most always finds me curled up in my Morris chair writing to you. It’s the best evening in the week and I always look forward to it; I miss it so much when one of my swearing-off spells includes a Sunday. Then I spend the evening sewing and thinking about you, but I’d much rather talk to you, it seems chummier.

I’ve worked so hard this whole blessed day that I just ache all over. Sunday isn’t much of a rest day when you’re keeping house and are out all week. Yet I’d rather have my home with all its responsibilities than live again in a furnished room and have all the freedom that goes with that sort of life. I do miss the Cathedral on Sundays, the organ was such a treat to me, and now I have no music in my life at all – except the music in my . . . (entire p. 2 missing).

(p. 3) All to myself I was comparing your life with that of one of your colleagues who is well known for his writings but who never goes into the field. Year in year out, he is locked up in his office or study writing and writing, or giving college courses. In some ways he gets more fame that way, but what a deadly existence! Life is so short and no one is certain of more than this one chance of earth. How foolish it is, then, to live in a rut, to make each day like every other? I do not advocate a life of pleasure, nor one devoid of accomplishments, but surely one should live as one goes along, do something more than grind out scientific contributions.

On Monday night at Academy meeting Mr. Roy C. Andrews spoke of his trip to Mongolia. I had never seen him nor heard him before, nor did I meet him, but I liked him right away. I thought that his way of living was ideal. He and his wife travelled everywhere together and one could tell from the way he spoke that he loved her greatly. Nor have they foregone the joy of having a baby. It seems to me that folks like that who travel and work together are leading a broader type of existence than your colleague of whom I was speaking.

All of this is only to show you that I am sympathetic with your preference for travel. If you don’t want to write anything on the Cuban paper I’ll understand and get along as best I can. Were I in your boots I’d choose a trip to Abyssinia or Alaska in preference to writing a paper, and I would not even now be engaged in breaking rocks and preparing manuscripts except to please you. I can think of so many more worthwhile things that I might be doing instead of spending my time chipping rocks.

May I ask that you do not bother about that Civil Service blank which I forwarded to you? I have already heard from Washington that I have passed and that my name is on the eligible list for palaeontologist on the Survey.

Sincerely,

The Doctor