5 May 1920

It has been our boast that America was free to all the oppressed and down-trodden of other countries; we have offered sanctuary to those religiously persecuted; we have offered free education and invited all to come and share our blessings. But what’s the result? Our schools and all of our public institutions are paid for in large measure by the taxes imposed upon middle class Americans. It is the people with incomes ranging from $2000 to $20,000 a year who bear the taxes and support our “free institutions.” If the immigrant received only the advantages that his puny contributions to the taxes would give him, he wouldn’t get very much. The Italian who pays $20.00 a month doesn’t assume much of the burden of taxation and pays little of the direct taxes which his other people (sic) because he spends little on food, clothing and the decencies of life. But he parasitically sucks in all that he can get for nothing: free education, free clinics of all kinds, free amusements, penny lunches in the schools, etc. Often he sends his children to institutions to be taken care of by the state until they are 14 years old when they are withdrawn and put to work. But it’s a misnomer to call these things “free” – air and light and water and stars are free, for they are God-given, but schools and hospitals have to be paid for by someone and it’s you and I and those like us who are paying for these “free” things. Yet we derive nothing from them. These low-grade foreigners crowd our schools, they bring their dirt, their disease, their vile language, their lack of ideals into the school-room so that no American who has any regard for his child’s health or morals would let that child go to a public school. He must resort to expensive boarding and other private schools, thus supporting, through taxation, the public schools for the foreigners and paying, through tuition, for the education of his own children. We must constantly erect new asylums, new hospitals for the mentally and physically unfit, but the inmates are seldom native-born of native parentage. We must pay for the upkeep of these institutions, for doctors, nurses, food, clothing. We must run clinics, but when we are sick we do not go to these “free” places which we support, instead we go to our own physician and pay him. In other words, a man like yourself, for instance, couldn’t afford to have a family of more than two children because you are indirectly supporting three or four foreigners. Persons with decent standards of living won’t have children if they can’t bring them up properly, but the Dago with no standards has, therefore, no compunctions about having a family of ten. And so we reach the alarming conclusion that the native Americans are being replaced, not just pushed out, by the foreign element. Native American children just aren’t being born, while the foreign ones are multiplying with frightful rapidity. [Note: she is not referring to the indigenous peoples of North America – American Indians or Native Americans – but to the children of earlier, north and west European immigrants who were born in the United States].

An interesting study was made not long [ago] of the graduates of Mt. Holyoke College, the most American of all the colleges having (p. 6) 87% of its students American born and of American parentage. It was found that in the last hundred years the immediate ancestors of the students had steadily decreased in the number of children born. That is, where great-grandparents had 4 children, grandparents had 3, and parents 2, and we know how often today families can afford only a single child.

Persons who have never had occasion to come face to face with the problem do not realize how alarming it is. We have on file in our office over 10,000 records of defective children examined. There are in addition 1,000 awaiting examination. These being merely the worse ones selected by school principals, but there are thousands of others whose name have not yet been sent to us. Nearly all these are Jews or Italians; Scandinavian and German stocks are rare and children with American born parents rarer still. There are already 250 classes for defective children in NY city and 50 more, at least, are needed. You probably have no idea of the number of institutions scattered over New York and supported by the state just to care for these defectives. And institutions are full, with long waiting lists. Think of the incalculatable expense. Think of the persons spending their lives in caring for these worthless bits of humanity. Yet in self-defense, even if not in pure altruism, we must care for these children. It has been shown time and time again that our prisons are fill with the “graduates” of reformatories and other corrective institutions. It is the imbecile, the half-cracked “loony” boy who, as a man, commits murders, robberies, and other crimes. And so we get back to the fact that we ourselves are supporting and making life easy for the very ones who, when grown, will murder or rob us or attempt to overthrow our government. And it’s social workers who, by not striking at the root of the evil, are fostering, nourishing and perpetuating the moribund branches of decadent lines of evolution. They simply don’t get anywhere at all; their work is as near completion as Penelope’s web – woven by day and unraveled by night.

It is too bad that thoughtful people do not realize just how terrible is the crisis we are facing. Our labor troubles and all the social unrest are being fomented by Bolsheviks, Reds, and other dissatisfied immigrant elements, by people who do not read or right (sic) our language, who confuse liberty with license, who know no law, who recognize no government, bow to no god. In kindness we refer to them as fanatics, we even tolerate them.

The Sunday after you sailed, New York stood aghast at one of the most shocking crimes committed in many a day. A famous surgeon, Dr. Markoe, was just starting down the aisle of St. Thomas’ Church with the collection plate, when a man in the congregation jumped up and at close range shot the surgeon dead, almost at the steps of the altar. The man wounded several others. He was caught and it turned out that he had long been known to be “queer,” he had a grudge against the rich, he had been in several lunatic asylums but being laxly guarded had escaped. He just wandered into St. Thomas’, he did not know Dr. Markoe but just suddenly felt a desire to kill him, which he did. So it isn’t alone the actual expense of caring for these defectives that weighs upon us, but it’s the frequent losses of valuable members of society so often caused by them.1

It is unfortunate that many more or less intellectual people, particularly those who are sheltered and who live in certain protected environments, should be hoodwinked by the specious sophistries and casuistry of the extreme Socialists, the Bolsheviki, and other agitators. There are many who, like Miss Percy, know not whereof they talk and who espouse the cause of all the riff raff who want to land on our shores or have landed. They are carried away by such beautiful phrases as “This is the land of opportunity” – “America is free to all” – “here all are born with equal opportunities and rights regardless of race, color, or creed.” But I reckon if some of these “parlor socialists” knew a little more about the slums than can be learned from driving through them in a limousine, if they could see how these “oppressed foreigners” come here thirsting for money more than that delights of education, if they could see some living specimens of the offspring of these immigrants, if they could take a look into the “melting pot” and see the diseased stream constantly being poured into it, maybe they’d talk less about welcoming with open arms the scum of Europe.

(p. 7) Dear old Pal o’mine, do you think I’m becoming a fanatic myself? Do I love you? I’m doing a heap of thinking these days and I dearly love to talk my thoughts off to you. I’m forming my own opinions on a good many of the present day problems, and I’m doing it from first hand information and observation not academically in my study. I would not abandon the quiet and seclusion of the study for good, but I like also to be out in the world, to see and know what’s going on, to be a part of it all, and the habits of clear, detached thinking which I formed in my study I can now carry with me into the bustle of an active life. It is such experiences as I am now having that will broaden my outlook as it could never have been broadened had I accepted the seclusion of academic life. What would I learn of the various phases of existence, of the great social and economic problems if I were stowed away in a lecture hall at Vassar? Just think what I’ve seen of life since I left the Museum last July! Could any college offer so liberal an education as I’ve been acquiring? I wouldn’t swap any two of my academic years for this last one.

Had I been tucked away at Vassar I’d have had no occasion to learn as much about nursing as I did when the epidemic was upon us. I studied economics in college but I never learned so much as I have recently from my own observations; I studied psychology from text books, now I’m studying it from human material. Formerly I dealt with books, books, books, now I’m dealing with the stuff that books are made of.

I guess college teaching is all right if you want to settle down, to vegetate, to specialize in one line of thought. But I’m too expansive; I’m growing like a weed; I’m thinking on dozens of subjects not just one; I’m learning all sorts of miscellaneous things; meeting all sorts of interesting people. I’m too active and full of “pep” to be cut out for a professional job. I couldn’t sober down to it, be staid and steadied and decorous enough. Pal, I’m so deliciously happy and full of life these days, so wonderfully well and cheerful. I wake up glad to be alive, glad to go to work and I’m almost never blue or if I am, the mood soon passes. Isn’t it a glorious improvement on last year? And, compared to two years ago this time, this is Heaven. Of course I didn’t know you two years ago, which is the main reason that I didn’t appreciate what wonderful treasures (illegible) contain.

I’m just bursting with curiosity to know how my venturesome (illegible) is faring in his search for the Golden Fleece. I’ve been following the European news on oil activities in the financial and business section of the “Times” and certainly you couldn’t have picked out a better time to arrive on the scene. This morning I read that the *London Daily Mail* reports with glee the British coup in gaining control of the Shell Oil group including the new fields in Mesopotamia. The Standard Oil at present draws its supply mainly from American fields but already the company is complaining of a shortage. What Great Britain is up to is to beat the U.S., especially the Standard Oil to the new fields throughout the world and the present British-Dutch combine goes a long way toward doing it. France too is waking up and the government has just proposed the expenditure of 10,000,000 francs next year to develop French oil. Pal you must be having such an exciting time. Aren’t you secretly proud of Little Boy Blue? I am. I like to think of him handling big issues in a big way; I like to think of him meeting and associating with the captains of industry. There is nothing that quite so takes my heart and fancy as versatility, the ability to succeed in whatever one undertakes. By that I do not mean easy, or necessarily quick, success; sometimes there must be many failures before success comes. There are some persons who always achieve ultimate success, there are others who are always failures. There’s something about you that inspires faith in your ability to succeed. This feeling of confidence in you no doubt arises in part from your fine physique. I read just recently of a survey that was made of the successful men of the world in all walks of life, in industry, commerce, all the professions, etc. and it was found that the successful men were as a rule 5 ft. 10” in height or over and men of the world who are doing the big thing, that physical fitness leads to and accompanies mental fitness. It’s the man who leads a healthy all-round life who is fit to cope with life. Dancing may have gotten you into heaps of trouble Pal but I’m sure it’s what has kept you young and in such splendid physical trim. Pal, won’t you please sometime let me see you in evening clothes? I’m sure they must just be the finishing touch. But don’t most scientists look like humped-up seventeen year locusts about to split their exoskeletons up the back when they don a dress (illegible). Your own devoted Pal. Marjorie Daw2”

1. The physician who was shot in church was Dr. James Wright Markoe, a well-known and highly respected surgeon. The ‘lunatic’ was Thomas W. Simpkin. The story of Markoe’s murder during the church service was described in great detail in the *New York Times* of April 19, 1920, starting on the front page, above the fold, with a photo of Dr. Markoe.
2. “Marjorie Daw” refers to the British and American nursery rhyme, as does “Little Boy Blue.”