

HAWTHORN HILL
DAYTON, OHIO

January 9, 1922

Dear Harry:

“Listen to Reason; listen to me!” That article that you and Mr. Stetson are talking about can’t be turned off the reel, in the jaunty way you think. I wish it could. An article by Mr. Brewer on the work of the Wrights and the work of Langley would have no weight or influence for several reasons. In the first place, the subject is not one that can be discussed in one article. It would do no good to assert things without giving your proofs. You would have to go into Langley’s work fully and show wherein he was wrong—not just be stating that he was wrong but by telling what was right and who did contribute the different factors that were necessary to the solution of the problem of flight. Langley’s work is on record. That won’t change. The main proof that Langley’s scientific work was sound was this demonstration that his machine was capable of flight. Now we have the facts on record—not accepted by everyone but at least not denied by Walcott or Zahm. They dispute the conclusions but not the facts. Will’s and Orv’s scientific work has never been published. The next thing of great importance is to get that on record. I shall put every bit of energy I possess into that one thing until it is done.

When Orv gives an account of their work he will give credit for every idea they got from other people. Do you know, Harry, I believe we could get out one of the most interesting books, imaginable. It will carry conviction, too, because there will be no careless statements in it. Orv drives me nearly crazy, picking me up on this and that point when I am writing to you, for instance! You never saw any thing to equal his ability to get things exactly straight. There hasn’t been one case yet in the law suits, for example, where his statements have not finally stood. I believe, as Mr. Page believes, that a book with Orv’s story of the invention will make a great and immediate impression. That ought to have been out long ago, but Orv has been almost an invalid for five or six years—besides his natural aversion to writing. But now he sees himself the necessity of doing the job and it will get done.

There is every reason for dealing with Langley’s work so as not to antagonize the “scientists”. That has to be handled very carefully or we will create a prejudice that will be hard to overcome. We are not attacking Langley in telling about the schemes of that “gang”. They, with the possible exception of Walcott, had absolutely no interest in Langley. With Zahm it was a mixture of personal spite and hope of financial gain; with Curtiss, it was chiefly business. Walcott thought he would kill several birds with one stone. He would do his friend Curtiss a good turn and at the same time, add to his own prestige as Langley’s successor. In attacking what they did, there was every attempt to keep Langley out, except when it was necessary to show what caused his failure, in the particular instance. We realize what an advantage they have. If they hadn’t this advantage, they wouldn’t be able to get anywhere with such a flimsy case. It was a devilishly clever scheme. Orv saw that at once. But we have to fight back with entirely different weapons. We will win, in the long run. We have the advantage of having the Truth on our side and they can’t beat that, unless we throw our case away. If we

depended upon such stuff as is being put out on their side, we wouldn't have a ghost of a show. Maybe they can afford to do anything for the sake of the impression it makes at the moment. We can't. This question will not be finally settled by the bunch that is now in control,—the people that are afraid of either Curtiss or Walcott. It will not be settled, either, by a public opinion, based on nothing but vague impressions. Now that we have finally got the facts about that Hammondsport business on record in a responsible place, my anxiety is very much relieved. We must follow it up of course and not let any more adverse stuff come out than we can help.

There is one thing we ought to have that we haven't been able to get, so far. In the early days, Will carried on an extensive correspondence with Chanute. These letters discussed what progress was being made, and if we could get copies, we could establish dates and many other important points. The Wright Company, in a suit several years ago with Montgomery, wanted to get some of these letters. They wrote to Mr. Chanute's grandson, in Denver, and he declined to let them have any copies. I am afraid they will refuse us also. These would be priceless to us.

I had a nice letter from Mr. Stetson about Christmas time. I know how you both feel and am everlastingly grateful to you both for the concern you have to get something effective done! Please don't get disgusted and quit giving advice!! We can't do this particular thing.

Mr. Page thinks that it isn't probable that there was bias in the "Digest" office. He blames himself for not taking better care of the matter. I do not agree with his guess as to probabilities. He doesn't see half of what is involved in the way they presented the case. It is pretty bad, altogether. Mr. Page is certainly a man of great poise and good judgment. I believe I agree with Mr. Akeley. He says he thinks Arthur Page gives promise of being a bigger man than his father. He is only thirty-seven or thirty-eight, as you doubtless know.

Orv really pities you poor people who are at the mercy of this typewriter! It is so easy to write this way that I don't know where to stop. But occasionally you are spared its products. Last week I wrote you a letter which seemed so bootless that I didn't send it on. We thought we were going to have some more poets but not now, anyway. We were hoping to have Robert Frost for an evening of readings this Thursday and Percy MacKaye was coming over from Oxford to visit us at the same time. But we didn't make connections, quite, so it's off for the present. Stef is to be in Columbus a week from tomorrow but I don't believe he can get here. What do you think of his new book?

Love to Isabel. Tell her I haven't improved much over my first letter. I still make a good many mistakes.

Sincerely, etc.

Katharine Wright