

7LGA/2/1/12-4 Oct 1914. Written from the Hôpital Auxiliaire 1376, Hôtel Claridge, Paris.

Transcript: Dearest Mother All day I have meant to write to you but there have been incessant interruptions although we have not had a busy day. Roger Gibb came in today as he wished to help with our work here. He is returning to London tomorrow morning and will take this letter. We have several untrained helpers already and we felt it wise not to accept from another as it would be so awkward if he came over and then had not enough regular work to fill his time. We have been joined by Mr and Miss Ellis who have brought a motor ambulance with them and a motor lorry for the exclusive use of our hospital. We hope to get special permits from the English Ambassador and the French authorities which will enable the ambulance to pass in and out of Paris. It is a beautiful motor with springs from which the stretchers are hung. The Ellis brother and sister are bringing and maintaining both cars themselves and are lodging outside our rather overcrowded quarters. They are quite young but seem sensible and nice. I think when they learn their way about they will help our work very much. The arrival of the ambulance and the fitting in of the stretchers caused a crowd of several hundred people to collect opposite our door. We usually have a crowd there but at moments of particular excitement it doubles or trebles itself in no time. The funerals take place early in the morning. They are rather specially touching. There is always the military picket. Sometimes also a police picket. The men walk on either side of the hearse with their guns reversed. Then we come behind two or four or more of us - unless relatives happen to be able to come. On the way to church everyone in the street salutes or crosses, and women come out and put flowers on the coffin. If the ceremony's catholic the service is very interesting. A beadle with a heavy silver knobbed stick walks in front of the coffin thumping on the floor. After mass a vessel with Eau Bénit is handed to us with which we have to sprinkle the coffin. It takes one straight back to the middle ages. In the service this morning there was little humanity and nothing but ceremonial but of course this varies with the officiating priest. A dear little abbé came here one day to see one of our poor Frenchmen and he just stood at the end of his bed and raised his hands to bless him and say 'Oh, Mon Brave, Mon Brave' in a voice that made us cry. After the service today an old women came to us and said 'Le mort, c'est un anglais?' We told her no, that he was a Frenchman, a brave Frenchman. And then she took our hands and kissed them saying 'un français que vous avez soigné. Merci, mesdames, merci, merci'. These poor wounded French men are like broken children, tortured by the fear of the German invasions and horror stricken (even more than our own men) by what they have been through. They have no power to get well. We try to help them so very hard but I do not feel we have succeeded yet but we have had some desperate cases - fractured skulls, gangrenous limbs etc etc etc. I cannot bear them dying away from their own people, and I feel we are able to help them less than we help our own Scotch and English who understand us and to whose friends we can write so much more easily. One of our doctors was told her night nurse spoke French fluently and being diffident herself asked the nurse to question a newly arrived French patient. The nurse plunged at once with 'Où avez-vous le pain', which wasn't a great success. We think it is an important sign of confidence that the French Government should be returning to Paris. As soon as the President comes back - and has a little time to spare - Madame Perouse is determined to bring him here to inspect our Hospital. A ward has been called after him, Salle 'Poincaré', and she thinks he will be much gratified. Let us hope he will. It is quite a new experience to be so popular. We are inundated with visitors: distinguished military and lay. The Duchess of Westminster has sent 6 of her doctors and many of her nurses to see over our hospital and the French Red Cross is continually taking people round. It is one person's duty to deal with visitors. This is rather a dull letter I am afraid, but all the time interruptions have gone on, and I was up most of last night so that I am sleepy. I am so glad to hear that Colin is happy and 'unafraid' - that sounds alright. Very much love to all my dear ones Yrs always LGA Will you please give Alan and Ivy and Aaa my news