

7LGA/2/1/17-Written from 'L'Hopital Auxiliaire, Hotel Claridge, Champs Elysées'

'Dearest Alan I hope everything is going well with all my beloveds at Aldeburgh and 19 Craven Hill, and that Colin didn't mind going to school. It seems ages since I came here. We are working incessantly from 8am-11pm or later & scarcely get out at all but I feel it to be a sort of holiday. It is so new and so interesting. The difficulties have been & are considerable but I hope we are steering right & will come through! The organisation of the English RAMC [Royal Army Medical Corps] seems v. defective - the intention apparently was to take all the English wounded home - stopping the worst cases at one of the military base hospitals at Rouen or Versailles if necessary - but the numbers are enormous & the severity of the wounds so great that the plan is impracticable. Civilian help was absolutely necessary to clothe and feed the men as well as to treat them. Auxilliary [sic] Hospitals have been started by the French Red Cross (ours being one of them) but the military authorities distrust & dislike them although the RAMC men actually working at the front are extremely glad of any well run hospital to which their wounded can be sent. The difficulties of transport of the wounded are great as lots of the bridges have been blown up & the lines into Paris are blocked with transport of stores etc etc. By motor the roads are so frightfully bad that it is agonising to bring bad cases over them. Many die of shock on arrival here. I took a day off on Wednesday & went by car to Braisnes [Braisne], a little place near Soissons, and almost at the front - It is about 5 miles from the fighting line - the field ambulances bring [?illegible] there daily, deposit them in the church (a sight not to be forgotten) - they are given hunks of cheese & the ones who aren't dying are then carted on again after 12-24-48 hrs delay. They lie on the stone floor with one doctor & one nurse. They are simply tragic. The doctor is doing his v. best. I brought back 2 men in our car & they are now recovering although they were fearfully ill on the journey, one shot thro' the throat, the other with a bad compound fracture of the arm. Lord Esher visited us here today. He had come to Paris last night! We thought him hostile & suspicious at first but he melted when we took him round the wards & he talked to the men & officers. If there is any difficulty about the English wounded by treated by civilians we will get the French Red Cross to move our Corps out of Paris to a place conveniently situated for the French wounded. Lord Esher was mollified when he found absolute hospital discipline in the wards, & nothing feminine about them & no one holding anyone's hand - but I think it quite possible that the English War Office will remove all English wounded from civil auxilliary [sic] hospitals whatever it costs to the men themselves. It wd be very nice if you & Ivy wd come out here for a week end presently & bring out our dear O.L. If the Germans can be forced back now, Paris will feel itself safe & everything will become quite easy here. Even now the banks are reopening & people are returning. A German bomb was dropped here this morning but it did not do much harm. Our two ambulances brought by Miss Ellis & her brother are coming out this week. Much love to Ivy. I hope she is keeping her eye well on the Children's Hospital. Yrs ever LGA Everyone is fearfully kind to us & likes what we are doing. Ivy will be interested to hear that our fund for this bit of work has reached £2025. Socks, shirts & little towels v. gratefully recd if she knows kind ladies who want to help. ? Colin - Colin Anderson, nephew Children's Hospital - the Women's Hospital for Children, founded by Louisa Garrett Anderson and Flora Murray in 1912 OL - 'our dear OL/Old Lady' - Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Ivy - Alan Garrett Anderson's wife