

7LGA/2/1/09-27 Sep 1914. Written from the HÃ´pital Auxiliaire, HÃ´tel Claridge, Paris.

Transcript: Dearest Mother Two nice little letters came from you this morning one 5 days, the other 4 days on the journey. We try and send our letters to England by hand: either by means of the American Embassy bag or by private friends. People are v. kind in offering help of this kind. It wd be a great help if you wd enclose a few English stamps in each of yr letters and then I cd stamp my letters ready for posting in England. Things are going well here and we are very busy. We have 68 patients: 6 of them French; 2 Turcos and the rest English and Scotch and Irish. There is an officers ward of 12. We have had 2 deaths - both of men brought to us almost dying. They were buried with military honours with a firing piquet of 8 French soldiers two walking in front and three on either side of the coffin. We have a lot of surgery: sometimes I am in the theatre from 2 - 9 or 10 at night and have eight or more operations. The cases come to us very septic and the wounds are terrible. Today we are having an amputn of thigh, 2 head cases perhaps trephine and five smaller ones. We have fitted up quite a satisfactory small operating theatre in the 'Ladies Lavatory' which has tiled floor and walls, good water supply and lighting. I bought a simple operating table in Paris and we have arranged gas rings and fish kettles for sterilisation. Gradually we are improving the domestic arrangements and the routine of the nursing. The food is rough and badly served but everyone is very kind about it and it is improving. Personally I don't mind it and I am quite well, in fact very much rested mentally by the complete change of the life here. Also, after years of unpopularity over the suffrage it is very exhilarating to be on the top of the wave, helped and approved by everyone, except perhaps the English War Office! While all the time we are still doing suffrage work - or women's work - in another form. The nurses whom we brought from England with us are all turning out satisfactory people, ready to do anything and we have a good deal of supplementary help from people here. One American man is making himself invaluable in the officers ward, and we have a dear old French stock broker who is here all day long slaving for us. The cases are very heavy. Especially the severe fracture of thighs. They need 4 people at least to dress them and take the best part of an hour each. As soon as the men become sufficiently convalescent we have to draft them on to a military hospital at Versailles from which they are either invalided home or returned to the front 'where every man is needed'. Lord Esher came here yesterday and inspected us and fired questions at us in an aggressive military way. He had no right to do either as we are financed by private donations and the French Red Cross but of course it would have been most impolite to have been anything than very conciliatory to him. We answered all his questions and took him round the wards and gradually his manner changed and we hope he was friendly when he left. The officers are all most appreciative about the Hospital - and so, I think, are the men although they do not express themselves so easily. Four girls came in for an hour yesterday afternoon and sang hymns in the courtyard. The wards open onto it by big French windows so that everyone heard and all round the court the men sang Onward Christian Soldiers and other good rousing hymns. They liked it very much. We are going to have Scotch songs tomorrow instead of hymns and I fear even a gramophone may appear for a short time. All the men are shocked by what they have been through - and normal comforts and little pleasures are a help to them and make them sleep and forget a little. I have had one day completely off work here when I went for a long motor drive - but except for that I have scarcely been out until after supper. Every evening Dr Murray and I try to go out for a stroll. Paris is looking wonderful, especially at night. The streets in this quarter are almost deserted as most of the good houses are closed. They are beautifully quiet. There's a little moon and over the town search lights are playing all night from the roof of the Madeleine and the Eiffel Tower etc. We walked along the river last night - past the Grand Palais and the Chambre des DeputÃ©s and came back very refreshed. It is difficult for us to go out in the day because visitors come all the time and there are ambulances and telegrams and old generals and the washing and the cook and the insistent countess and the discontented nurse all to be met and soothed and dealt with in succession. We have been joined by two more doctors from London [Majorie Blandy and Rosalie Jobson] who are just qualified and who will be very useful in the capacity of dressers. Any offers of help in the direction of clothing are most acceptable. Shirts, socks, small turkish towels, handkerchieves are perhaps the most needed. Dr Woodcock 27 Nottingham Place is our representative in England. She will arrange for the packing and transport of goods to us here. People like to feel that when they give things, they go straight to the men who need them and we can absolutely guarantee that. I wish the whole organisation for the care of the wounded - their transport, the disposition of base and field hospitals and their clothing and feeding cd be put into the hands of women. This is not military work. It is merely a matter of organisation, common sense, attention to detail and determination to avoid unnecessary suffering and loss of life. Medical women could do it so much better than it is done - especially if the right med. women were chosen for the job - ahem!! We have a scheme already and are gradually breaking it to the old officers who come round to see us. We are having a wonderful time. I hope we will be able to do the job really well. Very much love dearest mother Yrs LGA