

[From Lady Osler to Mrs. Chapin]

13, Norham Gardens, Oxford.

Feb 13th (1915)

Dearest Sister

The post went today without anything very satisfactory from me I fear. I really hadn't a chance to write yesterday and I find that our letters are delayed if they do not go to London by [the] middle [of the] day on Friday - The service in the P.O. here is short and in London too I suppose and the mail is advertised to close Friday 10 PM - Goodness knows what may happen now - if this blockade begins really. The people had a very thrilling time on the Lusitania and an American doctor who is here tonight was on the Baltic. All the men were called on deck at dawn the last morning. Boats were hung out and all preparations made as they thought an attack from a submarine was coming - They used the wireless & destroyers came and took them into Liverpool - Jack Osler was on board but we have not seen him yet - he came to join his old Regiment. Revere was expecting to go yesterday but the ship with nurses has been delayed somewhere and I think he will now have his inoculation before he goes to Cliveden - Troops have been changing here this week - enormous numbers going into a big camp at Northampton and less trained ones coming here - A letter from Norman telling of his crossing etc. It is very gratifying to have these men send their family letters to me first - Archie Malloch sends us his home letters with pictures of amputations & many interesting surgical things for his father. Look on the map and see where he is - Lapanne - just on the coast between Dunkerque and Ostend and near Furnes. The Hospital is a Hotel - only 25 ft. from the sea - His room is at the very top and he says at night he can see the bombs bursting over Ostend. The cases brought there are terrible - just fresh from the field or Trench - Great Heaven isn't it the very devil. Today I have just been wild with despair about it all & the heartstrings just nearly pulled out with sympathy. Wanda M.M. is in town for a month's holiday so I am looking after the people more - our Belgians - Ramsay Wright is becoming much more interested and is helping - A Prof Thonan Geologist from Louvain who has been living at Merton College some time has now been given a house and brought his wife & baby - Yesterday she came to say the landlady had left no linen for change - etc - so I went to see her and have made her quite happy today. I took her out to buy pots & pans - Fancy her experience Her first baby born one day - Louvain bombarded the next. She & baby moved into the cellar - & from one part of the cellar to another as the house fell in. Finally they were in a vegetable bin for three days - then the water pipes leaked in & they crept out and took refuge in a church - & finally got away. Not a vestige of house left nor a rag of clothing Her people lived at Ypres - they reached there but were driven out - and all came to England Now the parents house is ruined and they are just heart broken and worn out.

You can imagine what a pleasure it is to be able to help make them comfortable now - thanks to my very generous American friends - I have had a very busy week. Much to be done at our work room - 100 housewives & holdalls finished - p(y)jamas - and some flannel vests for soldiers. The Government provides such heavy flannel shirts & cardigans that they do not consider under vests necessary - but of course every one wants the soldiers to have them and it is almost impossible to buy enough woven ones. We have a good pattern for a flannel one - Marion also sent me an excellent pattern for soft shoes for these poor tender frost bitten feet - so are all making these.

9/ And in a just case, she says:

2054-1/55-39 G.R.O.
(Lady O. TO Mrs. Chapin, Feb. 13, 1915 - 2)

15, Norham Gardens, Oxford.

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Norman wrote of their crossing in an enormous transport and marching 5 miles out of Havre to a Camp at midnight & sleeping in a tent in a sleeping bag - after that he could tell no plans. I am sure you were interested in Mrs Stickneys letter. If nothing bad happens I shall go to Paris in May - Hamilton Emmons has offered to drive Willie wherever he wants to go - Marion has been having twinges of apin & wants to go to Boston for Harvey C- to operate. She came to talk to W.O about it - he thinks it unwise now - on account of the uncertainty at sea - and she might be made nervous in not being able to get home. Mrs V.B began to worry at Hamble so she and Martin are very comfortably settled at the Regent, Leamington - nice rooms - & a maid, Ada's sister who is a dressmaker out of work. Mrs V.B likes her very much. If the weather is ever decent she & Martin are coming over for Sunday. We have such a funny little man spending Sunday here. He has come from the Mayo Brothers' Hospital in Minnesota to take charge of the Laboratory at the American Hospital at Paignton. Is from Georgia and says "Yes Mam" so prettily. The Red + U.S. uniform for men is too hideous - The hat makes me roar on this dumpy little man. It is a sombrero with a fine leather strap that goes through the rim and under the hair at the back like a child - This little round, smooth face is simply killing - He has just gone to Nuneham to see Mrs Harcourt who is the Secretary of the American Ladies Committee - & quite wonderful - I wonder what she will think of this dumpling.

I have just seen Hugh Minturn's death in the paper - How dreadfully sad! Adèle will be in it - for they live very near them in London - Willie has just had such an extraordinary letter from Adèle about nothing - just high-flown language -

Monday. Here is Elsie's letter written in a blizzard just as you left and yours just returned. I have just come from town where I have been on a queer errand - an old friend of Willie's died suddenly - he was going to arrange the cremation etc - was called to Sheffield & asked me to go. I have always such queer errands in London - ovarian tumors - cremations, Belgian babies - almost anything. I am worried nearly ill over America & Germany.

Good night

Grace -

Not a word of house left now a rag of clothing. Her people & C. the parents house is ruined and they are just heart broken and worn out.

You can imagine what a pleasure it is to be able to help make them comfortable now - thanks to my very generous American friends - I have had a very busy week. This Mr. J. D. S. made some time consistent in the hospital finished - p[y] Jan. and we feel now that there were some warm vests for soldiers. The Government provides such heavy flannel shirts & undershirts that they do not consider under vests necessary - but of course every one wants to have them and it is almost impossible to buy enough of them. We have a good pattern for a flannel one - Marion also sent me an excellent pattern for soft shoes for these poor tender frost bitten feet - so are all making these.