

The Manor House, Chislehurst

The Portsmouth accident July 29th 1886

in full - most interesting

My dearest Anna

MCGILL UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES
ACC. NO. 1584
REF. 16 b

Accept my sincere
thanks for your long & interesting
letter of July 12th. I was especially glad
to get your short sketch of the children
of whom I have heard so little that they
seemed far removed from me. I have
been wishing to know if you intended
to take Annie back, or if your search for
a competent nurse has to be renewed.
I am sorry to hear that Helen is being knocked
about so much - poor woman her natural
temperament is far from happy & yet she has
some gratitude in her for kindness given.
As to ticks, matras &c. with other & pleasant
things occupying one as at present nothing

troubles me connected with them
 except the work it made for you -
 thank you very much for your kindness.
 It is a long time since I have written
 to you but I don't think I can go back
 far upon places & people visited - they
 seem all lost in the absorbing topic of
 the Portsmouth accident, which we
 were pained to find had been called
 to Canada - it doubtless has made you
 too somewhat anxious. I returned to London
 from Stanleigh - leaving Eva there - on Tuesday
 the 20th inst. joining papa at Langham Place
 where I found poor papa getting over his
 address, because of the many interruptions & the
 time it occupied to get data ^{or} at libraries.
 We had a most pressing invitation from
 the Receipts wh: with much persuasion
 I got him to accept for Sat: the 24th - a week
 later than they had wished. This has proved
 to be the greatest blessing both to papa & myself

as the quiet has soothed him & enabled
 him without interruptions to go deliberately
 over said address putting final polish
 on, & on Wednesday he took it to London
 well satisfied & much relieved to have
 it in the hands of the printers. Paper was
 too busy to wish to go to the Postoffice
 entertainment, but from the first Rankine
 had expressed a wish to go & for his sake
 I suppressed all my numerous dislike for
 ships, guns & noisy explosions, & greatly against
 my inclinations started from the Victoria Station
 at 9.30 A.M. There we met Mr. Bailey & Mr. Sanford
 Fleming, the latter got us good places in a
 drawing room car, introducing us to Judge Glyn
 & others so that I began to think we were going
 to have a pleasant time. On arriving at the
 docks we were transferred into very high
 open trucks into which temporary seats were
 placed & R. & I scrambled into the best.
 Crunched & found ourselves amongst
 strangers. These conveyances were only to carry
 us around the dockyard to show us their
 extent

4 We had not proceeded far when
it was evident that ^{our} head run off
the rails as the bumping was severe. ~~that~~
is my last conscious thought; utter oblivion
lasted until I opened my eyes languidly
& found myself sitting in an easy Chair
in the surgery of the back yard, with my
hair dishevelled & a wet cloth on my
head. a bagg of people around & three or
four people lying or sitting faint-looking
& bruised. Rankine stood in the middle
of the place with his back towards me
with a terrible gaping wound ^{the back of} on his
head wh. a surgeon was sticking together.
his Coat off & his shirt horribly stained
with blood. I think I became unconscious
again, for what I most knew was Dr.
Bailey stood beside me & I begged him
to bring R. to me & I wd not be pacified
so he went & got him & he sat beside ^{me} assu-
ring me that a Scalp wound was being
treated. Shortly after I was put into an

Ambulance. Their two men
 carried me a good distance to
 the house of the Chief Surgeon where
 I was most kindly welcomed by
 his wife, Mrs Sedgwick, I lay all the day
 on their drawing room sofa with a
 basin of Cold water in wh. were three
 handkerchiefs to keep changing them on
 my head. The accident occurred about 11.30
 P.M. Sat by me at the 1st till lunch was
 announced when he felt quite able to
 take some. I got nothing till 4 P.M. & then
 only a light repast. After lunch, to my
 distress, R. started off with Mr & Mrs Sedgwick
 to see the Naval engagement. The Mr. assuring
 me it wd do him no harm, & so it proved for
 he has had no farther ill effects except great
 general stiffness for a day or two. At 6.30 he
 returned in a Cab to take me to the station
 & felt quite able to go. He made me very sorry
 & we got back to the Langham somewhere about

H. C. R. had telegraphed to papa from
 Portsmouth & it was well he had pos-
 sibly exaggerated accounts had been put
 up in the Hotel including our names
 as amongst the injured. It has been a
 most wonderful escape. I have not
 suffered a half hours pain from my
 head & have only a few slight bruises -
 My right thumb having given me a
 little trouble & it still swells & gets hot
 when I write or sew. On Saturday we came
 here & it has been so lovely & peaceful & I
 feel convinced has probably had something
 to do in warding off after bad effects & the
 quiet so hospitable to papa. You see I
 have given you a wholly egotistical
 statement but as you may infer I had
 no knowledge of anything except through
 the newspapers. Chief Justice, Watson & believe
 still suffers from contusions of the head,
 & a broken arm & an injury to the elbow

of another gentleman I understand
are amongst the most severe injuries.
It has brought me & my loss into
great notoriety & the number of personal
& written inquiries have been overwhelming.
I had only just arrived here on
Saturday when a telegram from the
Queen was put into my hand!
To inquire for Lady Dawson & her son
& expressing sympathy for their accident.
Mrs Keelpath says she wishes she could
have a mild accident that wd bring
her as much celebrity. But please say
nothing of this - the ^{affair} has its solemn side & I
want to keep that in view. It was very
very kind of Seary & Will to Cable.
We spoke of Cabling to prevent anxiety
at home, but we hoped the papers would
not mention it. It was most difficult to
make plain what has happened if you
had known nothing of it. So it worth
mentioning that I have on a new home -
a bunch of spirit Coloured hours on

wh. apparently saved me from serious
injury as I was pitched exactly on
that low. The backs are paved with
cobble stones & as it rained our clothes
suffered. A new umbrella papa bought
for me the day before the excursion
probably saved R. as he was at the time
holding it up & it was broken & torn.

We intend to leave this retreat
& return to London on Sat. as R. has
decided to make another voyage on
the P. & O. (Ship "Carthage"). he sails on the
15th August & we want to be near him & visit
him as much as we can until he leaves.
You know he has obtained another degree.
M. R. C. S. & I find him pleasant since
but I cannot now enter into another
subject as I will lose the mail as it leaves
this place by 10 P. today. I wanted very
much to write to thank George for his
kindness. Papa has written to Will. but
doubt if I have kept him. With love
to Bernard & all the young folks. As ever
your affectionate
Mother