



Giverny
Nov. 17, '14

Dear Mildred,

Your quick response to our call for help has been so cheering. There is so much to be done and everyone has, relatively, so little energy. I wish you were here to help me overcome my own inertia and the mental inertia that I daily run up against at the hospital. Everybody means well but there are days, like today for example, when I leave the hospital with a feeling of despair. A doctor has no hold over volunteers and they have a habit of carrying out their own plans that is very disturbing. I have been obliged to promote the Grandmother to the position of head nurse and I don't believe that this is going to accomplish a thing except to make matters more hazardous than ever. It is a disagreeable sensation to leave the hospital each day with the feeling that orders may or may not be carried out. Of course, there is never anything seriously wrong but I do so like to see things done well.

Since I last wrote to you I have been able to get out of the hands of the Red Cross and to be attached to the hospital in Vernon. This has simplified things very much and I am sure that, if we have the money, we can continue to make ourselves useful during the winter. I think also that I will find many opportunities to give warm clothes to the men who leave the Vernon hospital. We have at last secured some more waterproof cloth and have again begun to make blankets. I am so glad that you are going to start the girls knitting. Every thing that you can send will be useful, and I am not sure but what you can make yourself more useful at home than over here.

At the same time we continue to miss you very much. As the papers contain nothing but war news and, as I am so constantly on the go, I long for a little outside conversation; for an occasional exchange of ideas. Your letters are always such a pleasure for, in America, art has not been

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[written on side]

I received a letter from Helen Litter. If you can't send international post office adds. send money to the bank.

Lloyds Bank (France) [Lta]

26 Avenue de L'opera Paris

Contributed to Maine Memory Network by Maine Historical Society

MMN # 102423

Date: November 17, 1914

Description: Dr. William Johnston expresses gratitude at Burrage family donations, France, 1914

completely thrown into the hinterland with all the things you would like to think and dream about if you only could get two or three hours of consecutive thought. These consecutive hours do occasionally turn up but, instead of being able to dream, you feel forced to go over in your mind the events of the last three months and to try to make head or tail out of what has and what is going to happen. Each day that the Germans fail to win a decisive victory leaves me more and more confused as to why they began the war and as to what is going to be the Grand Finale. Is all Europe going to become one big hospital? Must we go on for several years using only the executive sides of our brains? I feel sometimes as if I would go mad just driving along in one direction. To give myself a little relaxation I have again taken up the history of medicine and I will try (if I have the time) to write a short history that will give a medical student some general idea of what has gone on in the past. Now that the world has come to a standstill it seems a good moment to review our progress. Medicine is now being put to a supreme test and the next few years will have taught us so many lessons that when we start off again with a entirely new point of view.

I think that this general upheaval will have more influence on art than on medicine. It will confirm medicine in the path that it is already following: it will bring European art to its senses and, I hope, put fresh life into art at home. How I would like to get back to America and have a chance to do some big pictures! Try as I will I cannot get the painting out of my mind. Are you able to do anything at all in preparation for the work at the school? I am keeping you in the letter and, if my imagination will only work a little, I will write to you soon about some plans that I have thought of.

Wex are all getting along very well and the children are just as happy as ever. They are planning a Japanese play for Xmas and are impatient that we should begin to make their costumes.

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We all send you our best love. I wish your father was President!
Kindest remembrances to all your family, sincerely W.B.J.

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In time of peace I do not think that the French army ever camps out: when they have the manoeuvres they are billeted on the inhabitants so the soldiers had neither woolen blankets nor waterproofs. The English were able to equip their expeditionary force of a few hundred thousand men comparatively easily but the French had to equip several million and the government simply could not get the things. They have really been doing their best and have sent over a million blankets and "tentes individuels"(whatever they are) to the front but you must remember that the principal manufacturing district of France is in the hands of the Germans. The French also do not understand how to combine blanket and waterproof. It seems that the models they have in Paris are painfully impractical. So if you see an opportunity to start a fund for punches you would be filling a real want. Dr. Johnstons sister, Mrs. Van Rensealer has spoken of doing this also you might be able to combine .

I have much to write about the hospital and the hospital funds . In the last few weeks the situation has entirely changed. There are not nearly so many men being wounded and they have more than enough room for them in the large hospitals. In Paris there is apparently great competition among the hospitals in capturing the wounded that are sent there. When Susie went to the American Ambulance they had five hundred beds but

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only three hundred wounded. When our little Ambulance was started it was really needed. The men were lying on the floors of the Vernon hospitals. We received the surplus men first from the Red Cross hospital at Bizzy and then from the military hospital at Vernon. Recently Dr. Johnston found that they had no wounded for him in Vernon and then the order was given that the small ambulances, like ours, were to be closed "by extinction" that is that they were to cure the patients they had but were not to receive new ones. It has been very confusing to have this happen just as we had received enough money from you and other friends to run the Ambulance for several months but it is really good news as Dr. Johnston really getting worn out. And we find that there is much more need of the money to help some of the military hospitals here which receive the bare necessities from the government but cannot provide the men with any comfort or any warm clothes when they leave. If the men arrive with their clothes and socks in rags they leave for the front with the same things and without any winter clothes. A man who has been in hospital must feel exposure much more than one who is accustomed to it. It seems that most of the money given by the charitable goes to Paris: hardly any reaches the provinces. In fact we see more to be done than we can possibly cope with. So if you find any more people willing to send us clothes or to trust us with money, please encourage them. Of course the money that has been sent us definitely for the ambulance we will use for paying up the bills but a number of people have said that the money was to be used for other any purpose and I am sure you will not mind our diverting the funds sent by the Burrige family.

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