

dominated, and little of the lovable boy we had known appeared to remain. Throughout his visit I heard of nothing but escapades, of breaking bounds, of friends he had made who appeared as not very creditable characters, of ways in which one could "do" medical officers. Any suggestion of another point of view was met by "San ferryami"—the phrase (bearing little resemblance to its original French) by which the Army expressed what it thought was its philosophy. Finally I said, "I think it's time you went back to Australia, Ailward."

"You betcher," he agreed, though without understanding my meaning. So we took our leave, and I have heard nothing more of him; my acquaintance with him appears in my mind now as an episode—one of the many that Army life produced, and one tinged with sadness. For I think that our feeling as to his deterioration was only too correct; people who came in contact with him after his leaving our hospital had little good to say of him, and his doings, as boasted about to Sister W. and myself, could only be excused by being considered exaggerations which must reflect unhappily upon his mental condition. Perhaps a long voyage and the sane treatment and normal conditions of home life might restore his balance; it would be very good to know that they had done so.

### A VISIT TO DEVASTATED FRANCE.

By H. H. Montefiore.

(Formerly Administrative Officer in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps.)

After four years of absence, I again set foot in Paris. The aspect of the gay capital is somewhat more normal than in war-time. The shops are opened again, the toilettes are elegant, but still the long crepe veil of the mourner predominates.

The grey-blue uniform of the French officer and the poilu is always delightful to the eye, and it is good to see the many decorations pinned to the tunics, for the French are allowed to wear their medals at all times. Numbers of American soldiers are joy-riding in huge camions, numbers of American women parade the streets in dark grey costumes and many and varied badges. They relieve the monotony of their uniform by wearing low-necked blouses and lace collars and cuffs, very offensive to English ideas of what is correct. Of Boche, no trace! They are now restricted to Versailles.

How the French rejoice to think that their beautiful city is intact! What a change and what gloom and sadness creep over you when you take train to the devastated area by way of Soissons and Coucy, passing the famous Chemin des Dames. The whole country seems bleeding. The once lovely trees of fifty, sixty, and a hundred years' growth point their blackened stems to heaven, like mournful sentinels. The forests are decimated, and the huge obus holes filled with stagnant water, where myriads of insects breed, make the pleasant walks of the old days absolutely impossible. As soon as you put your head out of doors, gadflies and mosquitoes seem to spring from nowhere, thirsting to draw blood and cling to you with incredible persistence. You can imagine what the soldiers must have suffered, and especially the wounded, when lying exposed to the burning rays of summer.

Our journey from the station to the wooden shanty where we were to sleep was made in an army cart, drawn by a stout farm mare and driven by the farmer's wife. These "voitures a vivres," painted blue grey, are allotted to the properties whence all transport has been taken. The entry and descent are anything but graceful for the gentler sex, who are very apt to catch their petticoats on the protruding brakes. We wound along the plains, which were always covered with crops at this time. The French peasants love the soil, and after they return from evacuation they take with resignation the destruction of house and household gods, if they can find their own "bout de terrain" to cultivate. Out of two villages of from eight hundred to two thousand inhabitants not a single house remains standing. Those peasants who have had the courage to return have made little houses for themselves out of the remains of houses or dug-outs, or have been given the wood and corrugated iron to have a "baraque" built by the Boche prisoner. There are many hundreds of these working in the Aisne district, and they seem to prefer the good food and shelter given them here than to return to their country.

One poor peasant family think themselves lucky to have found a "cagna" left complete by the soldiers. It consists of an outer room to eat in, a little roofed-in shed for tubs and cooking stove and materials, a lean-to for the horse, who puts his head into the large room where sleep the family—papa, maman, a 15-day old infant, and nine children ageing from 16 months to 16 years—"nid d'ames"—all well and jolly and quite willing to give shelter to a family of five cousins until



they are provided with a home of their own. Little sixteen months had never tasted fresh milk in her small life till she came to the farm, and when she was given a cupful hot from the cow her glee was quite touching. She could not drink fast enough, and held out her cup for more with every tiny finger trembling. As a result of the war, all the children of from about eight to ten years old cannot read or write. The Boche took the schools over in 1914, and they have as yet had no opportunity to learn.

The once famous apple orchards of Moyembrie have not one single apple tree remaining whole; either they have been wholly cut down by the Boche or, more cruel still, they have had a neat ring cut round them to prevent the sap rising. The Aisne peasants will suffer from the loss of their apples and cider for years to come. Nature has been kind and has thrown a mantle of poppies—"rouge comme le sang"—cornflowers, and flowering grasses over the havoc wrought by man. The country is literally riddled with dug-outs, some cunningly camouflaged, others with long flights of wooden steps and supports of sandbags. Let us take a look at one. It has a nice front room which evidently served as an office, and tables, chairs, and lockers are still in place. Lower down and well protected from attacks of shells, is a bedroom with wooden and wire framework, making quite a comfortable bed. The quarries of Moyembrie were fitted out as barracks for 1500 men with such ingenuity that soldiers from far and wide came to examine them. There are rooms for officers neatly boarded off, dormitories for the men, large refectories, and kitchens. A wooden Madonna with folded hands and sweet smile gives a benediction to all who pass. A tiny chapel has been fitted with altar and candlesticks and statues taken from the old church of Coucy. They have been kept safely till the time when the glorious resurrection is to begin.

Coucy-le-Chateau gives the saddest of impressions, for here the houses are grouped together and the scene of desolation is complete. The two old gates of Coucy, the Porte de Chauny, and the Porte de Laon are in ruins. Both bear the inscription, "Gloriously delivered in September, 1918, by the 52nd Company, commanded by General Daydrein," after having three times changed hands. The cemetery is upturned. The German could not let the dead rest in peace. Here the garden of a beautiful chateau renowned for its wood carvings and collections of antiquities, opens its shattered grill to the visitor, and there the Orphanage and the Hospital are roofless, and show gaping wounds in outer walls.

The ruins of the Chateau de Coucy are still magnificent, though it is no longer a monument of any style of architecture. The whole compares in no mean manner with Pompeii, and the State has conceived the idea of conserving Coucy as a glorious monument of what France has suffered in the war. As many pilgrimages have been made to the Italian ruins, so should the French Pompeii draw to it crowds of sightseers, and rightly, too, for no one who has not visited the devastated area for himself can have any idea of what Belgium and France have suffered

#### EXTRACTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE.

From Mrs. Bensusan (Ethel de Lissa), Ouro Preto Gold Mines, Minas Geraes, Brazil:—

With regard to the hon. secretary O.S.U.'s request for notes on work, &c., of old students, it is a very great pleasure to think that one can remain in touch with old colleagues thus; and it is with readiness that I send you my own unimportant particulars. During the first two years of the war much "war work" was done in this camp, and bazaars and fetes were organised, so that about £2000 was sent to various charitable organisations in England, and five beds were maintained in a hospital. For a mining camp with (at that time) only thirty-one British wage-earners, this was considered creditable. Several on our staff went to the Front, two being killed and several wounded. Some have returned here to work.

In January, 1918, I went Home with my husband and little son, as it was probable that our two sons at Public School would be joining up at any moment. One had already become 2nd lieutenant in the Royal Naval Air Service (ultimately R.A.F.), which he left in February, 1920, and is now engaged in Rio in commerce, his nerves having been shattered for the time by a serious accident. The second son was demobilised in June, 1919, a second lieutenant in the Royal Sussex. (Neither went to the Front.) He also is interested in Brazil, and lives in Santos, a flourishing port of Sao Paulo, a wonderful city itself. Our only daughter, who came out from England on a visit, is now going to continue her education in Brazil, studying in Sao Paulo for the medical preliminaries, which are differently arranged here from either England or Australia. Would that it could be done under