

through doors guarded not by gendarmes but by their friendly *compatriotes* wearing sashes of their beloved tricolor, who give them all a great *poignet de main*. There the Prefet shakes hands with each, and in the name of France welcomes them back.

After the formalities of medical inspection and registration are concluded, they go to their allotted hotels and after that they are free to wander where they will in the town until they are sent on to their destination. After the first excitement is over, one sees them standing at the corners or walking slowly in groups, and one is conscious that the prevailing attitude is one of listless depression. Spoken to, they brighten up at once, and have the air of remembering how to smile, but as one passes they appear to sink again into dullness. The second day after their arrival it is better, the fatigue of the long journey is passing off and they are learning to feel free again.

Ill-treated? No; but badly nourished, *yes*. Always the same story. "But for the Swiss, who sent us parcels, we should have died of hunger." "A parcel every fortnight; *penses-donc*," and shaking hands extract a case of cherished bits of paper from some inside depths and produce a postcard from one of the senders of the parcels. "Ah! those Swiss are generous ones. We shall never forget them and their kindness, never; they will have their reward. When I arrive, what a letter I shall write! I shall try to thank them properly, these Swiss; they are true friends."

"Our diet? For breakfast, tea; yes, *tea*, but no colour, the colour of water, and 150 grammes of bread. A little bit that, a mere nothing. For dinner, beetroot and turnips; for supper, coffee, and again no bread to speak of. And *dirt*—hairs and straw in the soup."

"Vermin? Yes, we were eaten alive, especially at the beginning. Wash your clothes? How could you when you had only one shirt?"

They had had to work and had been paid for it, though not highly. One man had saved up 63 francs and on his return went with it straight to the Banque de France, "pour aider la Guerre." One man we met, a cheerful, energetic person, a mason and plasterer, had evidently done good work and been well paid; he came from a camp that appeared to have been well managed. He showed us picture postcards of it that he had brought away hidden in his shirt, also of the church close to the camp where they went every Sunday to hear Mass. From a secret corner about his person he brought out another treasure. "Look, I made it for the Quatorze Juillet," he said proudly. A tiny flag rolled up tight, the red, white and blue carefully sewn together, and on the white was written "Vive la France. 14 Juillet, 1915." We asked him how he dared. "Oh, I hid it well," he said. He shook hands again and again as we wished him good luck, and looking at the badge we wore he said, "When I have made a little money I shall send a donation to the Croix Rouge—it is all the same, isn't it?"

A lad, very white, told us he had had his cough for six months. "You see, I had no relations to send me food, and I didn't get enough to eat, so I could not get rid of it, but now I shall be all right."

There were no stories of injustice and no bitterness against their jailors. One man spoke of having to leave two marks behind that were owing to him, because the man who paid them had no change. "I said to him, oh well, I make you a present of that." "But I shall write to the Kommandatur, and he will see me righted. I shall not lose my two francs, no no."

The greatest suffering seemed to have been absence of news of their families. One man said that his wife was in the occupied country, and all the news he had had from her was a postal order for four francs. "I did not want her to send me money, but it was news all the same. I knew she was alive. And now I shall get her back. Oh yes, I am sure she will get back."

The next day the convoy starts again for the south. Up and down the platform walks a lady with a sheaf of papers in her hands. She is calling out names. "M. Tel et Tel?" "Me voilà, Madame." "Monsieur, votre femme vous reclame; elle est émigré à B—," and a slip with the address is handed him. What joy it brings—the first news for seventeen long months. The organisation of the Bureau des Recherches makes it possible for many thousand repatriés to hear news of their families almost as soon as they touch French soil. Generally it is good news—but not always.

They cannot all go on at once. The suffering and privation have told so severely on some of them that they must wait awhile and gather up strength to face the new life that awaits them. Sometimes it is a question of merely a week's rest and the homelike Maisons de Repos give them all that is needed. But there are others who need some weeks of care and nursing to put strength into them again and to prevent them from falling into permanent ill-health. For them, too, a Maison de Repos is being prepared in a high mountain valley, where in the fresh air, tended by loving hands, they may rest and forget the pain they have come through and find again that splendid courage which is the heritage of their race.

IRENE SUMNER.

PRESENTATION.

Great regret was felt and expressed at Standish Hospital last week, when Miss du Sautoy, who has been Matron since the Hospital opened in May, 1915, left to take up important work in London. It is mainly owing to her great power of organisation that the Hospital has been run so successfully, as it is far more complicated in its arrangements than most Voluntary Aid Hospitals, owing to the staff all living in the hospital, and it has accommodation for 105 patients. Before she left Standish House Miss du Sautoy was presented

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)