

## A FEW DAYS IN THE WAR ZONE.

(Continued from page 374.)

Verneuil, where Sisters of the F.F.N.C. have worked since the early days of the war, has always been associated with a vision of the simple life. Turning over old letters the reason for this is not far to seek. A Sister, in describing life at Verneuil, wrote:—"We live the simple life, and shall find it very difficult to conform to all the conventionalities if we return at the end of the war; trivialities seem more trivial than ever, so near are we to the realities. We are lodged in a romantic, tumble-down, dear old chateau divided into three tenements. A relic of the old family lives at the far end, a retired postman in the middle, and the English 'Mees' in the near corner. Each section has a strip of garden, which is cultivated industriously, skirted by a charming little stream, and away over are flowery orchards, and such skies!—blue, blue!—in which the sun plays hide-and-seek in springtime with pink and purple clouds. As for the moon and stars, they are for ever smiling and twinkling at us when the day is done.

"The front of this demesne is the yard, where we are reminded that 'war is war.' Here at times brave men take their rest, shoe their horses, tend their beasts, and teach us the everlasting lesson of selfless patriotism, personified in the truly sublime Poilu. We are often very tired and very cold, but we have only to pass to our quarters through this yard to feel warm at heart with admiration for

the knightly and incomparable defenders of France. All's well with a country whose sons love her, as France is beloved of her children."

To read over a few such letters naturally made one anticipate with great pleasure a visit to Verneuil.

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To be up at 5 in the morning (quite unnecessarily, but I once lost a train, and am not quite sure how much besides), and to be stepping downstairs, valise in hand, just as that ubiquitous *garçon*, after superhuman effort, was ascending with *l'eau chaude*, was cause for

regret on both sides. Then to hope for *petit déjeuner* at such an hour was, of course, unreasonable. But in the little *salle* soldiers making an early start were also inclined to appease the inner man.

Our kingdom for a cup of hot coffee! Instinctively we were all at one.

A cloth somehow flew on to the table; cups, saucers, spoons, plates, knives and forks skipped around and clattered down—evidently in no mood for use thus early; then that tireless *garçon* darted hither and thither: into every drawer and cupboard, hole and corner,

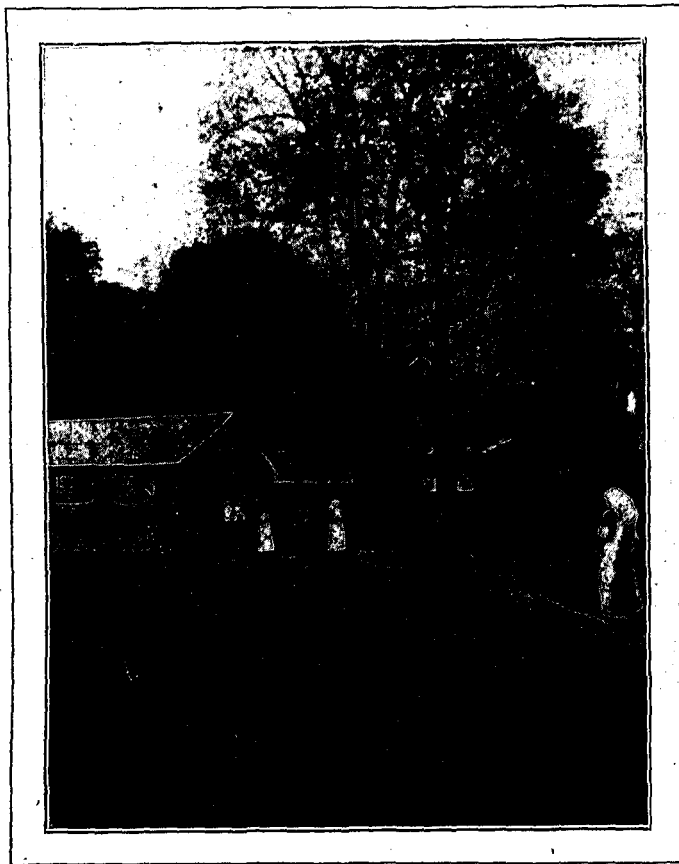
including the stove, he peeped and poked. I joined the hunt. Curiosity prompted enquiries.

"*Beurre*," he rapped out by way of reply. Alas! Mme. Econome, not yet risen, had spirited away the butter overnight and taken the keys!

But why the stove?—

*N'importe!*

It is compulsory for the wayfarer to pay his bill, and as *petit déjeuner* was marked fcs. 1.50 on the *chit*, we approached the



THE HUTS IN THE GROUNDS AT VERNEUIL.

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