

On Sunday we visited the prisoners' graves in the cemetery at Lille, and took some flowers for them; they are buried two in one grave, and many of the crosses are marked "Inconnu"; the graves are well-cared for and the ground was blue with forget-me-nots growing all around. We were taken to the Museum at Lille, from which many valuable pictures and statues were taken away by the Germans, but they have nearly all been got back since the Armistice.

We also visited the American Red Cross Depot, which is now doing wonderful work in supplying comforts and furniture for the ruined homes of the French people.

Not the least interesting of the things we did was to visit the systematically-destroyed factories in or near Lille. In September, 1917, the Germans began to break up the factories, and by June, 1918, they were all broken up. The actual material found in the factories was all sent to Germany. The first one we were taken over was a spinning flax and thread factory. The Germans took away the forty-five looms and every spinning engine, they destroyed every bit of machinery, pulling up by a crane a 600 lb. weight to the top floor, making holes through and dropping the weight on to the machinery underneath. All broken up steel and lead, &c., were taken for munitions. To do this job thoroughly they employed a professional gang of house breakers—seventy-five in number—sent from Maison d'Haas, at Magdeberg, to break up the factory; these men worked under military control. This factory alone sustained a definite loss of six million francs; and it will cost three times this to replace and establish it.

The other factory we visited was at Lesquin, South of Ronchin, the Thompson-Houston factory, where they made steam turbines and electrical appliances. All the machinery was broken up piece by piece; they took away what they could, and destroyed the rest. One building was taken away piece by piece and set up in Germany, and before they left on October 17th, 1918, they went round with lighted torches, setting fire to everything, laughing like devils in their glee. English, French and Italian prisoners all used to work here, but the English were treated much worse than the others, and many died.

Towards the end of the German occupation they were lodged in a room next to the ammunition dump, so that if the English bombed it they would be blown up. 500,000 people were put out of employment by the destruction of the factories.

The factory people in Lille were the first people to have the system of pensions, they got their pensions after working for thirty years, 30 francs per fortnight for the men, 25 francs for women, they are also decorated by Government, and have the option of remaining at their work or retiring on their pension.

About the deportation of the women, we heard the shameful facts from the women themselves,

some of whom we visited in their homes. Many thousands were deported from Lille alone; they were treated with every circumstance of indecency and disrespect. They were away six or eight months, and were only allowed to return home through the intervention of the Pope.

We visited some of the schools, and saw the school children who have suffered under the German's occupation. The children are two inches shorter than they should be owing to insufficient nourishment.

Our journeys outside Lille were taken in an Army motor lorry, and many days we journeyed eighty miles in this. We visited places, the names of which are so familiar to us, we have so often heard them spoken of by our men—Armentières, Merville, Locon, Bethune, La Bassée, Lens, Arras, Vimy Ridge, Bailleul, Kemmel, and Ypres. They are simply indescribable, one can never realise the utter ruin and desolation of these places without seeing them, one wonders that anyone came out alive, and we are more than ever filled with admiration for our men who went through it all with such unflinching spirit year after year.

Fought over for four years these beautiful towns are nothing now but heaps of ruins, and yet the people are going back to live among them, and are in a most plucky way trying to build up among the remnants some small corner where they can live. A woman in Lens, living among a few sticks and stones where her home should have been, told us, "It was better to be at home in the wreck than in lodgings with strangers." In another ruined home in Locon, where we had our sandwiches, they served us with hot coffee as we sat round the stove. On the wall still hung a crucifix, and in one corner was a counter and a stock of tinned food, post-cards, chocolate, &c., with which they did quite a trade. Their sleeping quarters were on some straw on a few boards they had fixed on to the rafters. Outside they were cultivating a garden and growing vegetables. It was while waiting here we talked to a Chinese, who smiled all over his face when we gave him cigarettes and matches, and asked us "Were we Blighty." We saw boards up with familiar names, "Lime Street," "Paradise Corner," and were told that not far from here there were 1,000 Germans still unburied, "skeletons in uniforms." All the country is dead and destroyed; cemeteries are everywhere, some in perfect condition, others churned up by constant shelling. Not a living tree or bush for miles.

Vimy Ridge is a place to haunt one. We walked right over it, about five miles; everywhere are trenches, barbed wire, shell holes, dug outs, graves in shell holes, on mounds, marked by crosses, some named, many unknown, nearly all Canadians, who finally, in April, 1917, took Vimy Ridge after several attempts. A place of shadows, inexpressibly sad, and yet one did see signs of spring and of new life there, in the daffodils, violets and wood anemones which were springing up among the dead trees and blackened bushes on the Ridge. Kindly

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