

## FRENCH FLAG NURSING CORPS.

### "THE GREY OUTLOOK OF THE DEVASTATED EXPANSE."

A Sister writes:—"Our ambulance has joined with the Centre Hospitalier de Royallieu, Compiègne, in which I have a medical service. The Médecin Chef here had been at Mobile 1, where he knew the other Sisters of our Corps who worked there, and he seemed greatly pleased to find that I belonged to the same Corps.

"No doubt, we shall all feel deeply leaving our dear Poilus when the time arrives to part from them. The devastation one sees around is appalling; in some parts little remains but heaps of stones and debris. One day I was given to

survivor of all this shelling and bombing, standing quite intact. I made several attempts to seize it; I crept between the unexploded and semi-exploded shells, but, alas, the bending roof ready to make its descent upon them sent a thrill through me, so I retraced my footsteps, leaving my souvenir in its unique resting-place. There was not a sign of life anywhere, except my own being; not even a bird; the absence of sound seemed extraordinary, as though the ravages of the campaign had stilled even the sounds of nature; not a living creature existed at Vauxboin; the gruesome aspect of the whole village, the grey outlook of the devastated expanse was deplorable—an uncanny feeling of extreme loneliness crept over me, so after my brief exploration of the ruins I turned my back on our once happy little domain. The entire route from Soissons



LE CHATEAU (XVII CENTURY), VAUXBOIN, AISNE.  
USED AS A HOSPITAL BY F.F.N.C. SISTERS, NOW IN RUINS.

spend at my disposal, and I went to our old ambulance at Vauxboin—the 12/14—but nothing of it remains except a small portion of half of the front wall of the chateau, ready to crash at any moment, otherwise nothing but stones and charred wood lie there; the fine trees which stood at the foot of the wood and separated us from the "Contageux" burnt to atoms; shells, exploded and non-exploded, lying about everywhere that one could hardly plant one's foot; bomb holes of enormous dimensions, &c. I gazed in through the window of what was once our *salle à manger*—now a heap of stones with the remains of our fortified looking buffet at one side and resting upon it was the centre table fruit dish, composed of fine china! A marvellous

was bestrewn with shells, machine-gun cartridges, helmets of both French and Germans, trenches and graves—what a change in so short a time. I was glad to find signs of life again as I neared Soissons, but even it is a veritable scene of devastation; one gets lost among the huge heaps of stone, streets and quarters are unrecognisable, the fine cathedral is existing only in shell scraps here and there and ready to give its last thud at any moment. Compiègne also is much overthrown in parts, the beautiful cathedral having much suffered, some of the fine wood of the great forests down, and the pretty, once mossy pathways riddled with shell and bomb holes; these forests are wonderful. It is getting very late now and my tiny, blinking lamp is giving out."

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