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English
Sergeant
the
Serbian
Army

FLORA
SANDES



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COLONEL MILITCH, COMMANDANT OF THE SECOND REGIMENT (ON THE LEFT) AND HIS CHIEF OF STAFF ; WITH THE REGIMENTAL FLAG

An English
Woman-Sergeant
in the
Serbian Army

BY
FLORA SANDES

With an Introduction by
SLAVKO Y. GROUITCH
*Secrétaire-Général of the Serbian Ministry of
Foreign Affairs*

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INTRODUCTION

INNUMERABLE have been the manifestations of sympathy, generosity, and of the sincere desire to help Serbia given by the British people to their little Ally since the very beginning of the War. No words could ever express the deep gratitude of the Serbian Nation for the splendid services rendered by the many British Medical Missions, whose staffs, men and women, have nursed the sick and wounded without a thought for the hardships and dangers to which they have been personally exposed, and which, especially during the typhus epidemic and, later on, during the Great Retreat, were very serious indeed. British women have played a

most prominent part in this humanitarian work of charity and mercy, and some of them have even given their lives for the Cause.

When the history of their splendid achievements is written—as I hope will be done some day—the name of Miss Flora Sandes will certainly figure in it with a special acknowledgment. In the interesting pages which follow she will herself give a vivid description of her experiences during the Retreat in the ranks of the Serbian Army, in which, I believe, she was the only foreign woman allowed to serve in a fighting capacity. That in itself speaks very highly of the esteem and confidence in which she is held in Serbia. But she only took to a rifle when there was no more nursing to be done, as, owing to

the Army retreating, the wounded could not be picked up and had to be left behind. Before that she had worked in Serbia for eighteen months as a voluntary nurse, practically without interruption, having left the country but twice, and that on a short visit to London to collect funds and bring back with her dressings and other hospital supplies which were badly wanted. During the typhus epidemic she volunteered to go to Valjevo, which was the centre of the disease and where eight Serbian doctors and many nurses had already succumbed. The same fate very nearly overtook her, but fortunately she recovered and resumed immediately her self-imposed duty.

Such examples of self-sacrifice, added to so many others given by British men and

women in Serbia, have implanted in the hearts of the Serbians a deep love and admiration for Great Britain, who may well be proud of such sons and daughters.

SLAVKO Y. GROUITCH,

*Secrétaire-Général of the
Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

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CHAPTER I

REJOINING THE SERBIANS, NOVEMBER, 1915— THE SECOND REGIMENTAL AMBULANCE

EVENTS moved so rapidly in Serbia after the Bulgarians declared war that when I reached Salonica last winter I found it full of nurses and doctors who had been home on leave and who had gone out there to rejoin their various British hospital units, only to find themselves unable to get up into the country.

I had been home for a holiday after working in Serbian hospitals since the very beginning of the war, but when things began to look so serious again I

hurried back to Serbia. We had rather an eventful voyage, as the French boat I was on was carrying ammunition as well as passengers, and the submarines seemed to make a dead set at us. At Malta we were held up for three days, waiting for the coast to clear. The third night I had been dining ashore, and on getting back to the boat, about eleven, found the military police in charge, and the ship and all the passengers being searched for a spy and some missing documents. We were not allowed to go down to our cabins until they had been thoroughly ransacked, but as nothing incriminating was found we eventually proceeded on our way, with a torpedo-destroyer on either side of us as an escort. The boats were always slung out in

readiness, and we were cautioned never to lose sight of our life-belts. We had to put in again at Piræus, and again at Lemnos for a few days, so that it was November 3rd before we finally reached Salonica—having taken fourteen days from Marseilles—only to find that the railway line had been cut, and there was no possible way of getting up into Serbia.

My intention had been to go back into my old Serbian hospital at Valjevo to work under the Serbian Red Cross as I did before; that was out of the question now, of course, as Valjevo was already in the hands of the Austrians, but I thought I might get up to Nish and get my orders from the President of the Serbian Red Cross there. I inquired from a Serbian officer staying at the hotel, who had just

ridden down from Prisen, if it would be possible to ride up into Serbia, but he most strongly discouraged all idea of riding, saying that with every facility at his disposal, and relays of fresh horses all along the route, it had taken him ten days to ride from Prisen to Salonica, and that during that time he had frequently been unable to obtain food either for himself or his horses; that, furthermore, it was very dangerous even with an escort, as part of the way was through hostile Albania, and that all the horses were needed for the Army. I gave up that idea, therefore, and set to work to find out where I could come into touch with the Serbians, and finally found I could go to Monastir, or, to call it by its Serbian name, Bitol. Accordingly, I, with four

other nurses and a doctor whose acquaintance I had made on the boat, who also found themselves unable to reach their original destinations, left for Bitol the next day.

Arrived at Bitol, I at once made inquiries about the next step farther, and found that Prilip, about twenty-five miles farther on, was still in the hands of the Serbians, though its evacuation was expected any minute, and even now the road from Bitol to Prilip was not considered safe on account of marauding Bulgarian comitadjes, or irregulars. However, the English Consul had to go out there, and he said he would take us with him to see how the land lay, and whether we were needed in the hospital there.

I spent the afternoon prowling round Bitol, mostly in the Turkish quarter.

The next day we went with the Consul to Prilip—though up to the last moment I was afraid we should not go, as there was so much talk about the road not being safe—some of us in the touring car and the rest in a motor-lorry, with an escort of Serbian soldiers, all armed to the teeth. I took my camp bed and blankets with me, on the off chance of being able to stay at Prilip, as I was gradually edging my way up to the Front, leaving the rest of my baggage in Bitol to be sent after me. We got there without any mishap, keeping a sharp look-out for Bulgarian patrols. We found a Serbian military hospital at Prilip, and I asked the Upravnik or Director if I might stay and work there, to which he consented, but added that he was afraid that it would not be for long,

as they were expecting to have to fly before the Bulgarians any day. I accordingly got a room at the hotel, and the Consul left me an orderly to look after me, named Joe, who could speak a little English. I was very pleased at getting into a Serbian hospital again in spite of all difficulties, as the opinion in Salonica seemed to be that it was impossible; but I must say I felt rather lost when the cars went back that evening and I was left alone, the only Englishwoman in Prilip.

The first thing I did was to turn all the furniture, including the bed, out of the room in the tenth-rate pub., which was the best hotel that Prilip boasted, and made Joe scrub the floor and put in my own camp bed.

I take the following extract out of my

diary, written on my first night in Prilip :

“ Monday, 8th, 8.30 p.m.—I am sitting up in bed in my sleeping sack, writing this in a very small room in S—— Hotel, Prilip. The room contains (besides my camp bed) a rickety chair, and a small table with my little rubber basin, a cracked mirror and my faithful tea-basket. From the café below comes a deafening chorus of Serbian soldiers. I am glad there is a good lock on the door, as someone is making a violent effort to come in, and from the fierce altercation going on between him and the boy-chambermaid, scraps of which I can understand, he is apparently under the impression that I have taken his room—I may have for all I know, but anyhow the proprietor gave it to me.

“The view from my window is not calculated to inspire confidence either. It looks on to a stableyard full of pigs, donkeys and the most villainous-looking Turks squatting about at their supper. These, I tell myself, are the ones who will come in and cut my throat if Prilip is taken to-night, as I don't think any responsible person in the town knows I am here. However, if I live through the night things will probably look more cheery in the morning.”

In the middle of the night I was awakened by another fearful racket in the passage. “That's done it,” I thought, sitting up in bed with my electric torch in one hand and my service revolver in the other, “it's like my rotten luck that the Bulgars should pitch on to-night to

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come in and sack the town.” However, a very few minutes convinced me that it was only two drunks coming up to bed, and, telling myself not to be more of a fool than nature intended, I turned over and went to sleep again.

I think my morbid reflections must have been brought on by the supper I had had. Joe, my orderly, had, for reasons best known to himself, taken me to a different restaurant to the one where we had been to lunch with the Consul, assuring me that it was much better; it was not, very much worse, in fact, though I should not have thought such a thing could be possible. It was full of soldiers and comitadjes drinking. At first I could get no food at all, and when it did come it was uneatable. I had supper with an

American doctor I met in the town next night, and he informed me that food was so scarce and dear in Prilip that to get anything of a meal you had to have your meat in one restaurant, your potatoes in another, and your coffee in a third !

Next morning I went round to the hospital, and in the afternoon one of the doctors took me round and introduced me to the Serbian Chief of Police, who was most friendly and polite, got me a nice little room close to the hospital, and apologised for not being able to ask me to come to his house as his guest as his wife was ill. This is the sort of courtesy that has always been extended to me in Serbia ; they think the best of everything they can offer is not too good for the

stranger within their gates, and I began to feel much cheered up.

There were not very many wounded in the hospital, but a great many sick, and dysentery cases beginning to come in rapidly. I was soon quite at home there, being used to the ways of Serbian hospitals. The Director was going to Bitol for a few days, and I asked him to ask the head of the Sanitary Department there, Dr. Nikotitch, if I might join a regimental ambulance as nurse, as I heard that the ambulance of the Second Regiment was some miles farther up the road, just behind the Front. The Second and Fourteenth Regiments were then holding the Baboona Pass, a very strongly fortified position in the mountains, against the Bulgarians.

I stayed about a week in the hospital ; there was plenty of work to do—in fact, to have done it properly there would have been enough for a dozen nurses, as dysentery was rapidly becoming an epidemic, and the hospital was soon full up ; we could take in no more. We were fearfully short of everything, beds, bedding, drugs, and we simply had to do the best we could with practically no kind of hospital appliances. Any kind of proper nursing was impossible, most of the patients lying on the floor in their muddy, trench-stained uniforms.

One afternoon two of the doctors motored out to the ambulance of the Second Regiment and took me with them. We stopped first at the ambulance of the Fourteenth, where we found twenty

unfortunate dysentery cases lying on the bare ground in two ragged tents groaning. We had a long chat with the doctor of the Second Regimental ambulance, and had coffee and cigarettes in his room—a loft over the stable. That is to say, I did not do much of the talking as he was a Greek, and besides his own language only talked Turkish and not very fluent Serbian, although later on, strange to say, when I joined the same ambulance, we used to carry on long conversations together in a kind of mongrel lingo very largely helped out by signs.

We visited a large empty barracks on our way back, and made arrangements for it to be turned into a dysentery hospital, as this disease was beginning to assume serious proportions, and our



FRENCH STEAMER WITH BOATS SLUNG OUT
READY AND ESCORT

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AMBULANCE OF SECOND REGIMENT. OX WAGGONS WHICH
HAVE JUST BROUGHT IN WOUNDED

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hospital was full up. This was never carried out, however, owing to the Bulgarians' rapid advance a few days later.

The next day the Director came back, and brought with him papers whereby I was officially attached to the ambulance of the Second Regiment; and it was part of my extraordinary luck to have just hit on this particular regiment, which is acknowledged to be the finest in the Serbian Army. Everybody was extremely kind to me in the hospital, and all the doctors asked me to stay there and work, saying I could have no idea of the hardships of ambulance life; but as I knew that it would not be many days before we all had to clear out of Prilip before the advancing Bulgarians, and that would mean my going back to Salonica, and

losing all chance of staying with the Serbians (whom I had grown thoroughly attached to in my work among them for the last year and a half), I adhered to my resolution to throw in my lot with the Army.

I always had my meals at the hospital now, and we had quite a merry supper that night, and they all drank my health, declaring they would see me back in three days, when I had been frozen out of my small tent on the hills, where it was already bitterly cold. The next afternoon I went all round the hospital and said good-bye to everyone; I was very sorry to leave my patients, they are so affectionate, and always so grateful for anything one does for them. One young soldier was my special pet; he had been driven mad

from the shock of a shell bursting close to him, though he was not wounded. He was such a nice gentle lad, and I used to spend a good bit of time with him, coaxing him to swallow spoonfuls of milk, as he would not take anything from anyone else, though the Bolnichars — hospital orderlies—were very kind to him. I heard afterwards that he lived till the hospital was evacuated, but died at Bitol. A good many of the men were from the Second Regiment, and when they heard I was going to their ambulance we only said *au revoir*. They assured me we should meet again when they were sent back to their regiment, as they would come and see me directly they had the smallest pain.

It was rather late in the day when Joe

and I finally set out in a very rickety carriage commandeered by martial law, with a very unwilling driver, and a horse that could hardly crawl. The harness, which was tied up with bits of string, kept coming to pieces, and the driver kept stopping to repair it. Joe began to look very uneasy, and kept peering round in the gathering dusk for any signs of wandering Bulgarian patrols, or comitadjes, as it was a very lonely road. At last, after what seemed an interminable time, we arrived at the ambulance, which was on the grass by the side of the road. They were not expecting me then as it was late, and the Serbians turn in soon after sunset. There was apparently nowhere to sleep and nothing to eat. One of them took us round to the doctor's quarters,

the same loft I had visited a few days before, not far from the ambulance. He turned out full of apologies, and said that he had had notice that I was coming that day, but that as it was so late he had given me up.

It seemed a bit of a problem where I was to sleep, but eventually some of the soldiers turned out of one of their small bivouac tents. These tents are only a sort of little lean-to's, which you crawl into, just the height of a rifle, two of which can be used instead of poles. You seem a bit cramped at first, but after I had lived in one for a couple of months I did not notice it. All the tents were bunched up together, touching each other, with four soldiers, or hospital orderlies, in each. I insisted, to their great surprise,

in having mine moved to a clean spot about fifteen yards away from the others, and some more or less clean hay put in to lie upon. There was a good deal of excitement and confusion, the whole camp turning out and assisting. They could not imagine why I wanted it moved, and declared that the Bulgarian comitadjes would come down in the night and cut my throat before the sentry knew they were there. Afterwards, when I was more used to war, and accustomed to sleeping in the middle of a regiment, and to sleeping when and where one could, in any amount of noise, I used to laugh at my scruples then, and only wondered they were all as good-tempered and patient as they were with what must have seemed to them my extraordinary English ideas. The doctor

sent me down some supper of bread and cheese and eggs, and presently came down himself and sat on the grass beside me as I ate it, and altogether they all did their best to make me comfy, and were as amiable as only Serbians can be when you rouse them out in the middle of the night and turn everything upside down. It reminded me somewhat of my arrival in Valjevo, at the beginning of the typhus epidemic, when owing to the vagaries of the Serbian trains I was landed at the hospital at 3 a.m., after everyone had given me up. After I had finished my supper I crawled into my tent, tightly rolled myself up into the blankets as it was a very cold night, and slept like a top on my bed of hay.

CHAPTER II

A SERBIAN AMBULANCE AT WORK— WE START TO RETREAT

NEXT morning we all turned out at day-break, and I got a better view of my surroundings. The ambulance itself consisted of one largish tent, where the patients lie on their clothes on very muddy straw, until they can be removed to the base hospital by bullock-wagon. This is done as often as transport permits. There were a few cases of dressings, drugs, etc., in the tent, and a small table for writing at. There were about twenty patients in at one time, some of them sick

and some wounded. About a dozen little tents, similar to mine, for the soldiers and ambulance men, and two or three wagons completed the outfit.

There was a Serbian girl, about seventeen, helping; she was very unlike any other Serbian woman I had ever met, lived and dressed just like the soldiers, and was very good to the sick men. She spoke German very well, so that we understood each other and became very good friends; she gave me lots of tips, and though I had been under the impression that I knew something about camping out and roughing it, having done so already in various parts of the world, she could walk rings round me in that respect. The first thing the men did after I had had some tea with them by

the camp fire was to set to work to convince me of the error of my ways, and to move my little tent back to its old spot before any harm could happen to me. We don't have breakfast in Serbia, but have an early glass of tea, very hot and sweet, without milk.

The doctor came down shortly afterwards to prescribe for the men who were sick, and then a couple of orderlies and myself dressed the wounded ones, those who were able to walk coming out of the tent and squatting down on the grass outside, where there was more room, and light enough to see what you were doing. They kept straggling in all day from Baboona, where there was a battle going on; it was not far away, and the guns sounded very plain. There were not very

many seriously wounded, but I am afraid that was because the path down the mountains is so steep that it is almost impossible to get a badly wounded man down on a stretcher. Any who are able to walk down do so, and they were glad to get their wounds dressed and be able to lie down. At lunch-time we knocked off for a couple of hours, and I went back with the doctor to his loft. We had lunch in great style, sitting on his bed, there being no chairs, and with a blue pocket-handkerchief spread out between us for a table-cloth. He said they were expecting to have a retreat at any moment, and that we must always be in readiness for it as soon as the order arrived. All the patients we had were to go off that afternoon if the bullock-wagons arrived. This ques-

tion of transport is always a terrible problem; in many cases bullock-wagons are the only things that will stand the rough tracks, although here there was a good road all the way to Bitol, and had we had a service of motor-cars we could have saved the poor fellows an immense amount of suffering. Imagine yourself with a shattered leg lying in company with three or four others on the floor of a springless bullock-wagon, jolting like that over the rough roads for twenty or thirty miles. When I was in Kragujewatz we used to get in big batches of wounded who had travelled like that for three or four days straight from the Front, with only the first rough dressing which each man carries in his pocket.

The wagons came that afternoon, but

only two or three for the lying-down patients; several poor chaps who were so sick they could hardly crawl had to turn out and start on a weary walk of a good many miles to the nearest hospital at Prilip. One man protested that he would never do it, and I really didn't think he could, and said so; however, the ambulance men, who were well up to their work, explained that it was absolutely imperative that all should get off into safety day by day, otherwise when the order came suddenly to retreat we might find ourselves landed with an overflowing tentful of sick and wounded men, and no transport available on the spot. "Go, brother," they said kindly, "Idi polako, polako" ("Go slowly, slowly"), and fortified with a drink of cognac from the ambulance

stores, and a handful of cigarettes from me, he and the others like him set off.

We all turned in prepared that evening, and I was cautioned to take not even my boots off. Later on, sleeping in one's clothes didn't strike me as anything unusual; in fact, two months later, when we had finished marching and arrived at Durazzo, it was some time before I remembered that it was usual to undress when you went to bed, and that once upon a time, long, long ago, I used to do the same.

In the middle of the night a special messenger arrived with a carriage from the English Consul at Bitol, advising me to come back at once, and that a motor-car would meet me in Prilip, and take me back to Bitol. I knew perfectly well that

I should not be able to find the motor-car in the middle of the night in Prilip, which is as dark as the nethermost regions, there not being a lamp in the town, and that it would probably mean sitting up in the carriage in one of those dirty little streets all night; so I said all right, I would see about it in the morning, and went to bed again. In the morning I had another look at the telegram, and as it was not an *order* to go back, but only advising me strongly to do so, I said I meant to stop. They all seemed very pleased because I said I wanted to stick with the Serbians, and, as we all sat round the camp fire in the bitter cold of a November sunrise, we drank the healths of England and Serbia together in tin mugs full of strong, hot tea.

Later on during the day came another telegram, and I must say that the English Consul at Bitol was a perfect trump in the way he did his duty by stray English subjects and looked after their safety, before he finally had himself to leave for Salonica. A Serbian officer was sent out from somewhere, and he said that if I liked to throw in my lot with them and stop he would send out a wagon and horses, in which I could live and sleep, and in which I could carry my luggage. I hadn't very much of the latter, and what I had I was perfectly willing to abandon if it was any bother, but he wouldn't hear of that; and in due course the wagon arrived, and proved, when a little hay had been put on the floor to sleep on, a most snug abode.

The next day the wounded kept straggling in all day, faster than we could evacuate them, and when the order came at ten o'clock that night that the regiment was forced to retreat from Baboona, and that the ambulance was to start at once, we had sixteen wounded in the tent, twelve of them unable to walk. The Serbian ambulances travel very light, and half an hour after receiving our orders we were on the move, the men being adepts at packing up tents and starting at a moment's notice. At the last moment, while the big ambulance tent was being taken down, a man with a very bad shrapnel wound in the ankle was carried in, and as it was blowing a gale, and we couldn't keep a lamp alight, I dressed it by the light of a pocket electric torch,

which I fortunately had with me. They said at first that he would have to go on as he was, but as I knew very well that it might be three or four days before he would get another dressing I insisted on them getting out some iodine, gauze, etc., and kneeling in the mud, and with some difficulty under the circumstances as the tent was being taken down over my head, I cut off his boot and bloody bandages (he had been wounded in the morning) and cleaned and dressed the wound. He was awfully good, poor fellow, though it hurt him horribly, and he hardly made a murmur. Then two ambulance men carried him out to the ox-wagon, three of which had appeared from somewhere, I don't know where. I found the Kid, as I called her, had been working like a

Trojan in the pitch dark and pelting rain helping the men through the thick slippery mud down the bank to the road, and had settled four men, lying down, in each wagon, that being all they could hold, and had also decided the knotty point which should be the four unlucky ones who had to walk—these four being, I may say, quite well enough to walk, but naturally not being anxious to do so. When they were all started off, she and I clambered into our wagon, and the whole cavalcade set off in the pitch dark, not having the faintest idea (at least, we had not, I don't know if anybody else had) where we were going to travel to or how long for. We were a long cavalcade with all the ambulance staff, the Komorra or transport, and a good many soldiers all

armed, and a most unpleasant night we had rumbling along in the dark, halting every few miles, not knowing whether the Bulgars had got there first and cut the road in front of us, or what was happening. It was bitterly cold besides, and as the Kid and I were black and blue from jolting about on the floor of our wagon I began to wonder how the poor wounded ever survived it at all.

A little way on we picked up a young recruit who said he was wounded and couldn't walk; our driver demurred, saying that he had had orders that no one else was to use our wagon, but we said, of course, the poor boy was to come in if he was wounded. He lay on my feet all night, which didn't add to my comfort, though it kept them warm. He

was evidently starving, so we gave him half a loaf of bread that we had with us, and some brandy out of my water-bottle, and he went to sleep.

Putting brandy in my water-bottle had been suggested to me by a tale a young Austrian officer, a prisoner, who was one of my patients in Kragujewatz hospital, told me. Poor boy, he had been badly wounded in the leg, and was telling me some of his experiences during the war and about the terrible journey after he was wounded, travelling in a bullock cart. He said he had a flask full of brandy, and that was a help while it lasted. When that was all gone he filled up the flask with tea, which was pretty good, too, as it had a stray flavour of brandy still, and then when he had drunk all that he put

water in, and that had the flavour of tea !

The next morning our "wounded hero" hopped off quite unhurt, and we couldn't help laughing at the way we had been done. It was a bitterly cold dawn, and we found to our sorrow that the recruit had not put the cork back in my water-bottle, and the rest of the brandy had upset, as had also a bottle of raspberry syrup which the Kid set great store by. I once upset a pot of gooseberry jam in a small motor-car, and it permeated everything until I had to take the car to a garage to be washed, and go and take a bath myself before I could get rid of it; but it was not a patch in the way of stickiness to a pot of raspberry syrup let loose in a jolting wagon, and we were very

glad to get out at daybreak, after eight hours' travelling, to walk a bit to stretch our legs, and also to wipe off some of the stickiness with some grass.

We came through Prilip that night, and were rather doubtful how we should get through, but though the people standing about glowered at us, and we heard a few shots in the distance, nothing much happened, and only one man got slightly hurt.

We arrived somewhere between Prilip and Bitol at sunrise, and made a big fire and waited for further orders when the Colonel of the regiment should arrive. Presently he rode up with his staff, and I was introduced to Colonel Militch, the Commandant of the Second Regiment. My first impression of him was that he

was a real sport, and later on, when I got to know him very well and had the privilege of being a soldier in his regiment, I found out that not only was he a sport, but one of the bravest soldiers and most chivalrous gentlemen anyone ever served under. We stood round the fire for some time and had a great powwow; my Serbian was still in an embryo stage, but the Colonel spoke German.

We were all very cold and hungry, but one of the officers of the staff, who was a person of resource, made some rather queerish coffee in a big tin mug on the fire, and we all had some, and it tasted jolly good and hot, and then the Colonel produced a bottle of liqueur from a little handbag, and we drank each other's healths. I got to know that little hand-

bag well later—it used always to miraculously appear when everybody was cold, tired and dying for a drink.

After a couple of hours the ambulance went on about a mile and pitched camp, and I went with them. The Kid went to sleep in the wagon and I did the same outside on the grass. The doctor sent me a piece of bread and cheese, which I casually ate on the spot, not liking to wake the Kid up, but afterwards I was filled with remorse for my thoughtlessness, when I was convicted by her later on for not being a good comrade at all, as it appeared it was the only eatable thing in camp; but, as I was new and green at “retreating,” at that time it never dawned on me: I learnt better ways later on. I made her some tea with

my tea-basket, but it was not very satisfying.

Later on in the day the Commandant of the Bitol Division, Colonel Wasitch, and an English officer came up in a car. I was introduced to them, and went with them in the car somewhere up the road to visit a camp. The Commandant of the division went off to attend to business, leaving the English officer and myself to amuse ourselves as we liked.

Here we were witnesses of a case of corporal punishment. I relate it because some people think this is quite a common occurrence; it is not, cruelty is absolutely foreign to their natures. Some people once talked of setting up a branch of the "Prevention of Cruelty to Animals" in Serbia, and were

asked in astonishment what work they supposed they would find to do ; who ever heard of a Serbian being cruel to child or animal ? Corporal punishment, that is to say, a certain number of strokes with a stick (maximum 25—schoolboys will know on what part), is the legitimate and recognised way of punishing in the Serbian Army, and the sentence is carried out by a non-commissioned officer. As an officer once explained to me, some punishment you must have in the interests of discipline, and what else *can* you do in wartime, when you are on the move every day ? Particularly was it so at this most critical juncture, when it would have been fatal for the whole Army had the men been allowed to get out of hand.

This question of corporal punishment in the Serbian Army has so frequently been brought up to me by English and French officers that I purposely mention it, as I have always tried to thoroughly disabuse their minds of any idea that the men were indiscriminately knocked about. I may add that it is not so very many years since flogging was abolished in our own Navy, and no doubt in course of time the Serbian Army will follow suit. The most popular officer I knew, who was absolutely adored by his own men, was extremely ready to award corporal punishment. "My soldiers have got to be *soldiers*," he replied curtly to me once, and his men certainly were. These things always depend largely on the particular officer, of course. I think the

Serbian soldier, more than anyone else I have ever come across, can excel as a "passive resister" when he is under an unpopular officer; while all the time keeping himself just within the bounds of discipline, he will contrive to avoid doing anything he does not wish to do, while he is extraordinarily "clannish" and loyal to one whom he likes. In the critical moments in a battle it is not the question whether an officer is "active" or "reserve" that counts, or whether he has passed through his military academy or risen from the ranks, but whether the men will follow him or not.

Captain —— and I walked back to the ambulance together and found that some of the orderlies had got a pig from somewhere and were roasting it with a long

pole through it over the camp fire : it smelt jolly good, and as we were very hungry, having had nothing to eat but a piece of bread and cheese, we accepted their invitation to have supper with them with alacrity. As soon as it was cooked we all sat round the big fire in a semi-circle, and ate roast pig with our fingers, there being no plates or cutlery available, and Captain — said he had never tasted anything so good in his life, and wished he could come and join our ambulance altogether.

At some of the other fires dotted about they were roasting some unwary geese which had been foolish enough to stray round our camp. As the inhabitants of the houses had fled leaving them behind we certainly could not call it looting.

Looting was very firmly checked; the Serbian is far from being the undisciplined soldier in that respect that some people suppose.

CHAPTER III

A RIDE TO KALABAC AND A BATTLE IN THE SNOW

IT snowed hard in the night and most of the next day and was bitterly cold, blowing a gale, but my wagon was a good bit snugger than the tent. The Colonel and his staff had quarters in a loft over a little café just along the road, and after lunch the Commander of the division, who came with two English officers, took the Kid and me with them in their cars some miles back along the road towards Prilip, where we all walked about and inspected the new positions part of the regiment

was to take up. The Kid went back to Bitol in the car with them that evening to fetch some clothes, and I never saw her again, though I believe she did want to come back to us later on.

I used to sit over the camp fires in the evenings with the soldiers, and we used to exchange cigarettes and discuss the war by the hour. I was picking up a few more words of Serbian every day, and they used to take endless trouble to make me understand, though our conversations were very largely made up of signs, but I understood what they meant if I couldn't always understand what they said. It was heartbreaking the way they used to ask me every evening, "Did I think the English were coming to help them?" and "Would they send cannon?" The Bul-

garians had big guns, and we had nothing but some little old cannon about ten years old, which were really only what the comitadjes used to use. If we had had a few big guns we could have held the Baboona Pass practically for any length of time, for it was an almost impregnable position. I used to cheer them up as best I could, and said I was sure that some guns would come, and that even if they did not they must not think that the English had deserted them, as I supposed they had big plans in their head that we knew nothing about, and that though we might have to retreat now everything would come right in the end. It was touching the faith they had in the English, whom they all described as going "slowly but surely." They were very much

excited when they saw the two English officers, as they were sure they had come to say some English troops were coming.

One day, however, one thousand new English rifles did come, and there was great rejoicing thereat.

With the courtesy which always distinguishes the Serbian peasant, they used always to stand up and make room for me, and bring a box for me to sit on in the most comfortable place by the fire, out of the smoke, and I used to spend hours like this with them. Under happier circumstances they would all have been singing their national songs and dancing, but, though there were many fine singers among them, nothing would induce them to sing: they were too broken-hearted at being driven back. One man did start a

song one night to please me, but he broke down in the middle and said he knew I would understand why he could not sing.

There was deep snow on the ground, and it was bitterly cold, and the men used to anxiously ask me if I managed to keep warm at night, as they huddled up together, four in one tiny tent, for warmth, and seemed to rather fear that they might find me frozen to death some morning in my wagon, but I was really quite warm enough.

The next day, while we were doing the dressings, a man came in who had walked from Nish, twenty-two days' tramp. He was a cheery soul, and said he felt very fit, but he looked as thin as a rake. We all crowded round him to hear the news. He



ROASTING THE PIG

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AN AMBULANCE FIELD KITCHEN

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said that the town of Nish was evacuated and everyone gone to Krushavatz.

Commandant Militch told me he was sending for his second horse, so that I could ride her. When she arrived she proved to be a very fine white half-Arab, who could gallop like the wind, and I grew very fond of her. She had a passion for sugar, and always expected a bit when she saw me. The Commandant had moved his quarters a few miles farther up the road towards Prilip to a small deserted hahn, or inn, consisting of two small rooms by the roadside. It was close to the village of Topolchar. I had been cautioned not to stray away from the camp by myself, as it was very unsafe; only a few days before Bulgarian comitadjes had swooped down and taken

prisoner a Serbian soldier who had gone to fetch some water not a quarter of a mile from his own camp. One bright sunny morning, however, the hills looked so tempting that I went for a stroll and wandered on farther than I intended. I was out of sight of the camp, when suddenly I heard voices behind some trees, though I could not see anybody, and I knew that none of our men were camping near. Discretion conquering curiosity, I beat a dignified retreat at a brisk walk, as I was quite unarmed at the time, and they told me when I got back it was a good thing I did. I took no more constitutionals over the hills while in that neighbourhood, anyhow, for I had no wish to cut off my career with the Army by suddenly disappearing, as no

one would know what had become of me.

One day I rode over on Diana, my white mare, to see the Commandant and his staff at the hahn. They all welcomed me most warmly, inviting me to stop to supper, sleep there, and ride out next day with them to the mountain of Kalabac, to visit the positions there. I accepted joyfully. They said I could either sleep there near the stove or have my wagon brought up, if I was not afraid of being too cold. I decided in favour of the wagon, as the hahn was already pretty crowded; so they telephoned for it, and in due course it arrived with my orderly. It was a grey-covered wagon, and I had christened it "My little grey home in the west." A house on wheels is

an ideal arrangement, as if you take it into your head to sleep anywhere else you go off and your house simply follows you. It was planted exactly opposite the door, with a sentry to guard me.

The Commandant, in spite of all his troubles, was full of fun, and even in the darkest and most anxious hours in the tragic weeks that followed kept up everyone's spirits and thought of everyone's comfort before his own. After a most hilarious supper I turned in, as we were to make an early start next morning.

Next day the Commandant, his Adjutant and I, with four armed gendarmes, rode off to Kalabac. It was a lovely day, and we had about two hours' ride across country to the first line of trenches. The Commandant and I used to have a

race whenever we got to a good bit of ground. He was a fine rider, and, as the horses were pretty well matched, we used to get up a break-neck speed sometimes, and had some splendid gallops. About a year before in Kragujewatz I was riding with a Serbian soldier who had been sent with a horse for me, and he said : “ What did I want to be a nurse for ? ” and tried to persuade me not to go back to the hospital, but to join the Army then and there, regardless of my poor patients expecting me back.

The first line of trenches that we came to were little shallow trenches dotted about on the hillside, with about a dozen men in each. We sat in one of them and drank coffee, and I thought then that I should be able to tell them at home that

I had been in a real Serbian trench, little thinking at the time that I was going to do it in good earnest later on under different circumstances.

After that we went on up to another position right at the top of Kalabac. It was a tremendous ride, and I could never have believed that horses could have climbed such steep places, or have kept their feet on some of the obstacles we went over, but these horses were trained to it, and could get through or over anything. Just the last bit of the way we all had to dismount, and, leaving the horses with the gendarmes, did the rest on foot. There was no need for trenches there, as it was very rocky, and there was plenty of natural cover. Major B—— and another officer met us

near the top, and he and the Commandant went off to discuss things. It happened to be Captain Pesio's "Slava" day. This "Slava" day is an institution peculiar only to the Serbians, and which they always keep most faithfully. Every family and every regiment has one. It is the day of their particular patron saint, and is handed down from father to son. It is kept up for three days with as much jollification as circumstances permit, even in wartime. I have been the guest at plenty of other Slava days in Serbia, but I never enjoyed anything so much as I did that one. We sat round the fire on boxes or logs of wood under the shelter of a big overhanging rock, with a most gorgeous panorama of the country stretching for miles round, and had a very festive

lunch, and all drank Captain Pesio's health. In the middle of lunch I had my first sight of the enemy, a Bulgarian patrol in the distance, and orders were promptly given to some of our men to go down and head them off. The men all seemed to be in high spirits up there, in spite of the cold, and some of them were roasting a pig, although I suppose that was a "Slava" luxury for them, not to be had every day.

It was evening by the time we left, and we slipped and slid down the mountain again by moonlight. When we got back to the first trenches which we had visited we made a short halt, and sat in an officer's little tent and drank tea. He had certainly not been at war for four years without learning how to make himself

comfortable under adverse circumstances, and had brought it down to a fine art. He had a tiny little tent, one side of which was pitched against a bank, and in the bank there was a hole, with a large fire in it, and a sort of tunnel leading up to the outer air for a chimney. His blanket was spread on some boughs woven together for a bed, and he was as snug and warm as a toast when he did get a chance to sleep in his tent, which was apparently not very often. He was very popular with everyone, and the Commandant spoke particularly of his bravery. We were quite sorry to leave and turn out into the cold night air.

We had a long ride home, ending up with a hard gallop along the last bit of road, and it was late when we got back to

the hahn. There was a big fire going in the iron stove, and we soon thawed out. The Commandant sat down at his table and dictated endless despatches to his Adjutant, while I dosed on his camp bed till about ten, when he finished his work for the time being and we had supper. Every now and then there would be a rap at the door, and an exhausted, half-frozen rider would come in bearing a despatch from one of the outlying positions on the hills.

I was very sorry afterwards that I had not taken my camera with me up to the positions, but I was not sure at the time if they would like me to, though afterwards they told me I might take it anywhere I liked.

There was another small ambulance here in charge of the proper regimental

doctor, and in the afternoon everyone was ordered to move up into the village, Topolchor, and find rooms there. The soldiers were all delighted at the prospect of getting under a roof of any kind, though I felt quite sorry at leaving my Little Grey Home. The doctor got me a nice big empty room in what was formerly the school. There was a pile of desks and tables filling up one side of it, and a stove, but otherwise no furniture. After my orderly had unpacked my camp bed and lit the stove I had some visitors : three or four old native women, who came up and inspected me and all my belongings closely, and seemed deeply impressed with the extraordinary luxury in which an Englishwoman lived, with a room to herself, a bed *and* a rubber bath ! I had

been making futile efforts, by the way, for the last few days to make use of this same bath, in spite of my orderly's repeated assurances that you could *not* have a bath in wartime, which I found afterwards to be strictly true. I did not succeed even here, owing to the lack of water and anything to carry it in.

The villagers themselves, those who had not already fled in terror, seemed to live in the most abject poverty, huddled together in houses no better than pigsties. The place was infested by enormous mongrel dogs, which used to pursue me in gangs, barking and growling, but they had a wholesome respect for a stone, and never came to close quarters.

Next morning I went for a long ride with the Commandant to inspect some

more of the positions. He had to hold an enormous front with only two regiments, and, as we were outnumbered by the Bulgarians by more than four to one, when the latter could not break through our lines they simply made an encircling movement and walked round them, and, as there were absolutely no reserves, every available man being already in the fighting line, troops had to abandon some other position in order to cut across and bar their route. Thus we were constantly being edged back, and were very many times in great danger of being surrounded. We were fighting a rear-guard action practically all the time for the next six weeks—a mere handful of troops, worn out by weeks of incessant fighting, hungry, sick, and with no big guns to back them up,

retreating slowly and in good order before overwhelming forces of an enemy who was fresh, well equipped and with heavy artillery. It was no use throwing men's lives away by holding on to positions when no purpose could be gained by it, though the Colonel felt it keenly that the finest regiment in the Army should have to abandon position after position, although contesting every inch, without having a chance of going on the offensive. It was heartbreaking work for all concerned, and the way they accomplished it is an everlasting credit to officers and men alike.

My orderly told me he had heard we were going that evening, so he packed up everything, camp bed included, and put it in my wagon. We hung about all the evening

expecting to get the order to go at any moment, as the horses were always kept ready saddled in the stable, and you simply had to "stand by" and wait until you were told to go, and then be ready to get straight off. Eventually, however, the Commandant came back and said we were not going that night, and we had a quiet supper about ten o'clock and turned in, with a warning to be up early in the morning. As my bed was packed up I rolled myself up in a blanket on the floor, and my orderly did likewise at the other side of the stove and kept the fire up. It was snowing hard and frightfully cold. At daybreak we did move, but not very far, only to the little hahn by the roadside; and there we stood about in the snow and listened to a battle which was apparently

going on quite close ; although we strained our eyes we could see nothing—there was such a frightful blizzard. A company of reinforcements passed us and floundered off through the deep snow drifts across the fields in the direction of the firing. There was no artillery fire (I suppose they could not haul the guns through the snow), but the crackle of the rifles got nearer and nearer, and at last about midday they were so close that we could hear the wild “ Hourrah, Hourrahs ” of the Bulgarians as they took our trenches, and as the blizzard had stopped for a bit we could see them coming streaking across the snow towards us, our little handful of men retreating and reforming as they went. The Bulgarians always give the most blood-curdling yells when they charge.

The ambulance was already gone, and there were only the Colonel and his staff, myself and the doctor left. The horses were brought out, and the order came to go, but only about three miles to where the big ambulance was camped with whom I had been at first.

There was a river between the hahn and this ambulance, and the road went over a bridge. This bridge was heavily mined and was to be blown up as soon as our men were over, thus cutting off, or anyhow considerably delaying, the Bulgarians, as the river was now a swollen icy torrent. We sat round the fire of the ambulance and dried our feet. Some of the men were soaking to the knees, having no boots, but only opankis, leather sandals fastened on with a strap which winds

round the leg up to the knee. Later on some wounded were brought in, given a very hurried dressing, and despatched at once to the base hospital. The majority of them seemed to be hit in the right arm or wrist, but I am afraid perhaps the worst wounded never reached us. One poor fellow who was hit in the abdomen was, I am afraid, done for; he would hardly live till he got to the hospital.

We heard no more firing till late in the afternoon, when all at once it broke out again quite close, and with big guns as well this time. We wondered how on earth they had been able to get them across the river, but the explanation was forthcoming when we heard that the bridge, although it had ten mines in it, had failed to blow up—the mines would not

explode; no one knew why. I floundered through the snow up a little hill with some of the others to see if we could see anything, but we could not see much through the winter twilight except the flashes from the guns momentarily lighting up the snow banks, and hear the noise of the shells as they whistled overhead.

This had been going on for a couple of hours now, and the Greek doctor was getting into a regular funk because they had had no orders to move, though it was all right as we had no wounded in the tent to be carried away, and no one else was worrying about it; but he finally sent a messenger up to the Commandant, as he seemed to think the ambulance had been forgotten. A couple of days afterwards the men told me

with much scorn that that afternoon had been too much for him, and that he did a retreat on his own and never came back to the ambulance again. I was just thinking of looking round for something to eat, as I had had neither breakfast nor lunch, and had been much too busy to think about it, when the order arrived for the ambulance to pack up and move, and the tents came down like lightning. The soldiers were all retreating across the snow, and I never saw such a depressing sight. The grey November twilight, the endless white expanse of snow, lit up every moment by the flashes of the guns, and the long column of men trailing away into the dusk wailing a sort of dismal dirge—I don't know what it was they were singing

—something between a song and a sob, it sounded like the cry of a Banshee. I have never heard it before or since, but it was a most heartbreaking sound.

My saïs (groom) brought Diana round to me. I asked him if he had been told to do so, and he said “No,” but that I “had better go now.” He shook his head dubiously, murmuring, “Safer to go now,” when I told him I was coming later on with the Commandant and his staff.

War always seems to turn out exactly the opposite to what you imagine is going to happen. Such a great proportion of it consists of “an everlastin’ waiting on an everlastin’ road,” as someone has already written. Bairnsfather hits it off exactly in his picture of the young officer with his new sword: how he pictures himself

using it, charging at the head of his company, and how he really does use it, toasting bread over the camp fire! I had some wild visions in my head—as I knew the Commandant would wait until the last moment—of a tremendous gallop over the snow, hotly pursued by Bulgarian cavalry. I imagine I must once have seen something like it on a cinematograph. What, however, really did happen was that, having received permission to stop, I sat for four hours in company with seven or eight officers who were waiting for orders, on a hard bench in a freezing cold shed, which in its palmier days might have been a cowhouse. I was ravenously hungry, and sucked a few Horlick's milk tablets I found in my pocket, but they did not seem so satis-

fying as the advertisements would lead one to suppose. However, presently the jolly little captain, whose tent I described on Kalabac, came in, followed by his soldier servant bearing a hot roast chicken wrapped up in a piece of paper! Where in the world he got it I can't think. We had no knives or forks, but we sat side by side, and each took hold of a leg and pulled till something gave. It tasted delicious! He shared it round with everybody, and I don't think had much left for himself. Although he came straight from the trenches, where he had been fighting incessantly and had not slept for three nights himself, he was full of spirits and livened us all up, and we little thought that it was the last time we were to see him. I was terribly sorry to hear a few

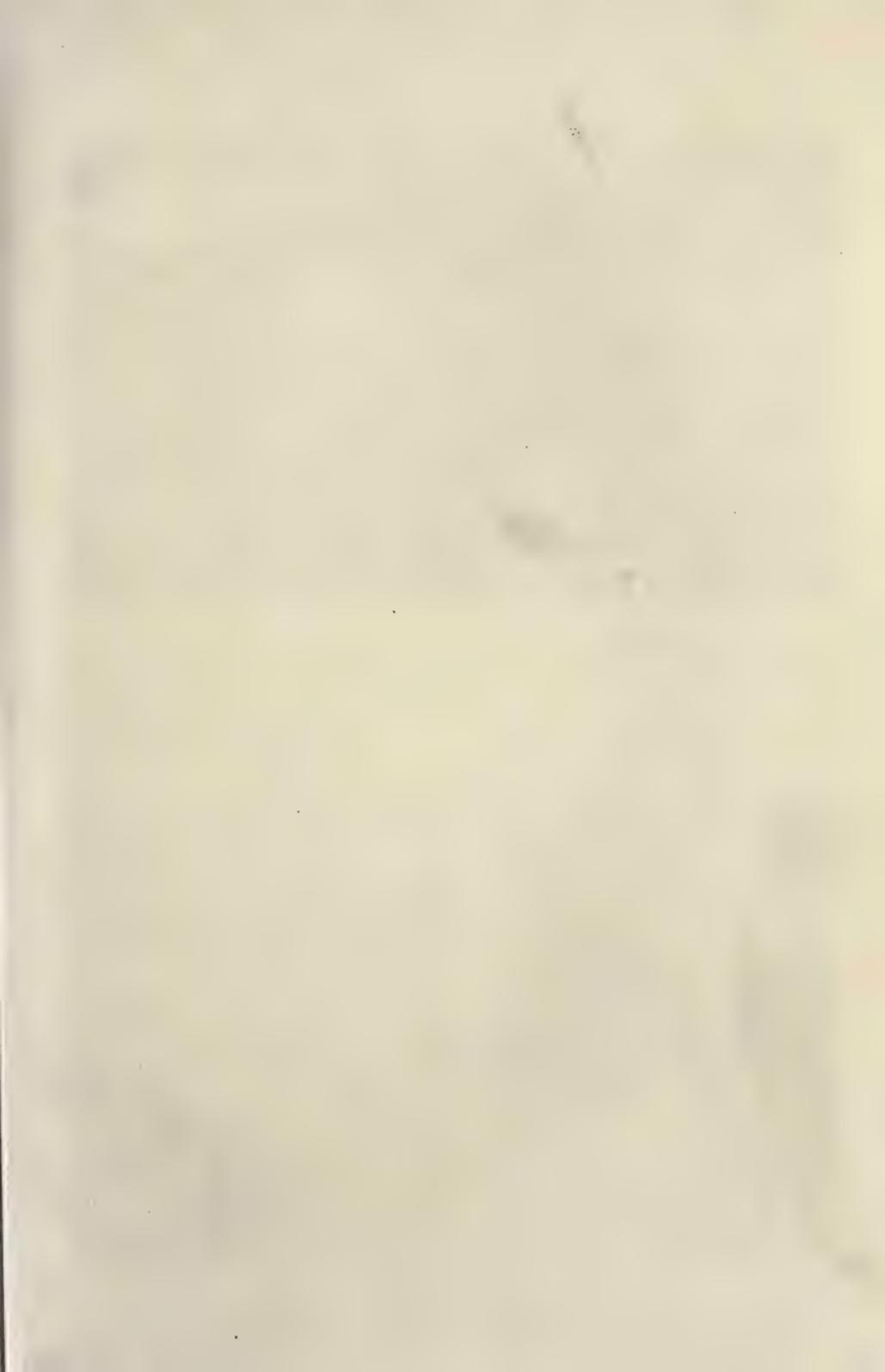
days later of the tragic death of my gay little friend.

The firing had ceased, as it usually does at night, and at last, about nine o'clock, the Commandant appeared and the horses were brought out, and instead of the wild cinema gallop I had pictured we had one of the slowest, coldest rides you can imagine. There was a piercing blizzard blowing across the snowy waste, blinding our eyes and filling our ears with snow; our hands were numbed, and our feet so cold and wet we could hardly feel the stirrups. We proceeded in dead silence, no one feeling disposed to talk, and slowly threaded our way through crowds of soldiers tramping along, with bent heads, as silently as phantoms, the sound of their feet muffled by the snow.

I pitied the poor fellows from the bottom of my heart—they were so much colder and wearier even than I was myself, and I wondered where the “glory” of war came in. It was exactly like a nightmare, from which one might presently wake up. My dreams of home fires and hot muffins were brought to an abrupt termination by the Commandant suddenly breaking into a trot, when I found my knees were “set fast” with the cold, and I had a very painful five minutes till they loosened up.

After a long time we turned off the road across some snowy fields. I followed close behind the Commandant, who always made a bee line straight ahead through everything; and after our horses had slipped and scrambled through a hedge, a couple of deep ditches and a

stream we eventually got to the village of Mogilee, I think it was called. The soldiers bivouacked in some farm out-houses, and we were received by some officers in a big loft. They had a huge stove going and supper ready for us. We finished up the long day quite cheerily, even having a bottle of champagne that a comitadje brought as a present to the Commandant. We all slept that night in the loft on the floor, I being given the place of honour on a wide bench near the stove, while the other six or seven selected whichever particular board on the floor took their fancy most, and spread their blankets on it. Turning in was a simple matter, as you only have to take off your boots; and, though the atmosphere got a bit thick, we all slept like tops.





THE TENT I SLEPT IN FOR TWO MONTHS

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SERBIAN ARMY TRUDGING ALONG

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CHAPTER IV

I MEET THE FOURTH COMPANY—A COLD NIGHT RIDE

WE were all up at daybreak next morning as usual; no good Serbian sleeps after the first streak of light. It was still snowing fearfully hard, making it impossible to go out, though the Commandant and his Staff Captain rode out somewhere all the morning. We had sundry cups of tea and coffee during the morning and a pretty substantial snack of bread and eggs and cold pig about ten. I protested that I was not hungry, and that we should have lunch when the Commandant came in,

but they reminded me of what had happened to me yesterday in the matter of meals, and might possibly happen again to-morrow, and advised me to eat and sleep whenever I got a chance. They were old soldiers and spoke from experience, and I subsequently found it to be very good advice.

It was a long day, as we had nothing to do. In the afternoon the doctor started to teach me some Serbian verbs, and afterwards we all played "Fox and Goose," and I initiated them into the mysteries of "drawing a pig with your eyes shut," and any other games we could think of with pencil and paper to while away the time.

About dusk we set forth again to a small village, Orizir, close to Bitol. It was pitch dark as we splashed across a field

and a couple of streams to another little house which we occupied. It consisted of two tiny rooms, up a sort of ladder, with a fair-sized balcony in front. The balcony was quite sheltered with a big pile of straw at one end, and I elected to sleep there, though they were fearfully worried about it, and declared I should die of cold, in spite of my protestations that English people always sleep much better in the open air than in a hot room with all the windows shut. Foreigners always look upon English people as more than half mad on the subject of fresh air, especially at night. The next day my orderly, who was in a great state of mind, and seemed to think that I would lose caste with his fellow orderlies if I persisted in sleeping on the balcony, told

me that he had found another room for me in a hahn by the roadside, where I accordingly slept the next night, and subsequently we all moved down there. I actually got my long-sought-for bath that day, my resourceful man borrowing a sort of stable for me for an hour and fixing it up for me. As all old campaigners know, a certain kind of live stock, and plenty of them, is the inevitable accompaniment to this sort of life, and is one of its greatest trials, though you do get more or less used even to that. I burnt a hole in my vest cremating some of them, but judging by the look of my bathroom, where the soldiers had been sleeping, I am not at all sure that I did not carry more away with me than I got rid of. While I was engaged in this interesting

occupation my orderly called out that the English Consul was there and wished to see me, so I hastily dressed and went out to interview him. He had come in a car to take me back to Salonica with him if I wanted to go, which of course I did not; so he just drove me into town to pick up a large case of cigarettes which I had previously ordered from Salonica for myself and the soldiers and anyone else who ran short of them, and he also gave me a case of tins of jam and one of warm woollen helmets, which were very much appreciated by the men. He said he thought I was quite right to stop, and we parted warm friends.

When I got back I found the Staff Captain, who was the Commandant's right hand, just going out for another

cold ride. He had had fever for the last two or three days, and looked so fearfully ill that I begged him not to go, as, however much he might, and did, boss everybody when he was well, he might let himself be looked after a little bit when he was ill. Rather to my surprise he submitted quite meekly, and let me dose him with quinine, and tuck him up in his blankets by the stove, and as he was shivering violently I told his orderly to make him some hot tea and stand outside the door to see that no one came in to disturb him. As the tea did not seem to be forthcoming, I went out presently to see what was up, and found him with several of his fellow orderlies sitting in the snow round the camp fire having a meal of some kind. He said he had made the tea, but had not

any sugar; so I asked some of the others.

“Now, don’t you say ‘Néma’ to me,” I said, before he had time to speak, “but go and find some, because I know perfectly well you have got it.” It is a Serbian peculiarity, which I had found out long ago, that whenever you first ask for a thing they invariably say “Néma” (“There isn’t any”). I have frequently been told that in a shop with the thing lying there under my eyes, because the man was too lazy to get up and get it. They thought it a great joke, and of course produced it, and “Don’t say ‘Néma’ to me” became a sort of laughing byword amongst some of the men afterwards whenever I asked for anything. They have a keen sense of humour, and are always

ready for a laugh and a joke, and their gaiety and high spirits bubble up even under the most adverse circumstances.

The rest of the Staff and I then made a fire in the other little room, and sat there and played chess and auction bridge, and were making a terrific noise over the latter, when the Commandant came back. If you really want an amusing occupation, likely to give rise to any amount of discussion and argument, try teaching auction bridge to three men who have never seen it played before, in a language your knowledge of which is so slight that you can only ask for the simplest things in the fewest possible words. You'll find the result is a very queer and original game.

The next afternoon, it having at last stopped snowing, I walked over to visit



REINFORCEMENTS IN THE SNOW

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AN EARLY START. PACKING UP

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my old friends in the ambulance a couple of miles up the road, and we sat by the camp fire and pored over the map of Albania, whither we should soon be going, and discussed the war as usual. When I got back about sunset I found the Commandant had gone to visit a company who were camped about a mile and a half up the road, and his Adjutant was waiting for me, as we thought it would be a good opportunity to give away some of the warm woollen helmets while it was so cold. Accordingly, followed by a couple of men carrying the wool helmets, some cigarettes and a few pots of jam, we started for the camp. It turned out to be the Fourth Company of the First Battalion, strange to say, the very company that I afterwards joined, though I didn't guess that

at the time. It was a most picturesque scene with the little tents all crowded together, and dozens of big camp fires blazing in the snow with soldiers sitting round them; they all seemed very cheery in spite of the bitter cold. We had a great reception, the whole company was lined up, and under the direction of their Company Commander I gave every seventh man a white woollen helmet—unfortunately there were not enough for each man to have one—and every man a couple of cigarettes, and my orderly followed with half a dozen large pots of jam and a spoon, the men opening their mouths like young starlings waiting to be fed. This is a national custom in Serbia; directly you visit a house your hostess brings in a tray with a pot of jam, glasses

of water and a dish with spoons on it. You eat a spoonful of jam, take a drink of water, and put your spoon down on another dish provided for that purpose. It is very amusing to see a stranger the first time this is presented to him; he generally does not know what he is supposed to do, or whether he is to dip the jam into the water, or *vice versa*, and how many spoonfuls it would be polite to eat, Serbian jam being extraordinarily good. One Englishman I knew wanted to go on eating several spoonfuls, and I had gently but firmly to check him.

I was introduced to all the officers, and a great many of the men who were pointed out to me as having done something very special. One of the men was wearing an English medal for

“distinguished conduct in the field.” The men seemed awfully pleased with their little presents ; they never have anything in the way of luxury—no jam, sweets or tobacco served out to them with their rations, no parcels or letters from home (at this time), no concerts or amusements got up for their benefit, none of the things that our Tommies hardly regard in the light of luxuries, but necessities. No one who has not lived with them can imagine how simply they live, how much they think of a very little, and what a small thing it takes to please them. After that little ceremony was over we sat round the officers’ camp fire and a young sergeant—a student artist—played the flute very well indeed, and they sang some of their national songs. It was all so friendly and

fascinating that we were very loath indeed to tear ourselves away, and I promised to come back next day and take their photographs, but next day they were not there, having been ordered off at dawn to hold some positions up on the hills.

Among other sundry oddments in my luggage I had a box of chessmen and a board, and as several of them could play we whiled away many weary hours when we had nothing else to do playing chess. The Commandant and I were very evenly matched, and we used to have some tremendous battles, sometimes long after everyone else was asleep, and always kept a careful record of who won. Some of the others were very keen on it too, and those who were not playing would stand round and offer advice. I used sometimes

to think, as I listened to the sounds of hurried packing up going on all round while we sat calmly playing chess, that the Bulgars would walk in one day and capture the lot of us, chessboard and all.

About 9 p.m. next night the Commandant gave the order to start, and we walked the first mile, the horses being led behind, I suppose to get used to the roads, which were one slippery sheet of ice. When we got to Bitol, which was quite close, we went to the headquarters of the Commandant of the division, and sat there till about midnight, while he and our Commandant discussed matters. We met Dr. Nikotitch there again, and he and Commandant Wasitch asked me if I really had made up my mind to go on. They said the journey through Albania would

be very terrible, that nothing we had gone through so far was anything approaching it, and that they would send me down to Salonica if I liked. I was not quite sure whether having a woman with them might not be more of an anxiety and nuisance to them than anything else, though they knew I did not mind roughing it; and I asked them, if so, to tell me quite frankly, and I would go down to Salonica that night. They were awfully nice, though, and said that "for them it would be better if I stopped, because it would encourage the soldiers, who already all knew me, and to whose simple minds I represented, so to speak, the whole of England." The only thought that buoyed them up at that time, and still does, was that England would never forsake them. So that settled the matter,

as I should have been awfully sorry if I had had to go back, and I believe the fact that I went through with them did perhaps sometimes help to encourage the soldiers.

We left there soon after midnight, and rode all night and most of the next day. The Commandant and his Staff Captain drove in a wagon, the same one that the Kid and I had driven in on the first night of the retreat. They asked me whether I would rather come in the wagon with them or ride, as the roads were simply terrible, but I elected to ride and chance Diana going on her head, which she did not do, however, as the Commandant, with his usual thoughtfulness, had had her roughed for me a few days before. We rode very, very slowly, always through crowds of soldiers, pack-horses and

donkeys, halting about every hour at little camp fires along the roadside made by our front guard, where we sat and warmed our feet for about a quarter of an hour till the tired soldiers could catch us up, there being frequent halts for them to rest for a few minutes. I rode alongside the Adjutant and another officer, and was very glad that my orderly had filled my thermos flask with hot tea, with a good dash of cognac in it, which the three of us consumed while riding along. The roads were really fearful, one solid sheet of ice, and the Adjutant's horse came down so often that eventually he had to walk and lead it. Occasionally we all used to get down and walk for a bit to warm our feet, which became like blocks of ice, but the going was

so hard that we were glad to mount again. I say "mount," but in reality, what between wearing a heavy fur coat and getting colder and stiffer and wearier, it was more a sort of crawl up Diana's side that I did; fortunately she was a patient animal, and used to stand still. It soothed my feelings to see that I was not the only one, several of the others having nearly as much difficulty in mounting. They were all so friendly, and I had more than one "Good luck to you" shouted after me. It was not really such a hard ride as we had expected, though, as stopping at the little camp fires and chatting with the men round them made a nice break.

About daybreak we arrived at a hahn, where we found the ambulance again, and the Commandant and the Captain

got their horses there, and we all walked, and later on rode, up and up a winding road, up a mountain. It was bitterly cold, and every few yards we passed horrible looking corpses of bullocks, donkeys and ponies, with the hides and some of the flesh stripped from them; sometimes there were packs, ammunition and rifles thrown away by the roadside, but very, very few of the latter; a soldier is very far gone indeed before he will part with that. Of course everywhere swarmed with spies, and we stopped a man and a boy in civilian clothes carrying baskets; they protested that they were going down to do some marketing or something of that sort, but whatever it was they wanted to do they were told they could not do it, and gently but firmly turned back.

At the very top we stopped at the ruins of a filthy little hut, where a halt was called and the field telephone rigged up. We built a fire outside—it was too dirty to go inside—under the wall, and had some coffee, and tried, very unsuccessfully, to get out of the howling, bitter wind. The soldiers sat about and rested, and we stayed there until late in the afternoon. We were to spend the night at Resan, some way down the other side, and about 3 o'clock the doctor said he was going down there, and I might as well come down with him and look for a room. Wily young man, he was petrified with cold himself and didn't like to say so, so had previously told the Staff Captain that *I* was cold and wanted to go into the town, and that, as I could not go by myself,

hadn't he better escort me? He let this out afterwards, and I was very indignant with him, but he was quite unabashed. He used to love teasing me, calling me "Napoleon" because I rode a white horse, and we were constantly sparring. My orderly, after a long search, found me quite a decent little room in a house close to the Caserne, where the staff were to be quartered. The family consisted of two old ladies and a girl, who all fell on my neck and hugged me, rather to my embarrassment. One of the old ladies explained volubly that she had once had something—I never could quite make out whether it was a husband or a cat—and had lost it, and I was now to take its place in the family circle.

We all sat round the stove in my little

room, which seemed quite a luxurious palace to me now, and I made them real English tea with my little tea-basket, and the poor old things seemed quite enchanted, as they had neither tea nor sugar in the house, and they fussed over me, and could not do enough for me.

The next morning I stayed in bed till nearly eight, and, after dressing leisurely, went up to see the Commandant and staff, who said they had begun to think they had lost me. About five o'clock my orderly came in in a great state of excitement and wrath, declaring that he did not know what to do with my things as the wagon had been taken for something else, and that the Commandant and staff were all gone. He was an excitable person, and used to get these panics occasionally,

and, as I knew perfectly well that whatever happened they would not leave me behind, I told him not to be such an ass, but to go and get my horse and I would go and find out for myself, as I could not get any sense out of him. I happened to meet the Commandant in the street, and, as I fully expected, we had supper quietly, and did not stir till 9 p.m. We nearly always did ride at night. We left very quietly, and walked the first bit of the way through the mud, and then rode up a beautiful serpentine road, which had originally been made by the Turks, through what looked as if it might be beautiful country if you could only see it. All the way along there were soldiers and camp fires, which looked so pretty twinkling all over the hills through the fir trees, and we

made frequent halts while the Commandant gave his orders.

I thought we were going to ride all night, and it was a pleasant surprise when we turned off the road, and put our horses at a steep muddy bit of mound at the top of which was an old block-house, one of the many built by the Turks and dotted all over that part of the country. The telephone was rigged up there, and it was full of officers and soldiers; the ground all round was a perfect sea of mud, and there were soldiers everywhere. I had not the faintest idea whether we were going to stop there half an hour or for the rest of the night, and I don't suppose anybody else had either, except, perhaps, the Commandant. I sat by the stove for some time, and finally lay down on the

floor on some straw that looked not quite so dirty as the rest, though that is not saying much, but when I woke up some hours later I got the impression that I had strayed into a new version of the Black Hole of Calcutta. The whole floor was absolutely covered so thickly with sleeping men that you could not put your feet down without treading on them. I counted up to twenty-nine and then gave it up because I saw several more come in afterwards, though where they managed to wedge themselves in I do not know. The Commandant had left the telephone and was sleeping peacefully among the others; the only person awake was a very big, good-looking gendarme, who was keeping the stove stoked up, although it was already suffocatingly hot. The Ser-

rians laugh at me because I declare that they always pick their gendarmes for their good looks; they are certainly a magnificent set of men. This one inquired if I wanted anything, as soon as he saw that I was awake, and I asked him if he would fetch me my thermos flask full of tea, which he would find in Diana's saddle-bag. He had never seen a thermos flask before, and when he brought it back and I shared the tea with him he was perfectly thunderstruck to find it still hot. He couldn't make it out at all, and seemed to think that in some extraordinary way Diana must have had something to do with it, and I shouldn't be surprised if next day he put a bottle of tea in his own saddle-bag to see if his horse would be equally clever.

About 5 a.m., while it was still dark, I woke up again so boiling hot that I could not stand it any longer, and crawled out cautiously over the sleeping men, treading on a good many, I am afraid, though they did not seem to object, and took a walk round ; but, as it was raining and the mud appalling, I did not stay outside long. There was one camp fire still going, and what I took to be a large bundle covered over with a sack beside it. Here's luck, I thought, something to sit on beside the fire, and down I plumped, but got up again quickly when it gave a protesting grunt and a heave, and I found I had sat down on a man. After that I sat on a tin can in the cold passage for some time and waited for daybreak.

CHAPTER V

WE SAY GOOD-BYE TO SERBIA AND TAKE TO THE ALBANIAN MOUNTAINS

THE next morning we rode on and camped at another block-house. The field telephone was going all the time here, and evidently the news was anything but satisfactory. I did so heartily wish that I knew more Serbian and could understand more of what was going on. I was so keenly interested in what was happening and where the various companies were and how they were getting on, and it was maddening when breathless despatch riders used to come in from the

trenches, and I could only gather a little bit of what they were saying, and generally miss the vital point. The Commandant and his Staff Captain used to pore over maps at the table, and, although they would not have minded my knowing anything, of course I could not bother them with questions. Sometimes if Commandant Militch was not busy he used to show me the various positions on the map, and tell me where he was moving the men to. It was such a frightfully anxious time for him, he had to hold the threads of everything in his hands; everything depended on him, the lives and safety of all the men, and despatch riders and telephone calls gave him very little rest.

On this particular occasion we made an unusually sudden start, and he explained

to me afterwards, as we were riding along, that the Bulgarians had made another of their encircling movements, and got round our position, and very nearly cut the road in front of us, and there was considerable probability at one moment that we might have to take to the mountains on foot, to escape being taken prisoners. However, he was able to send some troops round, and they succeeded in getting down in time to cut them off. Being taken prisoner by the wild Bulgarians would have been no joke.

We halted in the afternoon in a field where a company was resting, some of the Third Call. There are three calls, First, Second and Third—the young men, middle-aged and the old fellows, who as a general rule are only used for light work, guarding

bridges, railways, etc., but now had to march and do the same as the young men, and it came very hard on them.

The Serbians live hard and seem to age much quicker than our men do, as they call a man of forty or forty-five an old man, and they look it, too. The peasants usually marry very young, about twenty; and as we sat and chatted round the fires several of this Third Call told me their ages and how many sons they had serving in the Army. We camped that night in a house in the village, the usual room up a flight of wooden steps. These houses never seem to have any ground floor. I suppose in these disturbed parts the inhabitants find it safer to live at the top of a ladder.

The next day the snow had all cleared

away, and, strange to say, it was like a lovely spring morning. While I was drinking a cup of coffee out on the verandah a young soldier came up and wanted to see the Commandant. He looked fearfully thin and ill, and told me that he and ten others had had nothing to eat for eleven days. I was horror-struck, and asked the Staff Captain if such a thing could be possible, but what he literally meant was that they had been stationed somewhere where they had received no regular rations, and had had to live by their wits or on what the people in the village would give them. Be that as it may, there was no mistaking the fact that he looked very hungry, and I gave him a large piece of bread and cheese which I had in reserve and some cigarettes.

He put the piece of bread and cheese in his pocket, and when I asked him why he did not eat it then and there said he was going to take it back and share it with the others! To see real unselfishness one must live through bad times like these with men, when everyone shares whatever he has.

We rode on into a filthy, muddy little village, where we spent the afternoon. I went for a walk up the hill, through a company of soldiers who were resting on the grass, belonging to some other regiment whom I did not know, and coming back I was stopped and closely questioned by an officer. He did not know who I was, and was evidently considerably puzzled. He wanted to know where I had been and why, and seemed to think that I

might have been paying a visit to the Bulgarians, who were close on our heels as usual. He looked rather incredulous when I said that I had only been for a walk, and I thought he was going to arrest me on the spot pending further investigations, until I pointed to the brass letter "2" on my shoulders, and said I was with the Second Regiment, and that the Commandant was down in the village. Then he let me pass. The Commandant had taken the regimental numbers off his own epaulettes when I first joined and fastened them on the shoulders of his new recruit, and I was very proud of them. The Commandant was very much amused when I told him about it, and told me not to go and get shot in mistake for a spy.

In the evening we rode on by Ockrida



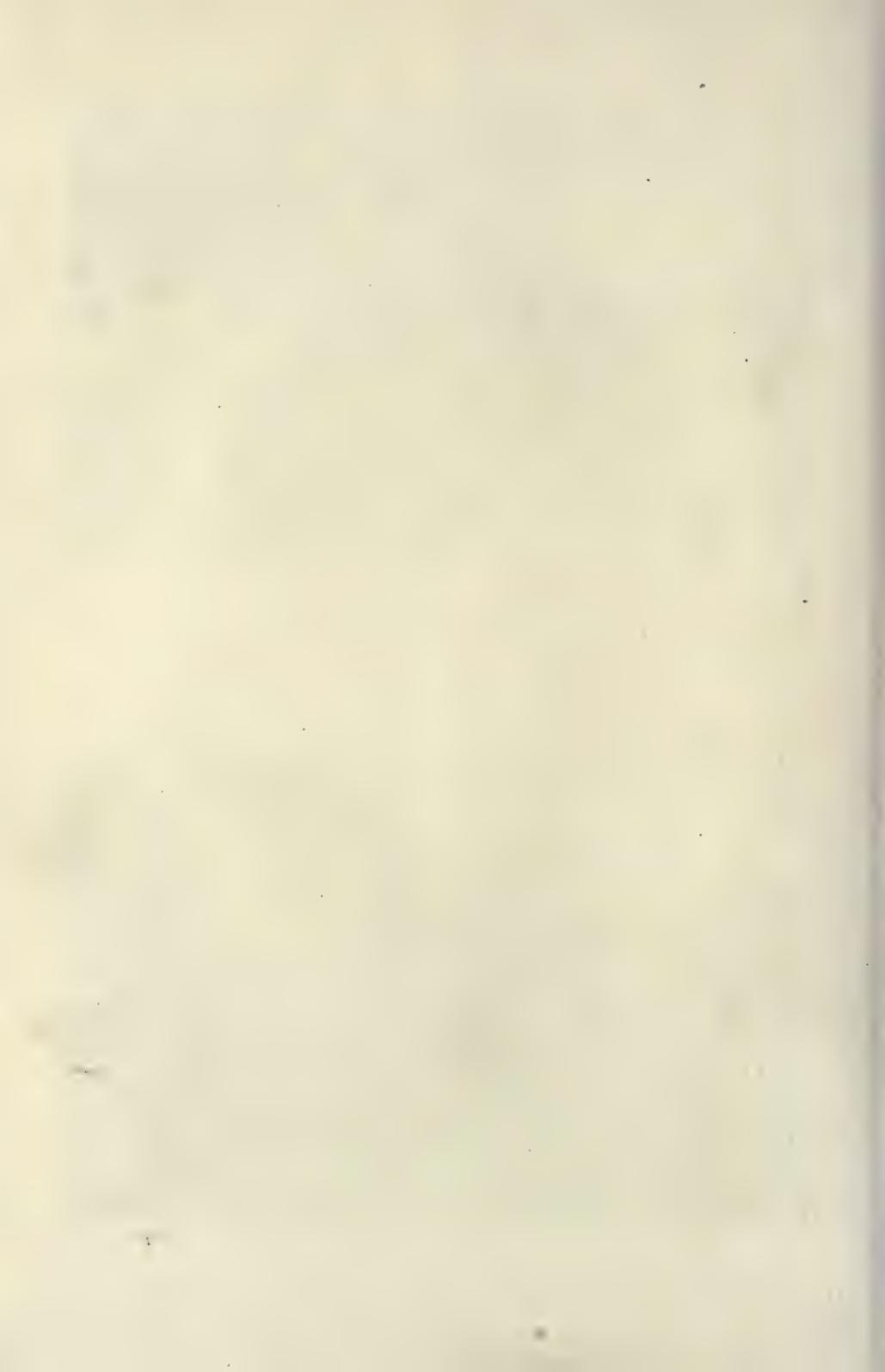
A COLD HALTING PLACE

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THE BLOCK HOUSE WHERE WE ALL SLEPT

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Lake, on and on along the most awful roads, with mud up to our horses' knees, till we finally came to a building and camped in the loft.

Next morning I rode out with the Commandant to inspect the positions. There was a battle going on a little way away in the hills, and we could hear the guns plainly and see the shrapnel bursting. There was a lovely view of the lake, and on the other side you looked away towards the black Albanian hills, and we thought as we looked towards them that this was the very last scrap of Serbia, and that we should soon be driven out of it. Coming back we passed a company by the roadside, and the Commandant stopped and talked to them, and anyone could see how popular he

was, and how pleased they always were to see him. He made them a long speech, cheering them up and telling them to stand fast now and not despair, as some day we would all march back into Serbia together.

We rode to Struga, on the Ockrida Lake, that night, and went up to the headquarters of the Commandant of the division, where we found him and his whole staff in bed. The room seemed absolutely full up with camp beds and sleeping men, but they got up with great cheerfulness, put on their boots and brushed their moustaches and entertained us with tea and coffee till about 1 a.m., when we repaired to an empty hotel, where there was plenty of room for all, for a few hours' sleep.

We were routed out long before dawn, and after a cup of Turkish coffee in the kitchen all turned out into the main street of the village of Struga. In the bitterly cold grey dawn we stood around in black, churned-up mud, shivering, hungry, and miserable. The discouraged soldiers trailed along the road, in the half-light of a winter morning, and altogether we looked the most hopelessly forlorn Army imaginable, setting our faces towards the dark, hard-looking range of snow-capped mountains which separate their beloved Serbia from Albania. It was the last town in Serbia, and we were being driven out of it into exile. It made me feel sad enough, and what must it have been to them, for they are so passionately attached to their own country that they never

want to leave it, and the Serbian peasant feels lost and homesick ten miles from his own native village.

A great deal has been written about the physical sufferings of the soldiers at this time; hunger and pain they can stand, but this home sickness and despair, the feeling that they were friendless, an Army in exile, not knowing what had become of all their loved ones in Serbia, this was what really broke their hearts and took the spirit out of them far more than their other sufferings. They looked upon me almost as one of themselves, and officers and men alike used to tell me about their homes until I felt almost as if it was my own country that had been invaded, and that we were being driven out of. "I am leaving my youth behind

me in Albania," said one young officer to me as we sat looking away into the stormy Albanian sunset one evening. How many of us before we won through to the coast were to leave not only our youth but our health and some of us our lives on those Albanian mountains!

Very glad I was that morning to see the sun rise and things brighten and warm up a little. We rode to a Turkish village up on a hill overlooking Struga and the lake, and from there we watched the bridge burn which connected the Turkish quarter of the town with the part held by our soldiers, thus delaying the Bulgarian pursuit, but not for long. We stayed there two or three days with fighting going on all around. The Bulgarians kept up a heavy bombardment with their big

guns over the Struga road, responded to by our little antiquated cannon. We looked right down on it, and watched the shrapnel bursting all day and the enemy gradually coming closer. Some of our artillery was concealed in a little wood just below the village, and presently the enemy got the range of this beautifully, and the shells were falling fast among the trees. The doctor had been down there, and he brought me back a piece of shell which had fallen right into the middle of the men's kitchen and upset all their soup, scattering them in all directions, but, wonderful to say, not hurting anybody, and he had promised to take me with him next time. I was sitting on the wall with the Staff Captain watching it and wanted very much to go down, but he said I had better

not. "Do you mean only I 'had better not,' or that I 'am not to'?" I enquired meekly, having a wholesome respect for military discipline by now. "No," he said positively, "I mean you are not to." So there was nothing more to do but to salute and say "Rasumem" ("I understand"), the Serbian reply to an order. I thought it rather hard, however, to be chipped afterwards by the officer in command down there for not coming down to help them and I could not persuade him that I had done my best.

The Turkish inhabitants of the village were very friendly, and the old man who owned our house used to bring us large presents of walnuts. They did not seem to like the Bulgarians at all, and explained to us by signs that the Bulgarians were

bad people and very cruel and would cut their throats if they came into the village. The villagers used to sit about all day watching the shrapnel. They seemed very pleased to see us, and several of the children used to bring me presents of nuts and flowers. They used to look at me with great curiosity, and could not quite make out who or what I was. I found a couple of miserable looking Austrian prisoners who were wandering round the village, who were too ill to go away with the others and had been left behind.

We left there a few days afterwards at three o'clock in the morning and rode down to a valley where the Fourteenth Regiment were camped, and spent the rest of the night sitting round their camp fire. We looked so funny in the early morning

light all squatting round the fire, the Commandant included, toasting bits of cheese on the ends of pointed sticks; it tasted extremely good washed down by some of the Commandant's "Widow's Cruse" of liqueur. I wanted to take a photograph of us, but the light wasn't good enough. Afterwards I curled up by the fire with the soldiers and went to sleep, and the sun was shining brightly when I woke to find the whole regiment sitting up with their shirts off busily hunting the "first hundred thousand," and I wished I could do the same myself. "Shirts off" always seemed by unanimous consent to be the order of the day directly there was a halt for any length of time, and I should think there must have been very large "catches" sometimes.

We crossed the frontier through Albania that afternoon, and went along a winding road up a hill till right at the top you looked down on beautiful Lake Ockrida and Serbia on one hand and on the other barren Albania. Here we halted for a few minutes, and sort of said good-bye to Serbia, and then rode on in silence into the Albanian valley, where we camped at a sentry's little hut on a hillock.

The next day the Commandant took me with him for his usual ride up into the positions. The hills were very rough and steep, but our plucky horses managed it all right. We stopped at one Albanian village on the way which was invested by some of our troops. These Albanian villages were a perfect picture of squalor and filth. I don't know what the people

subsist on, but they seem to live like animals. I had always pictured the Albanian peasants as a very fine picturesque race of men wearing spotless native costume, and slung about with fascinating looking daggers and curious weapons of all kinds, but the great majority of those I saw, more especially in the small towns, were a very degenerate looking race indeed.

We had intended going up to some positions which the Fourteenth Regiment were holding, and where a battle was then in progress, but before we got up there we got word that they had had to retreat, and saw them coming back down the mountain side; so we had to stop where the field telephone was rigged up, and the Commandant was very busy for a long time giving orders, etc. He was away

for some time, and I lay down and went to sleep on the grass. With their usual charming manners a couple of soldiers came up, telling me they had a fire over there, and one of them fetched his blanket and spread it by the fire for me to lie on, while the other one rolled up his overcoat for a pillow. The Serbian peasant's manners are not an acquired thing, depending upon whether they have been well or badly brought up, but seem to be natural and part of themselves, and as such are always to be depended upon. People who do not know anything about them have sometimes asked me if I was not afraid to go about among what they imagine to be a race of wild savages, but quite the opposite is the case. I cannot imagine anything more unlikely than to

be insulted by a Serbian soldier. I should feel safer walking through any town or village in Serbia at any hour of the night than I should in most English or Continental towns.

Coming back in the dark, Diana fell on to her head in a ditch, and I rolled off out of the way, as I did not want her to lie down on top of me, but I got unmercifully chipped for "falling off." I was tired, and had besides a splitting headache; so I went and lay down in my tent when we got in. My orderly came and tucked me up, made me some tea, and told the men near not to make a noise, and altogether made up for any shortcomings he might have by being exceedingly sympathetic. I had not intended going in to supper, but he was so per-

suasive about it, telling me there was, as he expressed it, such a "fine supper," and was so anxious for me to have some, that I finally went in. About 9.30 p.m. we packed up again and rode for a couple of hours to another little house, where we found some officers, who turned out of their beds—which they invited us to sit on while they entertained us with tea—after which the Commandant, Captain, Adjutant and myself turned in thankfully, not for very long, as we had to start at 3 a.m. the next morning.

We rode till daylight, and then camped on a hill near the ambulance. There was no house here, so the staff borrowed one of the ambulance tents, and I pitched my little one alongside of it. The Second Regiment were camped on the same hill-

side, and the next morning the Commander of the First Battalion, Captain Stoyadinovitch, came in to see the Colonel before going with his battalion to take up the positions. I asked if I might go with him, and he said I might; so I rode off with him at the head of the battalion, little thinking how long it would be before I saw the Commandant and his staff again, and that was how I came afterwards to be attached properly to a company, and became an ordinary soldier.

CHAPTER VI

FIGHTING ON MOUNT CHUKUS

WE rode all that morning, and as the Commander of the battalion, Captain Stoyadinovitch, did not speak anything but Serbian, nor did any other of the officers or men, it looked as if I should soon pick it up. The staff had also shifted their quarters at the same time, and while we were riding up a very steep hill where Captain S—— had to go for orders Diana's saddle slipped round, and by the time some of the soldiers had fixed it again for me I found he had got his

orders and disappeared. I asked some of the soldiers which way he had gone, and they pointed across some fields; so I went after him as fast as Diana could gallop. I met three officers that I knew, also running in the same direction, and all the men seemed to be going the same way too. The officers hesitated about letting me come, and said, "Certainly not on Diana," who was white and would make an easy mark for the enemy; so I jumped off and threw my reins to a soldier.

"Well, can you run fast?" they said.

"What, away from the Bulgars!" I exclaimed in surprise.

"No, towards them."

"Yes, of course I can."

"Well, come on then," and off we went

for a regular steeplechase, down one side of a steep hill, splashing and scrambling through a torrent at the bottom of it and up another one equally steep, a sturdy lieutenant leading us over all obstacles, at a pace which left even all of them gasping, and I was thankful that I was wearing riding breeches and not skirts, which would have certainly been a handicap through the bushes. I wondered how fast we could go if occasion should arise that we ever had to run away *from* the Bulgarians, if we went at that pace *towards* them. Though no one had breath to tell me where we were going, it was plain enough, as we could hear the firing more clearly every moment. We finally came to anchor in a ruined Albanian hut in the middle of a bare plateau on the top of a

hill, where we found the Commander of the battalion there before us, he having ridden another way. The Fourth Company, whom we had already met once that morning, were holding some natural trenches a short way farther on, and we were not allowed to go any farther. The Bulgarians seemed to have got their artillery fairly close, and the shrapnel was bursting pretty thickly all round. We sat under the shelter of the wall and watched it, though, as it was the only building standing up all by itself, it seemed to make a pretty good mark, supposing they discovered we were there, which they did very shortly. An ancient old crone, an Albanian woman, barefooted and in rags, was wandering about among the ruins, and she looked such a poor old

thing that I gave her a few coppers. She called down what I took at the time to be blessings on my head, but which afterwards I had reason to suppose were curses. The shells were beginning to fall pretty thickly in our neighbourhood, and our Battalion Commander finally said it was time to move on. He proved to be right, as three minutes after we left it the wall under which we were sitting was blown to atoms by a shell. My old crone had disappeared in the meantime to a couple of wooden houses on the edge of the wood. We had to cross a piece of open ground, which we did in single file, to reach this wood, and before we got to it we got a whole fusillade of bullets whistling round our ears from the friends and relations of the old lady upon whom

I had expended my misplaced sympathy and coppers. These were the sort of tricks the Albanians were constantly playing on us from the windows of houses, whenever they got a chance.

We got down through the wood to where we left our horses, waited for the Fourth Company to join us, which they presently did, and then rode on, halting for a time, not far from where some of our artillery were shelling the enemy down below in the valley. The officer in charge showed me how to fire off one of the guns when he gave the word, and let me take the place of the man who had been doing it as long as we stayed there.

It was dark when we got to our camping ground that night, close to where the Colonel and his staff were settled, so I sent

for my blankets and tent, which I had left with them, and camped with the battalion. After a light supper of bowls of soup we sat in a circle round the camp fire till late, smoking and chatting. The whole battalion was camped there, including the Fourth Company, with whom I had previously spent an evening at their camp in the snow, and I thought it very jolly being with them again. It did not seem quite so jolly, however, the next morning, when we were aroused at 3 a.m. in pitch dark and pouring rain, everything extremely cold and horribly wet, to climb into soaking saddles, without any breakfast, and ride off goodness knows where to take up some new position.

It was so thick that we could literally not see our horses' ears; I kept as close as

I could behind Captain S——, and he called out every now and again to know if I was still there. We jostled our way through crowds of soldiers, all going in the same direction up a steep path turned into a mountain torrent from the rain, with a precipitous rock on the near side, which I was told to keep close to, as there was a precipice on the other. A figure wrapped up in a waterproof cloak loomed up beside me in the darkness and proved to be the Commander of the Fourth Company. He presented me with firstly a pull from his flask of cognac, which was very grateful and comforting, and secondly a pair of warm woollen gloves, which he had in reserve, as my hands were wet and frozen. This young man had a most useful faculty of having a “reserve” of

everything one could possibly want, which he always produced just at the right moment, when one did want it. He had not done four years' incessant campaigning without learning everything there was to know about it, and prided himself upon always having a "reserve," from a tin of sardines or a piece of chocolate when you were hungry and had nothing to eat, to a spare bridle when someone's broke, as mine did one day, although he seemed to carry no more luggage than anyone else.

We rode like this till after daylight, and then sat on the wet grass under some trees and had a plate of beans; they tasted very good then, but I've eaten them so often since that now I simply can't look a bean in the face. They asked me if I was going to tackle the mountain on foot

with them, or if I would rather stay there with the transport. I went with them, of course. Mount Chukus is 1,790 metres high from where we were then, and it certainly was a stiff climb. We left our horses there—I had been riding a rough mountain pony of Captain S——’s—and the whole battalion started up on foot. There was no path most of the way, and in places it was so steep that we had to scramble along and pull ourselves up by the bushes, over the rocks and boulders, and in spite of the cold and wet we were all dripping with perspiration. We of necessity went very slowly, making frequent halts to recover our breath and let the end men catch up, as we did not want to lose any stragglers. It must be remembered that not one of these men but

had at least one old wound received either in this or some previous war, and a great number had five or six, and this climb was calculated to catch anybody in their weak spot.

We arrived at the top about 4 p.m., steady travelling since 3 a.m. that morning, most of which had been uphill and hard-going. One officer with an old wound through his chest, and another bullet still in his side, just dropped on his face when we got to the top, though he had not uttered a word of complaint before.

At the very tip-top we camped amongst some pine trees and put up our tents; it was still raining hard and continued to do so all that night, and everything was soaking—there didn't seem to be a dry spot anywhere. The little bivouac tents

are made in four pieces, and each man carries one piece, which he wraps round him like a waterproof when he has to march in the rain; and, if it is not convenient to put up tents, rolls himself up in it at night. We made fires, though we were nearly blinded by the smoke from the wet wood; someone produced some bread and cheese and shared it round, and then we all turned in. It was so cold and wet that I crawled out again about 2 a.m., and finished the night by the fire, as did three or four more uneasy souls who were too cold to sleep. My feet were soaking, so I stuck them near the fire and then went to sleep, pulling my coat over my head to keep off the rain, and it was not until some time afterwards that I discovered that I had burnt the soles nearly

off my boots. I felt hearty sympathy for a soldier I heard one day in Durazzo being reprimanded by an officer for having half his overcoat burnt away—"Do you think you were the only one who was cold? Why didn't *that* man and *that* man burn their clothes? they were just as cold," and I thought guiltily of my own burnt boots.

Later on the next day the sun put in an appearance, as did also the Bulgarians. The other side of the mountain was very steep, and our position dominated a flat wooded sort of plateau below, where the enemy were. One of our sentries, who was posted behind a rock, reported the first sight of them, and I went up to see where they were, with two of the officers. I could not see them plainly at first, but they could evidently see our three heads

very plainly. The companies were quickly posted in their various positions, and I made my way over to the Fourth, which was in the first line; we did not need any trenches, as there were heaps of rocks for cover, and we laid behind them firing by volley. I had only a revolver and no rifle of my own at that time, but one of my comrades was quite satisfied to lend me his and curl himself up and smoke. We all talked in whispers, as if we were stalking rabbits, though I could not see that it mattered much if the Bulgarians did hear us, as they knew exactly where we were, as the bullets that came singing round one's head directly one stood up proved, but they did not seem awfully good shots. It is a funny thing about rifle fire, that a person's instinct always

seems to be to hunch up his shoulders or turn up his coat collar when he is walking about, as if it were rain, though the bullet you hear whistle past your ears is not the one that is going to hit you. I have seen heaps of men do this who have been through dozens of battles and are not afraid of any mortal thing.

We lay there and fired at them all that day, and I took a lot of photographs which I wanted very much to turn out well; but, alas! during the journey through Albania the films, together with nearly all the others that I took, got wet and spoilt. The firing died down at dark, and we left the firing line and made innumerable camp fires and sat round them. Lieut. Jovitch, the Commander, took me into his company, and I was enrolled on

its books, and he seemed to think I might be made a corporal pretty soon if I behaved myself. We were 221 in the Fourth, and were the largest, and, we flattered ourselves, the smartest, company of the smartest regiment, the first to be ready in marching order in the mornings, and the quickest to have our tents properly pitched and our camp fires going at night. Our Company Commander was a hustler, very proud of his men, and they were devoted to him and would do anything for him, and well they might. He was a martinet for discipline, but the comfort of his men was always his first consideration; they came to him for everything, and he would have given anyone the coat off his back if they had wanted it. A good commander makes a good company,

and he could make a dead man get up and follow him.

That evening was very different to the previous one. Lieut. Jovitch had a roaring fire of pine logs built in a little hollow, just below what had been our firing line, and he and I and the other two officers of the company sat round it and had our supper of bread and beans, and after that we spread our blankets on spruce boughs round the fire and rolled up in them. It was a most glorious moonlight night, with the ground covered with white hoar frost, and it looked perfectly lovely with all the camp fires twinkling every few yards over the hillside among the pine trees. I lay on my back looking up at the stars, and, when one of them asked me what I was thinking about, I told him

that when I was old and decrepit and done for, and had to stay in a house and not go about any more, I should remember my first night with the Fourth Company on the top of Mount Chukus.

The next morning our blankets were all covered with frost and the air was nippy, but got warmer as the sun got up, and one soon gets used to the cold when one is always out of doors.

We took up our positions again behind the same line of rocks soon after sunrise. In the afternoon the firing got very hot, and the Bulgars got a sort of cross fire on, so that the bullets were also spitting across the plateau where we had our fire last night, and they seemed to be getting up nearer round another ridge. Our cannon were posted somewhere below on

our left commanding the road, and we could watch how things were going on between them and the Bulgarian artillery by the puffs of white smoke. We had a few casualties, but not so very many.

We stayed there all day till dark, and it got very cold towards sunset, kneeling or lying on our tummies; sometimes we just sniped as we liked, and sometimes fired by volley as the platoon sergeant gave the order, "Né shanni palli" ("Take aim, fire"). I had luckily always been used to a rifle, so could do it with the others all right.

One drawback to Chukus was that there was very little to eat and no water, or at least hardly any, it having to be fetched in water-bottles from a long distance, or melted down from the snow

which still hung about there in deep drifts. We used to fill billy-cans with snow and melt it over the fire. The men had long ago finished their ration of bread which they carried in their knapsacks and only had corn cobs, which they roasted over the camp fires ; we had also almost run out of cigarettes and tobacco.

About 9 p.m. the order came to retire ; coming up the mountain was bad enough, but going down was worse. It was lucky there was a moon. We went down a different side along a path covered with thick slippery mud and very steep, and, as I had no nails in my boots and not much soles, I found it hard to keep my feet. Half-way down we met another battalion, and I was delighted to meet my old friend whose "Slava day" we

had celebrated on the top of Mount Kalabac, and who wanted to know what in the world I was doing here. We found the horses at the bottom, and then the men marched, and I and those of the officers who had horses rode all night through a long defile in the mountains. It was a very narrow track, with a mountain up one side and a precipice on the other which effectually prevented one from giving way to the temptation to go to sleep while riding.

We picked up the rest of the regiment soon after daybreak and halted there. I already knew nearly all the officers, and they all wanted to know what I thought of Chukus. We sat round the fires for some time laughing and joking and then all went on to within a few miles of

Elbasan. I thought we were going to camp there, but we still had another five or six miles' march to the outskirts of Elbasan. Since I had joined this company we had had a day's fighting, then a twelve-hour march, starting at 3 a.m. with a climb to the top of Chukus thrown in, 36 hours' pelting rain, two days' continuous fighting, nothing but a few cobs to eat, and now had been marching since 9 o'clock the night before, yet as we turned at 5 o'clock in the afternoon into the swampy field where we were to camp they had enough spirit left to respond to their company Commander's appeal, "Now then, men, left, right, left, right; pull yourselves together and remember you are soldiers," and this was only a sample of what they had been doing for weeks past.

CHAPTER VII

ELBASAN — WE PUSH ON TOWARDS THE COAST

NEXT day we had a whole blessed day's rest, and the men lay about and rested, and everybody washed their shirts and generally polished themselves up to the best of their ability. Our camp was in a bare and very muddy field about two miles outside Elbasan. In the afternoon Lieut. Jovitch got leave and took me with him to Elbasan to see the sights and show me what an Albanian town is like. It was a filthy little town; the streets paved with big cobble stones and running



AN ENGLISH WOMAN-SERGEANT IN SERBIA
THE AUTHOR IN KHAKI

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rivers of mud. The inhabitants were as hostile as they dared to be, and used to refuse to sell us anything. They put the price of bread up to Frs. 16 a loaf, and everything else in proportion, and would not sell us any hay for our horses, although they had plenty. Although the men were not allowed into the town then for fear of trouble, they would never forget it, and promised themselves to get some of their own back whenever they came back that way again. Many of the inhabitants were wearing Austrian overcoats which they had got in exchange for a small piece of bread from the starving Austrian prisoners who passed through there. Some of our men had been given new boots, and, while refusing to sell us anything, the Albanians would try to tempt them by

offering a small loaf in exchange for them, and naturally, under the circumstances, they sometimes succeeded.

There was absolutely nothing to see in the town, so we sat for a time in the only Kafana, or hotel, in the place—a dark, dirty little den, with some of the officers whom we met, and drank coffee, and later in the afternoon galloped back as hard as we could to camp through the drenching rain. We found our low-lying field afloat, and the soldiers had moved to a bit of slightly rising ground where it was not quite so bad. It was raining so hard and everything was so wet that on discovering a sort of loft or small room up a ladder fourteen officers and myself piled in there. Here three of us who had camp beds put them up, and the rest slept on the floor.

Of course, as a rule camp beds were no use to us, as you cannot get a camp bed into a bivouac tent. We thought we were going to stay there all night, and would have plenty of time to sleep, and sat about and talked, and some of them played cards all night; so we got a nasty jar when at daylight the order came that we were all to move to another camp. We didn't want any trouble with the natives, but the officers had the men well in hand, and they marched steadily through the town. I rode at the head of our company, while the company Commander dropped back alongside and kept his eye on the men; and we all went through without trouble, marching well. We camped in an olive grove beside the river, and most of us went to sleep. It

still poured all that day and all night and all the next night and all the next day.

I rode into Elbasan again, and paid a visit to Commandant Militch and his staff, who had taken up quarters in the town. They had arrived that morning, and the rains had been so heavy since we passed that the river had risen and they had had to ford it up to their waists.

We turned out before dawn next morning, and it was horribly cold and damp; we had been sleeping on the wet ground, there being no hay for the horses to eat, and much less for us to sleep on. We had to cross a beautiful old bridge over the wide Schkumba River, and there was a good deal of delay and waiting about. The river had risen, and the bridge did not reach quite far enough, so

the men had to cross a plank at the other end, and it took ages for the whole regiment to get across. Those who were on horseback forded the river, which was not very deep, though very wide, with a very rapid current. The fields at the other side were a swamp, and the men were up to their knees in mud and water.

My company was told off to take up a position by itself on a range of hills, and we went up there in the afternoon by a very bad steep track, through bushes with very big prickly thorns. The hills were covered with bracken, which we cut down to make beds of, and pitched our tents in a little hollow. We were all by ourselves up there, and had a very quiet four days, as we seemed at last to have shaken off the pursuing Bulgarians, and

it seemed sometimes as if everyone had forgotten all about us. We were the only company up there, and were a very funny-looking camp, with the men sitting about resting and repairing their clothes, and washing hanging out on all the bushes; in fact, we said ourselves that we looked more like a travelling gipsies' encampment than the smartest company in the regiment.

Christmas Eve was bright and sunny, and in the afternoon we visited an Albanian village. I was an object of great curiosity to the inhabitants, especially the women, and they always asked Lieut. Jovitch whether I was a woman or a soldier, and seemed very much puzzled when he said I was an Englishwoman but a Serbian soldier. We were sitting outside one cottage talking to a very old man



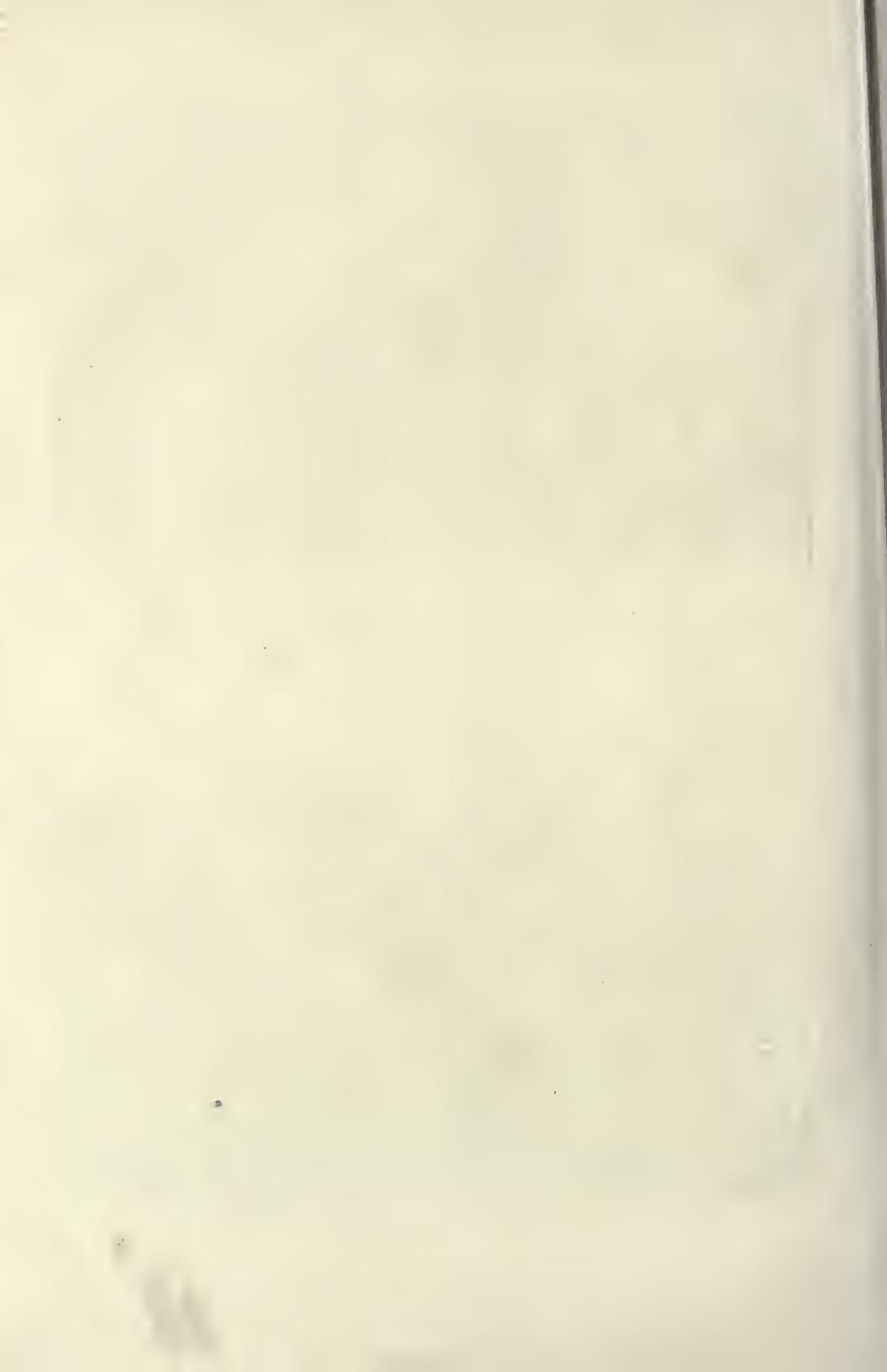
SERBIAN SOLDIERS. A COLD CAMP

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ROUND THE CAMP FIRE

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and his wife. Poor old thing, she patted me all over, examining everything I had on with the deepest interest, and finally disappeared into the cottage and came out again with a bowl of sour milk and some awful-looking bread, of which I ate as much as I could, not to hurt her feelings. We had given the old man some money, and I searched my pockets to see if I could find anything the old woman would like, and finally, feeling rather like "Alice in Wonderland" when she "begged the acceptance of this elegant thimble," I presented her with a small pocket mirror. I do not think she had ever seen such a thing before, and gazed into it with the greatest delight, though she looked about a hundred and was ugly enough to frighten the devil.

The Serbian Christmas is not till thirteen days later than ours, but we celebrated my English Christmas Eve over the camp fire that night. A plate of beans and dry bread had to take the place of roast beef and plum pudding, but we drank Christmas healths in a small flask of cognac, after which I played "God Save the King" on the violin, and we all stood up and sang it. This violin went into my long, narrow kit bag, which was carried on a pack-horse and had managed to survive its travels, though the damp had not improved its tone. In the middle of this performance a soldier walked up from the town with the news that the Allies were advancing and that Scoplyé had been retaken by the French, and we were all fearfully bucked. The men came

crowding up to hear the news, and immediately began making great plans of turning round and marching straight back into Serbia the way we had come, and we sat round the fire until late, playing and singing to celebrate the victory. This news afterwards proved to be incorrect, but we quite believed it at the time. We hardly ever did get any news of the outside world and the doings of one's own particular regiment, and more especially the varying fortunes of one's own particular company, seemed to be the most important things in the whole war to us, and what may have been passing during that time on other and more important fronts I did not hear from any reliable source until we got to Durazzo, and not very much then. The greater part of the

Serbian Army who went by the northern route through Montenegro to Scutari I heard afterwards had an infinitely worse time than we did, but we did not hear the tale of their sufferings until later, and much has already been written about them.

The next day was Christmas Day, and a Serbian journalist who had spent a great many years in America walked some miles over from his own company to wish me a "Merry Christmas," so that I should hear the old greeting from someone in English.

We had quite settled down to our gipsy life, but the food question had become a serious problem by now; bread was at famine prices, the men had finished all their corn cobs and had had practically nothing to eat for two days. I asked the

company Commander if it would be possible to buy anything for them, and we sent down into the town and bought a sort of corn meal for Frs. 200, and had it baked into flat loaves there in the town, and next day when we turned out for a fresh start we gave each man in the company half of one of my corn meal loaves and a couple of cigarettes, telling them it was England's Christmas box to them, which they ate as they went along, otherwise they would have had to march all that day on nothing. As the other companies who had not been so fortunate saw our men go past munching the last of their corn meal bread they called, "Well done, Fourth Company!" after us, and wanted to join us.

For the first time since we had left Baboona we had shaken off the Bul-

garians and were no longer within sound of the guns, but we had to press on or the men would starve.

We had lost hundreds of horses from exhaustion and starvation—once they fell they were too weak to rise again—and their corpses lined the road, or rather track. Sick or well, the men had to keep on. No one could be carried, and you had got to keep on going or die by the roadside.

The next four or five days we continued steadily on our way towards Durazzo, starting about 4 a.m. and generally turning into camp between 6 and 7, long after the short winter afternoons had closed in, so that we had to find our way round our new camping ground in the dark. The weather had got considerably warmer,

although the nights were still bitterly cold, and quite a scorching sun used to come out for a few hours in the middle of the day, and this took it out of the tired men a good deal. Before, when I had been working in the hospitals, and I used to ask the men where it hurt them, I had often been rather puzzled at the general reply of the new arrivals, "Sve me boli" ("Everything hurts me"), it seemed such a vague description and such a curious malady; but in these days I learnt to understand perfectly what they meant by it, when you seem to be nothing but one pain from the crown of your aching head to the soles of your blistered feet, and I thought it was a very good thing that the next time I was working in a military hospital I should be able to enter into my

patient's feelings, and realise that all he felt he wanted was to be let alone to sleep for about a week and only rouse up for his meals.

We went slowly and halted every few hours, sometimes just for a quarter of an hour, sometimes for a good deal longer, and the moment the halt was called everyone used to just drop down on the ground and fall asleep till our company Commander would call, "Now then, men, get up," and we would all pull ourselves together, everyone rising immediately without the slightest delay. In the long midday halt we used to join up with the others, and the whole regiment would rest together, and exchange any scraps of news going. In the evenings the men used to sit round the fires and gossip, and every-

thing that everybody did or said was discussed all through the regiment. News always travels like this among Serbians, and I have often been astonished after I had been away from camp to be told the following day exactly where I had been, whom I had been with, and what I had done. I remember once in Kragujewatz when there were some English officers up in Belgrade who fondly imagined that both their presence and their doings there were a dead secret, in the same curious way we, in the centre of Serbia, knew all about them.

Our riding horses were some of them so starved and exhausted that we could hardly keep the poor brutes on their feet, and I used to sometimes walk to give mine a rest; but at the same time I should

have felt more sympathy with it if it had not had a most irritating habit of refusing to stand still for a moment, but kept wheeling round and round in circles. It was a rough mountain pony belonging to my company Commander, who, when I joined his company, of course, produced a "reserve" pony for me. The poor little brute died two days after we got to Durazzo.

One night we halted on rather funny camping ground, on the side of a hill covered with holly bushes, and had to find our way through them in the dark. We slept round the fires, as there was not room to put up tents among the prickly bushes. Our company Commander, telling his ordonnance that they were all too slow for a funeral, lit our fire himself in two minutes under the shelter of a huge

holly bush, and we were half-way through supper, very comfortably sitting round a roaring blaze, while other people were still looking for a good spot for their fire, and were asleep at opposite sides of ours before half the others were well alight.

At last we were nearing our journey's end; it was the last day's march, and an unusually long one, too. We passed a company of Italian soldiers, and some of the officers came up early in the morning and visited our camp. Durazzo was being bombarded from the sea, and we could hear the boom of the big naval guns in the distance, but it was all over before we arrived. We marched that day from 5 a.m., which meant, of course, being up at least an hour before, to 8 p.m., with only very short and infrequent halts.

About dusk we reached Kavaia, and all the inhabitants turned out and lined the streets to watch us go past. There, again, they put up everything to famine prices, a tiny flask of cognac which we bought costing Frs. 6, in addition to which they would only give us three Italian francs for our Serbian 10-franc note.

I never saw anything like the mud in Kavaia ; in the town it was a liquid black mass, through which men waded far above their knees, and on the long road between Kavaia and our camping ground it was like treacle. It came right above the tops of my top boots, and one could hardly drag one's feet out of it. The road was full of rocks and pits, and every two or three yards there were dead and dying horses which had floundered down

to rise no more ; and it was pitch dark and very cold.

Though not very many miles, it took us nearly three hours to do this bit from Kavaia to our camp, there being a block on the road in front of us, and we were absolutely exhausted, when at last we saw the camp fires of the First Company twinkling on the hillside. We kept pushing on and on, and seemed to be never getting any nearer to them ; owing to the darkness and the constant blocks caused by the narrow approach to our camp, the road got frightfully congested. I did the latter part of the way on foot, too, and began to wonder if those really were camp fires ahead of us or sort of will-o'-the-wisps getting farther away. At last we turned on to the hillside by the sea, which was to

be our resting-place for the next month. I was lying on the grass talking to a soldier, while my orderly put up my tent. He said he was very tired, and I said we all were, but would soon be able to turn in. "Yes," he said thoughtfully, not complaining at all, but merely stating a fact, "but you have ridden most of the way and I have walked, and presently you will have *something* to eat, and I shan't." There was no supper waiting for the tired man. In the Austrian Army I hear the officers live in luxury while their men starve, but that could most certainly not be said of our officers—beans and bread, and not too much of either, and we had bought the bread ourselves. He was stoking up the fire a little later on, and I called him over and gave him my piece of

bread. He shook his head and refused to take it at first, saying, "No, you'll need that yourself," and not till I had quite convinced him that I had enough without it would he take it. We all turned in dead to the world that night, but very glad to have at last reached the coast, and I completely forgot that it was New Year's Eve, though certainly even had I remembered I should not have sat up to see the New Year in.

CHAPTER VIII

SERBIAN CHRISTMAS DAY AT DURAZZO— AEROPLANE RAIDS

NEXT day was New Year's Day, and everyone came up and wished me a Happy New Year, our English New Year, that is, as theirs, of course, did not come till thirteen days later, and we all hoped that the New Year might prove happier than the old one had been.

The whole regiment moved their tents up on to the hill and got ship-shape, which, of course, we had not attempted to do in the dark last night. All the men hurried up to the top of the hill to have their

first look at the sea, most of them never having seen it before, and they seemed never tired of lying gazing at it. The sea looked quite close, but in reality there was a river and a wide swamp between us and it, as I found to my cost one day when I tried to go down there to bathe. It was lovely weather, and that afternoon the band played for the first time, and we all sat about, or paid visits to each other's tents, and congratulated ourselves that we seemed to be nearing the end of our troubles, though as a matter of fact many poor fellows who had struggled on bravely through Albania succumbed in Durazzo, and thousands more later on in Corfu from the effects of starvation and exposure.

We were about 10 miles from the town of Durazzo, though it did not look

anything like so far, and we could see it plainly at the end of the long line of yellow sands jutting out into the sea. There were several wrecks round there, one of them a Greek steamer, which had hit a floating mine. There were a great many of these floating mines about, and the Austrian submarines were also very active, adding immensely to the difficulty of getting food and supplies, which all had to be brought by sea to the troops.

A couple of days after I rode into Durazzo with three of the officers to see the sights of the town. The first sight I did see was a real live English sergeant-major walking down the street. I could hardly believe my eyes, it seemed so long since I had seen an Englishman, and I did not know there were any there. I almost

fell on his neck in my excitement, and he seemed equally astonished and pleased to see a fellow countrywoman. He took me up at once to the headquarters of the British Adriatic Mission, and fed me on tea and cakes, while we were waiting for Colonel — to come in. The same man was also afterwards, strange to say, the first man I met in Salonica, as he was acting as Captain of the tug which came to take us off the French steamer on which we had come from Corfu. Afterwards I had lunch with Colonel — and his staff. It was the first time for so long that I had sat on a chair and eaten my meals off a table with a table-cloth that I had almost forgotten how to do it. I went back late in the afternoon laden with sundry luxuries they had given me in the way of butter,

jam, and a tinned plum pudding, and also two loaves of bread which I had bought in the town, as in those days when we got near a shop we always bought a loaf of bread, in the same way that people at home would buy cake.

I rode back with an artillery officer, who invited me to lunch next day, the other side of Kavaia, and I promised I would come if I could borrow a better horse than the one I was then riding. The road from our camp to Durazzo was in a shocking condition, and it was very hard to ride along it after dark; there were so many dead horses strewn all along it that it was a wonder they did not breed a pestilence.

On my way to my luncheon party next day I met my old friend whose "Slava

day" we had celebrated on the top of Mount Kalabac, and stopped there for supper coming back. We had supper by the camp fire with an orchestra of two Tziganes, who sang and played the Serbian airs on their violins. These Tziganes are all very musical and would sooner part with anything than their violin. Some of them play very well, and they can do a very difficult thing—sing a song and play their own accompaniment with chords on the violin at the same time.

The next day, the men having by now had a little time to get rested, there was a big parade and inspection, though we were a somewhat ragged-looking regiment for a full-dress parade.

On the Serbian Christmas Eve there was a great ceremony, which is always

kept up. Of course, we only kept it on a small scale, but I was told that in Belgrade in peace time it was a very splendid affair indeed. This was cutting the Christmas oak. All the officers rode out to a wood, where the band played, and there was a sort of service conducted by the priest, and then we came back carrying a small oak tree, and there were refreshments and much drinking of healths.

We kept up Christmas festivities for three days, and the men had extra rations, and all had roast pig, which even the very poorest family in Serbia always has on Christmas Day. In the evening I was invited to dinner with the Colonel of the regiment and his staff; we drank the healths of England and Serbia together, and kept it up till very late. They put a

gold coin in their pudding like we put things in our English plum puddings, and I got the slice containing it. They told me it was very lucky, and I always wear it now. On Christmas Eve they roast nuts like we do on Twelfth Night. It is the same date as our Twelfth Night, and I was surprised to find that they had many of these old customs which are now found more in Ireland than in England. Although they did their best to make a bluff at having a happy Christmas it was a very sad and homesick one for them really, not knowing in the least where their families were spending theirs, or if they would ever meet again.

We had fixed ourselves up pretty comfortably by now. By digging out a place about 2 ft. deep, building up the

earth into a wall all round and pitching the tent on to the top of that you can turn a small bivouac tent into quite a large and commodious abode, which will contain a camp bed if you have one and a fireplace with an earth chimney for the smoke, and when you have a fire going and four or five of you are sitting in there no one need complain of the cold, even on the coldest evening; and the evenings were still very cold indeed, although the days were hot.

I used to ride into Durazzo fairly often to see my English friends there, who were more than kind and hospitable to me, and used to give me many little luxuries to take back with which to eke out our slender rations, as, no longer having the hard exercise every day to put an edge on our appetites, we seemed rather to have

turned against beans. Though a corporal, I always messed with the officers.

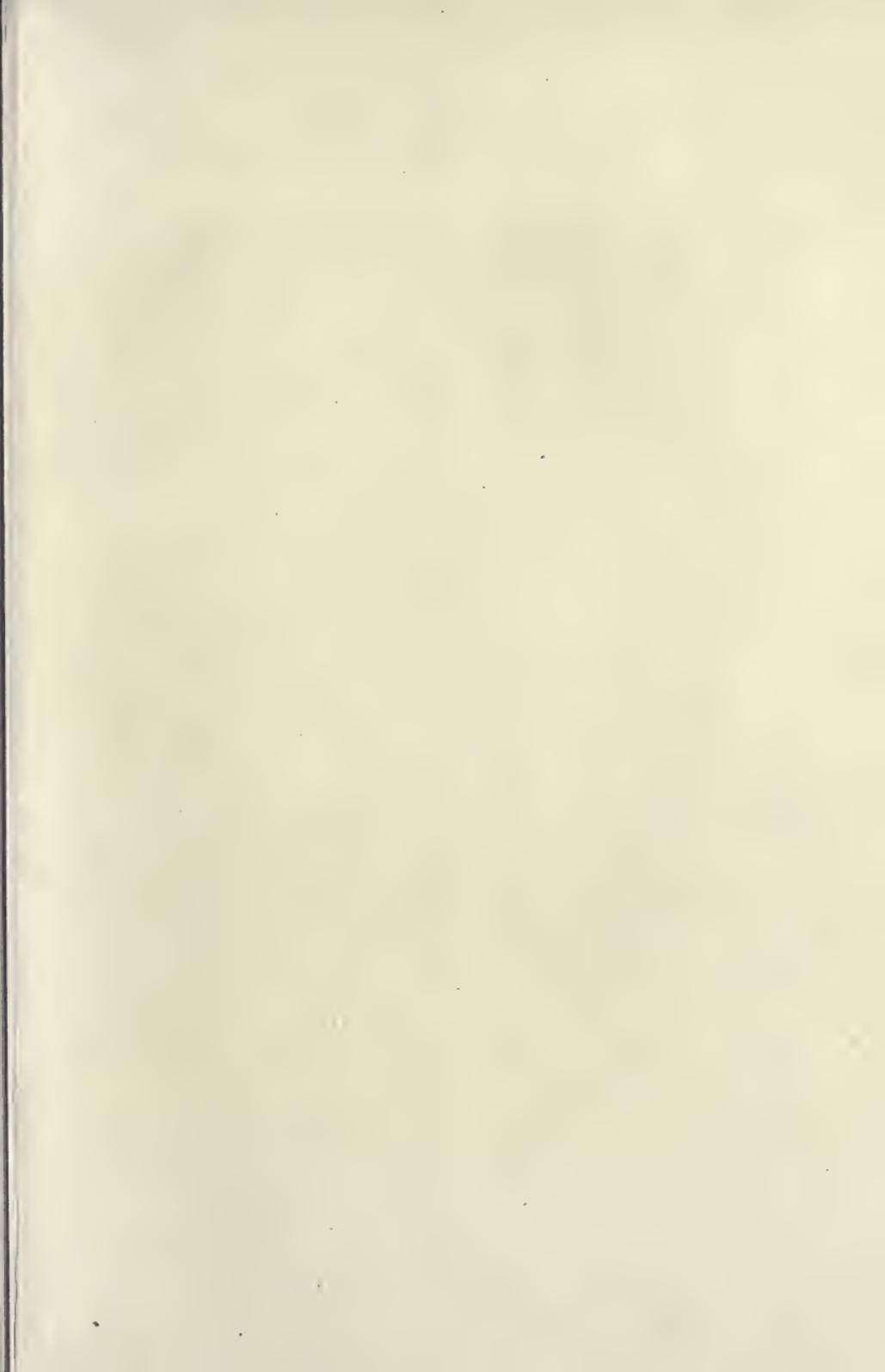
The British Adriatic Mission were feeding the Serbian Army, and were doing wonders, though owing to the constant arrival of fresh troops and the scarcity of ovens for baking their bread (although they were building fresh ones as fast as ever they could) the men were still on half rations of bread, and some days had to have biscuits instead; but, of course, the men could have eaten a lot more after their months of starvation. Among other things they had had some coffee given to them, but it was not much use, as they had no sugar, and the kindly inhabitants of Durazzo had made a corner in sugar and put the price up to Frs. 16 a kilo; so it was impossible to buy it for them, and I

racked my brains as to how I could get some at least for my own company. I asked the head of the B.A.M., but he, of course, could not make an exception of one particular company, even if it had an English corporal (I had been made corporal on New Year's Day, and promoted sergeant three months later), but he said he would see what could be done and turned the matter over to his Adjutant. He, being a young man of resource, went to a Red Cross organisation and demanded a *year's rations* of sugar for an English nurse. I do not know what the daily ration of sugar for an English nurse may be, but, anyhow, one year's worked out at a good-sized case, which I brought back in triumph (having borrowed a pack-horse in Durazzo for that purpose) and

divided up amongst my company, and perfect peace reigned in the camp, the men all spending a very happy afternoon sitting round their little camp fires, making endless little cups of sweet black Turkish coffee. I hope the American Red Cross will forgive me for sharing my year's rations with belligerents if they should ever chance to read this.

I got myself into sad disgrace one day, however, by going away from the camp without leave. An officer from another battalion was going to lunch at another camp some miles away, and he invited me to ride over with him. We started very early in the morning, and, as I could not find the Commander of my company to ask leave, I just went. We stayed there, not only for lunch, but for supper

and all the evening as well, and I would not like to say what time it was when we got back. The next morning my company Commander pointed out to me one of the soldiers up on the hillside doing four hours' punishment drill, standing up there with his rifle, accoutrements and heavy pack in the hot sun, and I was told that on this occasion I should be let off with a reprimand (although I had been three months in the Army and ought to know better by this time), but if I did not see the error of my ways I should find myself doing something similar to that next time, or five days' C.B. I got my revenge, however, a few days later, when he fell sick, and I returned to my original vocation of nurse. He was a very docile patient for a week, though after that he





SERBIAN SOLDIERS IN THEIR OWN SERBIAN UNIFORMS,
BEFORE GETTING ENGLISH KHAKI

suddenly thought it was time to reassert his authority, so got up one day when my back was turned, and ate everything I had not allowed him to eat while in bed.

I had a telegram one day from Durazzo from my friend Miss Simmonds, telling me to come and meet her in Durazzo at once. She and I had worked together in the Serbian hospitals ever since the beginning of the war, and as soon as she got my letter saying I was starting back for Serbia she had left New York to join me again, but, of course, could not find me, as by the time she got to Salonica I had disappeared into Albania. She had been doing most wonderful work ever since, organising relief for Serbian refugees and personally conducting shiploads of them

from Salonica to Corsica, Marseilles and goodness knows where. Among other little odd jobs she discovered a whole colony of them in Brindisi who had been without food for two days; so without any further red tape proceeded to hire carriages, drive round the town and buy up everything in the eatable line which was to be had wherewith to feed them.

I at once borrowed a horse and rode out to Durazzo to meet her. I did not know in the least where to find her there, but most of the people in the town seemed to have heard of her, and I finally located her at the Serbian Crown Prince's house, where she had gone to be presented. He was not going to see any more people that day, but when he heard that I had arrived he very kindly said that he would

see me too. I was not exactly dressed to be presented to Royalty, as I was still wearing the clothes (the only ones I had) in which I had come through Albania, besides having just had a hot and dusty 10 mile ride, but that doesn't matter in wartime. He was most charming, and decorated us both with the Sveti Sava medal.

After that we went on board her ship, in which she was sailing that night with 1,500 refugees which she was taking to Corsica. We had a busy evening, and had our work cut out for us feeding 1,500 refugees on bully beef and biscuits. The ship, which was a small Greek one, was simply packed, and it was no easy task on the pitch dark decks and down in the holds.

I slept in town that night. One of the English officers was waiting on the quay for me when I got back at midnight, and he had found me room in an hotel. The hotels in Durazzo are the limit, but this one did at a pinch. He asked the boy in the hotel if he could make us some tea. He said he could as far as the boiling water went, but he had neither tea nor sugar. A Serbian officer, a stranger to us both, who happened to be passing on his way to bed, overheard this, and immediately said he had both tea and sugar, which he would give us ; and not only did he do this, but came back afterwards and apologised for not having any cognac to put into it. As my friend remarked, “ Really the Serbians do give us points in the way of manners ; here is a man who, not satisfied with

seeing to the comfort of two people who are total strangers to him, and providing them with his own tea and sugar, comes back and actually apologises because he has not cognac as well!"

The next morning I went round to the British Adriatic Mission, and while I was having breakfast there there was a most terrific crash, followed by others in quick succession. I left my breakfast and went out into the street to see what was to be seen. Five Austrian aeroplanes were circling round and round overhead, apparently dropping bombs as fast as they could. The streets of Durazzo are very, very narrow, and the town is very small and very crowded. People were running as hard as they could to get out of the way—at least, the Italians were running,

the Serbians always thought it beneath their dignity to do so. I was standing with a Serbian artillery officer who knew all about it and could almost always guess pretty well where they were going to fall. Looking up into the clear blue sky you could see the bombs quite well as they left the aeroplanes: first of all they looked like a silvery streak of light, and then like a thin streak of mist falling through the sky, till they hit some building with a crash, smothering everyone in the neighbourhood with a powdery white dust. Two of them fell in almost identically the same spot at the end of the street about a hundred yards from us, and several more round about. Another officer joined us presently who was very much annoyed because he was in the

middle of being shaved when the first bomb fell, and the Italian barber had, without more ado, instantly dropped his razor and fled, so that he had to come out with only half his face shaved. He was rather glad afterwards, however, when he found out that had the barber remained he would have had no face left to shave, as when we walked back to the shop we found that a bomb had gone clean through the roof and the barber was standing outside anathematising aeroplanes for ruining his business. Altogether they dropped twenty-five bombs in about a quarter of an hour within a radius of a little over a quarter of a mile and killed a good many people.

There was a wide subterranean drain leading from the town to the sea, and down

this hundreds of Italians crawled, but I think if I were given the choice of crawling down a Durazzo drain in close proximity to some hundreds of the natives of that town or being killed by a bomb I would choose the latter. One day previously some bombs had fallen in the neighbourhood of a camp of Italian soldiers, who had to vacate it. A company of hungry Serbians near by had with great presence of mind seized the opportunity to go in and clear the deserted camp of all the bread and everything eatable it contained, and they were heard to express a wish afterwards that there might be a visitation of aeroplanes every day. When it was all over I went back again, and, finding the headquarters of the British Adriatic Mission still stand-

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ing, sat down to a fresh lot of bacon and eggs for breakfast, such luxuries not being obtainable every day.

CHAPTER IX

WE GO TO CORFU

WE remained near Durazzo for a month, the men resting and recuperating after their hard time.

There were a lot of young recruits who had been brought through with the Army from Serbia, but who had not yet been formally sworn in, and one morning this ceremony took place. The whole regiment was formed up in a square in the centre of which stood the priest with a table in front of him, on which were a bowl of holy water, with a bunch of leaves

beside it, a Serbian Bible, and a large brass cross. All the officers were drawn up in a double line facing the table, and the recruits behind them again, with the whole regiment forming the other two sides of the square and the band a little way behind.

The priest read a sort of short service, and then the flag-bearer carried the regimental flag up to the table while the band played. After that the priest walked all down the line of officers with the basin of holy water in his hand, and dipping the bunch of leaves into it sprinkled them each on the forehead and held up the cross for them to kiss; when that was over the swearing in of the new recruits began, and, as I had not yet been sworn in, I was one of them. We all stood at the salute and

repeated the oath all together, sentence by sentence after the priest, swearing loyalty to Serbia and King Peter, and after that we marched in single file past the table, removing our caps as we did so for the priest to sprinkle our foreheads, and then kissed the cross, the priest's hand, and, last of all, the regimental flag. It was a very impressive ceremony, winding up by the band playing the Serbian National Anthem while we stood at the salute.

All the officers came up and shook hands with me afterwards and congratulated me on now being properly enrolled as a soldier in the Serbian Army.

We were getting very tired of the Adriatic coast, and now that we were feeling rested again we were anxious to

be once more on the move and take the next step towards getting back to Serbia. Speculation was rife as to where we were going to be sent to be reorganised and refitted; no one knew for certain, and there were the wildest rumours about Algiers, France, or Alexandria, but at last the glad news came that we were really going, and to Corfu.

But there was still a six or seven days' march to Vallona, where the regiment was to embark. Doctors came round and every man was medically examined to see if he was fit for the march, as those who were not were to be embarked at Durazzo. We had heard that the road to Vallona was very bad, and in some places knee-deep in mud and water, and nobody was very anxious for the march if he could

go from Durazzo, so one and all declared that they had rheumatism or else sore feet; but eventually only a small percentage, among them sixty men from the Fourth Company, and about half a dozen officers, from the regiment were declared to be unfit. I was perfectly fit, but, as I was told I might do whichever I liked, I thought I might as well embark at Durazzo with those from my own company; so on the 3rd of February we left our camp and went into Durazzo to wait for the steamer, as it was uncertain which day she would sail.

I and some of the officers who were not on duty took rooms in the town, and there we had to wait for four days. We found some difficulty in feeding ourselves; there seemed to be hardly anything to buy, and

what there was was at famine prices, and our Serbian 10-franc notes were only worth three and a half Greek or Italian francs. We had to pay 50 francs for a bottle of common red wine, which anywhere else would have cost a franc. One day some Italian doctors invited us to lunch at their hospital; they were most excellent hosts, and it was a very large and merry luncheon party. Hardly any two people could talk the same language, and English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Serbian got all mixed up together into a sort of Esperanto of our own.

Every day as regularly as clockwork, between half-past ten and eleven, we had an Austrian aeroplane raid, and occasionally in the afternoon as well, and

we got so used to them that if we did not hear the first bomb in time we used to gaze up into the sky and wonder why they were so late, but the worst raid was when we were actually embarking.

Embarking is always a tedious business, and is always inseparably connected in my mind with hours of standing about on your own weary feet, like a flock of tired sheep, in weather that is always either too hot or too cold, or else raining, patiently waiting for orders.

We were embarked on large flat barges, and sent off to two or three small Italian steamers in the harbour. The one that I was on was crammed with men, and we had just got alongside the steamer when an aeroplane came exactly overhead. We made a fairly big mark with the large

crowded barge alongside the steamer, and it passed over us three times, dropping bombs all around as if they were shelling peas. Backwards and forwards it came, columns of water shooting up, now 50 yards to the right, now a little to the left, showing where the bombs hit the water harmlessly, one of them barely clearing a hospital ship at anchor. Every moment it seemed as if the next one must drop in the middle of our barge, but we were pretty well seasoned to anything by now, and, whatever may have been our inside feelings, we sat still and stolidly watched sudden death hovering over our heads in the blue sky, but it didn't seem somehow like playing the game when we couldn't retaliate at all.

The Captain of the Italian steamer got so exasperated that he shouted that he

was not going to have his steamer sunk on our account, and that we were to sheer off, as he would not take us on board at all; so our tug towed us back to the pier for further orders, and we were eventually sent off to another steamer.

I and the two officers I was with in the end found ourselves embarked on one steamer, with most of the men from our own regiment on another, and our servants and all our luggage on a third. By that time it was about 1 o'clock, and, as we had been standing about in the hot sun since 5 a.m. and had had nothing to eat, we began to feel as if we should like some breakfast; so we were anything but pleased to be told upon enquiry that nobody could get anything to eat on that ship, neither officers nor men.

“Now then, Corporal,” said my company Commander to me, “you talk French; go and see what you can do.” So I obediently went off to hunt up the Military Commander of the ship. He first informed me that there was no food on the boat, and that nobody could get anything until 8 o’clock that evening, and seemed to be inclined to let the matter go at that, but I was not going to take that answer back if I could help it; so told him that I didn’t think much of his way of treating his English Allies, whereupon, having turned that over in his mind, he said I could have something alone. Of course that was no use; so after a little more persuasion I finally got him to order the steward to serve dinner to the two officers and myself in the saloon in about an hour as soon as

it could be got ready, and while waiting for it we could have some coffee, if I could get anybody to make it for me. I accordingly went round to the galley and interviewed the cook, who informed me that the man who made the coffee was asleep in his bunk and I couldn't wake him.

“ Oh, can't I ? ” I said (in the words of the man when told by the steward that he could not be sick in the saloon), “ you'll see if I can't.”

“ Are you an officer ? ” he inquired, with that sort of veiled impertinence that the lower class Italians and Greeks are such past-masters of.

“ No, I am not,” I snapped, “ I am a corporal ; now which is that coffee-man's cabin ? ” and, on it being pointed out to me, I beat such a devil's tattoo on the door

with my riding-whip that in half a minute a very tousled and sleepy head appeared, and enquired what on earth was the matter. I told him I wanted three cups of coffee in the saloon *at once*, and he was so astonished that he got up forthwith and made them, and I went back in triumph to report, and felt rewarded on being told that I had done very well.

The next morning we were transferred in Vallona harbour on to a big Italian steamer, a fine boat, where they treated us very well. We reached Corfu about 1 a.m., and disembarking began there and then. We hung on till the last, as we had nowhere to spend the night, our tents, blankets, etc., being on another boat, and I had not even an overcoat with me and it was very cold, but at 3 a.m. we also had to go.

We had been looking forward to Corfu as a sort of land flowing with milk and honey, with a magnificent climate and everything that was good, but our ardour was rather damped when we landed at that hour at a small quay, feet deep in mud, miles away from the town, and about 8 miles away from our camp, so we were told. We did not know in which direction our camp was, and, even had we got there, would have been no better off without a tent or blankets; so we spent the remainder of the night sitting on a packing-case beside the sentry's fire, and I was glad enough to be able to borrow an overcoat from the Serbian officer in charge of the quay, who was just going off duty.

There was one of the most beautiful sunrises I have ever seen, but under some

circumstances you feel you would most willingly barter the most gorgeous panorama of scenery for a cup of hot tea.

We had a long, hot walk the next morning till we found our own division, where the sixty men from our company were camped pending the arrival of the Commandant of the regiment and the rest who were coming via Vallona.

Corfu may be a lovely climate and a health resort and everything else that is delightful at any other time in the year, but it was a bitter blow to us when it rained for about six weeks without stopping after our arrival, added to which there was no wood, and camp fires were forbidden, I suppose for fear that the men might take to cutting down the olive trees with which the island is covered. There was

no hay at first for us to sleep on, and the incessant wet, combined with the effects of bully beef, on men whose stomachs were absolutely destroyed by months of semi-starvation was largely responsible for the terrible amount of sickness and very high mortality among the troops during the first month of our stay there. This was especially the case among the boys and young recruits, who, less hardy than the trained soldiers, were completely broken down by their late hardships and died by thousands on the hospital island of Vido. They could not be buried in the small island, dying as they were at the rate of 150 a day, and the bodies were taken out to sea. The Serbs are not a maritime nation, and the idea of a burial at sea is repugnant to them. I heard one touching story. An

old man came to the island to see his son, but he had died the day before. "Where is his grave?" he asked, "that I may tell my old wife I saw his last resting-place. We had seven sons; six were killed in the war, and he was the seventh and youngest." The kind-hearted doctor lied bravely and well. "That is it," he said, pointing to a little wooden cross among a few others, where some graves had been made one day when it was too rough for the tug to call. How could he tell the poor old father that even then his son's body was lying out on the wooden jetty waiting to be carried out to his nameless grave in the blue Ionian Sea?

We found there had been some hitch in the commissariat arrangements, and there was no food for our sixty men. We bought

them some bread next day, but bread was 3 francs a loaf, and a third of a loaf to a man with nothing else was not enough to keep them going, while endless red tape was being unwound before their proper rations came along. They never made a complaint; but, though we could have bought bread for ourselves, it nearly choked us with the men standing round silently watching and wondering what we were going to do for them.

On the second morning, seeing an empty motor-lorry coming along, I had a sudden inspiration and boarded it, dashing down the steep bank to the road, telling them that I would be back in the evening from town with something for them, and taking an orderly with me. It was about fifteen miles' drive into the town of Corfu, and I

tramped about all day in the pouring rain from one official to another, from the English to the French, from the French to the Serbians, and back again to the French, till I was heartily sick of it, and had I had the money would have bought the stuff in the town and had done with it. There was plenty of bread at the bakery, but, of course, they could not give it to me without a proper requisition, which apparently I could not sign because I was not authorised to do so. It was getting towards evening, and I was beginning to despair, and was thinking of doing the best I could with a hundred francs I had borrowed, when I thought I would have one more try with the French authorities. I was wet through myself, as I had had no time to stop for a coat

when the lorry came along, and had been too busy and too worried to get anything to eat all day, but anyhow this time I managed to pitch them such a pitiful tale of woe about the sufferings of the men, and the awful time I was having trying to get them something to eat, that I quite softened their hearts, and they said they would give me what I wanted without any further signature, but that I must not make a precedent of this unofficial way of doing business. I was overjoyed, and sent my orderly off at once to hunt up a carriage, and we returned to camp in triumph about 9 o'clock with a whole sackful of bread, another of tinned beef, and two large earthenware jars of wine, which I bought on the way. There were plenty of the men waiting, when they heard my carriage

arrive, to dash down to the road and carry the stuff up to the camp, and there was great rejoicing over the success of my expedition. I was soon warm and dry and having some supper myself. The men were all right so far, but another day's short rations would certainly have seen some of them sick.

The question of transport was fearfully difficult, and the French and English authorities were working night and day to feed the troops, and, of course, they could never have got through the work if things had not been done in order; so I was duly grateful that under the special circumstances they let me carry out such an unauthorised raid.

About a week later the rest of the company arrived about 10 o'clock one evening,

and a sergeant proudly told me that our Fourth Company were all very fit and not a man sick or fallen out.

We moved to another camp up in the hills, a nice place, but very far from anywhere, though I found that I could get about anywhere I wanted to on the motor-lorries which used to come in with bread. The A.S.C. drivers of these lorries must have had a hard time at first; the roads were very bad and the weather shocking, and they were working sixteen hours a day carrying supplies, but they were full of pity for the deplorable condition of the Serbian soldiers, and were willingly working night and day to alleviate it.

One of the English officers gave me a small Italian tent in place of the little

Serbian bivouac one I had been sleeping in. It was a capital little tent, very light and absolutely waterproof. My orderly built a foundation of stones about 2 ft. high, with the chinks filled in with earth, and pitched the tent on the top of that, so that it was quite high enough to stand up in and also to hold a camp bed and a rubber bath, and he then made a nice little garden and planted it with shrubs and flowers, with a little wall all round ornamented with red bully-beef tins with plants in them, and it looked awfully nice.

The thing we missed most was not being able to have any fires to sit round. One day I came back on a lorry containing a load of wood intended for somewhere else, but I had got past any scruples

about commandeering anything where my own company was concerned; so I persuaded the driver to drop a few big logs off on the road at the nearest point to our camp, and we had at least one small fire for some time afterwards, and anybody who liked could come and boil his billy-can and make his tea at that.

The Serbian Relief Fund was short-handed and very busy, and I obtained permission to leave the camp for a few weeks and take up my quarters in town to give them a hand. Several shiploads of stuff had just come in, and everything had to be landed on the quay on lighters and then removed from there at once, as the quay could not be blocked up, to one or other of their two store-houses, which were at opposite ends of the harbour. One

of these store-houses had only just been acquired, and, as it was about 6 in. deep in coal dust, it had all to be scrubbed and cleaned out for the arrival of fresh bales, and that was my first job. I got a gang of Serbian soldiers, and we had a strenuous day's work with the very inefficient tools at our disposal, but we managed by the evening to get everything ship-shape and the floors clean, though we all got rather damp and coal-dusty in the process.

The quay was a most interesting place, though I should have enjoyed the work more if it had not poured steadily all day and every day, as there was no cover anywhere. French, English, and Serbians were all working there together, each trying to be the first to seize upon labour and transport both by water and land for

the particular job he was responsible for. There were a number of ships in the harbour waiting to be unloaded, and everyone was working as hard as he could, and things were considerably complicated by the fact that hardly one of them could speak the other's language. It was quite a usual thing to find an Englishman, who could not speak French, trying to explain to a French official that he wanted a fatigue party of Serbian soldiers to unload a certain lighter, and neither of them being able to explain to the said fatigue party, when they had got them, what it was they wanted them to do.

There was always a company of Serbian soldiers for work on the quay, and a fresh relay of men came on at 6 a.m., at midday,

and at 6 p.m., and you had to be there sharp on time if you wanted your men, or else you would find they had all been snapped up by someone else. As I could speak French and enough Serbian to get along very well, most of my work was on the quay, and I was often called in to act as interpreter. As I did not want to get down there at 6 a.m., however, I got a friendly English corporal, who had to be on duty then, to get twice as many men as he wanted himself, and then give me half of them when I came down. I was rather afraid of the English Tommies at first, and thought they would be sure to laugh at a woman corporal, but, on the contrary, there was nothing they would not do to help me, and the French soldiers were just the same.

I was superintending the unloading of some goods from a lighter one day, which all had to be transferred to another lighter, and taken across to the warehouse that evening. We were all very tired and wet, and the men were slacking off, and it didn't seem, at the rate we were going on, as if we should get through before 9 or 10 o'clock that night. The Serbian sergeant tried to buck them up, but the men were fed up and were just doing about as little as they possibly could. It is worse than useless to bully a Serbian soldier if he doesn't want to do anything; so, as I wanted to get back to the hotel to dinner, I went on quite another tack. I told them I had been working for them all day since early in the morning, and was tired and hungry, and that if they were going

to spend another three hours over the job I should get no dinner. The effect was magical. They all at once got terribly worried on my account, began to work like steam, and in an hour we had the whole thing done, and they were enquiring in a brotherly manner if it was all right, and if I would be in time for dinner now.

All these poor fellows working down on the quay had had their uniforms taken away from them and burnt, and had been provided with a blue corduroy suit for working in. Their old ones, though dirty, were warm, and their new ones were very thin, and in most cases they had hardly any underclothes; so whenever I had a gang of men working under me down at the warehouse I used to fit them out with warm sweaters, etc., of which we had

plenty, out of one of the broken bales. I used to make them work hard for a couple of hours, and then sit down for five minutes and have a cigarette, and then go on again for another hard spell. The Serbian sergeants used to be very much amused at my methods, but I always found they answered very well. They were always keen to be on my gang, and everyone said I got more work out of them than anyone else could.

There were a lot of new English uniforms, but the French authorities would not issue them unless there were enough underclothes to go with them, and these they were short of. However, I got a promise of underclothes from the Serbian Relief Fund, and then my troubles began. First I had to get a paper signed



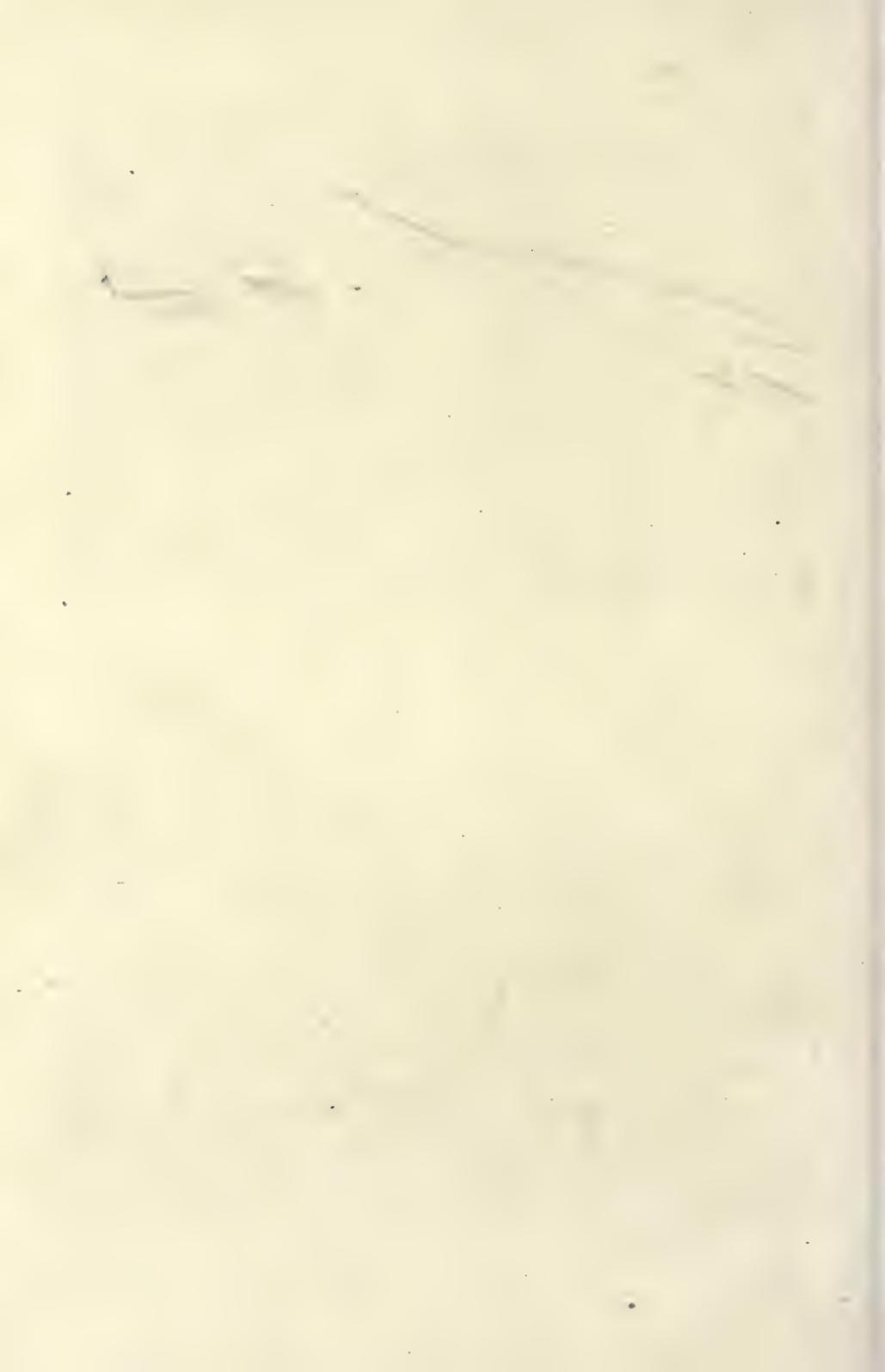
OFFICERS SITTING OUTSIDE MY TENT

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COLONEL MILITCH ON DIANA

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by the English saying they would give them if the French approved; then another, signed by the French, that they did approve and would give the uniforms; then one signed by the Serbian Minister of War; then back to the French again to be countersigned; then back to the Minister of War; then to the Serbian warehouse, who refused to give them because I hadn't got somebody else's signature, and so on and so on. To cut a long story short, it took three whole days walking round Corfu in the pouring rain before I could get all those papers sufficiently signed, including three visits to the Minister of War, and even then the transport remained to be found, as the motor-lorries were fully occupied carrying bread.

I had airily promised the French that I thought the English authorities could give me the transport; so I went up to them, and they said they would see what they could do.

“How much stuff have you?” inquired the officer in charge.

“Three thousand two hundred and fifty uniforms,” I replied, “and the same number of vests and pants.”

“Well, that doesn’t tell me anything,” he said; “I want to know the bulk and weight: you’re no good as a corporal if you can’t tell me that. Let me know exactly by eleven o’clock to-morrow morning, and I’ll see what I can do.”

Here was a poser, for, though I said at once that I would let him know, I had not the faintest idea of how to work it out;

but fortunately bethought myself of my sheet anchor, the big English corporal on the quay, who always seemed to be able to solve any difficulty; and, sure enough, he did it for me, and I telephoned the required information. In the end I got the stuff loaded on to a barge and took it myself to a point about 2 miles from my camp, whence it was carried up by a company, and we had the proud distinction of being the first regiment to be fitted out in new, clean English khaki uniforms.

When not on the quay there was plenty to do in the warehouses, sorting out the bales, or taking them across the harbour in our little tug, which was quite a journey, but I eventually got a chill and had to lay off for a bit, as the result of one wetting too many.

I used to go back to camp every Saturday afternoon and Sunday, and I always managed to take up a couple of cases of something, generally given me by the Serbian Relief Fund; either things for the ambulance or condensed milk or golden syrup for the men. Condensed milk was very much appreciated, as it meant that they each got a big bowl of *café au lait* for breakfast for three mornings, whereas, as a rule, they don't have anything until lunch.

One day an incident occurred which touched me very greatly. The non-commissioned officers and men of the Fourth Company formed a committee among themselves and drew up an address, which they presented me with, and which a man in the regiment who knew English

afterwards translated for me as literally as possible. An English major, to whom I once showed it, told me if that were his he should value it more than a whole string of medals, and as that is how I feel about it, coming as it did spontaneously from my own men, I put the translation in here :

“ To the high-esteemed

“ MISS FLORA SANDES,

“ CORFU.

“ Esteemed Miss Sandes !

“ Soldiers of the Fourth Company, 1st Battalion, 2nd Inf. Rgmt., ‘ Knjaza Michaila,’ Moravian Division, 1st (Call) Reserves ; touched with your nobleness, wish with this letter to pay their respects —and thankfulness to you ; have chosen

a committee to hand to you this letter of thankfulness.

“ Miss Sandes !

“ Serbian soldier is proud because in his midst he sees a noble daughter of England, whose people is an old Serbian friend, and to-day their armies are arm-in-arm fighting for common idea, and you Miss Sandes should be proud that you are in position to do a good, to help a Serbian soldier—Serbian soldier will always respect acts of your kindness and deep down in his heart will write you kind acts and remember them for ever.

“ Few months have passed since you came among us, and you shared good and bad with us. During this time you have often helped us to pass through hard-

ships, buying food for us, and financially.

“ Thanking you in the name of all the soldiers, we are greeting you with exclamation :

“ Long life to our ally England,

“ Long life to Serbia,

“ Long life to their heroic Armies,

“ Long life to noble Miss Sandes !

“ *Naredniks (Sergeant-Majors)*—

“ Milcontije Simitch

“ Rangel Miloshevitch

“ *Podnaredniks (Sergeants)*—

“ Milisav Stamenkovitch

“ Yanatchko Todorovitch

“ Bozidar Milenkovitch

“ *Kaplars (Corporals)*—

“ Vladimar Stankovitch

“ Milan Jovanovitch

“ Dragutin Rangjelovitch

“ Aleksa Miloshevitch

“ Zaphir Arsitch

“ *Vojnitsi (Soldiers)*—

“ Milivoye Pavlovitch

“ Milorad Taskavitch

“ Rangel Mladenovitch

“ Dragoljub Milovanovitch

“ Alexandar Iwkovitch

“ 4th Comp., 1st Battl., 2nd Inf. Rgt.

“ No. 1024 (Official Stamp).

“ To Miss Sandes, Corporal, volunteer of
this Comp.—

“ Please receive this little, but from
heart of my soldiers, declaration of thank-
fulness for all (for help) that you have
done for them until now, and in time,
when they are far away from dear ones
and loving ones at home.

R

“ To their wishes and declaration I am adding mine and exclaim :

“ Long life to our dear ally England,

“ Long life to heroic Serbian Army,

“ Commander of the Company,

“ JANACHKO A. JOVITCH.

“ 13/26 February, 1916.

“ Ipsos (Corfu).”

CHAPTER X

THE "SLAVA DAY" OF THE SECOND REGIMENT

THE companies used to take turns at working at the ports for about three weeks, and when our turn came the men were very pleased, as they much preferred it to doing drill, and they were able to occasionally get into the town also. We were camped about a mile and a half outside the town, but I thought it was the nastiest camp that I had ever been in—a very small crowded piece of ground with no shade, so that when the weather was hot we were perfectly roasted, and when it

was wet, when you tried to climb up the narrow steep path to it, you slipped back two steps for one you went up, in the thick slippery mud.

I gave up my room in town, as our camp was close enough to walk to. I could make myself understood pretty well in Serbian by now, though, of course, I made awful mistakes, as it is by far the most difficult language I have ever come across to learn, there being no books to help one. One can only pick it up by ear; so it is no wonder if I was occasionally misunderstood.

One day I told my orderly to go and fetch my thick coat, which he would find on a chair in my room, and bring it to me in camp. He duly arrived back about an hour afterwards with the coat *and* the

chair, which he had carried all through the town, and was much discomfited at the howls of laughter with which we all greeted him. I asked him what the landlady had said to his removing her furniture like that, and he confessed that she had made a few remarks, but, as she spoke nothing but Italian and he nothing but Serbian, they passed lightly over his head, and he triumphantly carried out what he had taken to be my orders. He was a capital orderly, always cheerful and willing. One day he told me, in answer to some remark of mine, that as my orderly he would not have to fight. " Will you fight with us going back to Serbia, like you did in Albania ? " he asked. " Why, of course I shall, Dragoutini," I said. His face beamed. " Then I shall go with you and

fight beside you,” he declared emphatically.

We went back to our camp in the hills when our three weeks were up, and to our great joy we heard that we were to embark almost immediately for Salonica.

They let us stay a day longer than was intended in order to celebrate the regimental “Slava day,” which is a great festival, and the whole regiment was *en fête* for the whole day. The Crown Prince Alexander himself came, and a great many French and English officers and a few ladies.

It was held in a beautiful big, flat glade, just below the camp, with huge big spreading trees. There was a large marquee decorated with all the different flags of the Allies, and everybody had been busy for the last week making paths and gene-

rally beautifying the place, and practising for the big march past of the regiment.

We had a variety of talent in our regiment ; among others a young student of sculpture. Building four high pillars of clayey mud flanking the path leading to the marquee, he carved on each a beautiful bas-relief. The first one represented a haggard, weary, beaten Serbian soldier going into exile ; the next a Serbian soldier re-equipped, holding his new rifle in his hand, his expression full of fierce determination, standing in a striking attitude with his face to the foe again ; while on a third was the head of a woman with a look of patient expectancy on her beautiful face, representing the women who were waiting in Serbia for the return of their sons and husbands to deliver them from the bondage

of the hated Austrian-Bulgarian oppressors. They were most striking figures, and some day that young Serbian soldier will become known as a very great sculptor.

It was an ideal spot for a *fête*, and we hoped anxiously that the weather, which had looked rather threatening, would hold up. The whole regiment was astir very early, and we were all drawn up under the trees before the guests arrived.

I was talking to the Colonel, when he suddenly asked me where my company was drawn up.

“Just behind the Third,” I replied, pointing over in that direction.

“Well, come over there with me, I want to speak to them,” he said, and we went over, I wondering what he was going to say, and was more than astonished when

I found the surprise in store for me. They all sprang to attention, and then, with me standing by his side, he made them a long speech, which all the other companies round could hear also, and said that he was promoting me to sergeant on that their great regimental "Slava day." Generally you are just promoted, and it is entered in the books in the ordinary way, and it was a very great honour to have a public sort of ceremony like that, especially on such a day. They all shouted "Jivio" three times for me when he had finished, and, though I felt extremely shy and embarrassed, I was very much pleased.

All the officers in the regiment and a great many of the men came up and shook hands with me afterwards, and congratulated me, and the Commander of the

battalion sent his orderly off for some spare stars which he had, and fixed my second ones on my shoulders there and then.

Later on the General of the First Army, who was one of the guests, when he heard I was one of his soldiers, also added his congratulations; in fact, I have never in my life had so much handshaking and patting on the back.

Presently the Crown Prince arrived and the rest of the guests. The whole regiment, headed by the band and the regimental flag, marched past him and saluted, and to see these fine healthy-looking fellows, with their swinging stride, you would never have guessed they were the same men who had gone through that terrible retreat in the Albanian mountains

and arrived at Corfu in such a deplorable condition two months before.

The guests all sat down to lunch in the big marquee, and after that there were songs, dancing, etc. The Crown Prince had to leave early, but said he would come back again later on.

I had invited two of my friends from the English hospital, and they enjoyed themselves immensely, and we all—guests, officers and men—danced the "Kolo" and all the other Serbian national dances together until evening.

Later on there was another big lunch and a great many speeches from the representatives of the English, French and Italian Allies. True to his promise Prince Alexander came back later in the afternoon, specially to chat with the soldiers, among

whom he walked about in the friendliest manner, enquiring after their families, how they had been wounded, etc., etc. It was easy to see how popular he is with his Army, and how pleased and proud the men were as they crowded round him.

We kept it up the whole day and late that night after all the guests had gone, in spite of the fact that we should have to be astir very early next morning, as we were to embark for Salonica.

We had a very hot, dusty tramp down to the embarking stage, and I had very bad luck, as I lost my dog “Mali,” who was a most faithful little brute, though it would be hard to describe his breed. He was a stray who had attached himself to an officer and afterwards been handed over to me, and he was always at my heels,

never quitting me for a moment and sleeping in my tent. Even when I was dancing the previous day he had nearly upset several people in his anxiety to keep close to me. It was only about half an hour before the boat sailed that I missed him. In the immense crowd of soldiers he had lost sight of me for a moment, and then could not trace me, and someone eventually told me that they had seen him starting back along the hot, dusty road to camp looking for me, and, as I dared not miss the boat on his account, I had reluctantly to give up the search.

The boat was a fine French Transatlantic boat, but the first day out at sea was very rough, and the men, who are anything but good sailors, lay about

prostrate, declaring that they would rather have ten days' continuous battle on land than one day on board ship.

However, Easter Sunday was very fine, and we all landed next day quite fit at Salonica. Our camp was up on the hills about seventeen miles from the town. It was a lovely place, and had the further advantage of having a spring of very good mineral water, which was a great luxury, as the drinking water around Salonica is not good as a rule.

The transportation of the Serbian Army from Corfu to Salonica was going on apace, and within a few weeks the whole force was safely landed without a single casualty.

The men were fully equipped down to the very last button—new English khaki

uniforms, belts, rifles, water-bottles, absolutely everything.

I went home on a couple of months' leave, leaving them full of spirits, and eagerly looking forward to the time when we could get another whack at the enemy, and march victoriously back into Serbia; and with any luck I hope some day to be able to describe how we accomplished it, and the triumphal entry into Nish which we are always talking about.

