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*G. S. Miller*

# SALONICA AND AFTER

THE SIDESHOW THAT  
ENDED THE WAR

BY

H. COLLINSON OWEN

Editor of *The Balkan News*, and Official Correspondent  
in the Near East

With a Foreword by

GENERAL, SIR GEORGE MILNE, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.

Commander-in-Chief of the  
BRITISH SALONICA FORCE

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

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TO ALL RANKS OF  
THE BRITISH SALONICA FORCES  
AND TO THE MEMORY OF THEIR COMRADES  
WHO FELL IN MACEDONIA.

"These men in our Eastern Armies have had the dust  
and toil, without the laurel, of the race to victory."

—*The Times.*



## FOREWORD

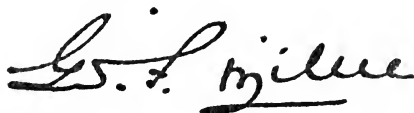
THIS book, written by the only member of the British Press who has devoted his whole time to the Macedonian Front, will be welcomed by the friends and relatives of all ranks of the British Salonica Army, and of those who have laid down their lives for their country in a little known part of the Balkans.

It will help to lift the veil of mystery which hung over the doings of the Army, due to the lack of publicity given to those events in Macedonia which ultimately led to the defeat in the field of the Bulgarian Army, worn out by three years of constant and harassing warfare.

The chapters dealing with the attacks on the Doiran position summarise the great difficulties which had to be surmounted by men whose strength was being slowly sapped by prolonged residence in the most unhealthy portion of Europe,

but whose *esprit de corps* was of the highest and whose faith in ultimate victory never faltered.

This book may help some to see in proper perspective how the crowning achievement of long and weary vigil in a secondary theatre of operations struck at the Achilles heel of the Central Powers and materially aided in their rapid collapse during the dramatic Autumn of 1918.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "G. S. Miller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent flourish at the end of the name.

*General.*

Advanced General Headquarters,  
Guvesne, Macedonia.



## AUTHOR'S NOTE.

THE publication of this book, which was written in the earlier part of the present year, was delayed for some months owing to the Author being abroad. But this proves to have been a happy thing, as in the meantime Ludendorff has given us his Memoirs, and these support in signal fashion all that is here claimed for the Balkan Front, and show that the sub-title, "The Sideshow that Ended the War," is in no sense an exaggeration, but is a plain statement of military fact.

Had the book been published earlier in the year, no doubt many people would have taken exception to this description, and said that the Author was too easily carried away by his enthusiasm for his subject. But if anybody knows exactly why our enemies crumbled up so suddenly and dramatically Ludendorff should. We will examine very briefly what he says on the subject of the break-through on the Balkan Front in September, 1918.

Writing of the Allied 1918 offensive on the Western Front, Ludendorff says (*Times*, August 22nd, 1918):—  
"August 8 was the black day of the German Army in the history of this war. This was the worst experience that I had to go through *except for the events that, from September 15 onwards, took place on the Bulgarian Front and sealed the fate of the Quadruple Alliance.*"

The comment of the *Times* on Ludendorff's own description of the march of events on the Western Front is as follows:—

"The other fact that stands out was the defeat of the

Bulgarian Army, a fact which in Ludendorff's mind seems completely to have overshadowed the sensational victory of the British Army at Cambrai at the end of September." Another Press comment on the same point was: "When Bulgaria, too, went, he threw up the sponge, and even the tremendous British victory in forcing the Hindenburg Line is dismissed in a few words as a mere incident in the general ruin."

Ludendorff himself continues:—"It very soon became clear that from Bulgaria nothing more was to be expected. . . . The position in the field could only become decidedly worse. It was impossible to tell whether this process would be slow or precipitate. The probability was that events would come to a head within a measurable time, as indeed actually happened in the Balkan Peninsula and on the Austro-Hungarian Front in Italy.

"In this situation I felt incumbent upon me the heavy responsibility of *hastening the end of the war and of promoting decisive action on the part of the Government.*"

The British Salonica Force could not desire a more striking tribute to its long devotion and ultimate triumphal success than these few plain words from Ludendorff. Together with the famous letter from Hindenburg in which, speaking of the Bulgarian collapse, he said, "It is no longer possible for us to resist; we must ask for an armistice," they demolish all that was ever said in criticism of the value of the Salonica Army and at the same time lift that Force to its rightful place in the history of the Great War.

H. C. O.

*London, August, 1919.*

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.—GETTING THERE ... ..	1
II.—WHEN THE B.S.F. WAS YOUNG ...	12
III.—SALONICA NIGHTS ... ..	27
IV.—A DAY IN TOWN ... ..	40
V.—THE “B.N.” ... ..	50
VI.—FRIENDS UP COUNTRY ... ..	68
VII.—“THE COVETED CITY” ... ..	78
VIII.—THE FIRE ... ..	90
IX.—TWO BALKAN DAYS—JANUARY AND JULY ... ..	105
X.—THE BALKAN STAGE ... ..	117
XI.—OURSELVES AND OUR ALLIES ... ..	128
XII.—THE ARMY FROM WITHOUT ... ..	144
XIII.—THE CONVERSION OF GREECE ... ..	157
XIV.—MUD AND MALARIA ... ..	174
XV.—HOME ON LEAVE ... ..	189
XVI.—THE ALLIED OPERATIONS ... ..	200
XVII.—DOIRAN ... ..	216
XVIII.—VICTORY ... ..	238
XIX.—THE PURSUIT ... ..	260
XX.—. . . AND AFTER ... ..	269
APPENDIX I.—WORK OF THE 16TH WING, R.A.F. ... ..	279
APPENDIX II.—A NOTE ON MALARIA ... ..	289
INDEX ... ..	291

## ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
General Sir George Milne, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., at a Horse Show at Guvesne . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Salonica in the days of the Turk: a photograph taken in 1911. It is interesting as showing the crenellated walls round the White Tower which still existed at that time . . . . .	16
Salonica in the days of the Allies. A section of the crowd listening to the French Band in the Place de la Liberte . . . . .	45
Some of the Comitadjis who worked for the British in the Struma Valley . . . . .	45
A scene in Jean, Tchimisiki Street, December, 1916 . . . . .	60
The Limonadji, or street lemonade seller . . . . .	60
Macedonian shepherd on the summit of Mount Kotos (4,000 feet) overlooking Salonica Harbour . . . . .	75
Salonica the day after the fire . . . . .	96
British Transport in Macedonia: A typical road on a summer day . . . . .	112
Our Balkan Allies: Serbs at Mikra, after landing from Corfu, 1916 . . . . .	128
Evzones of the Venizelist Army leaving for the Front, 1917 . . . . .	128
Macedonian mud: Serbian Artillery horses rescuing a Ford car . . . . .	176
The Pass Road from Bralo down to Itea . . . . .	194
Macedonian "Ladies" breaking stones for road-making . . . . .	194
The British Balkan Front from Gjev gjeli to Orfano . . . . .	208
Doiran, showing Tortoise Hill, Jumeaux Ravine and Petit Couronné on the left just above the lake. From here the hills rise upwards, over Doiran Town, to Grand Couronné, with its scarred crest. Dominating Grand Couronné is seen the undulating Pip Ridge, and beyond this again the snow-clad mountains of Serbia . . . . .	224
The British Fleet passing up the Dardanelles. Photo taken from the Flagship <i>Superb</i> , showing <i>Temeraire</i> , <i>Lord Nelson</i> and <i>Agamemnon</i> astern . . . . .	272
A map of the Balkan Front . . . . .	<i>End paper</i>

## CHAPTER I.

### GETTING THERE.

“WHOEVER would have dreamed of coming to Salonica?” sighed a melancholy and homesick young captain from up the line. We were sitting in the famous café of Floca—famous not for any startling merits on the part of *Floca Frères*, but just because it was our premier café, and the rendezvous of everybody in general—and the world must have a rendezvous, even in Salonica. Outside, through the newly glazed windows, we looked upon the charred skeletons of the buildings destroyed in the great fire—a conflagration which should really be referred to as the Great Fire, and will always so be thought of by those who saw it. And inside the flies were buzzing merrily—or fiercely—for the heat had come early, and they were in the first flush of their spring ardour. They settled on our hands, heads and faces, tickling, biting and enraging us. They buzzed round in clouds exploring milk jugs, beer pots, sticky cakes on plates (*gateaux mouches*, as somebody wittily called them) and generally behaving as all flies in the Near East do, as if to make up by their extravagance of vigour for the natural indolence of the inhabitants. And the flies were merely the *sauce piquante*, so to speak, to the general boredom and weariness of men who had been living for years without leave in a distressing country which they heartily disliked. The captain from up the line—like many others—had not seen home for over two and a half years. He was

## SALONICA AND AFTER

weary of Macedonia, and his heart longed fiercely for home—"Blighty" on a wet evening if you like, with the lights turned low and all the theatres showing their "House Full" boards, but "Blighty" under any conditions if the impossible could only happen. And the sigh that welled up from him *de Profundis*, "Whoever would have dreamed of coming to Salonica?" spoke volumes.

But to pass from his melancholy, which was a very common symptom in Macedonia, whoever *would* have dreamed of coming to Salonica? True it is now a household name, like "Plugstreet," Mesopotamia, and many other blessed words. But before the war who could have taken his atlas and, putting down his finger, said triumphantly, "There is Salonica!" True, we knew it existed somewhere, like Syracuse or Antananarivo. But very few people in our world knew anything more of it than its bare existence. St. Paul, we might remember, once wrote an epistle to the Thessalonians. But very few people, again, ever dreamed of connecting, however distantly, "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort" with the people of the modern city where Jew meets Greek in a perpetual tug of war. England, in short, never had any business with Salonica, and never expected to have any. It was as far removed from our ken as any place on the map could be. Belgium had been swallowed up; Paris had been menaced and saved; the battle of Loos had been fought and lost; Gallipoli had flared up with heroic glory and died down into a smoulder of forlorn hopes, and some people were already talking of "war weariness"—and still we had not heard of Salonica. And then there came a sudden and unexpected turn in the wheel of war. A new name appeared in the newspaper headlines—Salonica—and the convenient maps that accompanied the news of

## GETTING THERE

our men landing there showed exactly where it lay. The military critics told us exactly what the new expedition meant, and all it was going to do. Torres Vedras was mentioned, and what Wellington did. The public was much excited and waited eagerly for the glad news that history had repeated itself. (It came indeed, but after how many delays and doubts and grumbings?) The amateur strategist played joyfully with the latest idea, and trotted happily up and down a new country which looked delightfully small and easy on the map. The first exchange of shots was opened which developed into the long-drawn battle between Easterners and Westerners. The immediate doom of the Turk was announced. People said, "By the way, is it *Saloneeka* or *Sallonika* or *Salonyker*?" And so the new word—in various disguises—passed into the language.

And there it will remain. The many thousands of men of the British Armies who passed through it into Macedonia, and carried the Old Flag into lands where it had never been seen before; or who trod its uneven cobbles on very occasional leave; or lay weak with fever or wounds in the great hospitals that ringed it round, will see to that. They may have loathed Salonica as they loathed, in earlier days, the six o'clock hooter on a Monday morning. But in their minds it stands for Victory. And they will not let it be forgotten. When to-morrow's children are listening to stories of Ypres and Cambrai and Neuve Chapelle a great many others will be listening to what happened in Salonica and beyond.

The new name had not yet lost its first flush of popularity at home when the writer received an intimation that his humble services might be useful to the British Army

## SALONICA AND AFTER

out there. The Army in and around Salonica, cut off from all that was good for it, needed a daily newspaper, and it was suggested that one used to newspapers should be sent out to produce it. By all the rules of war (if all the stories we have heard be true) a dentist or a stockbroker should have been selected. But in this detail, at least, the Great War was quite rationally organised, and one familiar with big newspapers was sent to see about the production of a little one.

It meant saying good-bye to certain cherished hopes of continuing indefinitely a brief spell of work as correspondent on the Western Front. But the new idea had its own particular appeal. A recently published account of Salonica, written on the spot, gave the impression that it was a very "one horse" place indeed, with one café and one cinema. No doubt the editor would sit on a biscuit box and learn to give orders to the office boy in Turkish. The general idea was that aerial bombardments occurred on most days of the week. It was, in fact, a plunge into the unknown which promised to be interesting and moderately exciting. You may run a war in a wilderness. But a newspaper!

However, after a number of interviews at that forbidding place of interminable corridors in Whitehall, where the idea of a newspaper for an army was treated a little gingerly, rather as a small dog approaches its first hedgehog, a start was made. It was an itinerary that was then rather novel during the war, but has since become familiar to many thousands. Havre (raining heavily and very melancholy); Paris (beginning to look almost normal again); Rome (quite normal, except for many officers and soldiers walking about in neat uniforms as yet unstained by war), and so down to Messina, where a Greek steamer was due to sail for the Piræus. And after a very hot, dusty and tiring



## GETTING THERE

afternoon walking about the ruined city in quest of various visas and permits, I boarded the s.s. *Nafgratoussa*.

We sat down to an early dinner. There were about twenty of us in the little saloon; a mixed company, with Greeks predominating, but everybody spoke French. We included a rough-cut old Greek merchant skipper who did not seem worth more than five pounds. But during dinner he told me something of his affairs. He owned a steamer which, before the war, was worth £40,000 and which was now worth £120,000. From his blue serge coat he produced a document showing that he had just paid £4,666 10s. war risks insurance for one three months' voyage of his precious barque. He had been to London with £50,000 to try and buy another steamer, but had not been successful. "It is difficult to buy steamers now," he remarked casually, much as one might say that the price of boots was high.

There was also an elegantly whiskered Greek merchant of thirty-five or so, from Marseilles, who had a very lively eye, and immediately set it, and his conversation, at a very pleasant and quiet little French woman. She easily kept his advances at arms' length, and later mentioned that she was proceeding to visit her husband, who was an officer at Salonica. The visit, one gathered, was *sub rosa*; it was essential that the military authorities should not hear of it. How M. le Capitaine X. had arranged it we were not told. "We have not seen each other for nearly eight months," she said, impressively. It seemed a dreadfully long time then. But Salonica altered that point of view. And there was Mr. S., an elderly Englishman, lately of Smyrna, engaged in the liquorice trade; one of that large number of Englishmen whose families have been attached to the Near East for generations past, and who

## SALONICA AND AFTER

see very little of England, and of whom the home Englishman never hears. One learned that liquorice was used almost entirely for the tobacco trade, and that only round Smyrna will it grow really properly, as liquorice should. It is only on trains and steamers that one learns this sort of thing.

It was a pleasant trip across the Ionian Sea (with some little concern as to submarines, which we understood occasionally stopped and searched Greek ships), and so up through the picturesque and storied Gulf of Corinth, with the rugged mountains of the Peloponnesus looking across the narrow waters to the high crest of old Parnassus; past ancient Corinth—a tight squeeze through the narrow canal in its rock cutting—and so to the bare headlands which are the gates to the harbour of Piræus.

A feeling of the keenest disillusion came over me at the sight of the parched and brown earth surrounding it. This such classic ground! And that utterly commonplace huddle of buildings Piræus! One had imagined—well, all sorts of things infinitely more gracious and pleasing. And as we steamed into the harbour a wave of torrid air that might have come from the fires of Hades swept past the ship. Piræus seemed a mean, uncomfortable and scorched sort of place, utterly unworthy to be the gateway to Athens. The crowd of noisy boatmen who suddenly surrounded the ship, swarmed on deck like pirates and descended, shouting and quarrelling, on the luggage, did nothing to soften the brutal first impression of their native place.

Fortunately, a young Greek from Athens, who had been deputed to meet Madame, appeared at the same moment as the pirates and proved to be most useful in piloting us to the shore, through the customs, and

## GETTING THERE

so on the light railway up to Athens, and there to a hotel. It was an oppressively hot day, and the services and activities of this excellent young man were beyond all price. After learning that Madame was *en route* for Salonica I had offered to be of any service I could during the journey. It was thus that I found myself also sheltering under the wing of Mr. Achilles Leondopoulos, and listening to his views on the latest phase of the political situation at Athens, and on what the Allies ought to do in the conflict of wills proceeding between Constantine and Venizelos. From what I remember of it he uttered a lot of sound common sense. Firmness on the part of the Allies was necessary, he said. It was a long time before we employed it.

In those days the railway was not completed between Athens and Salonica, and Mr. Leondopoulos "charged himself" with the mission of finding out when the next boat was sailing. Two days later we returned to Piræus and pushed off into the busy harbour. It was a beautiful evening, and the idea of a two days' voyage to Salonica was pleasant to dwell upon.

"There is the *Helda*," said Leondopoulos, after a little while, and pointed to a small steamer. "I am afraid it is a little crowded."

I looked, and my heart fell at what I saw. Madame looked—and received the blow extremely well.

The *Helda* was a very small boat, and we were near enough to see that it was packed from stem to stern with human beings. As we drew still nearer we saw that numerous cattle and a general cargo were crowded higgledy-piggledy in the waist.

"*Ce n'est pas exactement une transatlantique*," murmured Madame.

"There are cabins for ladies," said Leondopoulos, brightly, and I wondered what they were like. (Madame

## SALONICA AND AFTER

told me later.) The noise of the chattering multitude on the ship came to our ears. We boarded her, and climbed on the after deck. To gain a footing there was like forcing oneself into the main street during a village fair. We were surrounded by a mob of unclean individuals including, apparently, bandits and cut-throats of all sorts; Greek soldiers; one pretty French girl, assiduously waited on by a young Greek with a very English manner; commercial people from Athens, Salonica and Kavalla; a score of long-haired and untidy Greek priests and, as I afterwards found, many Greek refugees from Asia Minor. And still boats came, bringing further pilgrims. I sought out the captain on Madame's behalf. He promised to do what he could, and said that if she liked she might sit in a chair on the bridge whenever she wished. We sat in the saloon a little later, making the best of dinner. It was hot and crowded and noisy. Opposite sat the pretty French girl with her ardent Greek cavalier, who dropped colloquial English phrases now and again to show that his clothes were not the only thing he had acquired in London. Madame was all attention to the little romance proceeding before us, and watched the pretty girl with great attention. "*Elle n'est pas serieuse,*" Madame announced finally and decisively. But the young lady was undeniably attractive, and the exquisite from Athens was making the most of his chances. (I saw him a year or more later, by the way, in a Salonica tram, and he had become a private in the Greek Army.)

The *Helda* was most decidedly badly overloaded. She also had a considerable list on her. I wondered what would happen to her if there were any sea on. But morning found us anchored off Chalcis. The day was hot but beautiful, the coast of Euboea most picturesque, and the *Helda* mercifully at rest. Only the

## GETTING THERE

crowded unwashed refugees, still stretched out where they had originally staked their claims, spoiled the beauty of the morning. A brisk trade in olives and goat's milk cheese was proceeding from boats alongside. And a little old man came up the side with a case of books. He proved to be a colporteur of the British and Foreign Bible Society. He passed round the decks selling here and there small religious pamphlets, talking goodness knows how many languages and dialects. He halted before me. "I have books in all tongues," he said, in English. "I have your Bible." I bought a small Bible from him, beautifully bound and finished for drachmae 2.25, or a little less than two shillings, and he passed on, through the lowing cattle amidships, to continue his work amidst the people thickly crowded in the forward part of the ship. It was a scene Borrow himself might have conjured up.

That day, on the hot crowded decks, seemed as long as twenty. Fortunately we were in beautifully calm water, between Euboea and the mainland, and there was no fear as to the behaviour of the *Helda*, who struggled gamely along, like a duck with a broken wing.

Evening brought us into the pretty little port of Volo, nestling under the slopes of Pelion. Day was just turning into dusk, the lights on shore were beginning to twinkle. It was a pleasant prospect. Suddenly a rumour ran round the ship. We were taking on still more cargo! There was much excitement, and the heated conversations on every hand gradually resolved themselves into a sort of meeting of outraged passengers in the saloon. Were we all to be drowned just to satisfy the greed of the captain and his owners! Two hundred and fifty cases of cheese were even now being transferred from boats! We should sink under the extra weight! The meeting became extremely heated. It

## SALONICA AND AFTER

was decided to send a deputation of eight to the Capitaine du Port to lodge a vehement protest. As the only Englishman present I was pressed to join.

We crowded into a boat and the mob on board bid us good luck and success in their various tongues. We consisted chiefly of Jewish and Greek tobacco merchants from Salonica and Kavalla. The house of the Captain of the Port was found after a little delay. He received us in his office, and though very short and plump, looked competent. There was an excited conversation in Greek. The Capitaine du Port finally suggested that we should return immediately to the ship, as otherwise we might find it gone without us. He would come aboard immediately in his own boat and look into the matter.

The scene that followed on board with the captain of the ship, the Capitaine du Port, and the deputation, with various other people intervening, cannot be described. The saloon rang and trembled with noise. The ship's captain, a slim and resolute looking man of about thirty, stuck to his guns and was even said to be prepared to use one. He would do as he liked with his own ship. True she might list a bit, but that didn't matter. She had done the same thing many a time before. The cheese was now on board and he was going to take it to Salonica. The Greek and Jewish tobacco merchants waved their arms at him and called him a potential assassin.

Finally the Capitaine du Port gave a ruling. It was true that more cargo had been taken on. But on the other hand a goodly number of passengers had disembarked. Consequently there were 45 tons less weight on the ship than there had been before. Nobody believed him, but the Capitaine du Port departed in his boat. The captain went back to his bridge and left

## GETTING THERE

the deputation still talking. We put out of Volo, the *Helda* feeling just about as springy and lifelike as a Thames coal lighter.

And even this voyage came to an end. Early afternoon next day found us off Salonica, looking a fairy place, with its hundreds of caiques in the harbour, the steeply sloping and picturesque town going up to the hills beyond, and the long front appearing to be delicately resting on the water. It is the eternal mirage and illusion of the East, which from afar promises so much and on closer acquaintance gives so little. Salonica smiled her best welcome. I little dreamed how long I and so many others would be there, and how much we should long to see the last of her.

A plain clothes French police officer came off to meet Madame. He was not an optimistic or cheerful person. "*Une sale ville,*" he said, when we were settled in the boat. "Four months have I been here already. And apparently one is going to be here all one's life." Then the worrying *douane*. And finally plump into the main street of Salonica with its noise; its crowded trams; its polygot and multi-coloured population; its rattling, springless carts; its buffalo waggons; its innumerable *loustros*, or bootblacks; its soldiers of half a dozen nations—and all the other things we got to know so well, and loathed, tolerated or liked, according to our temperaments.

A little later I met Madame's husband, M. le Capitaine X. He was forty-five or more, rotund and bald, and a very matter-of-fact personage indeed. But, all the same, I am sure that for him Madame would have undertaken that horrible voyage ten times over. Such is the wayward power of love!

## CHAPTER II.

### WHEN THE B.S.F. WAS YOUNG.

ONCE upon a time it was difficult to write for the world in general about Salonica and its Army. One had to explain; to apologise almost for its existence; to show what an important link were the British and Allied forces in Macedonia in the chain that surrounded our enemies, and how some day their *rôle* would be tremendously important. And with all the explanation one knew that the world at large was only half convinced, or not convinced at all. But the task now is easy. The work of the Salonica Army is done, and well done. Its vital share in the great victory is already clear, and when the historian takes up the story it may be that it will stand out in even greater relief than it does to us; or, at any rate, it is certain that he will realise from the outset of his labours what most people during the war only appreciated after years of misconception. But already, without waiting for the historian, the extreme value of the Macedonian campaign is striking and decisive enough. The Balkan Armies made the first real breach in the enemy ring, which resulted in the capitulation of Bulgaria, and brought Turkey, Austria-Hungary, and finally Germany herself, tumbling down in ruin.

For the moment we will talk of Salonica of the old days, when the war threatened to be interminable, and men settled down to exile with as good a grace as possible. A distinguished supply officer, who was one of the first of our army to set foot there, has put down



## WHEN THE B.S.F. WAS YOUNG

some of his impressions of that time. "It is difficult," he says, "to treat seriously the situation in Salonica in the beginning of October, 1915. The setting of the Place de la Liberté, with its cafés spread along each side of the brilliantly lighted square, where the Greek officers during the first mobilisation disported themselves in brilliant uniforms with their smartly dressed women-folk, was suggestive of the opening scene of a Balkan comic opera, and this atmosphere was intensified by the general topsi-turviness of the situation.

"Imagine a British Army landing in a neutral country, supposedly friendly, but actually engaged in active and organised opposition, of the passive resistance variety. Imagine the German and Austrian Consuls in a town containing more than a sprinkling of their own nationalities, of Turks, Bulgarians, and other enemies, counting each British soldier and gun as they passed the dock gates, and concocting in the evening their daily telegram sent by Greek wireless to Berlin. Imagine the mail train passing through the British Base up the British Lines of Communication, to the British Railhead at Doiran, with its daily freight of spies and alien enemies, bound for the hostile capital of Constantinople, and returning thence without let or hindrance. Imagine all these things, and you have a fairly accurate picture of early days in Salonica. A situation which would doubtless have appealed to the librettist, but which did not argue well for serious military operations.

"The first forlorn little party of Allies to land in Salonica consisted of a military mission of seven British and two French officers. Spirited away from Mudros harbour in the middle of the night of September 29th, in a destroyer under sealed orders, they were pushed unceremoniously ashore between the White Tower and

## SALONICA AND AFTER

the Marble Steps, and made a somewhat pitiful picture with their baggage and their batmen, and nowhere particular to go to. Our instructions, opened during the passage from Mudros, were somewhat vague. We were told to prepare for the possible arrival of five divisions, and that fuller instructions would await us at the British Consulate. We therefore repaired thither, leaving two clerks, the batmen and the baggage as the centre of a curious crowd on the beach. The Consul-General was on leave, but we were received by the Vice-Consul, who appeared to be somewhat embarrassed by our arrival."

The Vice-Consul had only heard of the probable arrival of the party half an hour before, and was quite unable to help.

"There was little more to be done for that day but to dispose of ourselves and our belongings. The French officers wisely got into mufti and became civilians, but the British continued to render themselves subject to summary internment by remaining in uniform in a neutral country in war time.

"The next few days were spent in reconnaissance of the harbour, railway and local topography, and in entering into various agreements and purchases, most of which were subsequently annulled by the action of the Greek Government, which stepped in and requisitioned nearly the whole of the articles purchased and the buildings hired. We managed to borrow a set of maps from the Standard Oil Company, which proved to be invaluable, as none were obtainable elsewhere. Two of us were arrested for making a reconnaissance of the Croisement Militaire, but fortunately the subaltern commanding the guard had been an engineer in Belgium before the war and had pro-entente sympathies. He was easily persuaded to let us go again.

## WHEN THE B.S.F. WAS YOUNG

“On October 2nd a wire was received from the British Minister in Athens saying that our arrival was unexpected, that it was causing political embarrassment, and that we ought to return whence we came. This was rather a blow, but we replied that we were sent out under War Office instructions, and could not leave without orders from the same source, and asked the Minister to repeat both cables home. The political situation certainly *was* delicate, and to judge by the local papers our arrival had occasioned considerable consternation. There were stormy scenes in the Greek Parliament, and in the end the Greek Government protested against the landing, but did not take any active military steps to prevent it.

“At 9 p.m. on the night of the 2nd we heard through French sources that our position was being officially recognised, and this was confirmed at 11 p.m. by the Greek authorities. This removed the danger of internment for the time being, but did not have much practical effect in reducing our difficulties. We found ourselves blocked at every turn by a solid phalanx of Greek obstructionists. We found that everything that we wanted could only be obtained by referring to half a dozen different officials, each of whom did his best to delay matters, but the whole business was so insidious and so cleverly manœuvred that I do not think any of us suspected hostile intent until months afterwards.”

Such was the beginning of the Allied campaign in Macedonia, and our difficulties, due to local obstruction, went on at an increasing rate for many months. I arrived in Salonica just as the Serbs were beginning to come in after being reconstituted at Corfu, following their terrible winter retreat through Albania. King Constantine and his friends the enemy had been nicely

## SALONICA AND AFTER

bluffed. He had refused to allow the passage of the Serbian troops over the railways of Greece, and while the wrangle was proceeding the British and French Naval forces had made their preparations, and the Serbs were brought by sea to Salonica without the loss of a single man, in spite of the submarines that lurked round the friendly shores of Constantine's kingdom. Some day a historian may tabulate and compare the various instances of Allied and enemy bluff during the war. I think it will be found that we easily proved his superior in this respect, as in most others.

The Serbs, then, came to add their share to the already varied aspect of life in Salonica. The French and British had already been there for nearly six months. They had made the unsuccessful advance up into Bulgaria in order to try and rescue the Serbian Armies at the last moment. It was a courageous and hopeless attempt which failed, as we can now see it was bound to do, but it was by no means labour lost. The Serbian Army was destined to play a great part in reclaiming the Balkans. The help of 1915 had been sent too late, but the Serbians knew that it had been sent, and that they were by no means entirely friendless. And from that Allied expedition up to Bulgaria really dates the re-birth of the Serbian nation, even though it seemed to them, at the time, that all was lost.

Under conditions of the greatest difficulty, with mud, snow, rain, and the worst of communications to contend with—not to mention Greek hostility—the Allies retreated through the mountainous country beyond Lake Doiran, punishing the Bulgars severely all the way, and leaving them sufficiently exhausted not to be able to follow us on to Salonica. Had they done so the story might have been very different, to our disadvantage.



Salonica in the days of the Turk: A photograph taken in 1911. It is interesting as showing the crenellated walls round the White Tower which still existed at that time.

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## WHEN THE B.S.F. WAS YOUNG

On the other hand it might have turned out badly for the enemy. Had the Bulgar pushed on to Salonica, and had we held him there on the strong line of hills, lakes and marshes that run round the city (the line known to the British as the "Birdcage"), he would have greatly lengthened his communications and would have had to undertake an enormous amount of organisation and pioneer work, chiefly in the way of road making, which later fell to the lot of the Allies, and principally to the British. Also, he would not have been so strongly entrenched on the formidable line of mountains up-country which afterwards resisted so many Allied assaults, and which were finally only carried in the victorious offensive of September, 1918. It is a pretty speculation, and one which, perhaps, it is profitless to pursue further now.

After the Allied retreat on to Salonica, in which a great part was played by the 10th (Irish) Division, General Sarrail at once set about the organisation of the "Birdcage," and British and French dug and wired feverishly. It was quite expected that the Bulgars would attack, and in the meantime the correspondents on the spot were allowed to announce to the world that the Allies now found themselves in one of the strongest "entrenched camps" ever made. It was no doubt largely true. But here again it is possible that the element of bluff played a part. The Allies were by no means organised properly as yet for resistance to a serious attempt, backed possibly by heavy German support, to capture the great Ægean seaport, on which the whole of our Balkan campaign rested. And it was a very good thing indeed, just then, to let the enemy know some of the difficulties that lay before him, and even exaggerate them. Allied reinforcements were only just beginning to arrive, and we needed time to take breath.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

The Bulgar never came down, and the Allies set themselves to the task of reinforcement and organisation. French and British troops poured in, and our men as they landed expected immediate fighting. They had to camp, in most unhospitable weather, on barren and muddy tracts of ground to the west of the old city, which later were to become organised camps on a huge scale, but which at that time were regarded merely as temporary halting places. Many of them landed in an appalling blizzard—the worst known in Macedonia for years past. (But we had plenty later on.) The British sent some splendid divisions, and it was well that they did, for only the best of troops could have “stuck” the long monotony and discouragement of the Balkan campaign, with its unpleasant mixture of difficult fighting, fever and boredom. Following the 10th Division, the 22nd, 28th, 26th, and 27th Divisions came, in the order named, and what most of them thought at the time was to be a quick and short campaign away from the main theatre of war, developed into the three-years long vigil, which was not to bring its final success until the Autumn of 1918. Both Corps headquarters were installed within a few miles of the city; the 12th on a huge mound near Lembet, supposed to be the site of ancient fortified villages; and the 16th on the picturesque little village of Kiredjkeui, on the hilly road running up to the mountainous region of Hortiach; quite a charming little place with a narrow, winding main street that always remained a great problem for traffic.

It was, until quite recent times, a retreat for brigands and comitadjis, who used occasionally to descend from there into the city, some five or six miles over the hills, and carry off a plump *bourgeois* for ransom. A few years before the war a member of an English family who lived in Salonica was captured one evening just



## WHEN THE B.S.F. WAS YOUNG

as he stepped off the tram and walked into his front garden on the main boulevard of the city. A heavy ransom was exacted for his return, and this was paid by the Turkish Government. The whole immediate region round the city, which was for so long covered with Allied camps was, until the troops came, a no-man's-land for the inhabitants of Salonica. The Greeks, after their arrival in 1912, in the first Balkan War, had done a considerable amount of good police work, but Macedonia still remained Macedonia, and there were many thousands of *Saloniciens* who had never stirred outside the limits of their city.

The hard winter of 1915, then, and the opening months of 1916 was a period of feverish activity on the part of the Allies. The great transports that came into the splendid bay discharged troops or munitions daily. There were docks, camps, offices, transport, telephones, dumps, hospitals—a thousand and one things to be organised. Salonica was only a corner of the Great War, but it immediately became a base for a campaign on a very large scale—a campaign of much greater proportions, for instance, than the South African War. The period was full of incident and excitement, although for the time being there was no fighting. The Allied cavalry patrols, far out up-country, beyond the line of the "Birdcage," kept a watchful eye on the Bulgar, who, as a matter of fact, was digging himself into the positions which he was to hold for three years. The Royalist Greek troops quartered round Salonica were, throughout these first months, a source of much worry and anxiety to the Allied commanders. Ex-King Constantine was just beginning his really sinister work. He seems an inconsiderable figure now that he is merely a deposed monarch inhabiting a Swiss villa, but he had great potentialities for mischief then, and for

## SALONICA AND AFTER

long afterwards. There came the day in May, 1916, when, by his orders, Rupel Pass, the gateway from Bulgaria into Macedonia, was surrendered to the enemy. The Greek army corps of Colonel Hadjopoulos surrendered to the Bulgars at Kavalla, and the enemy occupied that region and established themselves on the great mountain ranges (through which the Rupel Pass is the only gateway) which later marked the whole length of the British front. General Sarrail had already turned out the enemy consuls. He now, by a minor *coup d'état*, occupied the Greek post and telegraph offices. There had been a good deal of leakage of information on the wires, and it was high time to stop it. And, as a minor detail, the staff of the British Base Commandant were turned out of their offices by certain smaller denizens of Salonica, whose blood-thirstiness and vigour in attack were to become a byword to us all.

And so the summer of 1916 opened—that terrible summer which cost the British forces more dearly than many a minor campaign which has added great tracts of territory to the Empire. Salonica was now probably the most crowded city in the universe. The Serbs had arrived, and a little later came the Italians and the Russians. The streets, the restaurants, the cafés, and the cinemas all held far more people than was safe or comfortable. May opened with very hot weather, and the speckless blue sky that overhung the noisy, sweltering city was hardly clouded until late autumn. This was long before the Great Fire, which reduced nearly a square mile of central Salonica to a mass of ruins. Every street rang and echoed with the noise of rattling carts, clanging trams, rumbling lorries or trumpeting automobiles. For those who lived or worked in the centre of the town the noise, the crowds, and the heat became a constant and normal misery, like toothache

## WHEN THE B.S.F. WAS YOUNG

indefinitely prolonged. After a time it produced a kind of stupor. A month seemed a year. By the time the summer was half through, one seemed to have been scorched and jostled and deafened for ever in Salonica, and the twenty or thirty or forty years one had previously lived in England or elsewhere seemed to have shrunk to the dimensions of a pleasant incident.

The Place de la Liberté was the centre of all life in those days. It had cafés on both sides of it, and save for the hottest part of the afternoon it was certainly the most crowded and cosmopolitan spot in the universe. Looking down on it from the balcony of the Cercle des Etrangers—an excellent club founded years ago by a British Consul-General, and in many ways the pleasantest interior in Salonica—one realised for the first time the real meaning of such words as “cosmopolitan,” “polyglot,” and “crowded.” There were officers and soldiers of the five Allies; Turks, Albanians, Greeks (soldiers and otherwise), sailors from half a dozen navies; Allied “native” soldiers—Algerians, Indians, Annamites, and ugly Senegalese; Balkan peasants in their rough frieze dresses, with bright waist-bands; and the innumerable all-pervading Spanish Jews and Jewesses of Salonica. The buzz of their continuous conversation, in half the languages of Europe, rose like the noise of surf on a beach. And in the cooler hours, when the populace came forth *en masse* from their villas and apartment houses and warrens, one might have waltzed on their heads.

Here, too, the military bands used to play, and those afternoons were the happiest in the life of the city. The British figured very little in this. I remember seeing the band of the 7th Wiltshires once, but it went up-country with its battalion, and British music was heard no more. The French do these joyous and im-

## SALONICA AND AFTER

pressive things with much greater appetite and success than we do. They had a band which was largely composed of trumpeters, and their music was of a most martial and inspiring kind, though a little too vibrant for all tastes. But to see the trumpeters lower their instruments with a flourish, and a twist of the gaily decorated banners that hung from them; or to hear the band play the *Sambre et Meuse*, was very thrilling and exciting. The crowd never failed to applaud frantically, with long rolls of hand-clapping. The Italians, too, brought a band, which was of a quieter nature. Life is not all trumpets. And when Constantine went and the star of Venizelos was in the ascendant again, the Greeks produced a very good band and took their turn in the concerts of the week.

And over the way at Floca's, now by general consent the *chic* café of the city, the officers and soldiers of the Allies, and the better class residents of the city, sat jammed elbow to elbow at the round tables and drank tea, coffee or light beer, and ate large quantities of excellent and expensive cakes. The hospitals had settled down, and many English sisters and nurses were often to be seen. It was one of our few consolations that with the whole world at war almost the best chocolates of the time could be bought at this café. The industrious brothers who presided over it never (by some miracle) ran short of sugar during the greatest dearth. The cakes were the equal of those of a *patisserie* on the Boulevard des Capucines. And there everybody met to talk about the war and the heat and the flies; cursing all three impartially and wondering if we were ever to be delivered from any of them. Dusty and sweating officers came in from up-country—the nearer up-country of those days—and told terrific tales of the heat and discomforts in the camps in the outer marches of the

## WHEN THE B.S.F. WAS YOUNG

“Birdcage.” They were full of stories of their shopping experiences in town; of the poor quality of the merchandise; the impossibility of finding anything they really wanted; the tricks of the local Greeks and Jews, and the exactions of the larger shops, who put on all the airs of great departmental stores, but provided very little for a lot of money. Subalterns said, “Damn these confounded drachmas; I haven’t got the hang of them yet.” All our lives we had lived in a gold country, and it was hard to realise that these wisps of paper, many of them extremely dirty, really represented money. Partly, but not entirely, for this reason, they were thrown about with a negligent air, and the local shopkeepers benefited accordingly. A pound Greek note was spent with less than half the concern with which a golden sovereign would have been disbursed, and five drachmae, or a little over four shillings, became the unit of exchange. It was hard to imagine a purchase costing less than that. And in this atmosphere of fluttering notes and the smoke from a thousand cigarettes, with the long ventilator propellers revolving monotonously overhead, the Greek waiters wormed their way tirelessly in and out of the serried ranks of customers, summoned by impatient and insistent “psss-ss-ts” and answering with cries of “all right, sair.” There were lavish tips on the tables, and money to be made out of these hot British officers, who had the curious habit of drinking tea, or sitting round ices like schoolboys in a tuck shop.

Everything that happened in Macedonia (and a good many things that didn’t happen) was discussed in Floca’s. It was the only common meeting-place, the Forum of the Allied Armies. Secret agents sat there, and spies—an excellent arrangement for the hunters and the hunted to be in easy touch. There were bluff

## SALONICA AND AFTER

skippers from trawlers and mine-sweepers, destroyer commanders back from convoy to Alexandria or elsewhere; navy men of all degrees; padres who looked like warriors, and occasional warriors who looked like padres. One heard stories of submarine encounters, and other matters of palpitating interest. And yet, looking back on it all, it is extraordinary how little that really mattered was said. The British officer, naval or military, is an extremely close person about his job. You may know him extremely well, but he talks of little or nothing beyond generalities. I often used to wonder how the poor spies managed to get along, and where they got their information. It must be dreadfully annoying to sit in a café, buzzing with hundreds of interesting conversations, all jumbled up like a great jig-saw puzzle, and to be able to seize nothing from the mass. But of course *messieurs les espions* had their own methods, and Salonica, with its mixture of races, was a particularly favourable town for their operations. They were of all classes and grades, and in the earlier days German agents of all kinds moved freely amongst us. We had to employ a good deal of native labour, of every nationality, and at the docks, where the ships came in with their cargoes of lorries, aeroplanes, guns, and every kind of material of war, the enemy agents of the smaller calibres swarmed. Towards the end of 1916, owing to the increasingly dubious attitude of King Constantine, we had to send a brigade down the coast to Ekaterini to guard against a possible attack in the rear. The troops were not sufficient for the purpose if Constantine had really launched his Army, but something had to be done, and there was a good deal in showing that you are alert to a possible danger. I remember the remarks of an officer at the docks on this embarkation. "Those ruddy old spies were absolutely tumbling over each

## WHEN THE B.S.F. WAS YOUNG

other," he said. "It made me laugh to see them at work; they hadn't had a tit-bit like this since we came to Salonica. We didn't worry. We let them get on with it. They reported that two British divisions were being sent down the coast, and that suited us all right." I suppose that so long as a spy may be made to work for you like this he should be tolerated and even cherished.\*

There was always somebody to see and talk to at Floca's, providing you could squeeze in. But one soon found that the struggle to obtain a cup of tea at the café was too exhausting to be made a daily task. Gradually the tea habit was introduced at the club. It was a relief to escape from the grilling office or the crowded streets for an hour, and to sit in its cool, big room, with the comfortable easy chairs made in England. How many subalterns, after a spell of three or four months in the heat of tents or dug-outs up-country, have I seen sink into those deep easy chairs with a luxurious, "By Gad, this is comfort again." Blessed be the British habit of founding clubs. The most melancholy thing about the Great Fire was that it destroyed this haven, along with so much else.

The memory of dinner on the first night I arrived in Salonica will never fade. With a friend I went to the Olympos Restaurant. The big room was full; people were shouting, "pssst-sst-ing" and clapping hands at the waiters. It was almost like dining in a menagerie. And in the midst of the tumult my friend bent over and shouted in my ear, "You see that dark, handsome man at the next table, with the strong, hawk-like profile? That's the feller who assassinated Mahmoud Shefket Pasha."

Oh the intense joy of it! I was a little hazy as to

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\* See Note at end of Chapter.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

how Mahmoud Shefket Pasha had been done to death, but the point was that I was in Salonica where notorious and handsome assassins moved about unmolested and sat at the next table. This was romance and adventure if ever there was! I saw the handsome assassin every day, in the club playing backgammon, or elsewhere. In a week I was pointing him out proudly to newcomers who were duly impressed with my intimate knowledge of the sinister life of the Near East. And then, after a while, I became used to the assassin, and ceased to take any notice of him. Shortly afterwards he disappeared from circulation and was seen no more. But whether he really was the assassin of Mahmoud Shefket Pasha I never knew.

NOTE.—As the campaign wore on our counter-espionage work, which was run by the Intelligence Branch of the General Staff, developed greatly, and became extremely efficient. Owing to the rugged nature of Macedonia, and to the large tracts of wild country which existed behind our lines, it was for a long time a comparatively easy matter for enemy agents to cross from the Bulgar territory to our own, and back again. They posed as peasants and shepherds, or perhaps really were peasants or shepherds, and could be Turk, Greek or Bulgar at will. From Salonica, up through our own country, and into Bulgaria, these chains of spies ran. Conditions were extremely favourable to them, but although we may never have stamped the organisation out absolutely it became a very difficult and dangerous business for the spy. Occasionally there would be an execution, somewhere behind the Struma, and a grim procession would start out on a long journey, the Corps A.P.M. and his mounted policemen in attendance taking a white-faced Turk (sitting in a mule limber or a Ford car) to his native village, there to be shot before the head-man and all the rest of the village who cared to attend—and most of them did. The chief routes used by these enemy agents were across or near the Butkova and Tahinos Lakes, in the Struma Valley, and over the valley which was bounded on our side by the Krusha Balkans and on the enemy side by the Beles or Belashitza range. As one way of preventing this traffic we organised several comitadji bands of our own, composed of picturesque creatures swathed in cartridge belts, who loved their rifles as a mother loves her baby. They were swash-buckling individuals who hated shell fire, but were fairly efficient at the class of work they were intended for. Some of them could not drop their ingrained habits, even when working under the British flag, and were quite capable of extracting money from a well-to-do Turkish farmer under the threat of denouncing him as a spy. But on the whole they did their work fairly well, and earned the rations and the pay we provided for them.



## CHAPTER III.

### SALONICA NIGHTS.

FOLLOWING on the first advance up to Serbia, and the subsequent retreat, there came the long lull of preparation, and it was not until the burning months of June and July that the Allied Armies moved out from the line of the "Birdcage" to get in closer touch with the Bulgars, who were by now well established on their formidable line of mountains, at no place nearer than forty-five or fifty miles from the metropolis of Macedonia. On one of the last days of May, 1916, I happened to be a short distance up-country along the Langaza Valley. One of the battalions which had been holding the line of hills there, some eight or ten miles outside of Salonica, had organised an assault-at-arms, and I was invited to see the fun. There was a marquee with refreshments, and everything went off splendidly. But in the middle of the sports the 10th Division began to file past, on their way to take up the line on the far Struma. It was a blistering hot day, and the men with their heavy packs had marched down from the high plateau just under Mount Hortiach. They marched slowly past in a cloud of dust, every man looking at the trim enclosure of the sports ground, with its marquee and chairs and general look of happiness. The Tenth had come from Gallipoli, and already had experience of what a Balkan winter could be. And as they walked past now, beads of sweat hanging big on the face of every man and the dust swirling about their feet, they

## SALONICA AND AFTER

gave us the first real hint of what campaigning in a Balkan summer was likely to be. It was a strange contrast; the happy and comparatively cool battalion at play and the baked and dusty men of the Division on the march.

In the succeeding weeks and months the British took up their general line on the right, or east, of the front along the malarial Struma Valley to the sea; and with the French had some brisk hill fighting in the region of Doiran, where the Allies wrested a series of important positions from the enemy. The French occupied the centre, from the Vardar westwards, and the Serbs took up the line from the left of the French on towards Monastir. And on July 30th the first of the Russians came. That was a wonderful morning. They marched up the *Place de la Liberté* eight abreast, their bayonets on their long rifles; magnificent looking men, whose firm tread, in their heavy boots, seemed to make the earth shake. Here, one felt, was the might of the Czar, with his inexhaustible legions. Here was Great Russia, with her boundless primitive strength allied to the civilisation of the West. As the men marched they occasionally broke out into wonderful and inspiring chants. The Balkan campaign promised well as they tramped past. These, no doubt, were but the forerunners of many more. Roumania was coming in from the north. The enemy would be pinched like a nut between crackers. . . . Alas, that the tragedy of the Romanoffs was to dash these and many greater hopes, and the Balkan Front was to have its echo of the melancholy collapse of the Russian giant, so that good soldiers suddenly became worthless, and the local newspaper in Russian, which had been started for the troops, gently appealed to the men to salute their officers again, as they had done before!

## SALONICA NIGHTS

Twelve days later the first of the Italians arrived, Alpini and Bersaglieri amongst them—fine looking troops who drove the Italian inhabitants mad with joy. And gradually, in the never-ceasing heat and dust, the line of the Allies was formed far away beyond the line of the “Birdcage”—French, British, Serbs, Italians and Russians taking up their posts over mountain and valley in a continuous trench line across more than half of the Balkan Peninsula.

And while this was being done, and the men of so many nations were scratching out their temporary homes amid the wastes of Macedonia, the capital pursued its life of feverish activity; a city of merchants and shopkeepers exacting all the profits they could from the opportunity the great occasion presented, and a city of soldiers working and organising ceaselessly for the men up at the front, or snatching—during their moments of leisure or their occasional visits to the town—at any pleasure that presented itself; and Heaven knows it was illusory and unsatisfying enough.

Salonica’s cafés, cabarets, café chantants, cinemas and music halls did a roaring trade in those days. There were plenty of them, but there were never quite enough for the thousands of strangers who were within the gates of the city; all of them men who, in this unpleasing seaport of the Ægean, felt acutely that they were exiles and were only too anxious to try and forget it. Throughout it was a feverish, make-believe pleasure which never rang true. One always felt, even in the noisiest, most uproarious moments—and there was never any lack of them—that if some voice had suddenly called out, “This is all vain and false. There is not one man who is happy and amused with all this tawdry nonsense. Let every man who is sick at heart with it, and has no joy in it, walk out”—one felt that

## SALONICA AND AFTER

in such case the *salle de spectacle* would have emptied immediately, and that the soubrettes with the mechanical gestures and the harsh or squeaky songs about nothing in particular, would immediately have heard the terrible sound of their own voices in the silence that succeeded to the tumult.

But after all, what would you have men do who are engaged in the enterprise of war, which is so often boring when it is not dangerous; and who came down to town for three days after living in a trench in the wilderness, or were on earth again after flying through the white puffs from the enemy's anti-aircraft guns? There is not much room for philosophy when a respite is offered from the boredom or peril of war, and so Salonica's bastard Montmartre flourished. There was very little that was harmful about it—not more than usual, at any rate.

The Odéon, the White Tower, the Skating Rink—these are names that will live long in the memories of the men who were in Macedonia. The Odéon, which went with the fire, was one of the chief centres of gaiety in the old days. It had a certain elegance of design, rather like a miniature Covent Garden Opera House. It was oval in shape, and three tiers of boxes ran round it, each one filled with vociferous Allied Officers. If it were possible to award a palm for lung power I think it would be given to a prominent group of young French Flying Officers. But everybody was much the same and, dinner over at the various restaurants, the groups of Allied Officers filed in, twos and fours and sixes, arguing at the box office and paying heavily to assist at a performance which they never by any chance allowed to be audible. For the recognised thing to do in these halls of delight and amusement was to make such a terrible noise and clatter, such a *vacarme de tous les*

## SALONICA NIGHTS

*diabes*, that no word could be heard from the stage. One by one the ladies of the stage walked on, waved their arms in a uniform fashion, which suggested they had all passed through the same drill squad, and sang about Heaven knows what. Most of the songs came from the Paris cabarets, but they might have been in Choctaw or Senegalese. Meanwhile great fun went on in the boxes. Bottles were lowered up and down on the end of strings; caps were lassoed and recovered; a perspiring waiter was made prisoner; box called to box; the ladies of the establishment, relentlessly plying their commerce of selling the expensive champagne of the proprietor, darted about with shrills cries and laughter, always with an eye to business; and the members of the orchestra sawed away, quite accustomed to it all and quite indifferent as to whether or not their fiddles were heard. Occasionally from sheer exhaustion there would come a lull. This was not to be tolerated. Somebody would beat his cane on the wooden side of a box. The chorus would be taken up, and a more terrible sound than the noisy uproar of the human voice would succeed.

This method of making the most of a performance was common to all the music halls of Salonica, though in the open-air entertainment, which was given in the White Tower grounds in the warm summer evenings, the audience was much quieter. Such human ebullience is only possible within four walls and a roof, and is rebuked by the calm heavens. And here and there one found a magic touch which always calmed the tempest, like oil on water. One of these was a young person who was always allowed to "do her bit" in comparative peace. Her act was as stereotyped and mechanical and unartistic as anything could be imagined. But she was dainty and pleasing to look upon, and she "got

## SALONICA AND AFTER

off" her song with a smile and a rush, and in two minutes, still with a smile, had disappeared. She had only one song, and the refrain of it was:—

“ J'ai besoin du calmant  
Pour mon temperament.  
Donnez m'en, donnez m'en, donnez m'en !”

The smile, a flick of skirts, and she was gone. She attached herself to a local Greek army contractor, who had made a quick fortune by selling hay or something of the kind, gave up the triumphs and fatigues of the stage, and rode about Salonica in a carriage. She had apparently found a balm for her temperament.

Then there was Polly. It is not her name, but it will do. She dominated a raging audience as a *dompteur* dominates his cage of forest bred lions. She was plump and rounded, and a Union Jack graced one of her attractive curves. And in her own sphere she did the Old Flag honour. Polly was a product of the Manchester School of stage dancing, which has sent its devotees, generally in troupes of four or eight, to every music hall in the universe. They are all of them thoroughly capable, and with their skilful twinkling of toes and legs leave the Continental product far behind. Polly had seen many stages in Europe and the Near East. I think the Army found her at Salonica, and I heard people say they had seen her dancing at Bucharest and Constantinople quite a long time ago. (They begin very young.) And Polly would bound on to the stage when the noise was in full blast. Her appearance brought, if possible, a louder volume of uproar. Perfectly cool and self-possessed, Polly would twinkle about with her feet, occasionally uttering a peculiar call, difficult to reproduce in writing, which was taken up by the audience. She never hurried. She could wait until the noise had ceased. Then sure enough the calm would come, and Polly would begin her song and dance.

## SALONICA NIGHTS

Latterly her song was always "Blighty." When first I heard it on the gramophone somewhere in Macedonia, I thought it the most vulgar and unpleasing song I had ever heard. But if you are a long time away from home it grows on one wonderfully. It ends by becoming a tender *chanson* which twangs the heart strings a little. It may sound absurd, but

"Tiddley, iddley, itey,  
Take me back to Blighty,  
Blighty is the place for me,"

have been lines of poetry and music, stirring the tenderest sentiments, to many thousands of our men away at the war. It voiced a desire which was nearest and dearest to the hearts of all. Polly would end with some skilful and pleasing dance, a final call of "Ya-oup" (that is the nearest our spelling can get to it), and a farewell, nonchalant wave of the hand that put everybody in their places. We always wanted more of her.

Then there was "Tipperary." It also had great power to quell the storm. The orchestra had only to strike up with it and everybody would wait for the chorus to join in. I have seen British, French, Serbs, Italians, Russians and Greeks singing it together, and singing it with a real touch of seriousness; as a rite, something that stirred the finer feelings. What words they all put to the refrain one never knows.

And then, finally, there was "Madelon," perhaps the finest song of the war; certainly to be bracketed with "Tipperary." At first I used to wonder what it was that swept all the Frenchmen present into one channel of song and made them pass from mere noise to harmony. The artiste who sang it had a sinecure. The last joyous line of "Madelon, Madelon, Madelon!" sounded like "March along, march along, march

## SALONICA AND AFTER

along!" And it was only when on a visit to the Serbian front that I happened to secure the words. It was at a Brigade Headquarters, about 4,500 feet up in the snow. We were on a parallel and neighbouring slope to Sokol, from whence started the triumphant offensive of September, 1918. We had lunched royally, and the *pièce de résistance* had been a noble dish of wild boar, the gentleman who provided it having been shot somewhere near-by a few days before. And after lunch, while we drank many sweet coffees in the little hut built into the mountain side and an occasional Bulgar shell droned overhead, a young Serbian lieutenant of artillery produced his violin. He played very well, and it was not long before he had switched into "La Madelon," and one could see the pleasure it gave him to play it, up there in the quiet of the snows. This particular young man, a student of philosophy at Vienna, had been in the field practically without a break for six years. No doubt he had his own thoughts of his native Belgrade as he played.

Probably one can buy the song of "La Madelon" everywhere now. But for those who do not happen to have met it, one may say that it is all about a pretty serving wench at a cabaret "Aux Tourlouroux," frequented by the *poilus*. And as each soldier takes his wine from her he thinks of his own sweetheart, and says to Madelon some of the things he is saving up for "the other." It is made quite clear that although Madelon is not "severe" and can take a joke from all of them, she is quite good. As she says:—

" Why content myself with one,  
When all the regiment is my own? "

The *poilus* too are actuated by the best of motives.  
And they all sing in refrain:—



## SALONICA NIGHTS

“ Quand Madelon vient nous servir à boire  
Sous la tonnelle, on frôle sa jupon  
Et chacun lui raconte une histoire,  
Une histoire à sa façon.  
La Madelon pour nous n'est pas sévère  
Quand on lui prend la taille ou le menton  
Elle rit, c'est tout le mal qu'elle sait faire,  
Madelon, Madelon, Madelon!!! ”

It is certainly the most lilting refrain of the war. “Tipperary” has its strong dash of melancholy; very charming, but melancholy all the same. “La Madelon” is swinging and joyous, and warms the cockles of your heart; it sounds like red wine and, when the song is heard, one can see the soldiers drinking it at the tables under a shady “tunnel” in the garden of a cabaret in France. And after a Salonica audience of Frenchmen had sung that refrain it was always easy to see that it was as good as a promise of leave to them. Their eyes shone, there was a new spring in their gestures, and they turned to drink their thin Salonica beer with an air which said that life was still good, and that in spite of the “sacrée guerre” they were going to make the best of it.

It is wonderful, this evocative power of song, whether for joy or melancholy. I have seen innumerable instances of it in camps up and down Macedonia. The emotions are always very near the surface, especially in the case of men who have all been away from home for a long time, as was the general rule with the Salonica Army. Most of us rather looked down on the gramophone before the war. But what a wonderful difference it has made to the life of hundreds of thousands of exiles; how overwhelmingly, during the war, has it justified its invention. A bored half-dozen people are sitting round a mess table talking of malaria or sand-fly fever, or the absence of cheese from the rations, or some other unpleasantness; somebody turns on the gramo-

## SALONICA AND AFTER

phone and the voice of Mr. Robey, tinny but recognisable, uttering some fatuous nonsense, is heard. A smile goes round. Distance is annihilated, quicker than by wireless. Everybody is at once in Leicester Square, or walking up to Piccadilly Circus just before the dinner hour. London may not be quite *all* one fancied when away. But how keen becomes the longing to see it, and certain people in it!

I remember one night, at a small headquarters' mess on the picturesque hills overlooking the Struma Valley. The gramophone had been going for some time. And then from out of it a sweet woman's voice sang "My Ain Folk." Everybody there had been away from home for at least two years, and some for over three. The pathos and appeal of the song were almost too much. It hurt. The night outside was as beautiful as an autumn night of full moon in the Balkans can be. The peace and beauty of the hills under the moonlight intensified that sentiment aroused by the gramophone, the longing for one's "ain folk" . . . And perhaps it was just as well that just then, up in the silver blue vault, the hum of a German aeroplane was heard. In a few moments it had arrived over the camp. There was a sudden, disquieting whistle of something coming down and then a flash and a bang, somewhere close by in the brush that covered the hills. Again the horrible whistle, and another flash and bang. And then the Hun above turned his gun on the camp, which in the moonlight must have looked singularly pretty. Pap-pap-pap-pap-pap-pap-pap-pap, etc. In a few moments he had passed on. He had not stayed long, but he had thoroughly conjured away an attack of sentiment which, though very charming in a melancholy way, is really not a healthy bed-fellow.

## SALONICA NIGHTS

But to return to our Salonica Nights Entertainments. One could go on for quite a long time describing our artistes and their ways, although they changed but little in three years. There was the plump Italian lady who always appeared with a horrible little dwarf; the Roumanian family, who danced indefatigably, and whose father was a strong man of swelling proportions (people used to call laughingly from the audience, "Why don't you join the Army?"); also Lolotte, who danced strange lascivious eastern dances, and whose "turn" was in no way disturbed by the uproar; the Italian girl with a terrible squint but who sang well, and later transferred to the Greek Opera troupe from Athens; the chuckling nigger, who had a kind face, and could twist himself into all sorts of knots—these and many more; performers of third or fourth class merit, all of them, but who served their turn. They understood perfectly well their *rôle* in the life of Salonica, and probably would have been very much disconcerted if they had suddenly found themselves before a quiet and attentive audience.

And after all this talk of noise and boisterousness, perhaps it will be as well to correct any false impression which may have been caused. First of all, it was all so much blowing off steam. Nobody who participated took it seriously; it was merely the cloak that hid other feelings. Then again, with all the noise, the orderliness was remarkable. With all these audiences of mixed nationalities, giving vent to their high spirits, there was hardly even an ugly or unpleasing incident. It would not have been very surprising had there been. We were all Allies, it is true, but everywhere there slumbered small prejudices or criticisms which were inevitable in such a mixed team as we had in Macedonia. But they very rarely raised their tousled little heads in the music

## SALONICA AND AFTER

halls, even in the heat of false excitement. And one may digress for a moment to pay a tribute to the orderliness and good behaviour in Salonica throughout our sojourn there. There were five strange armies in the place, but during the war crime and disorder in the town were generally at an absolute minimum, although at night there were occasionally unpleasant incidents on the Lembet Road, and early in 1919 there was a disquieting outbreak of lawlessness at night. But the general conduct was marvellously good. I am insular enough to think that the calm British presence and example had its share in this; there is little doubt indeed that the British constituted the cement which kept the diversified Balkan Army together. Our very uniformity bred this general feeling of confidence. One British officer looked like all other British officers; one British soldier looked like all his fellows; one motor lorry looked like all the rest. To the foreign eye there is little or no difference in any of us. A Briton is just a Briton. We may not realise it ourselves, but we are a very strongly marked type. I remember once, after living a year in Paris, finding myself in the Strand and suddenly, for just a moment and with the eye of a foreigner, seeing the English type of face. A trifle hard and severe, perhaps, but one that inspires confidence and respect. It was possible in that illuminating moment to realise whence the foreign caricaturist gets his root idea of us, which, of course, he distorts for his own purposes. And Salonica at first thought we were merely stiff and unflexible, but soon realised that this was only the very beginning of us and that a good deal lay behind. . . . How many fulsome compliments did we hear in the later days! The reader must try and pardon this small essay on trumpet blowing. We did mighty little of it during

## SALONICA NIGHTS

the war. A little now that the great fight is over will do no harm; in fact, just a little more of it will be found later on in the book.

We had entertainments of quite another class. There was the operetta company from Athens, which played "The Dollar Princess," and many other light musical works, in Greek. The performance usually began at ten, and continued till one in the morning. The leading lady was an imperious beauty—in her own Greek style—from Athens, and during a short period she almost became a toast. Many suitors sought her hand, but like Madelon she did not believe in attaching herself to one, and kept them all dangling very cleverly. One young officer is known to have said, enthusiastically, "I am one of four who are allowed to send her presents!" It was a dubious privilege, as he found out. Again we quite often had excellent concerts in the town, gala affairs in aid of charities, which were attended by the various Allied generals. Between them the Allied Armies could provide sufficient talent to make a programme of the highest class. And finally there was the extraordinary development of entertainments within the British Army itself. But this is too interesting a subject to be dismissed here, and we will return to it later.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### A DAY IN TOWN.

EVERYTHING in this life, or presumably any other, is relative. The soldier whose lot it was, pleasant or otherwise, to work in Salonica thought of leave only as a journey home to England. But the soldier up the line had a different point of view. Leave for Home was a thing hardly to be dreamed of. But for the officer there was always the possibility of leave to Salonica, although it was not until late in the campaign that it was possible to bring parties of men down, and some of these saw their first town for two and a half years.

The man who lived in Salonica might sometimes wonder why on earth anybody should ever want to get leave to visit it. But the man up-country had no doubts on the point. On a number of occasions, after an absence of a week or ten days up-country, I have myself been pleasantly excited to enter the town again, and see people once more, and tramcars and shops. And it was therefore easy to imagine the joy of officers up-country who, after four or six months in the wilderness, with perhaps a squalid little village as the highest mark of civilisation, came down to town with three days' leave.

They made the very most of it, like schoolboys in the first flush of a holiday. And yet their trip to town always had its duties and responsibilities. Each officer so favoured always came down with a long list of commissions to be executed for his battalion, so that the

## A DAY IN TOWN

first two of his three days in town were generally filled up with tramping up and down the uneven cobbles in quest of things for others. And it was remarkable how faithfully and painstakingly this sort of thing was always done.

For long the weekly journals at home, humorous and otherwise, were filled with little articles describing the joys or trials of our officers and men coming home to England for a few days' leave. The story always began at Armentieres, or "The Salient," or some equally famous spot, and finished up at Victoria. Exactly the same incidents were common to the life of our men out in Macedonia, with only local differences, but Bairnsfather has not limned them nor have contributors to "Punch" let their fancy play on them. France overshadowed all, and for the average reader at home "Leave" meant a trip across the Channel in the Boulogne boat. They could not imagine that large numbers of their countrymen sat on barren hills just short of Doiran, or in the malarial plain of the Struma, and looked with much longing towards a higgledy-piggledy city of the Ægean, some fifty miles away. Victoria did not enter their thoughts. It was out of the question—reserved only for those lucky people who campaigned in France. Salonica represented all that there was to hand of civilisation and, if you like, *joie de vivre*. It was a poor enough substitute, but the very most was made of it on the rare occasions when those of the front-line could visit it.

Out in Macedonia the first throb of excitement came, say, on Tortue Hill, just below the sinister Grand Couronné, or at some outpost of ours on the plain facing the Rupel Pass. In the one case it meant a long ride to the railway, and then a tedious all-night journey in the train; in the other, a ride to the 70th Kilometre

## SALONICA AND AFTER

stone on the Seres Road, thence to be carried all the way down to Salonica in a lorry. But in either case the result was the same. A tired and dusty officer presented himself at the pretentious Hotel Splendide and demanded of the best they had in bath, breakfast and bedroom. And what matter if the prices were those of the world's best hotels? No niggard regard for the value of money ever spoiled a three days' leave in Salonica.

Bath and breakfast made a new man of our subaltern. Forgotten for three whole days were the dusty tracks, the stony nullahs, the mule transport, the bully beef, the chlorinated water, the eternal Bulgarian mountains, rumbling to the sound of the guns, and the unpleasant night patrols "up there." The world was his and all that was in it. There were pavements to walk upon—very uneven and dirty, but still pavements. There were women to be seen in the streets, even ladies, and all sorts of people who did not wear khaki. There were shops to buy things in, and girls who served them, who spoke quaint, quickly-learned English. And at the White Tower Restaurant there was an orchestra, and a big pleasure garden sort of place, with a few trees in it; and when on the summer nights everybody dined outside, with lights on the tables, and the well-to-do *bourgeoisie* of Salonica sat there with their ample and liquid-eyed ladies—well, it was not at all a bad sort of place, and helped to tide over many a man who ached for the long-lost and perhaps magnified delights of Home.

Behold our visitor, then, his puttees beautifully wrapped, or his field boots magnificently polished, starting out to conquer Salonica as though it were Piccadilly. At ten o'clock on a summer morning Salonica may seem a beautiful place. The clear air sparkles,



## A DAY IN TOWN

but it is not yet hot. Over the way (that is, fifty miles down the Gulf) the high crest of Olympus, with a patch of snow still on it, shines like a jewel. There is a hint of breeze in the air, and the picturesque caiques (scores and scores of them lined up against the sea wall) are bobbing about at their moorings, where the local merchants are in attendance, discharging their cargoes of rude pottery or charcoal or big golden melons, fresh from the Islands. The streets are alive with excitement, and there is much to look at and be interested in, after four months in a nullah. A staff car flashes past, with two impressive and impassive figures in it. "Lucky beggars," our subaltern thinks—but for the moment would not change places with them. A dozen dirty little *loustros* call out for the honour of polishing his polished boots: "Hey, Johnny, Mister, shine." (From General to Private we were all Johnnies to the Macedonian.) But he passes on, knowing well that his boots are beyond reproach now, even though in an hour's time the dust will have removed all their sparkle. Past him on the cobbled sea-front a constant stream of traffic is moving, chiefly military. There are tram-cars, too, with the local populace hanging from them in clusters. In one motor car that passes there are two nurses who have been given a lift on their way into town from one of the hospitals outside, and whose eyes are sparkling with pleasure and excitement as the car rushes them along. One of them is decidedly pretty, and our subaltern's breast heaves a little with all sorts of unexpressed emotions. Life down at the Base! By Jove, how lucky some people are! But that afternoon he himself has an appointment for tea out at one of the hospitals, there to meet someone who, as he sits in his nullah at the front, seems infinitely fair and pleasing, and perhaps vies in his thoughts with the image of another

## SALONICA AND AFTER

one, who is so far and so long away in England that it seems impossible that he will ever see her again. He may not be quite in love twice over, but it seems very much like it as he looks forward to the afternoon tea.

But before that there is business to be done. His steps lead him up the Place de la Liberté and so through the covered bazaar into the Rue Egnatia—a stretch of the famous Via Egnatia which St. Paul trod and which now, as our hero walks along its uneven cobbles, is one of the most noisy, crowded and varied streets of the universe. The strip of colour on his shoulder-strap shows the Division he belongs to, and each British soldier who meets him in the street salutes very smartly—a little *nuance* of extra tribute to the man from up the Line. Twice our hero has to skip quickly to avoid being crushed by a tram-car. Lorries come crashing along, and the bent native porters, with immense loads of all kinds on their backs, narrowly escape the fate of the foolish tortoises, which on summer days wander lazily across the Macedonian roads and are flattened out by our lorries. At Piccadilly Circus (that is what we at once called it and what many of the natives now call it) the congestion is tremendous. Here one broad highway comes down from the Struma front, the famous Seres Road, and another comes down from the Monastir region. East meets West here, if you like. Piccadilly Circus is on the edge of the city, and every variety of Balkan peasant and gipsy is marketing there, and buying all sorts of funny things to eat from trays that stand just off the main stream of traffic. British military policemen, majestic and amazingly competent, sort out the tangle, always just one second ahead of chaos. There is nobody like the British M.P.

A few yards along the Monastir Road and the visitor arrives at the E.F. Canteen. He has a long list of all





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Salonica in the days of the Allies. A Section of the crowd listening to the French Band in the Place de la Liberté.

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Some of the Comitadjis who worked for the British in the Struma Valley.

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*Photo: Lieut. Lafontaine.*

## A DAY IN TOWN

sorts of dainties and necessaries required by the Mess, and patiently takes his place in a queue until he can be served. Ideal Milk, cigarettes, some towels, a case of gin (very important), vermouth (equally important), a case of whisky (absolutely vital), some gramophone records with something from "Chu Chin Chow" if possible, chocolate, soap, some safety razor blades—and two dozen other things. But perhaps it is a bad time for stocks. The U boats have been unusually busy in the Mediterranean. The man behind the counter takes the list and looks at it with a gloomy eye. "None of that, sir . . . None of this." "What, no Gold Flake cigarettes?" gasps the visitor, in something like consternation! What is life up at the front without the tang of the admirable "stinker!" Verily, the humble Virginia cigarette, so despised at one time of all well-dressed young men, has also done its bit during the war.

But so far as means will allow, the list is made up and paid for, and our hero arranges that he will call for the packages in a "gharry" on the day of his departure. Then with a heavy load off his mind, but wondering a little what the Mess President will say about the things he didn't get, he turns his thoughts to lunch. There are still many other commissions to be done, but those can wait.

A passing car opportunely gives him a lift, and in five minutes he is near the White Tower. The correct thing to do is to lunch at the French Club, and he will have to be quick to obtain a ticket.\*

\* The French Club was an admirable institution. Its only fault was that it was not big enough for all who would go there. It was opened in 1917 and was immediately assaulted by Allied officers. It served better food, and at much cheaper prices, than anywhere else in town. Many people wondered why we did not have a British Club, and such an institution was often talked about long before our Allies opened theirs. But the idea was never taken up. The Salonica

## SALONICA AND AFTER

Luckily he is successful in securing one of the last tickets for the second service. He has half an hour in hand. The club is situated pleasantly on the edge of the sea, and has a charming little garden, executed in a scheme of bamboo decorations and sun shelters, by almond-eyed French Annamites. Here cocktails may be bought, and the blue sea laps pleasantly near the tables. He soon finds half a dozen acquaintances, all of them like himself possessed of the Freedom of Salonica for two or three days. . . The single cocktail becomes several. It is in the happiest frame of mind that he answers the bell and sits down to lunch. The big room shakes with conversation. Everybody is there; French officers with many medals, Greeks belonging to the Army of National Defence of Mr. Venizelos, with their ribbons all of sky blue colour. . . .

Afternoon finds him at Uchantar, seven miles out from the town on the slopes of the first barrier of hills. Here, at one of the General Hospitals, lives the young

Army had been given a foolishly bad name, and perhaps it was that the authorities thought that a campaign which was described as a "picnic" by idiots at home could not afford to give itself the luxury of a club and restaurant at the Base where officers could eat well without being swindled. Our own Rest House was not opened until long afterwards, when the immense destruction of hotels and restaurants caused by the fire made it imperative that we should have a centre of our own. But as far as the provision of meals is concerned, it was on nothing like such a big scale as the French establishment. Sometimes the French felt that they were being crowded out of their own club. But, after all, who can run a restaurant like the French? And again, did not British ships, throughout the whole campaign, carry every ton of beef that went to feed all the Allied armies in Macedonia? Week in, week out, the meat ships came in, carrying over from Port Said the Australian beef which kept five Allied armies going. Two hundred tons a day they delivered at the height of the campaign, in spite of the submarines. Ourselves we thought about it little enough, and probably our various Allies never thought about it at all. It was just one small, odd scrap of Britain's immense contribution to the war. Where *does* beef come from? Oh, ask the White and Red Ensigns. . . . And so, in this little matter of the restaurant we may fairly say that matters were even.

## A DAY IN TOWN

lady to whom he has more or less given his heart. She is delighted to see her hero—and it is a detail that she has another up the Line. There are other sisters and officers present, and there is a merry party on a slope of the hillside overlooking a magnificent panorama—the harbour far away, looking like a pool with tiny ships on it; the picturesque crest of Hortiach away to the east. Between them and the sea is a vast expanse of hillock and plain, dotted all over with hundreds of camps. Through it runs the Seres Road, the greatest artery of the British communications, bearing its daily burden of lorries and ambulances. And far away to the south across the Gulf, towers great Olympus, looking infinitely more majestic from this height than from the quays of Salonica. There is a blush of pink on its snowy crest. It is the herald of one of those glorious sunsets which make Macedonia magical; which come so often with the peace and calm of evening, and seem to compensate for the heat and dust of the day; which made it possible, indeed, for many thousands of our people to “carry on” and draw from evening the necessary strength and resolution for the morrow. The little group sits quietly, looking on at the wonderful scene. Individual thoughts are busy and they are all turned inwards. They are conjuring up visions of Surbiton, of Piccadilly Circus (the real one), of a summer’s evening up the Thames—or of a hundred other pleasant spots at home you may like to name.

“Curious that we should all be sitting here looking at a sunset behind old Olympus,” remarks somebody. It is a thought that often recurs—that English people should be gathered together like this in a land which a few years before some of them had never even heard of.

The party breaks up. The sisters have their work to do. There are a thousand and more patients to look

## SALONICA AND AFTER

after—malaria, dysentery, sand-fly fever, P.U.O., and other things—and they cannot wait on sunsets.

So our hero drops down to town again in a motor car which he has “scrounged” for the afternoon from an accommodating M.T. Officer. The peace of the last half-hour up there on the hillside has brushed him lightly with melancholy. He feels that life should be composed of gentle things. And it is not pleasant to leave Her. . . But town approaches, and his spirits rise a little with it. After all, she is coming to have tea at Floca’s with him on his last day. The bustle of Piccadilly Circus dispels the last whiffs of his melancholy. He returns the salutes of the M.P.’s feeling how good it is to be sitting alone in a nice big car.

At the French Club he meets a party of friends for cocktails. Afterwards they all dine in a box at the White Tower Restaurant. It is a merry party. There is champagne. Blow the expense! In the middle of it, the orchestra strikes up with its usual nightly medley of Scotch airs and dances. Instantly the restaurant is filled with those horrible noises which all Anglo-Saxons feel called upon to make when an orchestra plays a Scotch reel. The rest of the diners, the foreigners, take it for granted now. They have come to realise that when a certain kind of music is played the British make these noises. No doubt it is some sort of semi-religious rite. The climax comes (nightly) with the playing of Auld Lang Syne. The Anglo-Saxons stand up and clasp hands and bob up and down, like howling Dervishes, and even sing. At the end of it there are cheers and calls for more. And then our hero and his party, after paying the heavy bill, file out with much tramping of heavy boots on the wooden flooring. They are bound for a



## A DAY IN TOWN

box at the Odéon, where there will be even more noise. And so, after a night of it, to bed at the *Splendide*.

His thoughts are a little confused as he lies down in his twenty-franc bed. One day gone! But there are two more to come. Lots more shopping to be done. That must be polished off to-morrow. Wonder who will be in charge of the patrol to-night, looking for the jolly old Bulgar. Probably Jenkins. Serve him damn well right. Never liked Jenkins very much. What a day! Jolly fine sole that was at the French Club. Wonder what She is doing now? Perhaps lying in bed thinking of him. Hope so. But whom is he really in love with? England's so far away. Over two years since he saw the Other. So much can happen in that time. Curse the war. Wonder when it will end. . . And so to sleep.

## CHAPTER V.

### “THE B.N.”

ONE day the S.S.O. of the 28th Division came in a hurry into the office of *The Balkan News* and explained that he wanted some posters made of the largest size possible bearing the legend, under the name of the paper, “Reported Death of Queen Anne.” It was for a joke up-country, he explained. We managed to oblige him, and on the night the posters were done one was displayed from a box in the White Tower Theatre. The howl that went up from all the British Officers amazed everybody else present. What was this British joke? The well-known and deservedly popular A.S.C. Major who held the poster out of the box enjoyed the fun as much as anybody. And in the middle of it he turned to a friend near him and said, “Who *is* Queen Anne, anyhow?”

I mention this harmless little incident merely to show in what relation *The Balkan News* stood to the Army for which it was produced. It was everybody’s friend, and may truly be said to have been the centre of all interest and amusement in the B.S.F. Given the conditions under which it was produced, it might easily have been a joke. Instead it made jokes. Once, indeed, *Punch*, which, as everybody knows, thrives on other journals’ errors, made a palpable hit against it. There was an advertisement on the back page which read, “Finest Scotch Whisky.” Late one night the hand-set

## “THE B.N.”

type of this advertisement became dislodged on the machine, and the printer, who was a Spanish-Salonica-Jew, put the bits back as best he knew how. Consequently the next morning the line read, “Finest Witch Scosky.” *Punch* remarked: “Evidently the printer had been sampling.” But the trouble was, not that he had been sampling Scotch, but that he had never sampled English. And we should like *Punch* to try the task of producing without error a newspaper composed by Jews, Greeks, an Italian and other oddments, none of whom know English except in occasional dangerous patches, and which appears not once a week, but seven times!

Salonica was extremely well supplied with newspapers. It had them in all tongues—like the little man who was selling religious books on the steamer at Chalcis. There were Greek, of course, French, Turkish, Italian, and Judæo-Espagnol (the written language of the Spanish Jews who were expelled from Spain in the reign of Isabella). Altogether there were more than twenty. But there was only one in English, and it was *The Balkan News*, generally known as the *B.N.* or “The Balkan,” or the “Bawkanooos”—after the cry of the vendors who sold it all over Macedonia.

It may be taken quite for granted that when many years hence the last veterans of the Great War are telling stories to their grandchildren, quite a number will talk about *The Balkan News*. A newspaper, thank Heaven, is not merely merchandise, although many merchants own newspapers. A newspaper is a living thing, an idea with a soul in it, and the soul of the *B.N.* was a bright little flame that shone in many a dark place in the Balkans. There are people who used to ride twenty miles a day to get it. It was their only link with the world beyond. By means of the wireless

## SALONICA AND AFTER

messages printed in it, which a wise Government sent broadcast, they could read what Mr. Lloyd George had said the evening but one before. This means a great deal to a man who is living far away from anywhere, because Mr. Lloyd George was nearly always cheery, and one of his speeches was as good as a new disc on the gramophone. The *B.N.* readers could rejoice in victories, when we had them, and smile sardonically at the explanations of the military experts when we didn't.

If ever there is a "next war" I would suggest that the military authorities give as much attention to supplying the troops with news and newspaper reading as with rations. One is almost as necessary as the other—at any rate, on a front far removed from home. The London newspapers which arrived on the Salonica Front were hardly ever less than three weeks old. After such a lapse of time they were always flat and stale, as the troops had always learned sufficient of the current news in the interval to rob the big newspaper of nearly all its interest. The *B.N.* happily filled this gap, and although it did not take very long to read through, it always supplied new subjects for conversation. And that is what keeps the mind uplifted and the spirits bright in men who are so long away from their homes . . . "See what the *Balkan* had in this morning about the new Tanks?"

Any attention and care that an Army took to brighten and improve a newspaper produced specially for its troops would be repaid many times over. The proper provision of a newspaper, with the necessary machines, paper, staff, etc., and plant to reproduce photographic illustrations and humorous drawings, would run to about a tenth of the outlay necessary to organise the average supply dump, and the enormous value of such an installation to an Army, if properly

## “THE B.N.”

conducted, cannot be expressed in figures. The only drawback to such a newspaper, run on strictly military lines, is that it might tend to become a little too stiff in its attitude. The Press is one of the few things which does not run easily into the military mould. The comic muse, for instance, does not flourish under such conditions. A Major in charge of such a department might be the best of fellows, but there would be moments when his position in the military hierarchy would clash with his duties or his fancies as an editor. *The Balkan News* was free of this difficulty. As in the case of the official war correspondents, there was no rank attached to the office of editor. But the paper suffered from the disadvantage of having to rely entirely on local technical resources, and these, for the most part, were of a very primitive kind, so that the staff could never give full effect to their ideas and inspirations, and many good things that might have been done—all of which would have helped greatly in heartening and cheering the troops—had to be left undone. The difficulties of obtaining proper supplies and materials from England during the war were practically prohibitive.

But whatever the professional point of view may have been as to the technical shortcomings of the *B.N.*, there was little or no feeling of this kind among its many readers. “There are only two things one used to look for up the line. One was letters from home and the other was *The Balkan News*.” I have heard this said very many times, and it was the general opinion. And people liked it *because* it was small, and not in spite of it. There was no desire for a three-decker London newspaper in the trenches, with gardening notes, ladies’ page and all complete. The *B.N.* was a symbol of the life they were leading. If you live in a gully, you don’t expect to see the *Daily Telegraph* come

## SALONICA AND AFTER

up every morning with the ration mules, any more than you expect to put on a white shirt for dinner.

Started in November, 1915, the *B.N.* was the first daily newspaper to come into being purely for the needs of an army, and the cry of "Bawkanoos," which was first heard in the camps immediately outside the city, spread, as the troops advanced, to the furthest confines of Macedonia. The distribution was done by means of train, lorry and ration cart, but also, and chiefly, by the untiring efforts of some sixty vendors. All sorts of problems were always arising, of a kind quite unknown to the London circulation manager. The weather was a great factor. In the earlier stages of the campaign the roads were in a terrible condition, and a rainstorm or a blizzard often cut off not only the newspaper bundles, but rations and supplies as well. The newsvendors were of all ages from eighteen to sixty, and were chiefly Jews from Salonica, or Greeks—some of them refugees from Thrace or Asia Minor. They were almost invariably a hard-working, conscientious lot, and although some little suspicion was attached to them at first on the score of possible espionage, nothing was ever brought against them, and in time they came to be accepted as a natural feature in the camps. They dressed in the strangest garments, and their faces, as they appeared in photograph on the police passes with which they were provided, suggested nothing so much as a rogues' gallery. But their cry of "Bawkanoos" was as welcome as the birds in spring. I have heard it in the early morning in scores of camps, and it was often melodious in the highest degree. It always reminded me of the warning cry of "Achtung" that one hears on the Swiss toboggan tracks. (It is a German word, but it sounds very beautiful in a Swiss valley in winter.)

## “THE B.N.”

Looking back on nearly three years of work on *The Balkan News*, the predominating feeling is one of thankfulness that seven-day journalism is unknown in England. I remember that after the first solid year's work on *The Balkan News*, in all of which period there had been only one half-holiday—this because the Jewish vendors would not work on the feast of Yom Kippur—one felt dazed and benumbed. Help at first was difficult to get, and it was necessary to carry on day after day without cessation. In the summer of 1916, the office was like a red-hot stove. And, day after day, even four smallish pages need a lot of filling, when in addition to an Editor there is only a staff of one, whose energies are almost entirely taken up by the careful proof-reading that is necessary when the compositors are Jews and Greeks who do not understand English. And there was one dreadful period of over a fortnight, when even the staff of one was in hospital with a touch of dysentery. One worked in a dream—articles, proofs, leaders, poems, callers, telephone, proofs, machine breakdown, heat, flies, telephone, tea-time, proofs—and so on, till dinner. Every morning, during that year, one rose with enormous and bounding vitality; with great ideas of the great things one would do; of the articles and books that were calling to be written. By lunch time, these visions had evaporated, and during the heat it was as much as one could do to totter down Venizelos Street, protected by a sun helmet, and lunch frugally on an iced Perrier (when there was one to be found) and tomato salad. By tea-time, the fifty-and-one things of the sweltering afternoon had reduced one to a condition of fierce irritability; a crisis which was only conjured away each day by tea at the club. And by the time dinner came, at 8.30, one looked forward to the morrow with horror. It was a

## SALONICA AND AFTER

treadmill. One had the tragic feeling which must have always been in the heart of the oft-quoted Sisyphus. The stone pushed painfully to the top of the hill during the long day always came rolling back at lightning speed with every evening. For no sooner were the damp proofs finally passed than one had to begin to prepare another paper for the morrow. All this would not have mattered for six days in the week. But it was the seventh day that nearly broke the Editor's back.

But running the *B.N.* even in these first days of stress had many compensations. One was very much in touch with the great heart of the Army, and one knew exactly what tune it was beating to. Enough has been said about the British soldier's gift of humour in the War to make it unnecessary to labour the point here. One need only say that the men of the B.S.F. were in no way behind the men of the other British Armies. They did all their grumbling through the medium of humour, and we discovered some first-class humorists in the Salonica Army. They had, of course, all the usual humorous grumbles to make, common to all Armies, but they had also their specialities, and of these, quinine was certainly the foremost. That the humorous subject of quinine had behind it the very sombre background of malaria—with the strength of an army sucked away as if by an evil spell—only, of course, made the joke all the better.

The exactions of the local shopkeepers supplied the motive for many articles; also the quaint ways and language of the many Greek labourers attached to the Army. These were known generally as *Idey Broses*; from the Turkish word "*haide*" ("get along in front there") and the Greek word "*embros*," which means much the same thing. The drivers of the local carts all shout this in the streets: "*Haide-e-e-bros-s-s*"; both



## “THE B.N.”

words being stretched out to great length. It is the Macedonian equivalent for the French *attention* and the “mind your backs” of the London railway porter. Every Greek, or any other native of Macedonia, therefore became an Idey Bross. But somebody one day called a native “Johnny.” The native retorted in kind, and thus, although later all natives became “Johnny Greeks,” all the British became Johnnies too. And it is really a little disconcerting for a Staff Colonel to be addressed as “Hey Johnny.”

Later in the campaign, “Balkan Tap” was an inexhaustible fund of humour. It means that you suffer from a sort of mental obfuscation, due to long residence in the Balkans without leave—and many of the medical officers think there may be something in it. “Balkan Tap” is supposed to make you do all sorts of strange things, and the mere mention of the phrase in the Army theatres always brought its laugh. There are various explanations of the origin of the term, but they need not be traced to their sources here. “Balkan Tap” is an excellent illustration of the virtue of making the best out of the worst. The weariness and staleness that came of long campaigning in the Balkans became crystallised in a phrase; and the mere quotation of the phrase chased away the weariness for the moment and raised a smile.

After the many excellent humorous writers who figured so prominently in *The Balkan News* the poets were the most remarkable feature. There were thousands of men in the army who apparently had a desire to write verse, and they came from all classes. A few were really good, many quite passable and the majority terrible. For weeks and months on end, one would receive a dozen poems a day in the office—and poems are very troublesome things to deal with. So often one

## SALONICA AND AFTER

is tempted to publish a poem, not because it is good, but because something in it pleases or touches or amuses; or perhaps out of sheer compassion because the author sends with it a letter in which he describes how tremendously grateful and happy he will be if only he can see his poem appear in "your well-esteemed and bright little paper." It is disastrous to give way to any such weakness as this, because the delighted author immediately follows up his first poem with a second, which is much worse, and continues to bombard you at regular intervals. And though a poet who is never published may only waste away with secret grief, a poet who has been published once and then is scorned, becomes an angry and bitter man with a grievance.

The fame of the *B.N.* has gone all over the world. Innumerable thousands of copies of it have been posted to every corner of the British Empire. We were "noticed" in many newspapers in many climes, and always with every kindness, though sometimes with patronage. Did we not indeed once administer a rebuke to "The Kidderminster Shuttle" for this very reason?

One will never forget those days in the summer of 1916. The dominant note in life was exasperation—due to the heat and some of the native people one had to deal with. Up to lunch things would always go calmly, but in the afternoon there would be complications. The compositors would get tangled up, or the age-long quarrel which existed between them and their head man would break out afresh. One would have to go into the composing room and still the tumult, and in the midst of accusation and counter-accusation the desire to take them and bang their heads together became overwhelming. Most of the natives of Salonica have this irritating effect on one. The usual run of employees are utterly

## “THE B.N.”

unmannerly, and a favourite trick is to rush in and break in on a conversation with loud shouts about some unimportant matter or other. The local magnate, with whom you are talking, breaks off to answer and a hot discussion follows in Judæo-Espagnol. You stand there and run your fingers through your hair, and want to assassinate somebody. Salonica quite altered my views as to the ethics of murder. If one had known exactly what to do with the corpse, I would often have slain a son of Salonica.

During the long afternoon—perhaps the telegrams were late, or the precious typewriter had broken down, due to somebody once tampering with it—there would be an innumerable string of callers who put their little troubles at our door: Where to buy a piano, a gun, or silk stockings for a concert part “girl”; could you please cash a cheque?—is it true that you have a car, and if so is it likely to be going this afternoon to the —th General Hospital, nine kilometres away?—could you get us a programme printed by to-morrow night?—hello Old Thing, I’m down again for three days, come out and have a nice cool drink—may I use your telephone?—I want you please to find a nice Greek Officer with whom I can exchange conversational lessons—can you come up and see our show to-morrow night, I tell you it’s great, and our beauty chorus makes all the rest look cheap?—can you tell me where I shall find any literature which tells all about the many tumuli found round Salonica, and if not, do you know anything about them?—do you know the authentic history of the White Tower?—I have a little poem here, if you wouldn’t mind reading it through I’ll wait!—And so on. Also friends would come in and say, “I know you’re busy, but . . .” and stop for twenty minutes. So on, till tea-time, and then till eight o’clock, when

## SALONICA AND AFTER

the paper, with its cumbersome hand-set type would be "put to bed." Then back again after dinner, to prepare for the morrow. A seven-day newspaper, even a little one, is like a sick baby. You can never leave it.

Quite a number of anecdotes, true and otherwise, cluster round the *B.N.* One of the true ones is that of the Bulgar who left a note for one of our outposts on the Struma, saying that as he possessed the words for "Boris the Bulgar" published in the *B.N.* he would be awfully glad if he could have the music. "Boris the Bulgar" was a parody on the famous "Gilbert the Filbert," and the refrain of it was:—

" Good gracious, how spacious  
And deep are the cuts  
Of Boris the Bulgar,  
The Knifer of Knuts."

I believe it was decided that the request should not be granted. Another Bulgar used to leave a penny every night somewhere near Big Tree Well, in the region of Butkova Lake, and quite often he got his *B.N.* in exchange. No doubt every such copy did more than its fair share of propaganda.

And this sketch of the work of *The Balkan News* would not be complete if we did not mention a great personality who was closely identified with it. I refer to that grandiose individual known to all in the Balkans as His Macedonian Highness, The Comitadji.

H.M.H. The Comitadji was a sort of blend of Falstaff, Cyrano de Bergerac, Ally Sloper and Mr. Horatio Bottomley, adapted to Balkan conditions. It will easily be seen that here are all the makings of a Great Man. He was a being of imposing presence; he drank deep—too deep; he was, according to his own accounts, a great Bulgar Slayer; he had, naturally, a plurality of wives; and was a master of rounded, rolling periods.



The Limonadji, or  
street lemonade seller.

*Photo: Sergt. Milne.*



A scene in Jean Tchimisiki  
Street, December, 1916.

*Photo: Capt. T. E. Grant*

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## “THE B.N.”

In royal, or semi-royal, state, he moved up and down the British area of Macedonia in his powerful Ford motor-car, which was universally known as the J.R.L., or Junior Road Louse. Another Great Man of long ago, Don Quixote, was brought into being to tilt at the false romanticism which existed in Cervantes' time. H.M.H. was perhaps partly called into being by the great outpouring of decorations and orders which was one of the symptoms of the Great War. As so many others were being given, H.M.H. The Comitadji instituted his own orders. The best known of these was the Order of the Boiled Owl, and after a time it became a very prized decoration indeed. I remember a Lieut.-Colonel who had been so decorated, who, on reading that a mere major had been similarly honoured, suggested quite seriously that the O.B.O. (this was long before the days of the O.B.E.) should not be given to anybody below his own rank. There were other decorations, but the Order of the Boiled Owl was by far the most prized.

Armed with a plentiful supply of decorations, then, H.M.H. The Comitadji toured his dominions in the famous J.R.L. Soon no function was complete without him—or at any rate, without an account of his visit to it. For long he remained a semi-mystery to many men in the Salonica Army. Anything might happen in the Balkans, and quite a number of people were really persuaded that a magnificent individual, with gorgeous costume and royal mien, and with an amazing capacity for liquor, was somewhere in attendance on *The Balkan News* and flitted up and down the country. Some of them even saw him! But after a time it was generally accepted that the Editor, if anybody, was the Comitadji, and as the first thought evoked by the presence of the Comitadji was a plentiful supply of strong drink,

## SALONICA AND AFTER

the Editor had some dreadful times in vainly trying to do the reputation of the Great Man justice. The royal device of H.M.H. was *Ivresse Oblige*, and it was a motto that wanted a lot of living up to.

Perhaps to those who read this who have not lived in Macedonia the humour attaching to the august person of H.M.H. may not "spring to the eye" as our Allies say. But I, who know him well, have every evidence of the worthy rôle played by H.M.H. in lightening the weariness of the Macedonian campaign. He could not, naturally, actively ameliorate the conditions of life, but he and the Boiled Owl and the J.R.L. and the Court Physician and the rest did their bit in making people smile and be happier. His name became a household (or a camp-fire) word; it is one that will be vividly remembered, like *The Balkan News* and the White Tower, years after the War is over. And it is something to make G.H.Q. laugh. The Comitadji did that in the description of how he fared in the vast British Headquarters when he went looking for leave. The humour that exists in the subject of intoxication can certainly be overdone. But H.M.H. had other points than this, and he showed that there is many a worse motto in life than *Ivresse Oblige*. And he flourished under the highest patronage, for the C.-in-C. himself approved of his journeyings among the troops—even if he did not specifically commend his libations.



## CHAPTER VI.

### FRIENDS UP COUNTRY.

I REMEMBER well my first real escape from the noise and crowds of Salonica to the space and freedom of "up the line." It was not very far up, less than half-way to the front, but after a year's continuous work on *The Balkan News*, it was like an escape from bondage. I went up at the invitation of a friend who was an amusing and an amazing person. In Salonica he had been the head of a large business, but had thrown this up to take a commission in charge of "Greek Labour," as we called it, although there were all sorts of nationalities in the labourers we had to work for us, chiefly on road-making. Of Armenian extraction, born in Manchester, and with a long experience of the United States and Constantinople, my friend combined the qualities of East and West in a remarkable degree. To hear him talking—*Mon Dieu*, how he talked!—of what we should and should not do in the war, and accompanying his everyday English with gestures in the Oriental style (like murder, they always will "out") was an education. He thought with all the quickness and intensity of one of the cleverest of the Eastern races, and expressed himself like you or me. It made one realise how little the average Englishman thinks, or rather, how little he gives expression to whatever he may be thinking. The East may or may not be always "a-calling," but it is certainly always a-talking, and here one heard it articulate in our own language.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

And if England does not talk overmuch, it is always willing to sit and listen, and Jimmy, as we will call him, always had an audience.

Jimmy was in charge of a large camp of Greek labourers—men, women and children—but was living close by with an R.E. unit, whose duty it was to keep in repair a long stretch of the Seres Road. At this time, M. Venizelos was living in Salonica, as head of the National Defence movement, and Jimmy had invited him to come up the following day, and see what sort of a time the natives had when working under the British flag. Consequently, it being in the nature of a gala week-end, there was a special dinner on the Saturday night, and lavish entertainment on the morrow. It was a first-class dinner, and the evening that followed was lively and amusing to an extraordinary degree. Jimmy proved to have many entertaining “stunts” up his sleeve. He had a marvellously lifelike exhibition of a lady doing up her hair, in the style of Arthur Roberts, and could do absurd dances. Everybody tried to do something and the mess furniture suffered.

Next afternoon M. Venizelos came up from Salonica, accompanied by the other two members of the Triumvirate of that time—General Danglis and Admiral Condouriotis. A large square “ring” had been roped off in Jimmy’s Greek camp, and round this were gathered some thousands of our soldiers, a large number of staff officers from a neighbouring H.Q., and most of the population of the labour camp. There were first of all dances from the little girls of the camp (who were all earning high wages working on the roads), and M. Venizelos looked on with a benevolent smile. Then we had wrestling matches, presumably in the Greco-Roman style, and some very sturdy champions tried to pull each other to pieces. One realised that under

## FRIENDS UP COUNTRY

his baggy clothing, the Balkan peasant may conceal a splendid physique. A real champion from Crete, from whom much was expected, was beaten by a local man, to the great satisfaction of the residents in the labour camp. All this was followed by a display of boxing, and M. Venizelos, after taking tea and cakes in a crowded tent, returned to Salonica amid loud cries of "Zito." It was quite a successful afternoon, and M. Venizelos was able to see for himself what had long become an accepted fact all over Macedonia—that everywhere they came under British control, the natives had such a peaceful, happy and prosperous time as they had never known before in all their lives. One story of an old Turk in the Struma Valley crystallises all this, and throws a searchlight on the normal conditions of the Balkans. "You know," he said, to a well-known British Colonel, "this is the first war of its kind we have ever known. *None of your men have touched our women.*"

The time of this trip up-country was early spring, and the region in which I lived for a week had a beauty of its own, during this brief period before the heat came. It was a place of treeless, rolling hills and valleys, with a rocky crag here and there, scoured by deep watercourses which for the greater part of the year were dry. Here and there we had quarries which we were ceaselessly blasting for road metal. The O.C. lent me his horse, and with Jimmy I explored the surroundings. One day we went a long ride to Langaza and back, and I thought, as we thudded at full gallop across the plain, of crowded and smelly Salonica, with its eternal noise and discomfort. Here, in the pure air of Spring, with not a soul in sight, it was like being uncaged and given wings. Langaza is a big Turkish village, about two miles from the large lake of the same

## SALONICA AND AFTER

name, and set in a broad and fertile valley. The Army had just started a big potato farm there. We found the officer in charge of it away, but had an excellent tea in his rooms, an old Turkish house, all the same. How little we English change wherever we are. It was a splendid burst of freedom, but for me the whole glorious day would have been spoiled if we had not found a teapot at Langaza. And all over Macedonia at that moment, up to the confines of Serbia, Bulgaria and Albania, innumerable parties of Britons were sitting down to tea, in tents, huts or dug-outs, and asking each other to pass the marmalade.

Following on that first pleasant experience "up the line," I was able to make many trips, and go much further afield, thanks to the help of a sturdy Ford, which at one time and another bumped me over most of the tracks of Macedonia. And wherever one went one found a little settlement of Britons, generally very comfortably installed and always glad to offer hospitality and talk with somebody they did not see every day. After the first year of our presence in Macedonia the country became very well organized, and our men were able to settle down to some extent and make the most of the circumstances in which they were living. Those who could, abandoned tents and built huts to live in. Little camps grew and developed, so that the halting place of 1916 became a pleasant residence in 1917. The many motor transport companies dotted up and down the country took endless pains to make their camps look as much like home as possible. Divisional and Brigade Headquarters became pleasant little villages, cunningly hidden away in all sort of gullies, or built into a hillside. And in the line itself the battalion headquarters developed and did all sorts of wonderful things with sandbags and a few odd bits of corrugated

## FRIENDS UP COUNTRY

iron. So that gradually order and some measure of comfort were imposed on the wilderness, and if one had transport and the privilege of roaming up and down the country one could always be sure of a good dinner, a bed of sorts, and pleasant company in whatever spot of Macedonia evening might happen to find one.

On one of my earlier trips up the line I realised to the full what the officer who came down to Salonica on three days leave had to undergo for his amusement. A friend in a Scots regiment called in the office and insisted on my returning the compliment, so to speak, and spending three days "up there" with him. It was June, and broiling hot. The small Ford van, piled high with packages bought for the mess, took us six miles along the bumpy Monastir Road to Dudular Station. There we took the train and, after a very uncomfortable afternoon, during which everybody took off all the clothes they decently could, we arrived late at Karasouli. The R.T.O. was extremely glad to see us. A Boche aeroplane had not long before passed over and he feared it had "got" the train. Limbers were waiting for the mess supplies, and horses for us. For two hours we rode, and on the way admired a sunset behind the mountains on the Serbian frontier—a gorgeous sight. There were glimpses of the Vardar here and there, winding in its broad valley, and with the last glow of sunset a sickle moon hung over the mountains, now one long sweep of sepia outlined against the faint blue of the sky. After the afternoon in the blistering train, this peace and beauty of the cool evening was perfect—a balm to the soul. At dusk, with some difficulty we found the camp of the Brigade Transport Officer, hidden away as usual in as lumpy ground as possible.

Here we dined excellently on frozen rabbit (a new

## SALONICA AND AFTER

issue, over which we made the usual jokes). The Brigade Transport Officer was a hospitable soul, sent the port round freely after dinner, and pressed us to stop the night. It was now dark as a bag outside, and I should have liked nothing better. The B.T.O. protested that it was a shame to take a stranger out on a three-hours ride after dinner. McNab (as I will call my friend) insisted cheerfully that we should do the journey in two hours. He carried the day, or the night, and we started off in pitch darkness. We lost our way completely—McNab was new to this part of the line—and after many adventures finally rode into an ugly little valley full of dug-outs and shell holes at three o'clock in the morning, this being McNab's home in the support line of his battalion. We had been nearly six hours on the way. I was dog-tired and wanted only to lie down, but McNab insisted on producing a drink from somewhere in his dug-out and began to talk of the glorious time he had had in Salonique!

It was a very pleasant and interesting three days I spent with McNab and his friends. There was much to do and see. We were on the very left of the British line, just near the Vardar. Over the river the French took the line, and carried it on across the mountains to where, near the high Moglena Range, they linked up with the Serbians. It was a quiet time on the front. Nothing particular was happening, although there was a fair amount of artillery activity. Our trenches here, as things went in the Balkans, were strongly held; the junction on the Vardar was a point which needed every care in defence. But here, as everywhere else, we had practically no reserves. The Balkan campaign, in fact, was fought with no reserves worth mentioning, not even an Army reserve. We had none. The front-line troops were always the front-line troops, and some of

## FRIENDS UP COUNTRY

them were in the trenches without cessation for a year or more on end. Here again we come to the question of bluff, which has already cropped up elsewhere. The enemy could never possibly have realised how thin was our line, and how little we had behind it. We carried out raids and attacked with the very men who, in case of a big enemy offensive, would have been all that we could oppose to the Bulgars. On occasion, we even created a "stage army" to deceive the enemy. I know of one case in which the same section of transport, which was in view, but not in range of the enemy, was sent marching round and round a hill to give the appearance that it was a long continuous line. Remember that we had 90 miles of line to hold, and for a long period had only four Divisions, at times much weakened by battle losses and sickness, to do it. If the Bulgar had tried an attack on the grand scale, with German support, as was often anticipated, he would no doubt have received a rough handling—everybody was determined on that—but he must have got through.

Here, in the sandbagged front line, one thought of the multitude of shopkeepers and *commerçants* down in Salonica, who plied their trades and made their money out of the Allied Armies solely by virtue of this very sandbagged line, which they never saw or visualised, and probably never even thought of. No Man's Land here was some 1,000 yards wide and the Bulgar trenches ran along the crest of a high hill which as usual dominated us. In the tumbled space of ground between our patrols went out night after night to Red Indian work; a game at which they became extremely efficient, whether on this front or in the narrow No Man's Land near Lake Doiran or in the wide extent of the Struma Valley. I have met officers who have done patrol work in France who said they preferred it between trench and

## SALONICA AND AFTER

trench to this eerie wandering about in the darkness in a wild ground full of watercourses, ravines, ruined villages, and a hundred other features which might conceal an ambush. The Bulgar was extremely good at this game, but as time went on our own men became easily his masters in every form of night work.

McNab's Company Mess was a cheery place, full of young Scotsmen chiefly from Glasgow. The roof was of tin and the sides of sandbags. The Bulgar was rather fond of plumping 5.9's into this particular part, and it was trying, during dinner, pretending that one liked, or at any rate was quite indifferent to, the loud bangs that were sounding from the fairly near neighbourhood. The mess possessed a gramophone with four discs, all in French, which had been dug up somewhere in Salonica. One was "The Song of the Cameldriver," a most melodious individual who performed every evening. Another was "Le Dernier Carré de Waterloo, avec Chants, Trompettes, Tambours, Salves d'Artillerie. . . ." and goodness knows what else. It was inspiring and popular. There were also two songs from the Paris cabarets, imperfectly understood, but thoroughly welcome. We had them all twice over, and the sound of the ladies' voices took one's thoughts back to the Boulevard des Italiens and nights spent at "La Pie Qui Chante," and elsewhere. We lunched one day at the battalion headquarters' mess in the line, a massive creation of sandbags, and there on the walls *La Vie Parisienne* was doing its dainty worst. Everywhere one discovered "*La Vie*." One wonders what its war-time circulation became as a result of the British Army's fondness for a touch of colour in life. It became, in time, an acute relief to enter a dug-out or a hut or a mess of any kind and discover that the pictures on the walls were not the impossible, *lingéried*



## FRIENDS UP COUNTRY

creations of the artists of "*La Vie*." And yet one has seen many places so decorated, with the undulating forms of the skittish young things carefully cut out with scissors, with the most pleasing effect.

One day, McNab and I rode to the Brigade headquarters for lunch. It was tucked away in a very narrow ravine, with every hut most carefully *camouflé* with brushwood, but all the same the Bulgar heavies had found it, and a day or two before two mess waiters near the cookhouse had simply disappeared, following the explosion of a 5.9. Here we found that one of the officers on the staff—a keen naturalist, like many other officers in the B.S.F.—had a magnificent pair of eagle owls in a big cage. They stood nearly three feet high and had eyes like blazing yellow gooseberries. Their captor caressed their downy chests, and they looked down at his hand with grave owlish interest as he did so. Nobody else would have tried it. Their long talons and beaks commanded respect. The Brigade Staff had another curiosity of which they were proud; their so-called "Ice-chamber," a deep gallery cut into the rocky side of the ravine. Here after lunch, in the semi-darkness, we sat and smoked, cool as cucumbers, while outside the heat of early afternoon shimmered and danced. There was something boyish about the officers in their "shorts," with shirts open at the neck and sleeves rolled up. These and the eagle owls and the ice-chamber, and the general feeling of campaigning being jolly, as it can seem after a good lunch and when you are sitting in a cool place on a hot day, gave one a pleasing Peter Pan sort of impression.

Undoubtedly, in years to come, many of those who passed through the long exile in Macedonia will, in looking back, forget the hardships and the weariness and think only of the happier side. Some there were

## SALONICA AND AFTER

who had little or no happy side. The infantry who held the constantly battered trenches on, say Tortue or the Horseshoe—two of the many very “warm” spots near Doiran—or who patrolled day after day and month after month in the malarial Struma; or the transport drivers, whether of lorries or mules, who made their difficult way along muddy and hilly roads and tracks—these saw little of the pleasant side of life. But here and there were people whose lives, during certain periods of their service at any rate, were cast in pleasant places. One of the most favoured spots in all Macedonia was Stavros, the little port we made at the extreme right of the British line, on the Gulf of Orfano. It was a sweet little place of noble hills, covered with dense olive green scrub and trees, running down to the edge of a blue sea. Early in 1916 a camp began to spring up on the sea shore, which gradually developed so that huts became quite passable bungalows, and these and the tents that lined the beach reposed under the grateful shade of trees—very rare things in Macedonia. The climate was generally beautiful, although very hot and relaxing in summer, but there were winter and spring and autumn days there that were a dream of delight. There were only two drawbacks to life there; the mosquitos and the occasional bombs dropped by the enemy aeroplanes, but these, after all, were common to all the front. But for the bombs, and the frequent rumble of the guns a little further up the coast near the mouth of the Struma, where ancient Amphipolis lies buried, it was really possible to forget the war. Later on we opened a rest camp there, which was the most appreciated spot of all by tired officers and men sent down for a spell from the line. I spent a delightful four or five days at Stavros on one occasion. One’s hosts were as pleasant and as

## FRIENDS UP COUNTRY

hospitable as could be; my tent, pitched on white sand, was five yards from the edge of the tideless sea; it was very hot, but there was constant shade and a deck chair, and that most exquisite of all pleasures—sitting lazily while other people worked. One day, an energetic M.O. made me walk up a steep ravine to see the work of canalisation that had been carried out, so that the stream in the ravine could rush down strong and unimpeded, leaving no quiet pools in which the *anopheles* mosquito could breed—one little detail of the immense labour which was necessary to make Macedonia a place in which it was possible for civilised people to exist. It was very hot in the narrow ravine. The energetic M.O., full of enthusiasm about his anti-malarial work, bounded up from rock to rock like a mountain goat. Half-way up I regretted leaving that deck chair, thought longingly of the shady trees and the gently lapping wavelets on the shore. . . . But later at dinner, sitting on a little verandah, with the magnificent colours of evening shining on the bay, and over the great mountains beyond, that fronted our positions, one forgot the trials of an energetic afternoon in the peace and comfort of this *al fresco* repast. It was as good as an evening at Monaco, with the added charm of a picnic thrown in. Only the absence of Eve marred all such gatherings. How many thousands of men have thought, in such circumstances, that with “the wife” or “the girl” sitting there, even war would have its compensations. After dinner we went to the theatre, if you please; a large place, half-tent, half-shed, newly erected, where an excellent troupe from the 27th Division was performing; and coming out afterwards a bright moon could be seen shining up above through the trees and the nightingales—hundreds of them apparently—were so busy with their

## SALONICA AND AFTER

singing that it was almost a clamour. There is no doubt about it that Stavros was made for honeymoon couples, but alas! there were no honeymoons to be had in the B.S.F. Stavros had yet one more charm in that it was, so to speak, amphibious. The Navy was well represented there, chiefly by very jovial commanders of monitors, who in the mornings "shoved off" in their wallowing craft to throw some "heavy stuff" into the Bulgar trenches away beyond Orfano, and in the evening came ashore to tell all about it at the little club. Also somebody made a tennis court near the beach; and there was some of the best woodcock shooting in the world there—if you could get cartridges. Likewise there were the beauties of the Rendina Gorge—a real beauty spot. . . . But we must say no more of Stavros, lest we give a false impression of campaigning in the Balkans. It was, without a doubt, the Jewel of Macedonia, shining all the brighter for its contrast with so much of the rest of the barren country; and lucky were the people who were able to put in a good stretch of work there.

Later in the campaign travelling up and down was much facilitated by the various little hotels that were organised here and there, which I believe originated with the 28th Division. The chief purpose of these was to provide an intermediate stage for officers to sleep in a trip from the Line down to Salonica. They started in a very humble way and gradually developed until we reached the summit of accommodation in the hotel at Yanesh, the Savoy of Macedonia. Yanesh is also spelt Janes, and going along the roads one encountered here and there hanging signboards, quite in the old English manner, bearing the legend: "Go to Janes Hotel," which was a little puzzling to some people, who wondered who Jane could be. It was a well-built





*Photo: Topical.*

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Macedonian shepherd on the summit of Mount Kotos (4,000 feet) overlooking Salonica harbour.

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## FRIENDS UP COUNTRY

structure, with a dining-room, reading-room and a number of two-bed cubicles. And greater than all these was a bathroom containing two beautiful, shiny-white full-sized baths. How many officers, down from the dusty trenches in the Doiran hills ten or twelve miles away, have splashed about luxuriously in these, reveling in the caressing lap of plenteous hot water? During the "pantomime season" Janes Hotel was the scene of many a pleasant gathering in which both sexes were represented at dinner, for as a great treat the sisters and nurses at the Base hospitals were sometimes taken a trip up the line to see the Divisional shows. And what a difference it made to everybody, officers and men, to hear the sound of a woman's voice! For months and years on end the only representatives of the softer sex seen by our men up country were bent and wizened hags, with dusky faces, carrying a load of brushwood on their backs. Female grace is not a strong point in Macedonia, and the law of the male who makes his spouse do all the hard work is still observed. One may see My Lord trotting proudly along on a diminutive donkey, and My Lady trailing behind carrying her load.

There are so many friends up-country of whom one would like to speak, but they were all the same—that is, they were all most hospitable. There were friends at Dimitric, the battered little mud village on the Struma Plain, with its truncated minaret, so long the headquarters of the 27th Division. Dimitric was a very museum of birds—starlings, rooks, crows, storks, owls, screech owls, hawks, ravens, and many other kinds. And the marshes of the river, a few miles away, were a paradise for the sportsman—geese, and duck of all kinds. But that applied to many places.

At the headquarters of the various Divisions, in M.T.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

camps in Serbia and elsewhere, or with the Battalions, one always found a welcome. I remember at a Field Ambulance, tucked away like so many other camps in a ravine, one of the M.O.s at dinner produced a most amazing insect which he had found. It was just about the size of a small chick, and was the sort of thing one would expect to encounter only in a nightmare. The M.O., who was something of a naturalist, told us all about it, but I forget the details, and even its name. It crawled over the table during dinner, causing much interest and some alarm. Coffee over, the M.O. packed the horror back into its box and retired to his tent, from which presently came the melancholy and wistful sounds of a flute. (Besides being an M.O., a naturalist and a musician, he was a first-class photographer, a student of Arabic and an authority on postage stamps. One meets people like that.) He played extremely well, but I think there is nothing to equal the melancholy of a flute. Try it on a still evening in a picturesque ravine, with the rumble of the guns coming faintly from further up the line and a gentle enthusiast playing the Barcarolle from "The Tales of Hoffmann." He was still playing when we went to bed, his earnest silhouette cast by the candle-light on to the side of his tent, and as I lay in my own I felt like crying with the American in the famous story, "Take that man away. He's breaking my heart!"

There was one often to be met with up-country whom one cannot presume to include amongst one's friends, but who meant a great deal to the life of everyone in the B.S.F. Often on a lonely hill road, one would see far ahead a car coming with something that fluttered on it. The driver would see it too, and unconsciously stiffen a little. Somebody on the roadside would see it, and stand very erect and ready. And then the car



## FRIENDS UP COUNTRY

would flash past, with the Union Jack fluttering out. The British Commander-in-Chief was on his way up or down the line; the man who held in his hand the thunders of Jove, or the kindly power to reward good work well done. It always gave a little thrill to meet the C.-in-C. on the road. One felt suddenly very much in touch with home, and England's power and all that she stands for. Here, in a sense, was the King himself; or as near to him as we in Macedonia could hope to get.

Many stories are told of encounters with the C.-in-C. on the road. Some are true, no doubt, and some only *ben trovato*. There are stories of swift and terrible lightnings; other stories very kindly and gentle in demeanour, eminently satisfactory to all concerned. Stories of quite humble people being picked up and given a lift, and being able to air their views before Authority in a fashion they would never have dreamed of; and other stories of people who fled wildly from the possibility of encounter. No doubt all Armies have similar stories about their Commanders-in-Chief. These things grow, and expand, and take varying colours from the messes they pass through. And as everybody knows, every good General has a nickname by which his troops know him. Unhappy the General who is only known by his proper rank and titles. Napoleon had his nickname. And our General was called "Uncle George." Perhaps he knew it, and perhaps he didn't, but there can be no doubt that it was a very good name to have.

## CHAPTER VII.

### “THE COVETED CITY.”

SALONICA is a city with a very long street and a very long history. But the history is far the longer of the two, and runs back right through all the ages of civilization as we know them, to a time when the world was very young indeed.

Everybody who comes first into the city by sea says instinctively, “How beautiful!” An hour afterwards, if they have landed, they exclaim, “Heavens! *What a place!*” Its site is a splendid one, although the hills which rise sharply behind the town are absolutely devoid of verdure. It has a touch of Venice as the ship comes in, and seems to be floating on the water of the harbour. The sight of it, as sometimes seen through the early morning sunshine shining on a touch of pearly grey mist, can be enchantment itself. It is impossible, even when you know it well, to realise that this filmy cloak of splendour conceals so much that is squalid and mean. The wooden Turkish houses are washed in all sorts of colours, blue, pink and green, and at many points trees peep out of the houses. The old Turkish town runs up the steep slope of a hill, and from the sea the ancient walls can be seen circling all round it like a girdle, with the grim old Citadel frowning down from the top. Away to the right rise the high wooded crests of Hortiach and Kotos. The long suburb stretches round the bay and gives the place the air of a mighty city. The picture is complete, or

## “ THE COVETED CITY ”

would be, if there were a few trees on the barren hills. So powerful is the illusion of the East that even since the fire Salonica looks beautiful from the sea.

“ La Ville convoitée,” its only modern historian has called it, and somebody or other, indeed, has been coveting it throughout the ages. Somebody was always trying to steal it; some savage tribe or other was always battering at its walls, and often breaking through. Being in a geographical situation of great importance carries its disadvantages. In the First Balkan War (1912) three Balkan States coveted it, and it fell to Greece. This fact was largely the cause of the Second War, in the following year. Austria, looking down the broad corridor of the Vardar, had long cherished designs on it, and her desire to possess it was one of the motives behind the launching of the Great War.

“ The City of Salonica,” we read, “ was founded by King Cassander, 315 years before the Christian era. The King, being very ambitious, and wishing to possess himself of a portion of the rich Empire conquered by Alexander the Great, ravaged Macedonia. Many towns and villages were only heaps of ruins.” So we see that well over two thousand years ago, Macedonia was going through the same process which has continued practically without interruption up to the present day. In Macedonia, history does not merely repeat itself. It is a sort of cinematograph which flicks the same pictures on to the screen time after time. The costumes and weapons of the ravagers vary as the centuries roll on, but their methods remain much the same.

King Cassander thoughtfully built the new town to give shelter to the many people he had rendered homeless elsewhere, and named it after his wife (the Great Alexander's sister) Thessalonica. Salonica has always

## SALONICA AND AFTER

been worried by the problems of refugees, and we have three very recent instances; in 1914, owing to the deportation of Greek populations from Thrace; in 1917, following the Great Fire, when over seventy thousand people were homeless; and in December, 1918, and January, 1919, when thousands of wretched Greek families were brought down from Bulgaria—whither they had been deported by the Bulgars during the War—and huddled into the roofed shells of buildings remaining from the fire. Happy is the country that does not know the meaning of the word “refugee.”

Fire, pestilence, famine, earthquake, revolution, war and massacre—“The Coveted City” has known time and time again all the major ills that can afflict poor humanity. It is really a wonderful story. Following its palmy Greek days, the Romans came and, as was their wont, remained a few hundreds of years. The city had everything a city could desire; purple proconsuls, triumphal arches, temples and the rest, not to mention the famous massacre ordered by the Emperor Theodosius in which anything from seven to fifteen thousand people were wiped out in three hours at the Hippodrome. It was a propitious beginning for tribulation on the grand scale. Salonica was attacked innumerable times by sea and by land; often resisted successfully but was as often taken and sacked. Nameless Asiatic tribes of the very long ago; Tartars, Goths, Visigoths, Huns, Slovenes, Bulgars, Serbs, Arab and negro corsairs, bloodthirsty Normans, Venetians, Magyars, bands of adventurers from Catalonia and Aragon, and finally the Turks—all of them “had a go” at one time or another, and some of them came many times. History has long ago lost count of the successive invasions of Macedonia, nearly all of which aimed at Salonica. The stout old fortifications have rumbled

## “THE COVETED CITY”

and shaken to a hundred sieges. The Vardar valley and the road down from Seres have always been two great arteries for war.

It was in 1481 that the Turks came to Salonica. Murad II. chased out the Venetians, who, by the way, built the White Tower, for long afterwards a Turkish prison, and known both as the Bloody and the Janisseries Tower. This sturdy bastion, with its cells, *cachots* and *oubliettes*, was throughout the Allied occupation a signal station for the British Navy. Our sailors (who raced the French for it and got there just in time) found it in an amazingly dirty condition, but soon had it spick and span and whitewashed. They kept chickens and grew tomatoes on the crenulated summit, and slept soundly in it unmindful of the tragedies and cruelties with which it was haunted.

The Turks soon “turkified” the city, and so it was to remain for four centuries and a half. The famous old Christian churches of St. Demetrios, St. Sophia, St. George, and others, had minarets added to them and became mosques. The city which, under the Venetians, as on many previous occasions, had sunk very low in population, was filled up with imported Turks, and Salonica subsided into an Ottoman sleep.

The next invasion was a peaceful one, but one of the most curious and interesting of all. At the end of the fifteenth century the Jews of Spain began to arrive in Salonica. They came as refugees from the terrors of the Inquisition, and found under the Turk a religious tolerance which was lacking in the most powerful Christian country of the time. They found Salonica still largely depopulated, and in the course of time they imposed their own Castilian tongue on most of the inhabitants. The commerce of the Jews, as hardly needs saying, prospered. Salonica became a great Jewish

## SALONICA AND AFTER

centre, and attracted other Jews, who came from Spain, Portugal, Italy and Provence. They soon had business relations with their relatives and co-religionists in Venice, Amsterdam, Genoa and the Hanseatic ports. They became firmly rooted there, and for two hundred years this immigration continued, in varying degrees. And that is why, when the Allies in 1915 landed in a Greek city, which less than three years before was Turkish, they found they were in a markedly Jewish community where a very large proportion of the population still conversed among themselves in Spanish. And those of the newcomers who spoke French had a further surprise in finding that it was the only language they needed in their dealings with all the people of any education—and most of the children in Salonica can now, with very little difficulty, obtain an excellent education. Practically all the Jewish boys and girls now speak French with all the ease of their traditional Spanish, even though to the French ear it may not always be in the purest accent. The reason is that the Jews adopted French as their educational language in 1873, at which time the Israelite Alliance founded its first school, and since that time the French themselves have opened schools which supplement the Jewish schools. The Jewish *hamals*, or street porters, who carry huge loads on their back for a living; whose hands are knotted, and beards matted, and whose backs are perpetually bent beneath the load of the lowest form of human labour, have sons who wear white collars and bowler hats and work in banks and shops. The *hamal* lives on dry bread and olives and a scrap of goats' milk cheese, and sleeps in a hovel, but he somehow realises that education is good for his children. Many of these beneficiaries of such humble parental wisdom have emigrated to America and done well there, and later sent

## “THE COVETED CITY”

for their parents. It thus happens that many a street porter, who, like a human donkey, has padded for years up and down the quays and uneven streets of Salonica, his big, bare feet flattened out by the weights he is perpetually carrying on his back, has been called to New York and ended his declining years in ease and comfort. He spoke only his Judæo-Espagnol, but his son was taught to speak French and do other wonderful things of which the father had only the dimmest conception, or none at all. So much for the benefits and power of education.

I was invited once to an annual gathering of the Israelite Alliance. There were many hundreds of Jews there, male and female, and a great proportion of them were once removed only from the street porter class. But they rattled off French as though they had been born to it, and most of them had a wide acquaintance with French literature. I don't suppose one of them had heard of Meredith, but it is certain that a hundred per cent. had read Pierre Loti—and, of course, Racine, Molière and the rest remained to them from their school days. Some of the young men wore evening dress—with more or less success. At supper (for which, by the way, the caterer should have been shot) one found that their education had not included the art of eating. But there was no doubt about the quality of general intelligence, which was as sharp and direct as a needle. It was quite easy to distinguish the various grades of Jewish society; the wealthy merchants belonging to old-established families; those who had found their financial feet at a very recent date, but whose position had been consolidated by the handsome profits made in Salonica during the war; those who were only on the very first rung of the financial ladder; and those who had not begun to climb at all. But here, at the Alliance

## SALONICA AND AFTER

Israelite, all were on pretty much the same footing, although one could detect a sort of indulgent pity by the wealthy for those not so fortunate in this world's good things. It was a striking object lesson in Jewish solidarity and clannishness. The Jew often protests that he is regarded as a being apart. But see him at a gathering of his own kind and you see that he makes himself a being apart. It is not merely a question of religion, but is very much a question of tribe.

The Jews of Salonica maintain all their ancient religious and social customs very rigidly, although, in later generations, due to the spread of education, the orthodoxy is little more than an outward form. But most of them keep it up as being, as it were, a thing for the general good. One saw this at a circumcision ceremony one day, where the Grand Rabbi and many lesser rabbis were congregated in great state. It was a curious scene. The father, wearing his bowler hat tilted back on his head to make room on his forehead for the *tefillin*, or phylactery—containing a slip of parchment inscribed with certain passages from the Scriptures—was possibly a little conscious of the clash between his own modern outlook and the ancient tribal customs which he was helping to perpetuate. “Ah,” he said afterwards, with a laugh, “these are old customs. They must be kept up. *Il vaut mieux.*” But education is completely driving out the old Jewish dress which, until recent times was much as in the middle ages. Only the older men and women of the lower classes are now to be seen in the ancient costumes; the old men in long gown with slippared feet and the old women in the quaint gaudy head-dress in many colours, reminding one rather of a parrot, with a long tail hanging down the back containing the hair, and embroidered with seed pearls. The young men



## “ THE COVETED CITY ”

have long been wearing bowler hats and the young women would not dream of ever being seen as mother is.

When the Allies went to Salonica the population of the city was supposed to be something like 175,000. Of these, somewhere between 90,000 and 100,000 were Jews, and of these again a small proportion were registered at foreign consulates, calling themselves Portuguese, Italian or Spanish. A few years ago, it was possible to become quite easily any nationality you liked—or as many as you liked—but the coming of the Greeks made that more difficult, and all those in Salonica who were not definitely something else became Greek subjects. The Greeks numbered somewhere about thirty thousand. Next came about ten per cent. of Mussulmans, and the rest were made up of Bulgars, Serbs, Vlachs, Armenians, Albanians, Montenegrins, many real gipsies of the purest and dirtiest type, and all the various sweepings one might expect to find in a seaport which combines all the characteristics of the Levant and the Balkans. Turkish, Greek and Judæo-Espagnol are the languages of the streets, with some Italian; and Greek and French the languages of the shops, restaurants and cafés. The young Israelite who looked after the smaller business side of *The Balkan News* and controlled the many vendors did his complicated business in Greek, Turkish, Jewish-Spanish and French, spoke German and some Italian and made—more or less unconsciously—marked headway in English.

A curious people, not yet mentioned, who stand apart from all the rest are the Deunmehs, the name being taken from the Turkish word for converts. These people are of Spanish-Jew origin who became converted to Islamism, and as they have kept very much to themselves they may be regarded as Jewish Mussul-

## SALONICA AND AFTER

mans. The conversion of these people came about in a most interesting way. In 1655 a Jewish rabbi from Smyrna, named Sabbati Cevi, an enthusiastic mystic, landed in Salonica and proclaimed himself the Messiah. His movement spread like wild-fire, and followers flocked to him. The Turks allowed him a considerable measure of liberty, but he went to Constantinople, pronounced himself to be the King of Kings, and talked of dethroning sultans. There the Sultan of the day soon found drastic methods which persuaded the rabbi to become Mussulman on the spot. His many followers in Salonica and elsewhere followed his example, and the sect has remained to the present day. Much mystery is supposed to attach to their form of religion. The name they give themselves is "True Believers," and what one hears about their religion reminds one of the mysterious Druses of Syria. They are said—probably quite wrongly—to practise ancient Jewish and Cabalistic rites, while outwardly showing all the signs of Mussulmans. There are said to be about 15,000 in Salonica, and generally they belong to a fairly well-to-do class. They have powerful representatives in Constantinople and were well to the fore during the war as successful merchants and profiteers, and also in the councils of the sinister Committee of Union and Progress. The Deunmeh young man of Salonica is, as a rule, very correctly attired in European costume, but wears the fez. He may be seen sitting in Floca's consuming sweet cakes, his large liquid eyes reminding one rather of over-ripe gooseberries.

Enough has been said, we may hope, to show that Salonica is a varied and polyglot city, and the subject can be overdone. Polyglottery, as one may call it, ceases after a time to have any effect on one. The babbling of many tongues becomes merely a noise, and

## “THE COVETED CITY”

one notices only that there are large crowds in the streets, who get stupidly in your way, and not that they are dressed in many costumes. But now and again, even when you are used to it, this mingling of races brings its special note of humour or tragedy. A notable case was that of the tragedy of Floca's. Some eight months or so after the fire, the café managed to open again, and began by putting on some excellent dishes for lunch. One day I noticed that the cooking had distinctly fallen off. I asked the waiter why, and he replied that the cook was dead, and told me something of the story.

Rachel, Mehmet and Sophocles were the three people concerned, Jew, Turk and Greek. These are the real names of the three actors in the drama. Rachel was a young girl of sixteen or seventeen who served at the Floca chocolate counter. She had her hair down her back and a striking Greek profile, and the mere sight of it made newcomers to Salonica begin to talk about Aspasia and Pericles and other long-forgotten things. But in spite of her long straight nose, Rachel was a Jewess, and a nice quiet little miss. And she had nothing to do with the tragedy beyond being the innocent cause of it.

For a long time past, Rachel had been fiercely adored by Mehmet, a Turk in his middle twenties, who helped Sophocles, the cook, in the kitchen. I imagine he must have had very little, if any, encouragement. Salonica maidens, and especially the Salonica Jewish maidens, are most extraordinarily careful of their reputations, and all of them, whether Jew or Greek, immediately ask a stranger “his intentions” at the earliest opportunity if the acquaintance suggests developing beyond a two-minute conversation. And Rachel, who served out chocolates in nice boxes to British Officers and nursing

## SALONICA AND AFTER

sisters, would certainly not let her thoughts dwell on a Turk in the kitchen. But Mehmet, it appears, talked of it often while he was working with Sophocles, and Sophocles, who was well past forty with a wife and three children, would occasionally rally Mehmet on the foolishness of being in love.

The tragedy came during one such conversation on the eternal question. The two cooks were round the corner from their kitchen, drinking coffee together in a little hole of a café let into the wall of what had been one of the largest hotels. Mehmet was talking on the subject nearest his heart. And Sophocles, as was his wont, chaffed him. This time it was too much for Mehmet. Labouring under his obsession, and stung by a remark which suggested that he could never attain the object of his desire, he suddenly "saw red," and plucking an automatic pistol from his pocket fired three shots into the body of his companion. Poor Sophocles dropped his coffee cup and rolled over, murmuring, "Oh, my children! My poor wife!" And then Mehmet, with a cry of remorse, turned the pistol on himself. I was told that he fired four shots into his own waistcoat. That is all there is to the story, except that Rachel left the chocolate counter and never went back to it. But Rachel, Mehmet and Sophocles—Jew, Turk and Greek in conflict—it is quite an epitome of the Near East. As a rule, the mixed races there quarrel only over their politics. It was unfortunate for poor Sophocles that the question of love should have intervened.

Salonica's unhappy gift of being a centre of trouble has followed it uninterruptedly down to the most recent times. In 1908, the young Turk revolution broke out there; the wonderful world-regenerating programme of the new Committee of Union and Progress was pro-

## “ THE COVETED CITY ”

claimed, and rabbis, Greek priests and Moslem imams went about arm in arm and embraced each other. Abdul Hamid was deposed, brought to Salonica as a prisoner, and lodged in the Villa Allatini. On October 9th, 1912, the Greek Army entered the city in triumph. The Bulgars, who had raced down the Seres Road in order to try to be there first, came in next day, though in much smaller strength. In March of the next year, King George I. of Greece was assassinated by a lunatic Greek as he walked along the main street of his new city, and many thousands of Britons are now familiar with the poor little obelisk, bearing withered wreaths, which marks the spot on the pavement where he fell. At the end of June, 1913, the delicate situation which had all along existed between the Greeks and the Bulgars still in the town broke out into battle. There was a hot fight in the White Tower and the St. Sophia quarter before the Bulgars were overpowered. The fight in and around St. Sophia must have been a very pretty one. Bulgars were all round the gallery of the tall minaret and the Greeks peppered them from below. The marble balustrade is still all pitted with bullet holes, and some of the Bulgars are said to have been finally thrown from the top. Then came the Great War, making of Salonica one of the busiest hives of humanity in the world. And finally the all-consuming, devastating fire; but we must give that a little place all by itself.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE FIRE.

SATURDAY, August 18th, 1917, is a day that will be long remembered by many thousands of members of the Salonica Force. They may not always be able to recall the date itself, but they will never forget the fire that occurred on it, when nearly a square mile of the city was burned down in a few hours.

In those days I lived in a very pleasant and roomy apartment above one of the town's big shops. It was a very hot day, and the local Sirocco—a hot wind from the direction of the Vardar—was blowing half a gale, and had been doing so for two or three days. I was sitting at tea, clad as lightly as the *convenances* would allow, when Christina, the Greek maid from Constantinople, came in with some more hot water.

“You know there is a big fire,” she said. “They say half the town is burning.”

One accepted this as mere exaggeration, and so it was at the moment. But a little later I went up on to the flat roof to look. From here one had a view of practically the whole of the city and its surroundings. And sure enough, away up the hill in the north-western corner of Turkish Town, there was a big blaze in progress. Through glasses I could see a sailor standing on a roof semaphoring with his arms. It looked as though a considerable area was alight, and the hot wind was blowing strongly and steadily down towards our part of the city. Then I became aware that dozens of

## THE FIRE

the springless, rattling carts that make life hideous, were dashing over the cobbles and up the hill, presumably having been engaged for salvage work. But big as the fire looked it seemed a very remote thing, having no concern with one's own existence. Naturally a lot of these half-wooden houses would be burnt down, and Turks and Jews would be homeless! But life is sometimes hard and one must expect these things! I went down again and began to make preparations for a journey up Monastir way.

Perhaps rather less than an hour later I went up to have another look. Jove, but the fire had made progress! In the foreground people were standing on roofs, free from concern and enjoying the spectacle. But it began to look ugly, with that dry, hot wind like a forced draught blowing continuously. I went down to the street, where the car was waiting.

"Mason," I said, "I don't think we shall go up-country to-day. It looks to me as though there won't be any Salonica left to-night."

"Very good, sir," said Mason. "I heard there was a fire somewhere."

Mason, who was a corn merchant in a comfortable way of business at home, was always like that.

At the office I found that people were becoming slightly concerned, although there was no sense of impending trouble. The natives of the city were convinced that it would not spread far. They too felt, although they did not say it in so many words, that although the fire might destroy the native quarters, it would not have the bad taste to come down into the more or less civilised parts of the city.

I decided to go up and have a look at the scene of the conflagration. Egnatia Street was jammed, and we met the first refugees carrying bits of furniture,

## SALONICA AND AFTER

pushing through the press. A little way up one of the side streets, that climbs the hill northwards, we had to leave the car. Turks and Jews, with wild eyes, were hurrying down, carrying all sorts of things. A little further and we were on the edge of the burning quarter; and the tide of distracted, homeless people was flowing all around us.

It was an extraordinary sight, and one which but for the sewing machines and smashed wardrobe mirrors which littered the narrow streets and alleys, might have been plucked straight from Biblical times. This was the heart of the Salonica Ghetto, where a great proportion of the population still preserved their ancient costumes. Here were to be seen, in scores, white-bearded patriarchs wearing fezzes and their old-time gaberdine costume known as the *intari*, rushing about frenziedly in spite of the skirts that clung round their slippered feet. Their women-kind rushed about with them, holding their children by the hand and sobbing, shouting and imploring. It was an amazing and a sad scene; the wailing families, the crash of falling houses as the flames tore along, swept by the wind; and in the narrow streets a slow-moving mass of pack donkeys, loaded carts, *hamals* carrying enormous loads; Greek boy scouts (who were doing excellent work); soldiers of all nations, as yet unorganised to do anything definite; ancient wooden fire-engines that creaked pathetically as they spat out ineffectual trickles of water; and people carrying beds (hundreds of flock and feather beds), wardrobes, mirrors, pots and pans, sewing machines (every family made a desperate endeavour to save its sewing machine) and a general collection of ponderous rubbish. The evacuation of each street came in a panic rush as its inhabitants realised that their homes also were doomed. This attitude of only



## THE FIRE

believing at the very last moment that there was any danger for their own homes or business establishments, marked the whole progress of the fire until the moment when it had reached the edge of the sea and was blazing along nearly a mile of front. The inhabitants of every separate line or section of streets were convinced that the conflagration was going to pass them by. A quarter of an hour later they were fleeing for their lives, bearing all sorts of absurd household goods snapped up in panic moments. As it was the Jewish Sabbath many of the big shops were closed, and jewellers and others did not appear to try and save their stocks until a late hour. At ten o'clock that night, people in hotels on the water front did not think their sleeping arrangements would be disturbed—and were bolting with their hand luggage at eleven.

Amid the medley and the uproar of the fire up in the Ghetto I found the P.M. It was a difficult situation for any administrative officer to face. The local means for fighting a fire were *nil*, or next to it. It was not easy to say in whose hands lay the material and moral responsibility for tackling the fire, and here was a case in which a mixed command presented difficulties. Moreover, the fire had attained its alarming proportions with such a sudden rush that everybody was taken off their guard. And the "native" quarter seemed a place off everybody's beat. The Allies only visited it for a stroll or from curiosity. It was, in a vague way, nobody's business—until suddenly, like a thunder-clap, it became apparent that it was everybody's business. At about this time a company of the Durhams arrived from the garrison battalion down in Beshtchinar Gardens, to form a cordon. But that did not help to put out the fire, and there were still no fire-engines, and little water to go through them if they

## SALONICA AND AFTER

had existed. The two or three wooden boxes on wheels, which were emitting small jets of water in response to urgent hand-pumping, were laughable. One of them was marked "Sun Fire Office, 1710," and it might easily have been built in that year. Further Allied patrols now came up, French, Italian and the rest, and here and there officers were attempting to organise or direct fire-fighting operations. But everything was against them—the crowds, the narrow, jammed streets, the lack of everything useful, and above all the fire, which by now might have got the better of the combined resources of London and New York. A little later dynamite was tried, but the flames leaped laughingly over any breaches made. It had been thought earlier on that the Rue Egnatia, a street 30 ft. wide, which, running east and west, cut off the native quarter from the more modern half, might serve as a barrier. But when the time came, the flames cleared the street without noticing it. The hot wind blowing behind created a huge forced draught. Leaping ahead of the actual flames was a cloud of incandescent air, bearing great flakes of fire. This played on buildings ahead, prepared them nicely for the burning, and a falling flake of fire did the rest.

An hour's experience up in the fire zone was pretty conclusive evidence that the whole of Salonica, with the exception of the long suburb stretching along the sea eastwards, was in danger. And yet, although one felt this, it was difficult thoroughly to realise it and act on it; to digest the idea that some time during the night one would be homeless, and counted among the refugees. I returned to the office, where I found the general atmosphere only a shade more grave, and rang up the Local Transport Officer, down near the docks:—

## THE FIRE

“That the L.T.O. . . I say, you know there’s a fire on.”

“Yes, we’ve heard there’s a fire.”

“Well, don’t think I’m alarmed or in a panic or anything of that, but it seems to me it’s coming right down to the water’s edge. In that case, do you think you could lend me a lorry later on in the evening, so as to get as much stuff as possible away and bring the paper out again?”

The L.T.O. promised that this should be done if I rang up later. And there being little else to do at the moment, except to impress on all the natives that the office stood an even chance of being burned down, and to say what should be done in case of evacuation, two of us went out to dinner, and walked down Venizelos Street to the Club with the glow of the fire at our backs.

The Club was looking particularly brilliant for this, its last night. Quite a number of fair Athenians had come up to Salonica in the train of those who had followed M. Venizelos, and most of them happened to be present. The two dining rooms were full, and everybody seemed to be in the best of spirits. The fire, several acres of it, was now less than a quarter of a mile away in a straight line, and still coming onwards, but you would not have thought it to see the happy crowd in the club. Here and there champagne corks were popping. One could not help thinking of Nero and his fiddle. From time to time one of the attendant swains went out on the balcony and looked up the street. “Yes, it seems to be gaining,” he would say, and sit down. In moments of quiet one could now hear the roar of the conflagration—a terrible sound. And while we were sitting here at an excellent dinner, and while other people were sitting down to dinner at the Hotel Splendide and elsewhere, some fifty thousand

## SALONICA AND AFTER

wretched people already driven from their homes were rushing about frantically, carrying heavy loads a short distance down towards safety, only to cast the bulk away in the streets as they tired of the weight. Occasionally the club waiters asked, with a touch of anxiety, if one thought the fire would come down our way. The firm impression in the Club was that it would not. The buildings in the modern quarter were "trop solide." Therefore to dinner again. . . . When the turn of the modern buildings came, they went up like fireworks, in spite of their undoubted solidity.

It was nine o'clock when we left the club. A few minutes walk back towards the fire and we saw that the long wooden roof of the bazaar, which led from the Rue Egnatia down Venizelos Street towards the water front, had caught fire. It was the beginning of the end of the commercial quarter.

Several hours before this, two new British motor fire-engines had entered into action and were doing splendid work. They had only arrived from England a few days before, and were not completely ready for service. One was up at the Base Motor Transport Depot at Kalamaria, and the other at Marsh Pier. When the call came at the Base M.T., a scratch crew was raised on the spot and the engine was down on the quay and dipping its tail into the salt water within twenty-five minutes. Both engines did splendid work, and at one time as much as 4,000 feet of hose was coupled on to one of them. In one case, the driver of the engine—which, of course, once it had driven the vehicle down, became a pumping engine—remained at his post without sleep from eight o'clock on the Saturday night until six o'clock on the following Tuesday morning. One engine was in action for seventeen days and the other for ten, as once the first rush of the



Salonica the day after the fire.



## THE FIRE

conflagration was over there were many sporadic outbreaks which had to be attended to, and parts of the city smouldered for a fortnight.

But brave as their effort was the two engines could not stay the rush of that wall of flame which came on like a forest fire. On coming out of the club I decided to go up to my flat roof again. From this the sight was majestic. One looked into a sea of vivid red, out of which were thrust the long white needles of minarets. A few people were on the roof looking at the scene with a sort of fatalistic calm. Now was the time if ever to pack one's bags. That big and calm room which had been such a haven on many a hot summer's afternoon would shortly cease to be. I wandered round by the light of a candle (the electric light had now failed), packing some things and rejecting others—which afterwards I missed badly. But it was extraordinary what a calm, insouciant "let it rip" sort of mood was engendered by that roaring monster up the street. Since all Salonica was going to burn, what did a few personal effects matter? It is absurd, but that is how many people were affected.

I rang up for the lorry, and it came promptly. By now the streets in this quarter were repeating, on a larger and more crowded scale, what one had seen in the late afternoon up the hill. The hordes of refugees, like a gallant army fighting a rearguard battle, only evacuated one street as the enemy forced them to do it, and then congregated in the next. Merchants were throwing their stocks out on the pavements and then frantically appealing for transport to remove them. There were shrieks and cries, the crash of falling buildings, the sound of splintering glass—and now, louder than ever the unvarying roar of the fire. *The Balkan News* had been printing away up to ten o'clock, but

## SALONICA AND AFTER

at that hour everybody deserted the machine to go and see about their own affairs—and small blame to them. When it came to saving the type and other things we found there was nobody to help. All the same, we began—and then came the news that the street outside was blocking up. One end was impassable because of the hoses that ran up Venizelos Street towards the bazaar. A heavy lorry could not possibly go over those. And the other end was rapidly choking up with a jam of vehicles of all sorts which became thicker with each minute. It would not do to have the destruction of an Army lorry on one's conscience! We packed in all that we could, saved the precious reference library, closed the iron doors of the machine room downstairs, hoping that they would do their bit, and prepared to leave.

The sky over the whole of the "solid" commercial quarter was now one incandescent blush of sparks. People at the Splendide—where £60,000 had just been spent on a new tea room and other improvements to catch the stream of gold that flowed from the Allies—were now rushing to their bedrooms to collect what they could carry away. The multitude of refugees was driven into the last parallel of streets that lay near the quay. And at last everybody realised that even these would go. The refugees flowed to their furthest limit, into the docks. There one saw them in thousands, squatting hopelessly on their beds and bundles; babies whimpering; little boys and girls sitting very still and looking vacantly before them; here and there a bemused parent still clutching a sewing machine or a mirror; a thousand unhappy and pitiful sights. The roar of the fire was now like the noise of a battle. And late in the night, obeying a sudden change of wind, the flames executed a quick flanking movement and cut



## THE FIRE

right across the main street on to the sea. From this moment there was only one way out of the fire area, and that was westwards, along the Monastir road.

But just before this a magic change had come over the scene. The British Army, which up to that moment had belonged strictly to the British Army, suddenly became everybody's property. An order had been given over the telephone and forthwith, from all directions, our unrivalled transport service poured its innumerable lorries and motor vans into the town. Their order was simply to take up the refugees and what they had saved, and hurry them out of danger. Up to that moment, a rich merchant could not have hired a lorry for the evening for £1,000. After it, the tattered demaions of Salonica were given all the care of a fine lady being handed into her carriage by her footman. The Allies were all working now, but the British did very much the largest share. Our men behaved with the utmost care and consideration. "Come on, Mother, you next," they shouted, and tucked a wrinkled dame in a comic-opera costume and her family of three generations into a capacious lorry. The vehicles were loaded up at a tremendous rate, and as fast as they were full went off along the Monastir Road, deposited their charges and returned for more. There were now eighty thousand people homeless to deal with.

The Navy did its share, too. Lighters were run into the sea wall, charged with a medley of people, and taken off to various ships in the harbour. The sailors were just like the men of the motor transport—cheerful, chaffing and tender, carrying children and old people on board and depositing them as carefully as though they were brittle and might snap. The gallant old K. lighters, born of the Dardanelles campaign, never carried stranger loads than on that night.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

The fire now had a firm grip on the main line of buildings fronting the sea. It was the last phase, and it lasted in its dreadful glory for four or five hours. A number of caiques, moored to the sea wall, began to blaze with the heat, and were hurriedly pushed off and dealt with. A motor car, caught *en passage*, blazed in the middle of the road like a torch. And then, one regarded a scene to which only Doré could have done justice. Over three-quarters of a mile of front was blazing at one time—a great cliff of orange and white flame, and the thousands of refugees still crowded in and about the port were black pigmies against a gigantic crimson background—poor, puny humanity helpless before the blind force of nature in an evil mood. The sea reflected the fierce all-pervading glare of the shore. It seemed as if the world were blazing. Nothing mattered. One's face was black and eyes smarting, but everything, in a way, seemed very natural. Was it only eight or nine hours ago that Christina had come in with the hot water for tea to say that "half the city is burning"? It might have been a year. A new block of buildings catching fire and going up like a pyrotechnic display caused no sensation. Naturally the poor old place burned. So would you, if you had to stand a heat like that. . . . In the middle of it all, with the smoke and glare and the noise, and Tommy still working like a Trojan with the refugees, I remember buying a 2d. slice of melon at the corner of the quay and thinking it one of the best things I had ever tasted. The melon vendor, as he sliced up his luscious fruit, seemed to have the air of regarding catastrophes as excellent things.

Somewhere about three o'clock, the club, "my beautiful club," as Sir Herbert Tree might have said, began to go. That was the end, then, "Finish Salonique!"

### THE FIRE

Flat gone, office gone, club blazing! What was there left? I thought of the club's solid English furniture; of the pleasant tea hour; the beautiful ladies from Athens; the cheerful games of French billiards with the A.P.M., and everything else that made life bearable in Salonica. Poor old club! No more dinners on the balcony after a hard day's work. This was being homeless indeed.

At this time, the port itself, including French G.H.Q., was very much in danger, and the efforts of our two fire engines were directed to saving it, which they succeeded in doing. And at something after four o'clock in the morning, dazed by looking at the gigantic misery and destruction wrought by this blazing monster who had appeared apparently from nowhere and swept down on us like a whirlwind, I began to look for a lorry myself. Half-an-hour later I walked into the Mess of 244 M.T. Company out on the Monastir Road, where various refugees had already arrived, and, lying down on the floor, went to sleep.

At eleven o'clock the next morning I penetrated into the incandescent ruins of the town to find the remains of the office—and found it intact. It was the biggest surprise of my life. By something like a miracle, a corner block, including the Bank of Athens, had escaped, although all around it nothing but red-hot walls were left. At the high iron doors leading inside, the little Turkish *kavass* stood grinning for joy at my approach. He tried to pretend that he had stayed there all the time, and began speaking earnestly of his own devotion, but I found it hard to believe him. If it were so, he ought to have been cooked alive. A few weeks later a concert party sang a new song which said:—

“The Devil took Orosdi Back's,  
But Heaven saved *The Balkan News.*”

## SALONICA AND AFTER

It may have been so, in both instances. One cannot say. We certainly deserved it. But at any rate we "came out" two days later, and as, for the time being, there were no means of turning the printing machine, the gallant R.E. Survey Company *lithographed* six thousand copies, which were despatched up-country with a full account of the fire, in order to let the Army know exactly what had happened.

Then followed a miserable month if ever there was one. Wreckage, dust and misery everywhere. No water to wash in. A little petrol engine, installed by more excellent R.E.'s, coughing down on the pavement below, turning the machine. Explosions everywhere as the French sappers blew up dangerous buildings, with flying bricks thudding down on the roof. And Salonica with the life and soul gone out of it; a heap of rubble with not a hotel left, nor a restaurant, nor any place to go, save only the White Tower Restaurant. It was very hot. One lunched in the office off tinned things and worked in a sort of daze. Oh, for the club!

And Salonica never recovered during the occupation of the Allies. It remained a "washed-out" city; the wreckage was too big to repair. All sorts of grandiose schemes were conceived for its renaissance. Perhaps they will materialise. We shall see. There is certainly a splendid opportunity of building a great city worthy of the site.

The fire began at three o'clock on the afternoon of August 18th, and the fiercest of the burning was not over until 32 hours later, up to which time the buildings of the port and the French G.H.Q. were still in danger. It is finally believed that it began in a little wooden house in the Rue Olympos, where the refugees were cooking and spilt some oil. It reminds one of the great fire of Chicago, which was begun by a cow kick-

## THE FIRE

ing over a lamp in a stable. The Salonica fire is said to be the greatest in insurance history; that is, it brought about the greatest destruction by the sole agency of fire, without the contributory cause, for instance, of earthquake, as in the case of San Francisco and Valparaiso. The area of destruction was more than one million square yards and 9,500 houses and commercial buildings of all kinds and degrees were burned down. The damage was estimated at more than £8,000,000, of which nine-tenths was insured, British companies being by far the most heavily involved. The greatest loss of all was the magnificent Byzantine Church of St. Demetrius, famed among archæologists over the whole world and dating back to the 5th century. St. Demetrius is the patron Saint of Salonica, and is supposed to have saved it from many misfortunes, but his church, alas! was in the main track of the fire, and on this occasion the Saint's power was unavailing. The famous church of St. Sophia, dating back to the 6th century and built by the architect of the greater edifice at Constantinople, was saved. This was partly due to the wide courtyard in which it stands, but at one side the fire finished so close to the church that one can easily understand many people thinking that a miraculous intervention saved the building. St. George's Church, another very fine edifice, which is one of the oldest Christian churches in the world and dates back to the 3rd Century, was happily not in the track of the fire. There were 55,000 Jewish refugees, 12,000 Greeks, and 10,000 Mussulmans. The difficulties of finding shelter for these at once were very great. Many were sheltered in camps organised by the Allies, and the British at once gave 1,300 tents which provided shelter for over 7,000 people in three or four camps, where many of them made acquaintance with

## SALONICA AND AFTER

constant cleanliness for the first time in their lives, and on the whole took to it fairly well.

There were many warm tributes, individual and otherwise, made to the work of the British during and after the fire. Of these, we will take one, from the Greek journal *Phos* :

“The refugees were led on the night of frightfulness and destruction with indescribable affection far from the flames and found themselves under the protection of an elect race whose name is spoken with gratitude by those who have been so greatly tried. . . The life of these ardent apostles of humanity and goodness amongst us has been unstained and clean, and the Greek appreciation of it has been sincere and warm. . . Although there has been but little time in which so difficult an installation could be effected, nevertheless British energy, which is the marvellous and amazing quality of this great race, was able to gather humanely, shelter and feed a great number of refugees. The houses in which the refugees are sheltered are well-roofed and the tents placed in perfect line with English exactitude. There lives an entire population which yesterday was happy, but to-day is ruined and living on the charity of powerful friends.”

It is a little flowery, but we must remember that this comes natural to the Greek who is writing with a pen dipped in enthusiasm. Tommy blushed as he read it in *The Balkan News*. But there can be no doubt that he earned it.

## CHAPTER IX.

### TWO BALKAN DAYS—JANUARY AND JULY.

#### *January :*

IN Salonica when the wind blows very cold or very hot all the inhabitants refer to it as *le vent du Vardar*. I think it must be because most of them have never been beyond the confines of their native city, and the region of the Vardar River must seem to them a hyperborean place from whence comes everything that is unpleasant—including Bulgars as well as North Winds. But here we are, three men in a Ford at ten o'clock in the morning, up on the Serbian Front, quite a considerable number of miles beyond the Vardar, and the wind that comes sweeping down off the mountain cuts like a knife. We hope to arrive back in Salonica somewhere about tea-time, and when we get there we shall be able to assure the inhabitants, if they are sufficiently interested in the matter, that the Vardar is quite innocent of their present discomfort.

We wrap up with extreme care, and are soon bumping along the ruddy track. It is impossible to take the direct way "owing to the state of the roads," and so we must make a long detour, along what is optimistically described as a really good road. From the state of the route we are travelling, it is possible to get a faint idea of what the other must be like. Our wheels are soon nearly a foot deep in sticky mud, and the car slides along with a sort of zig-zag motion that reminds one somehow of a roller skater. We are travelling, un-

## SALONICA AND AFTER

fortunately, almost in the teeth of the wind, and it comes whistling like a bullet. In a very short time, in spite of fur gloves, my fingers are aching, and in spite of a rampart of sheepskin rug round the legs, my toes follow suit. The sky is a dull grey; the mists that hang over the mountains swirl aside occasionally to show their snow-covered tops. It must be dreadful manning the Serbian trenches up there.

Three-quarters of an hour through the mud, which here and there is being flattened out by small gangs of native labourers shrouded in all manner of strange garments, and we come to the village of Subotsko. It is as typical a Balkan village of the larger size as could be found in the whole of the Peninsula. As we turn into the main broad street a minaret stands out, sharply silhouetted against a *massif* of the big mountain range beyond—a pleasing picture-postcard effect. A stream runs through the street, and of course there is deep mud everywhere. There are bullock teams and small boys in voluminous trousers who pród the bullocks to the side with urgent cries, and keep a sidelong eye to the car that comes grinding and side-slipping up behind them. There are some quite genteel-looking galleried houses in wood, and in a sort of square stand some scores of men in groups, most of them wearing hooded sheepskin coats, so that from the back they look like large candle-extinguishers. There is evidently some sort of market being held.

A sharp turn out of the village and we have the wind behind us. The change is astonishing, and for a moment it is hard to believe that the blast is still blowing with the same strength and bitterness. But the grass and rushes at the roadside that flatten away before us show that there is no change except to ourselves, and even more so is this shown by the de-



## TWO BALKAN DAYS—JANUARY AND JULY

meanour of the local Macedonians who came trotting along towards us on their donkeys to market. Some of them sit backwards on their miserable little mounts, preferring to meet the weather that way. Those of whose faces we get a peep as they sit humped and shrouded, have the appearance of men who are being frozen alive and detest the process. But in spite of their crying misery, they cannot help looking picturesque in their many-coloured garments. Doubtless they are quite unaware of it, and would be very angry if they knew of it, but to the Western eye they bring a touch of comfort into that cheerless landscape.

A little further and we come suddenly on one of those British camps of light motor transport which have done such great work on the Serbian front. There are, apparently, many hundreds of extremely small, black motor-cars all in action at the same moment, and the sudden impression, as we round the side of a hill, is of nothing so much as an ants' nest suddenly disturbed. Perhaps they are swarming or something. If Maeterlinck were here, one feels that he would be moved to write a book about their strange habits and ways of life. And yet these strange little creatures, which have apparently popped out of holes in the ground, gave the Serbs the vital help that was necessary in their victory away up on Kajmakchalan, for no other transport could have done the same arduous work.

Another hour through the mud, with the road roguishly trying to slip away from us, and we run into a large village, which holds part of the Headquarters of a Serbian Army. We are to lunch here, and, with luck, hope to leave somewhere about two o'clock, but knowing Serbian hospitality it is doubtful. Following our lunch, our host sits with us long at the table—the other members of the mess have gone back to their

## SALONICA AND AFTER

work—talking on many things that are interesting, including the Serbs' great regard for England and their hopes in us.

We take the road again at last. The wind seems colder than ever. Half-an-hour or so along a good side-track and we strike the main Monastir Road—the chief artery for the French, Italians, Serbs, Greeks and Russians in this part of the world. There are about 45 miles of it before we get to Salonica, and it is a bleak prospect even with the wind behind our backs. It is a flat and dreary countryside, largely marshland, and much of it subject to inundations. The mountains are behind us, and there is nothing worth looking at. Squashed together on the narrow seat, we huddle still further within ourselves, sink our chins far down into our coat collars, and subside into a stupor of discontent. Occasionally the driver beats a hand against his coat, but that is all the sign of life we give. Suddenly something flashes past us that strikes a simultaneous shout of laughter out of the three of us, a shout which is cut off and whisked away instanter in the whistling wind. Sitting, a solitary passenger, in the back of a car driven by a French officer, is a black soldier. His face is not so much muffled round as bandaged, but as he whizzes past a turn of the whites of his eyes in his black face gives a lightning impression of bewildered discomfort, of gollywog misery, that is irresistibly comic. For five miles at least, that sudden explosion of mirth warms and comforts us.

The minaret of a fine mosque comes into view, that of Yenidje-Vardar, surely one of the most unhappy small towns in the world. On this bare plain it is frozen in winter and scorched pitilessly in summer. There are fragments of transports belonging to all our Allies as we go through its main street, and two French

## TWO BALKAN DAYS—JANUARY AND JULY

soldiers bargaining at a miserable little shop for onions. Then the dreary road again, as before, with more chilled natives on donkeys; and straining bullocks, their heads lowered to the blast. A little further on something exciting happens. Standing in the coarse grass, within 30 yards of the roadside, are rows and rows of wild geese, feeding tranquilly, undisturbed by our passing. A hundred yards further is another regiment of them, stiff and regular as Prussian guardsmen. The sight is not to be borne. With a certain shot gun which ought to have been in the car, we could have secured a bag that would have been an appreciable addition to the food supplies of the B.S.F. But an idea strikes me. Kept in the car, for possible emergencies quite other than this, is a large service Webley. My friend, a fire-breathing fellow, has a large automatic in his kit. At least we will have a shot of some kind. We have brilliantly divined the point that the geese are in no way alarmed at the noise of a motor so long as it keeps running. So the car is turned round and we stalk the geese, pistols in hand. The raising of an arm disturbs the first flock, and they are in the air before we can fire at them. With the second flock we are much more careful, and take to our stomachs at the roadside, just behind a low bank. At thirty yards we fire into the brown, and put in another shot each as they take to the wing. But to our disgust, nothing remains on the ground, and we take refuge in the car as quickly as possible and bowl off again.

Over the tumbling Vardar, brown in flood, and most repellent looking. The two Senegalese on guard at the bridge peer at us from out of their reed shelters. Natives of the scorching desert, they have as cold a job as the wit of man could devise. It would be interesting to know what they think of the Great War.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

The road is still uninteresting and always bumpy. Past an aviation camp, the great canvas hangars swelling in and out with fantastic curves as the untiring wind smites and bullies them. Flying does not seem a pleasant thing on such an evening. And somewhere about now a refrain comes into my head, which sticks obstinately there all the way to Salonica:—

“Some buttered toast, a cup of tea, and Thou,  
Beside me sitting at the fireside,  
And Wimbledon were Paradise enow.”

But do they still have buttered toast in England? And if not, is it really worth going home? Yes, decidedly Yes! There is still Thou. Damn the cold!

Miles and miles of British camps and dumps now—millions and millions of pounds worth of material. A little corner of the great war, but even so there is possibly far more in this one stretch than we sent for the whole South African Campaign. And finally Salonica. The trams are “off” (no fuel), most of the street lights are out, and the ruined front is a dismal place. But what matter? We are near our destination now. And shortly afterwards we enter a most wonderful and cheery mess-room, miraculously contrived out of petrol boxes and other odds and ends. The sherry and bitters tastes excellently. There is a blazing log fire. “What’s the news from Serbia?” someone asks. “Great news,” I reply; “I’m beginning to feel my toes again.”

### *July.*

An unflecked sky of perfect, dazzling blue overhangs the world as we roll out of the little Greek village of Ano and begin the long descent down to the shore of the Gulf of Orfano. We are in a region where insect life abounds in astonishing quantities and where enor-

## TWO BALKAN DAYS—JANUARY AND JULY

mous thistles grow to eight feet high, so that the Scotsmen in the Brigade whose Headquarters we are just leaving feel strangely humble as they have never done before. It is pleasant to sit in the big open Vauxhall in which D.A.D.O.S. does his rounds for the Division. On such a hot day as this an enclosed Ford van would be like a stove. We pass odd soldiers on the road, and little strings of transport. All our men are wearing sun helmets, open shirts, and "shorts." They are really half naked, and their arms, knees, chests and faces are baked a dark brown. The shorts can be let down, and in the evening, when the mosquitos begin to bite, are tucked into the puttees for protection.

It is a blazing, glaring, sizzling hot day—a Macedonian midsummer day at its very worst. Down on the sea shore we halt for a little while in a dump, where D.A.D.O.S. has something to do. The bare, ugly ground is red and baked as hard as a brick and the heat strikes off the corrugated iron sheds in waves. As one sits there in the car, inert, a wandering M.O. drops off his horse for a chat. I mention casually that both D.A.D.O.S. and myself had a bad night, in our little whitewashed rooms at the Brigade H.Q. owing to the exasperating attentions of innumerable tiny sand flies. "Keep a watch on yourself," says the M.O., "there's a lot of sand-fly fever about." As D.A.D.O.S. climbs back into the car the M.O. says he will take a photograph of us as a souvenir. "Never know what may happen to you, you know," he laughs. He tells us that our faces are in deep shadow. "Take your helmets off." We do, and the heat scorches our unprotected heads. The helmets are back again within five seconds, but it feels none too soon.

We pull up at Stavros, and lunch on the "stoop" of

## SALONICA AND AFTER

a pleasant little hut on the very edge of the sea. For some reason or other we both want to make an early start after lunch. "Catch me doing an afternoon journey in this heat," laughs our host. "It will be scorching along the valley. Why not go after tea?" But we insist that we must get along and foolishly keep to our intention.

It is comparatively cool among the trees of the Rendina Gorge, but soon we are out in the open at the beginning of the long valley in which lie the big lakes of Beshik and Langaza. There are large herds of goats spread across the narrow, bumpy track, which scatter with great fright and scuffling as we approach. And before we have gone very far we become aware that, even with the wind of our passage to temper the heat, the early afternoon of mid-July is not the time to travel along the Langaza Valley. The wind that fans our faces has nothing fresh and invigorating in it, but is languid and stifling. The dust whirls up from our wheels and hangs in dense clouds behind us. With the exception of an occasional goatherd, there is not a soul to be seen. The earth is one monotonous dun khaki colour. The short, burnt grass is alive with shrilling, leaping grasshoppers. Theirs is the predominant noise by day. The hoarse croaking of frogs fills the air at night. These are the two voices of Macedonia in summer time.

At the further end of Lake Beshik we come across a lonely signal station, and decide that it is time for an early tea. The sapper who appears out of the little telegraph hut provides us with some hot water, but the beverage as drunk out of an enamelled iron mug is somehow not inviting. The mug is hot, and the tea is hot, and the world generally is sizzling. As we sit in the car we are baked and fried alive. It hurts the



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British Transport in Macedonia :  
A typical road on a summer day.

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## TWO BALKAN DAYS—JANUARY AND JULY

eyes to look at the track. The glint of polished metal on the car dazzles like the blinding flash of magnesium. We realise that our host at Stavros was right and that there is no sense in being abroad in such weather—even in a motor car—unless imperative necessity demands it. It is a wise rule which enjoins on the whole army to rise at five, get as much work as is possible done before eleven, and rest during the baking hours between twelve and five in the afternoon.

We look down a shelving slope at the blue waters of the lake, and the temptation is too much to be resisted. Why be baked in the car when we can splash about in that! We take the car as near as possible to the edge, undress, and walk carefully over the stones and sand to the lake. But we keep our sun helmets on, and so attired take to the water. A sun helmet proves to be an awkward thing with which to swim, as whichever way you turn it dips deeply into the water. But it is better than risking immediate sunstroke. And we soon become aware that the water of the lake is of a piece with the rest of the world—warm. It is a quite unrefreshing bath. We wade out again and start to dress. As we squat down in the sand we become aware that we are being bitten. "More of those confounded sand-flies," says D.A.D.O.S. "Can't get rid of 'em."

We push on, bump and roll and switchback along many miles of track, pass Lake Langaza, with its primitive villages and fishing boats, skirt the slopes of beautiful Hortiach, and after a long time come out at General's Corner, and so on to the broad level highway of the Seres Road. The afternoon sun blazes down on it, and it is practically deserted—a blinding white ribbon running through a khaki landscape—until we come to Guvesne with its dumps. Here there are signs of life. The camps are beginning to stir after their mid-

## SALONICA AND AFTER

day torpor. A little further on we see, climbing a steep gradient, a long convoy of motor-lorries winding in and out, now in view, now disappearing. In a little while we catch it up. The gradient is very stiff, and we seem almost to creep past the rumbling monsters. The hillside is shaking as we go by. Ten—twenty of them, all nicely spaced out; shall we never get rid of them? The dust thickens the further we advance up the convoy, until we are in a dense cloud which gets in the eyes and mouth and tastes hot and nasty. We pass another ten of them, and still we are rolling up the hill alongside—a small atom engulfed in a whirl of dust and noise. Each driver as we pass turns a whitey-brown face towards us. The dust is caked thick on them all, encumbers their eyebrows, fills their ears, and gives their eyes a wild, bloodshot, strained look. Eight more lorries, their engines growling like monsters held by the throat, their vast bulks quivering and shaking as they thunder along. And then at last the officer's motor car ahead, which shows, thank Heaven, that we are at the head of the convoy at last. Thirty-eight three-ton lorries, grinding and forcing their way up a sun-baked mountain road, and stretching along nearly a mile of it! Away back to the time of the Romans and long before that, this was a military road, but it never had to carry anything heavier than a wheeled cart. We brought thousands of motor lorries to Macedonia and had to make our roads before we could use them. And day in, day out, these convoys roll along, friezes of them against the skyline or the hillside, and from miles away one can hear the deep-toned sullen roar of their passage, like a rumble of distant thunder.

Down into the deep dip before Likovan, and then through Lahana, with its little crowd of Tommies

## TWO BALKAN DAYS—JANUARY AND JULY

round the E.F.C. and up and over the highest point of the Seres road, at an altitude of over 2,000 feet. Here we meet a convoy rumbling up, charge into a cloud of dust, but, curving in and out, are soon past it. And in a little while we are on the last stretch of the hill road before it dips down into the Struma Valley. As we turn here and there we catch glimpses of a wonderful panorama, and in another moment the whole prospect is open to us; the wonderful wide sweep of the Struma Valley with the sun of early evening shining full on the great ranges of mountains held by the Bulgars; the river winding up to the gateway of the Rupel Pass, marvellously distinct in detail; Lake Tahinos to the East, and Seres shining white and clear twenty miles away. It is difficult to think that such a fair valley can have such an evil reputation, but such is the danger in the hot season of malaria that now, having learnt by experience, all our troops except a few advanced posts on the river line are withdrawn to the hills. The men left on the plain, who must have suffered there in this day of baking, steaming heat, are protected by face masks and gauntlets, so that they look like some mediæval survival; and at night have to smear their hands and faces with thick, dark ointment. It is but a detail of our discomforts in our Watch on the Struma. Think of wearing face nets and gauntlets on such a day as this!

And now we begin to drop. In five miles or so we go down some 1,800 feet. The car whizzes and turns, doubles on itself, hums round extraordinary corners, plunges down giddy descents. At times the sensation is more of flying than motoring. We flash past labouring mule transport and lorries stolidly but steadily ascending. The road is busy here. And in less than no time we are at Kilo 70, the great Depot and junction

## SALONICA AND AFTER

for the Struma front. Here we are amid dumps and dust, camps of all descriptions, and Decauville railways. The fiercer heat of the day has gone, but the air is close and stifling. In ten minutes I am dipping my head into a bucket of cold water, swilling away the accumulated dust, and wondering if an hour or so ago I really was sitting in the tepid wavelets of Beshik Lake wearing a sun helmet. It seems rather an episode that belongs to the far-away days of youth.

Three days later D.A.D.O.S. was riding his horse along the road when he incontinently fell off it. "Sand-fly" had claimed him, and he was picked up with a temperature of over 104 and hurried off to a Field Ambulance. It is just a little way Macedonia has—to trip you up just when you are feeling you are proof against anything her climate can do.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE BALKAN STAGE.

“The roses rahnd the door  
Make me love mother more. . . .

Whenagetback,  
Whenagetback  
To ma home in Tennessee.”

IT was the first time I had ever really caught the astounding words of “Way down in Tennessee.” They were being sung with great earnestness by a young, pleasant-faced Cockney sailor who stood near the breech of a 9.2 gun on a tiny improvised stage. There was bunting all around him and somewhere behind was concealed the orchestra—an accordeon. The occasion was the second birthday of one of our smaller and more exotic ships of war.

“I think,” whispered the Commander, as the wonderful song was finished, “that we’ll go aft when the interval comes, and leave the rest of the concert to them.” And a little later a group of us sat in deck chairs, energetically grasping whiskies and sodas, and looking over to the few twinkling lights of Salonica. The sounds of the concert came more faintly to our ears.

The subject of this chapter is a pleasant one; a story, perhaps inadequately told, of triumph over circumstances. That unostentatious little ship’s concert was only a very insignificant item in many scores of entertainments I saw in and around Macedonia, and only

## SALONICA AND AFTER

in casting the mind back is it possible to realise how much the men of the B.S.F. did for themselves in relieving the intolerable tedium that comes of a long campaign in a wild, comfortless country.

The story of the B.S.F. theatrical enterprises really begins with the pantomime "Dick Whittington," which opened with great success on Christmas Eve of 1915, somewhere up the Lembet road. "Dick Whittington" made history and largely set the standard for all future developments. The "book" was exceptionally clever from start to finish and was solemnly reviewed, if you please, in the *Times*. The show was given in two marquees placed T-wise, and what was intended merely to amuse the members of a Field Ambulance and anybody who might come along, was annexed by a wise General for the Division.

The following winter the members of the same Field Ambulance, the 85th, produced "Aladdin," this time as a Divisional enterprise at Kopriva, on the Struma, and in the winter of 1917-18 they (together with the 84th Field Ambulance) followed this up with "Bluebeard." All were great successes and it is a curious fact that throughout the campaign the Field Ambulances were very prolific in providing the best talent.

At first, this great movement to provide amusement for the troops spread rather slowly. In the early days it was regarded rather as a luxury. Later it was seen in its true light—as a necessity. Every tap of the carpenter's hammer and every electric bulb "scrounged" for the stage was really a tiny part of the necessary machinery for the continuance of a long and exhausting war. But it took time for this to be thoroughly understood, and in the beginning O.C.'s of units or concert parties had to proceed warily. Salonica, in some strange fashion, had become synonymous with the idea of a

## THE BALKAN STAGE

field of war where very little that was warlike was done. It would not do to confirm this erroneous impression by letting it be thought that the B.S.F. had theatres of its own to add to its other delights! So, like the worship of the early Christians, the early development of our theatres proceeded slowly and quietly. But gradually the movement increased until very few units of any importance had not made some sort of attempt to amuse themselves, and one found concert parties and theatres all over the country. By the time most of our men had been out in Macedonia for two years or more the fact that, when they were not working or fighting, they were trying to make themselves happy was accepted as a normal and sensible thing, in spite of what people at home might or might not think. And then came a further phase. The authorities, knowing well the difficulties that confronted them in trying to give leave, determined that if submarines and the difficulties of transport and the various other factors that operated were to keep most of our men out in Macedonia for a further indefinite period, they must be amused and interested as much as possible. At the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918, indeed, it became very clear that the Salonica Army would have to fend for itself in every way. With Russia off his hands, there was every possibility that the Spring of 1918 would see the enemy engaging in a big offensive in Macedonia in order to try and complete the tale of his conquests on the Eastern fronts. But there were no reinforcements to be expected from home, or from any other front. The Salonica front was, in fact, cut off from the rest of the world; or at any rate, our only link was the perilous one of the Mediterranean, which the Navy held in the teeth of enemy submarines and lack of Allied Naval co-ordination. It was a case

## SALONICA AND AFTER

of God helps those who help themselves. The B.S.F. combed itself out and made the most of its available supply of fighting material. Then knowing that at any time the men might be called upon to wage a very unequal fight to maintain their footing in Greece, it determined to keep them in the best spirits possible. They could not go to Blighty; therefore Blighty, as far as it could be done, should be brought to them. The authorities themselves encouraged sane and healthy amusement in every possible way. We had prepared for the worst, and now the only thing to do was to make the best of it. Under the direct stimulus of official help the B.S.F. saw a great efflorescence of theatrical entertainment. Macedonia might soon be burning. We would do our fiddling before and not during the event. So that we had the rather extraordinary coincidence that the finals of the great B.S.F. Boxing Championships were being fought off, before a great and most appreciative crowd, on the very days in March, 1918, when the Germans first attacked in such overwhelming strength on the Somme. One can write of these things now that the B.S.F. has so signally played its part in achieving complete and final victory. Before it would not have been so easy.

In France everything that went to the making of an entertainment was fairly easy to hand. In Macedonia practically everything had to be improvised. No wandering parties of London "stars" ever went out there, but officers and men found their own talent, and plenty of it. Quite often it was of a professional kind. After all, once you mobilise a whole nation you are bound to find the most diversified talent scattered throughout the Armies. A hospital orderly reveals himself to be, in private life, a scene painter of merit. A mule driver proves to be a member of a well-known Folly troupe.



## THE BALKAN STAGE

Lieut. Wunpip of the Rumpshires had a mottled career up and down the American Continent, and danced two years for his living in New York music-halls. A gay young pilot of the R.A.F. proves to have specialised at Cambridge in female parts with an authentic Cockney accent. All sorts of odd people who seemed to be merely horny-handed reveal themselves as capable, even soulful musicians. Aladdin could not have done better. The O.C. Concert Party clapped his hands and the right man, more or less, appeared. The question of costumes presented the greatest difficulties, and many have been the journeys down to Salonica to find things that very often Salonica did not possess. The fire brought on a crisis in this respect. Fortunately, in the case of Divisional shows, at any rate, the question of costumes and other "props" was thought out months in advance, and officers going home on leave were pressed into the service of finding all that was necessary for the forthcoming pantomime and bringing them back.

And then the girls of our B.S.F. shows! Really, one hardly knows how to begin to talk about them. I am sure that in all the theatres of war (whichever way you like to employ the word) the B.S.F. girls were far and away the best. They developed to a pitch of daintiness and perfection which it is quite impossible to indicate to those unfortunate persons who never sat in a Macedonian theatre. Necessity is the mother, etc. We had no ladies and so had to make them. And it was quite impossible, while the show was in progress, to realise that these delicate young creatures were young men who drove heavy motor lorries or threw bombs at the Bulgar. It all seems to show that English beauty is essentially masculine. Take a likely looking young man and dress him up suitably and he

## SALONICA AND AFTER

makes quite a pretty girl. But then, only the ghosts of the burnt-out shops of Venizelos Street could tell to what lengths the indefatigable O.C. Concert Parties went in order to obtain verisimilitude. It was an article of faith that to feel and act like a girl on the stage the player must copy the original down to the smallest details of *lingerie*. No cotton stockings, for instance, masquerading as the real thing. They had to be silk—if silk could possibly be found. And it made all the difference on the stage. Each big production had its leaven of mediocre female impersonators who were not expected to do more than look pretty in the chorus. But each production also had something startling to show. The qualities included striking beauty, good dancing, good singing, and—particularly in one case—amazing *joie de vivre* and *diablerie* and sprightliness of the soubrette type. The real females who sang in the Salonica music-halls were wooden compared to some of our imitations.

To realise how much the concert parties and the musicians meant to the Army in Macedonia, it is only necessary to try and imagine what life would have been like without them. To many thousands of men they were the one link with the gaieties and the comparatively care-free existence they knew before the war. Tommy was grateful to the men who had sufficient talent to provide these distractions for him, and for his part would willingly have seen them doing nothing else. In some cases this was so. Eight shows a week and rehearsals at a Divisional pantomime left no time for other work. But many others worked hard at the theatres only in the intervals of their military duties. Certain leading troupes attained the dignity of touring companies, and of course there was no question of their doing anything else while on tour. Great occasions

## THE BALKAN STAGE

were these when a concert party visited the camp. The Home O.C. would have guests for dinner and a special spread. Everybody would ride in from miles around, and there would be the greatest joy and hilarity until the time came for the Home O.C. to make a speech of thanks to the O.C. Concert Party and his merry men. Then a dreadful silence would descend on the hall of mirth. Audience and company alike looked and felt dreadfully embarrassed. In our honest British way we cannot do these graceful little things without looking as though we have been collectively condemned to death. Relief and joy would come again when the O.C. had delivered himself of his few words: "And I am sure (pause) that all of us—er (pause) officers and men alike are most grateful. . . In fact, a damned good show. . ." And then everybody would sing lustily "God Save the King." Nobody stumbled over that.

The most brilliant theatrical season of all was the winter of 1917-18. The Divisions, by dint of long preparation, surpassed themselves. The 26th Division produced its splendid pantomime "Robinson Crusoe" at the Divisional Theatre, Gugunci, and I think that, taking it all round, and weighing up every detail, it was the best variety show I saw produced in Macedonia. At Kopriva on the Struma, the 28th Division produced its gorgeous production, "Bluebeard," a positive delight to the eye, with beautiful costumes and an orchestra (mainly chosen from the 2/5th Durham Light Infantry and the 23rd Battalion Welsh Regiment), which entranced everybody and rivalled anything one might have heard in London. The Kopriva theatre was a huge old barn which, with a stage built on to it, served its purpose admirably. Further down the Struma valley the 27th Division produced "Dick Whittington." This Division suffered from having no permanent

## SALONICA AND AFTER

theatre. It was scattered over a long and difficult line, and was not lucky in finding anything so good as the Kopriva barn. But all difficulties were overcome and the show was given in the villages of Dimitric and Badimal and at Stavros. All the Divisional theatres had excellently appointed bars and supper rooms attached, and I remember, as I bought a two-shilling Corona at the bar at Badimal, thinking how curious it was that Nigrita, a little further down the valley, was the scene in 1912 of a notorious massacre by the Bulgarians. All the Divisional theatres had the added spice that they were well within enemy artillery range—they were, in fact, the most advanced of any war theatres—and the programme contained instructions as to scattering tactics in case of bombardment. But the Bulgars hardly ever tried to shoot at them, and this was one of the things put down to his credit.

I did a tour of the whole three pantomimes, and a most amusing and pleasant experience it was; this combination of occasional artillery “strafes,” a bombing raid (quite in the London style), and then the evening’s light music and gaiety—and during it all, the patrols far out in the darkness of the valley or crawling up and down the rugged ravines of Doiran. The war was always there. There was much inter-Divisional rivalry, but each production was one of which its organisers had every reason to be proud. The 22nd Division that year did not produce a pantomime, but relied on their excellent variety troupe, “The Macedons.” But later in 1918, they produced “The Chocolate Soldier”—a wonderful effort, which everybody agreed was the best musical show of all.\*

\* In March, 1919, “The Chocolate Soldier” was produced at the Petit Champs Theatre, Constantinople, and very much impressed the local inhabitants. The 28th Division also produced its pantomime,

## THE BALKAN STAGE

Then there was the 16th Corps Dramatic Society. Here we are on different ground. I should think it must have been one of the very best amateur dramatic companies ever put together. I spent three or four years in close touch with the London theatres, but I never enjoyed a farce more than Sydney Grundy's "The Arabian Nights," as produced by this Company. There was some amazingly finished acting, and the three or four women's parts were a source of strength, and not weakness. The company was in charge of a Lieut.-Colonel who had had much experience of this sort of work in India, and had the whole business as much at his finger ends as his other business of machine-gunning. One would like to give names, but once having begun, one would hardly know where to stop, and there were very many who deserved the gratitude of their comrades.

During this same winter there were innumerable other shows elsewhere; with battalions and brigades, at the Base, at hospitals, and with M.T. Companies all over the country. One cannot name them all, and I have concentrated on the Divisional shows because they were produced practically in the front line and with all the difficulties and disadvantages of being near no settled habitations. Night after night these Divisional shows were crowded with happy infantrymen who forgot entirely, for the time being, that they had been away from home for three years or more. It is sad to think how many of those dear chaps went under in the final and victorious offensive of September, 1918, after "sticking it" for so long. At the front and everywhere else, the entertainments did an immense amount

"The Babes in the Wood," there. At Tiflis the 27th Divisional Pantomime Company awakened a keen desire among Georgian and Armenian society to see more of English plays and performances.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

of good. They were, in fact, one of the chief factors which enabled our men to keep their *sanity* after the long hardship, monotony, sickness, and hope-deferred of the Balkan campaign. There is no need to apologise for them. They were as necessary as mules or shells.

Nor must we forget the various Divisional Horse Shows which were organised from time to time; wonderful functions which amazed our Allied visitors, and where British manhood and British horseflesh were seen at their best. Perhaps the most brilliant of all was the 27th Divisional Horse Show, which was held in July, 1917. The site, just on the edge of the Struma Plain, was magnificent, and "everybody" was there—nurses from the Base hospitals, delighted with the novel experience of a trip up-country, and General Sarrail sitting next to the British Army Commander in the grand stand. Aeroplanes circled overhead to keep off inquisitive Bulgar or Boche, and the weather was wonderful. It was astonishing to think that a Division very much in the field could have organised such a show. And the horses made everybody's eyes sparkle. At a Horse Show held by the 22nd Division at Gugunci, the enemy heavily shelled the road leading to the ground. It was an anxious day, as he could easily have plumped his long-range shells into the show ground itself. But he confined himself to the people and teams going and coming, and shortly after leaving the show the winning team of Heavy Artillery horses was destroyed—a sad end to a day of triumph.

And a final word on the B.S.F. Boxing Championships, which were fought off a few miles up the Lembet Road during the late days of March, 1918. Terraces had been constructed in a natural amphitheatre overlooking a dry nullah. At the finals on the third day over 16,000 men were present. Just as all was ready,

## THE BALKAN STAGE

the new French commander-in-chief, General Guillaumat, descended the long flight of steps cut in the hard ground. As he reached the ringside and advanced to shake hands with General Milne the band suddenly struck up the Marseillaise, and the whole 16,000 rose from their seats with one great spontaneous movement, and stood at the salute or rigidly at attention. It was a magnificently impressive moment. And one wondered, as the boxing progressed, what the two Generals were talking about, or at any rate thinking about, as they sat there side by side. The news from France on March 23rd, 1918, was very dark indeed. . . Would it be our turn next ?

## CHAPTER XI.

### OURSELVES AND OUR ALLIES.

WHEN the British first went to Salonica they had to begin from the beginning. In Eastern Europe they were the least known of all the great nations. German, Austrian, French, Italian and Russian—all these were known and more or less understood. But we, although our influence stretched wider throughout the world than any of the others, came to Salonica and the Balkans as complete strangers. A few Greeks who had been in Egypt had perhaps rubbed shoulders with us, but that was all.

At first, the impression of us was not too favourable. For one thing French influence and prestige overshadowed us. French influence was king, the language almost universal and the local people—all of whom pretend to wear their hearts on their sleeves, and most of whom can change them at will—thought of us as quite a secondary factor. The campaign was under a French command and French propaganda, we must remember, was a more virile and energetic growth than ours. I remember that when in August, 1916, the British captured the difficult position of Horseshoe Hill, on the Doiran Front, a local newspaper, the *Opinion*, published in French by a Greek of strong French leanings, came out with the following:—

“The English troops who have just come into contact with the Bulgars have given proof of remarkable abnegation and bravery. In the combat which took place





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Our Balkan Allies: Serbs at Mikra,  
after landing from Corfu, 1916.

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Evzones of the Venizelist Army  
leaving for the Front, 1917.

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## OURSELVES AND OUR ALLIES

in the position known as Horseshoe the British troops attacked the Bulgars with the bayonet with admirable dash, forcing them finally to give up the ground. Military circles (*les milieux militaires*) are extremely satisfied with the conduct of the English, all the more so as these troops enter into line for the first time."

It was no doubt fairly well-meant, but for once British G.H.Q. was annoyed, and the *Opinion* had its nose tweaked by French G.H.Q. It was rather exasperating that the dear old British Empire should be cheerily patted on the back by a Salonica journal. But then comparatively few people outside our own country have ever heard of Hastings, Agincourt, Crecy, the Armada, Blenheim, Malplaquet, Quebec, Badajos, Trafalgar, Waterloo, Inkerman, the Mutiny, Rorke's Drift, and a few score more historical "stunts" which help to make up the story of Britain. And throughout the war we were so busy impressing on everybody that we were not a military nation that most of them finished by believing we had never had a "scrap" at all; or at any rate nothing more than an occasional brush with a handful of niggers.

We had to start, then, from nothing, and it soon became less than nothing, because at first sight we were regarded as a brusque and unpolite people. The British officer or soldier stolidly went his way on the pavements and gave the impression of not caring a hang for anybody. He had not the easy ways and flourishes of some of our friends, and the first impression therefore was that he had no manners. The British officer, when he enters a café, does not usually salute the assembled company as most of our Allies do. It is a pleasant custom and is worth copying, but happens not to be in our scheme of conduct. The sole reason is that the average Briton is timid and a

## SALONICA AND AFTER

little self-conscious, and hates, as he hates the Devil, drawing attention to himself in public. This point was, and largely remains, utterly misunderstood, and is the basis of most errors on our account. The average British officer would rather die than wear three or four medals dangling on his breast. The average French officer likes to do it, and is proud of the effect they cause in public. Neither is right and neither is wrong. It is simply the fundamental temperamental difference between two peoples. But it is striking, all the same, how sooner or later British masculine codes end by imposing themselves on other nations, providing they can be studied long enough. In this simple little detail of medals, it was very noticeable that towards the end of the Salonica campaign fewer and fewer Allied officers wore their medals, and contented themselves with ribbons. If there is a real standard of right and wrong in these matters, then there is good ground for thinking that the British are always nearer to it than anybody else. Just as there are people, who, by some superior endowment, may lay down the law as to whether a work of art is good or bad, so there is a people which has the gift of setting the masculine standard.

On the other hand, the French are extraordinarily simple and unostentatious in ways one would least expect. A French general, for instance, is often a much less impressive figure than a French *sous-lieutenant*. A tiny star on the cuff of his jacket (or two or three, according to his rank) is often the only sign of distinction a French commander of a division or army will carry. For the rest he is often dressed in simple, unadorned horizon blue or khaki with the plainest of *képis*. And I have seen a French general of Division sitting at a table in front of Floca's taking

## OURSELVES AND OUR ALLIES

his *aperitif* like any other man, and chatting away vivaciously with a lieutenant. A British general could no more do that, without losing something, than he could buy bananas from a barrow in the street. All French generals I happen to have talked to are the same; simple, easy and, on ordinary occasions at any rate, making almost a cult of being unadorned. Of course, on "holidays and fête days" a French general can be one of the most gorgeous and impressive of individuals.

The British rapidly gained ground in everybody's esteem in Salonica. "*Ah, les Anglais!*" I became tired of people of various nationalities who told me how much they loved the British; what a revelation we had been to them; how straight, honest and unaffected we were, and how wonderfully competent in doing things. "We misunderstood you at first it is true. We did not know your ways. We thought you had very little politeness. . . . But now! *Ah, les Anglais!*" The idea flourished until there came a time when our prestige was almost overpowering. We had to play second fiddle all through the Balkan campaign, and the Great People at home never helped us a scrap, because through a thousand ill-inspired megaphones the world was told that Britain, after all, was only playing a mediocre part in the war. What we achieved in the Balkans we had to do "on our own," but the result was that British stock rose highest in the local Allied market. One smiled when people talked about the British troops being taken away from Salonica to some other field of war. We were an Allied Army of five nations, and such a state of things must always be a difficult compromise. There were many racial antipathies and prejudices, and it is absurd to pretend—now that the enemy has been beaten—that there were

## SALONICA AND AFTER

not. These sometimes showed themselves sufficiently on the surface to have caused much pleasure to the Bulgar had he known. The British forces were, to a large extent, the link which bound the whole Allied Army together; our example and prestige, all the stronger perhaps for not being too much insisted on, was a factor always working for harmony. One cannot better express it than by saying that we were the *Armée de Liaison*. This is a point which ought to be thoroughly understood at home. On this ground alone, the British Divisions in Macedonia more than justified themselves. They were not only a fighting, but a political army, and it would at any time have been the height of unwisdom to take them away—even if their numbers had been replaced by troops of some other country.

This high regard for the British sometimes became a little embarrassing. It was occasionally so fervently expressed that it was likely to cause irritation elsewhere, and this was the last thing anybody desired. M. Repoules, for instance, a former Greek Minister of Finance, wrote an appreciation of the presence and work of the various Allies in the Balkans in which it was impossible not to see that he had “plumped” for the British. He was quite nice about the others, but lyrical about us. A long extract from the article was translated for *The Balkan News*, and it is typical of our men that, immediately, a number of skits came in making gentle fun of the eminent Greek’s praises of “our blue-eyed boys.” One felt glad of this. It is a dreadful thing when a nation comes calmly to accept unlimited praise as being its rightful due. And there is one tribute from M. Venizelos which was not made public, but which I know to be absolutely authentic. “The British people,” he said to an acquaintance of

## OURSELVES AND OUR ALLIES

mine, "is in its civilisation two hundred years in advance of any other nation in Europe." Well, well, perhaps in sanitary matters we are.

In the early days the Allies were chiefly represented by the French, the Serbs and ourselves. The Greeks were still Constantine's, and the Italians and Russians had not arrived. The French and the British were already fairly well known to each other. But the Serbians were new to us, and we were new to them, and it was not long before a mutual admiration sprang up. We admired them for their supreme soldierly qualities, felt sympathy for their sufferings, and generally had a big-brotherly affection for the little nation which had been so tried. They on their part discovered us as a revelation. Their horizon, before the war, had been bounded by Austria and Germany, and those who had ventured further afield had gone to Paris for their culture, and found much good by so doing. But England they did not know, and in us they apparently found all that they had been longing for. In a thousand informal gatherings it became plain that the Serbs had taken us to their hearts and they were never tired of saying so. And how many of our own people did one hear saying, "By Gad, I admire the Serbs. They *have* put up a fight." It was impossible not to be impressed by the long-limbed, spare, well-set-up soldiers of the Serbian Army. And we never forgot that they were an Army which had been saved from the very jaws of destruction. In us, the Serbs professed to find striking qualities of efficiency in administration, honesty, generosity, bravery, *chic*—quite a catalogue of good things. The entente was complete, and Serb and Briton were delighted with the mutual discovery.

It was most impressive when the Serbs began to go

## SALONICA AND AFTER

up the line again. Reconstituted at Corfu after being rescued from the horrors of the Albanian retreat—many, alas! died after coming into Allied hands—they completed their new training and re-grouping at the camps at Mikra, near Salonica, and in the summer of 1916 began to move up-country again to meet and check the Bulgarian advance that was threatening. I first saw them moving up on a hot July evening. I was going to dinner at an Indian Medical Camp and they filled the road for a mile or more. They had already marched some eight or ten miles, and looked very hot in their new French blue uniforms with blue steel helmets, and the dust was rising from their feet like steam. But they were fine upstanding fellows, lean and hard, and everyone of them was browned to a rich mahogany. When I came back three hours later, they were still on the road, marching stolidly, silently, with an utter absence of pomp or ceremony, every one of them looking simply what he was—a fighting man going out again to fight. They had no illusions about that. For several days they were moving up, infantry, artillery and transport; 120,000 of them, all that was left of the 650,000 men Serbia had mobilized; men of the Vardar, Danube, Timok, Morava, Drin and Schumadia Divisions. (The Serbs name their Divisions after the rivers of the country.) A few mornings after this, I was awakened at about five o'clock by the sound of a band playing selections from "Toreador" and there the blue line was still filing past; regiment after regiment of them, their nut-brown faces shining in the early morning sunlight. Poor Serbs! The Great War gave little respite to them, and of the 120,000 many were soon to fall. When the final 1918 offensive came they were able to muster with all ranks, all services, and with 10,000 Yugo-Slavs included, only 80,000 men.



## OURSELVES AND OUR ALLIES

At about this time I attended a number of Serbian ceremonies. There was the Slava, or feast day, of a crack cavalry regiment for instance, out in the hills just behind Sedes. It was a grilling hot day, and everybody had to stand bareheaded at the religious ceremony—a simple matter for a Serb, but an ordeal for us. As we entered the sort of stockade in which the regiment was, the Colonel at the gate kissed each one of us on both cheeks. I met him in the street next day, and he did not recognise me. It is rather curious to be kissed by a man one day, and to be a stranger to him on the next. He was, in a rather gipsy way, a very handsome man, and was generally understood to have been one of the leaders in the assassination of King Alexander and Queen Draga; that dynastic tragedy which—worked up and boomed by the Austrian Press—did Serbia so much harm in the eyes of other nations.

After the religious ceremony we sat down to a tremendous lunch which lasted for hours. We were sitting under a long open thatched shelter, and the scene might have been laid in Central Africa. General Moschopolous, who was the head of the Greek command in Salonica at that time, was present, and a certain Serbian captain who always loved to make speeches addressed himself directly to the Greek General, and in vibrant tones assured him of the glorious part Greece was shortly to play. As Constantine's attitude at that time was becoming more and more dubious, General Moschopolous looked very uncomfortable. After the interminable lunch we danced the kola, which has been described as the only ceremonial dance which can be performed in long grass on a steep hillside wearing top boots and spurs. You link hands in a long line and, to the sound of the Serbian pipes, the line advances and retreats, and at the same time each individual dancer

## SALONICA AND AFTER

performs evolutions of his own. Some of them indulged in extraordinary feats of agility. I found it more than hot enough merely to hold hands and move backwards and forwards.

This particular Slava was held in celebration of Kossovo Day. It has been remarked by most observers of the Serbs how much they live in the past, how tenacious they are of nationality, and how remarkable it is that in celebrating the battle of Kossovo they should do honour not to a victory, but to the greatest defeat in their history—the crushing defeat of 1389, when the Serbian nation went down before the power of the Turk. In a certain official publication, a writer has hit off excellently this characteristic of the Serbs. “No other nation,” he says, “not even the Irish, lives so continuously and intimately with its past as the Serbian. To the Serbian peasant, the battle of Kossovo, fought a generation before Agincourt, is infinitely nearer and more real than the South African war to the ordinary British workman. The inclusion of such and such a place in the Great Dushan’s Empire is a reason for its ‘restoration’ to Serbia almost too obvious to require argument. It is essential to keep this in mind if one wishes to understand Serbian policy or Serbian aspirations for national unity and greatness.”

Stephen Dushan was, of course, the greatest of all Serbs of olden times and his empire at one time stretched over nearly all the Balkans. That is one of the main difficulties in dealing with the Balkan questions. Each of the Balkan races can invoke an era when some fighting ancestor held sway over much of the rest. Consequently the extreme nationalist in any of these countries points to a patch of territory and says, “That is undoubtedly ours. In the —th century

## OURSELVES AND OUR ALLIES

our great Emperor so-and-so ruled the whole of it." Such an argument is regarded as final. With the Serbs, their history is kept amazingly alive by the many poems and songs written round the national heroes which are handed down from generation to generation and recited or sung at all feasts. They charge in battle with the names of their mediæval heroes on their lips. It is this intense nationalism which spurred them on in their long fight against adversity during the war, and which finally enabled them to play a big part in recapturing their own country. The eulogy which Mr. Balfour paid to them in his speech at the Lord Mayor's banquet in 1918 was well deserved.

In January, 1918, I spent the Serbian Christmas with the Headquarters of the Vardar Division on the Moglena front. A massive lunch was followed at a very short interval by a bigger dinner. We drank a great deal of red wine, but happily it was all of the same kind. An orchestra was stationed outside the door of the long hut, and in relays the kola was danced for hours on end. One could not help but admire these men tremendously, with their courageous acceptance of exile from their devastated country. They heard from their families only at the rarest intervals, through Switzerland. Most of them had been fighting for six years. And yet there was no suggestion that they would not go on fighting indefinitely until the victory was won. One felt how much British moral support really meant to these hardy fighters, and what their deception and discouragement would have been had our troops ever been taken away. The British and Serbian armies never really fought side by side; that is, their respective fronts never touched, the French always being between. But we had a number of Motor Transport Companies with the Serbian armies; in fact,

## SALONICA AND AFTER

we did practically all their mechanical traction, and these hard-working British troops created a splendid impression. The great victory of the Serbs when, in the autumn, they captured the 8,000 feet summit of Kaijmacklan, would not have been possible without the devoted work of some of our Ford units, which kept supplies and ammunition going up a dreadful mountain road which may fairly be described as a precipice.

Take him for all in all, the Serb is indeed a man. I suppose that under his own conditions of Balkan warfare you could not possibly find better fighting material in the world, and we came to the conclusion that all round he is easily the best soldier in the Balkans. He is strong and hardy, courageous, great on bayonet work, and is not too much shaken, as so many otherwise courageous people are, by artillery. The Serbs are, of course, almost entirely peasants, and Serbia, being in normal times a great pig and chicken country, they are always very well fed. The Greek soldier can get along on much scantier rations than the Serb.

How much Serbs are a peasant race I realised one day up at Tresina, the Headquarters of the 2nd Serbian Army. As I was walking through the village with some Serbian officers one of them pointed to a thick-set old soldier who was standing some little distance from us, his hands folded behind him, in an attitude of deep contemplation. "Do you know who that is?" said the officer. Naturally I replied that I was not acquainted with many Serbian soldiers. The officer laughed.

"That is Voïvode (Marshal) Stepan Stepanovitch," he said. "He always dresses like a simple soldier."

I expressed a desire to meet him, but was gently dissuaded. The Voïvode, it appeared, only spoke Ser-

## OURSELVES AND OUR ALLIES

bian, was something of a recluse, loved to walk by himself in contemplation, and was not given to conversation with anybody. He was the son of a peasant, and did not bother to look like anything else. Marshal Misitch, the Commander of the 1st Army, was a leader of another type, and you felt when near him that you were in the presence of a great soldier. He is quite an unassuming man—but he threw the Austrian army twice out of his country, and if Serbia's enemies had been limited to the Dual Monarchy there would have been no question of an Albanian retreat. General Vasitch, Commander of the Third Army, was another very interesting personality who made astonishing progress in his study of English.

The Italians we always found very sympathetic in spite of the difficulties of language. There is a uniformity about them which appeals to the English mind. One Italian officer is very much like another, and the same can be said of the men. They had other points in common with us, being extremely neat and orderly and great builders of roads. Their famous road to Santi Quaranta vied with the Seres Road in construction, although it did not have to bear anything like so much traffic. The Italians, when they first came, had the distinction of being under the command of perhaps the tallest and biggest soldier in the Balkans—General Petitti di Roreto. He stands six feet four or so, and is of very big build. I remember the sensation when he came walking up the Place de la Liberte when the Italians first landed. The rolling hand-clapping which had been proceeding as the Italians passed, swelled into a veritable tornado as their immense General appeared. The lot of the Italians in the campaign was similar to that of the rest—long periods of inaction, save for hard digging, varied by

## SALONICA AND AFTER

spells of fierce fighting against impregnable positions.

The Greeks, of course, began their relations with us under a great handicap. Although Venizelos had invited us to Salonica, the Greeks we found at Salonica were largely hostile. Things went from bad to worse, and the name of Greece was at zero when Venizelos came to Salonica. He it was who lifted Greece to her feet again in the eyes of the Free Nations, and the bravery of the Army later on did a good deal more. But we will deal at greater length with this point in a later chapter.

Three years fairly close acquaintance with the Balkans and its muddle of problems and races have enabled me to make up my mind on one point only—and that is, that it is unwise for European outsiders to take to their bosoms any one Balkan country in particular. The Serbs have behaved magnificently in the war, and all their friends hope they will have their full reward. But it would be a great mistake on our part to make a pet of the Serbs because of this. What we of the outside nations want is the detached point of view; only in this way will it be possible to see the eternal Balkan problem in its proper perspective, and enable some measure of equity to be meted out to the various Balkan peoples. The great trouble is that the British Balkan "expert" is nearly always violently prejudiced in favour of one particular country. Mr. This dreams of nothing but Greece; the Brothers That beat the big drum of Bulgaria. (We saw during the war what sort of mischief this sort of thing can cause.) It should be our mission to try and hold the balance, and to correct, as far as possible, distorted local views.\*

\* But all the same one must protest against a letter which I saw published in a London newspaper of November, 1918, which bade us, now that we had knocked him out of the war, to hasten to love

## OURSELVES AND OUR ALLIES

Only an hour before writing this, I was talking to a Greek, a bank manager and a very pleasant man. But, politics cropping up, he led me before a map on his office wall, and with terrific heat explained what Greece, in bare justice, *must* have. There was no stopping him. "If they all went on like you at the Peace Conference," I said, "there would be another war at once." This irritated him. "It is your rôle," he said, "to explain to the world what Greece should have." "Devil a bit," I replied, in polite French. To repeat, I am convinced that the moment a man takes one Balkan nation specially under his wing, his opinion on Balkan questions becomes for ever useless.

the Bulgar. "Our men tell us," the letter said, "that the Bulgar was a plucky fellow and a clean fighter. It will be our own fault if we fail in getting into touch with him. It behoves us to make a good impression, and much depends on our first appointments." Whatever the last phrase may mean, this is damnable. The letter went on to talk of the good treatment of our prisoners in Bulgaria. Unfortunately first impressions of some observers as telegraphed from that country gave a very erroneous idea of how the Bulgar had behaved. He treated our men most horribly and he treated the poor Serbs five times worse. They wallowed in filth, neglect and brutality. The fact is that there is a strain of very real savagery running throughout the Balkans and the Bulgar has an extra dose of it. At a Peace Conference he will demand everything in the name of civilization. Confronted with his atrocious treatment of prisoners of war, he will say, "Well, after all, you know, our own soldiers are treated much like that at any time." The Turk does exactly the same; parades his veneer when in contact with civilized people, and winks at any atrocity that may be going on in the interior. They both try to get the best of both worlds. It is true that our soldiers of the B.S.F., with their usual "sportsmanship"—that baffling quality which no other country quite understands—made the very best of "Johnny Bulgar" in every way, and were always ready to hail any good point they found in him as opponent, whether of courage or anything else. But our men who came trooping down after the armistice from the Bulgarian prisoner of war camps were very much cured of any pleasant feeling they might have had that the Bulgars, on the whole, were good fellows. They at least would not rush "to make a good impression"—unless it were with a Mills grenade. Do not let us, for goodness sake, have any illusions about people who love to hang villagers in batches, and then take photographs of them. The Bulgar loved this sort of thing. If he is to be accepted as a savage—all right. But in that case don't let us have him masquerading in a frock coat.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

Nor must we make the mistake of thinking that on the few years of modern civilization which the various Balkan nations have behind them, too great an edifice can immediately be erected. It will need patience and education and a few more years of the enjoyment of real freedom before they can do much. Each Balkan nation has its virtues, and its faults. Each nation has its statesmen—but none has any great quantity. We may draw a parable from our own hard experience in Macedonia. When the Seres Road was first taken in hand to permit of heavy traffic being run on it we laid down a surface which at first sight looked quite good and solid. But the rains came, and in less than no time our pleasant surface of good road was pushed down into the bottomless mud of Macedonia. We had to take the road severely in hand again, put in a solid foundation, build it up gradually and keep on building it up all the time—and to make it equal to its task it needed hard, conscientious and unremitting labour. Something of the same kind must be done to introduce into the Balkans a civilization which is likely to endure. Anything that is scamped will sink down into the mud again. There are many attractive qualities among the Balkan nations. What they lack most of all is *character*, and it cannot be built up in a few years.

This brings me back to my favourite among the Allies—the British. I am not ashamed to say that most, though not all, of what I have seen in the war has confirmed me in ancient prejudices. I have been throughout the war an ardent singer of our own praises. There has been need of it, because so few other people have done it. The other nations have taken us at our own valuation, and I am convinced that during long periods this was a source of military weakness, because other nations thought, naturally, that we were doing



## OURSELVES AND OUR ALLIES

rather *less* than we said we were doing, and concluded, therefore, that it must be mighty little. I am convinced that we are the finest thing turned out since the Romans, and that our administration everywhere we go shows it. (It sounds a little Hunnish this, but I am not sure that a two-per-cent. dash of Hun spirit wouldn't sometimes be a good thing for us—particularly in dealing with the Huns.) But we will talk a little more about ourselves in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE ARMY FROM WITHOUT.

THE exemplary conduct of the British soldier was the chief theme in the comment of most observers of us when in the Balkans. I don't for a moment pretend that we had not "bad hats" amongst us. Most commanding officers could enlighten one on that point. But there was something about the general conduct and attitude of our men which inspired confidence wherever they went. If Tommy were about, then the people whom he was near felt that everything was all right. What did M. Repoules say?—"The British are practically worshipped throughout the whole of Macedonia. . . . What is the power behind the goodness of character? And how is it gained? By nature? No! By bearing, education and will. Their intentions are always straight, their thoughts innocent, and they never misuse their power. . . . Not even the most ill-educated Englishman, even when intoxicated, molests anyone, hurts anyone, hurts an animal, touches a fruit tree, or displays any vicious tendency. Heredity has not left in the British character a trace of brutality or barbarism."

I think it is mostly true, and the heart of the whole tribute is, "They never misuse their power." It never occurs to the British soldier that because he is in uniform, occupying somebody else's country, he has a right to do things which he would not dare to do in his own. He is just as good-humoured to the Balkan

## THE ARMY FROM WITHOUT

peasant woman as he would be to one of the "lydies" who sell flowers on the fountain in Piccadilly Circus. He doesn't think that because he, a foreign soldier, sees a Balkan chicken he has a mandate to "pinch" it. It simply doesn't occur to him to play the conquering warrior game. He has a phrase of his own which shows this. He speaks of himself as "the brutal and licentious soldiery," and we all know that once Tommy has made a joke of a thing he has absolutely robbed it of its sting. The same British Colonel whom I have already once quoted (and who, by the way, was a markedly cynical, man-of-the-world type) told me that in several years experience with his Division he had not known a single case of assault on women, and had any such occurred the case must have come through his hands. And yet we employed a great deal of female labour in road-making, with men of ours constantly in charge of them. "Of course. . . ." the Colonel added with a twinkle. He would, being the cynic he is. But his testimony remains, and is all the more valuable as coming from one who was in no way swayed by sentimentality, and who had shed all his illusions long before he came to Macedonia. Tommy was a great civilising force in Macedonia. Even the most mulish of the peasants—and they can be very mulish—began to realise that something new was abroad: that soldiers could be up and down the roads and on the side tracks everywhere and that nobody's head was broken, no woman was carried off, and no chickens or eggs were looted. In many places far off the beaten tracks the peasants were encouraged to bring their produce from miles round and hold a market. Here Tommy bargained—"Hey, Johnny, how much them eggs. . . . Eggs, uffs. *Idey*, how much?" It was not long, of course, before the Balkan peasant having lost all fear

## SALONICA AND AFTER

of our soldiers began to exploit them. The primitive mind rebounds quickly from fear to profit. . . . How long the traces of civilization we left will remain, or whether or not they will be the real beginning of a permanently better order of affairs in Macedonia, depends on many things.

The writer occupied during the best part of three years the rather singular position of being of an Army and yet not in it, and so while knowing something of its inside workings, can yet look on it from an outside point of view. And my final impression of the British Army is one of great efficiency, even though in many instances we spent more money to do a thing than we need have done, and in others had more men—or officers—to do a job than we need have had. But there is no doubt about it that the Army gets things done, once it thinks of doing them. We heard, during the war, a great deal about the circumlocution of the Army, and how a request or an order or a suggestion travels round and round from office to office until it dies of giddiness. No doubt there is a great deal of that, but though "the system" may have its faults, I think it gets there in the end. I used to be fascinated by the way in which, if I asked for a thing, it travelled round its appointed circle inevitably as fate and came back—generally granted. In many ways the Army is extraordinarily business-like. I was always impressed by the desks in the Army offices; severely neat; nothing out of place; all sorts of little gadgets for keeping straying pencils or pens in their places; a nice orderly row of wooden receptacles marked, "In," "Provisional," "Out," and so on. They were like the sanitary arrangements in all the camps; amazingly clean, severe and business-like. There ought to be a special medal struck for the men of the Sanitary Sec-

## THE ARMY FROM WITHOUT

tions, and their yellow armlet should be regarded as a badge of honour. Here is one point at least in which the war must have taught invaluable lessons to hundreds of thousands of men. M. Repoules might have said that next to the godliness of the British soldier comes his cleanliness.

As a rule, I found the Army extraordinarily prompt in dealing with any matter put before them. I never felt this so much as in the case of a pair of old boots. I had sent these to the Officers' (Ordnance) Clothing Store, where boots were taken in to be repaired. A few days later there was a ring on the telephone:—

“That you. . . ? Just had a report in about a pair of boots of yours sent in for repair on the 17th. Report says: ‘Reference, etc., etc., etc., the welt on these boots is entirely gone, and to be repaired properly they will need re-welting. Cost of this will be fourteen shillings. Please enquire whether sender will be willing to pay this amount.’ Well now, what about it? Do you think it is worth your while to have these boots re-welted? Of course, old boots are always better to wear than new.”

“I quite agree with you. They're a very comfortable pair. I'll pay the fourteen shillings cheerfully.”

“Right. That's all I wanted to know. I'll send it through. . . . Oh, four or five days. Cheero.”

Now if anybody had bothered me about a pair of old boots! But it was this officer's job to deal with old boots, among many other things, and he treated the matter just as he would if he had suddenly been ordered to start a potato farm, or take a trip round Macedonia and see what were the prospects of the hay crop.

It was my fortune to have a good deal to do with Staff officers. In the lighter literature of the war one reads a great deal about “a gilded member of the Staff

## SALONICA AND AFTER

appeared," or, "Of course, if you're on the Staff," or, "I met a Staff officer the other day." I saw lots of Staff officers nearly every day; talked with them, smoked with them, even joked with them. Like the schoolmarm of whom the little girl said in an awe-struck whisper, "Look, Mother, there's Teacher smiling," Staff officers are really quite human. After prolonged study of them I am convinced that the old, authentic regular Staff officer is in many ways one of the best types turned out by Dame Nature. Take him for all in all, the Englishman of a certain class cannot be beaten. But with all his qualities I think our regular Staff officer, P.S.C., or otherwise, has often one great lack—he is not in touch sufficiently with general, ordinary, contemporary life. To this it may be replied that a military expert has only need to know about military affairs. But the Great War showed how elastic and wide military affairs can be. One often felt that a Staff officer might be excellent at his job; he was probably also a first-class man at sport, and might know a great deal about music, literature or anything else. But he had never seen enough of existence as the average man knows it, and remained a little aloof from the world's ordinary affairs. In short, he was a little too stiff and elevated in his attitude to life—ordinary life, which does not include merely the best things which merely the best people engage in. I think that the ideal training for a Staff officer should give him a year's experience of life in more varied forms; send him, say, to knock round New York for a year so that he could learn to say "See here, now" without blushing; send him for a year to live in certain places in Yorkshire and Lancashire, so that he could appreciate that this great Empire of ours contains such things as factory operatives; or even give him a year's general experience

## THE ARMY FROM WITHOUT

in Fleet Street. Then, I think we could turn out the perfect man; the Regular Staff Officer who has rubbed shoulders with the real world and met people who when you use the word "polo" think of a football being thrown about in a swimming bath. I say this with all the more conviction because several such men exist, and I have met them. I know one who combined the traditions of a good name, and years spent in a Lancer Regiment, with a considerable experience in a commercial branch of life in which he had to compete for his living. The result was marvellous and, applied to his particular job, did quite a lot of good to the B.S.F. He looked through an angle about four times wider than he would have done without his experience of ordinary "common or garden" life. Napoleon intended to be rude when he called us a nation of shopkeepers, but if it helped us in beating the Boche a little quicker "next time," I should be quite happy to see a Passed Staff College man keeping a tobacco stall for a little while. His democratic experience behind the counter would be an invaluable training, giving him experience in dealing with all possible types of men, from shag to Corona-Coronas.

Having thrown so many bouquets at the Staff Officer one must certainly say something about the Regimental Officer who came down to town on his infrequent shopping excursions and who, in the words of "The Song of Tiadatha":—

" In his hob-nailed boots he slithered  
Up and down Rue Venizelos."

The plain, unvarnished Regimental Officer was a factor who was very largely responsible in keeping our Macedonian show together, through sickness and long discouragement. I got to know some hundreds of them personally, and some scores of them very well

## SALONICA AND AFTER

indeed. They were always the same; unfailingly cheerful and making a joke of the things that irked most. When I say "unfailingly cheerful," I don't mean that they thought the war a pleasant occupation. They hated it from the soles of their boots upwards, and sometimes asked pathetically, "How long do you think it will last? . . . Another two YEARS! For God's sake, don't say that!" It was a *cri du coeur*, all right. They loathed Macedonia, and had every reason to. The interminable trenches, with only an occasional spell out of the line—further back somewhere on yet another hillside; the same old Bulgar mountains always looking down wherever they were; perhaps a course of machine-guns or trench-mortars as a doubtful break in the monotony; a spell down at a Base hospital with a "go" of malaria or a fragment of Bulgar shell received in a "stunt," with—the best thing of all—a stay at the pleasant Officers' Convalescent Home up at Hortiach to follow; and then back again up the line on the same old round. There was a good deal more fighting on the Balkan front than the people at home were aware of, and some sectors of trenches, under very frequent artillery fire, which were as warm as anything in France. One never knew, as they went back again, whether they would turn up once more for another dinner at the White Tower or the Club. One always had a keen personal interest to know what battalions had been engaged. But if it was not one, it was another, and quite a number of cheery faces which one hoped to see in after years are now missing for ever. Bismarck said that the Balkans were not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian Grenadier. But a good many very fine Britons are lying there.

And the Men? For two years and more Salonica saw next to nothing of our soldiers of the front line.



## THE ARMY FROM WITHOUT

Courtesans and contractors had made their fortunes; Constantine had played his long trick and lost; Britain had changed from a land where no man had to be a soldier, into a land where men of fifty were forced to be soldiers, and still the troops who moved up-country in 1916 had not paid a visit to Salonica, unless it were in an ambulance. It was only at the beginning of 1918 that it was found practicable to bring parties of these men down to the Base for a sort of semi-leave, and I remember seeing the first groups of them walking along our main streets. There was not much to boast of, but there were trams and pavements and real houses, and they were looking round about them with all the naïve wonder of a yokel on his first visit to London. Think of that, O ye Comedians who sang, "If you want a holiday go to Salonica," or whatever the silly thing was. Some of our men certainly went to Salonica for a holiday, but it was after sticking it for two and a half years or more up in the wilderness.

And how they chafed at the misconception and lack of recognition at home! People simply do not understand how this rankled and ate into them. *A* says carelessly an unkind thing of *B*. The thing probably passes out of *A*'s mind immediately, and is for ever forgotten. But if by chance *B* has happened to overhear it—well, he never forgets. It was exactly the same with the unthinking people—comedians and others—who said, or wrote, ill-natured things of the Salonica Army. With the people at home it was merely a passing reference, light as air, fleeting as thought. There were so many other and more interesting things to think about. But the men out in Macedonia thought over these things, brooded over them, discussed them rancorously in "bivvy" or trench. What was the good of passing years in the Balkans for fat-minded

## SALONICA AND AFTER

people at home who didn't care a damn!; who thought they were having a "good time in Salonica"? Oh, but there was some language used about the people at home.

And this is, perhaps, the place to say that the reader of these pages who does not happen to know Macedonia may have gathered the impression that it is a moderately pleasant place to live in. There is quite a lot of talk in them of striking scenery, of Army Theatres, cheery mess rooms, and so on. But if an idea has been given that campaigning in the Balkans has anything pleasant about it for the average man in the ranks, that idea should be abandoned. Unless you have lived the life of "bivvies"; unless you have lived for three years in all weathers without ever a proper roof to your head, and, as a rule, in considerable discomfort; unless you have splashed about for weeks on end in mud and sleet, or lived on the baked, scorched earth through an interminable six-months summer, with chlorinated water as your only drink—well, if you have not lived this life you cannot hope to describe it. And the writer was lucky enough not to have been living that particular life, and so has perhaps not brought it home sufficiently to the reader. But the men lived it, and they know, and no doubt some day some of them will adequately describe it. Why, it was a red-letter day for the men up-country if they tasted *beer*—and even then it was only a thin Salonica brew. "What of that," the reader may say. "A man can go without beer." But the Salonica campaign taught me all the good and comfort that can reside for very many men in a simple pot of beer. It is not a mere drink, to be poured down a man's throat just to "wet his whistle." The drinking of beer is a ritual that enshrines most that he holds dear, that brings

## THE ARMY FROM WITHOUT

him nearer to home and all it means to him; that conjures up all the scenes which were good or familiar to him in the days before war claimed him. It means to him what cut glass and finger bowls mean to some other people. A single pot of beer can mean all the difference between final "fed-upness" and a cheerful view of campaigning. We are sympathetic to the French soldier's love of his thin red wine. Let us then be sympathetic to the British soldier's love for his ration of beer—when good fortune brought it. The two things are exactly parallel. Of course, in the New Armies there was a very large proportion of men who were entirely indifferent to the subtleties which may be contained in a beer mug. But if they didn't want their own pot of beer there was no service they could not readily get in exchange for it.

After the victorious offensive in 1918, the Bishop of London, who was out visiting the Balkan Army, wrote a letter to the *Times* which, in the history of Salonica, may well rank with St. Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians. In it he asked eloquently for fairness to a gallant force, and in commenting on the letter, the *Times* put its finger right on the spot. "Few of us at home," it said, "have any conception how much our praise, and when necessary our criticism, if only it is sympathetic, means for the Armies at the front—how much it sustains them in their trials and spurs them to fresh efforts to victory. . . These men in our Eastern Armies have had the dust and toil, without the laurel, of the race to Victory."

As a matter of fact, the British troops in the Balkans were particularly good men. The four Divisions mainly concerned in the campaign were all of splendid quality. One might even call it a picked Army. Average troops could certainly not have stuck the long

## SALONICA AND AFTER

campaign, and rallied so magnificently for the final desperate enterprise, as General Milne describes in his 1919 despatch. But such was the fatality which pursued our Salonica Army that even when the great break-through occurred their names hardly figured in the general communiqué, which was issued from the French command, and the people at home knew that there had been a great Balkan victory without knowing that our men had played a vital part in winning it.

And while we are on this subject it will be as well to give part of an interview which a French correspondent, M. Gaston Richard, had with one of the leading French commanders in the Balkans, and which was published in the *Petit Parisien*. I took it from a Constantinople paper which had copied it.

“The Allied Armies were marvellously keyed up, and their high *moral* certainly dominated that of the Bulgars. No Army endeavoured to act alone, and this harmony of forces counted for a great deal in the decision.

“Let us take for example the work of the Anglo-Greek Army which operated on a front where the enemy was constantly expecting to be attacked, and where he had in consequence multiplied his defences, brought up great reserves, and placed in position an enormous quantity of artillery. Behind this thick curtain of defences, and in view of an offensive on their own part, the enemy had gathered formidable reserves of material. The mission of the Anglo-Greek Army was to pin the enemy to the ground and to oblige him to employ his reserves in order to prevent him sending them to points menaced elsewhere. This rôle it filled marvellously, and if you had been able to be present at all that it accomplished, you would have been enthusiastic.

## THE ARMY FROM WITHOUT

“And when later, the Bulgars evacuated the Doiran front in order to fly towards Strumitza, the Anglo-Greek Army, in pressing the pursuit with energy, prevented any re-grouping of divisions and contributed to change the enemy retreat into an irremediable rout. This must be said for the honour of truth.”

We ask for no more definite tribute as to the part of the B.S.F. in the great victory which was the real and authentic beginning of the end. “We knocked the props one by one from under him,” said Mr. Lloyd George. Doiran was the first prop.

In Salonica we had, at one time and another, very many interesting personalities. There was the Crown Prince of Serbia, rather austere of countenance, who was not very often seen about. He was often up at the Serbian front, but when in Salonica kept very much to his residence and his work. One of the few occasions on which I remember seeing him abroad was on H.M.S. “St. George,” the Depôt ship, which was one of Salonica’s greatest institutions, on the occasion of St. George’s Day. Then we had M. Venizelos, who was with us for a long while, and occasionally M. Pasitch, Serbia’s veteran statesman. Essad Pasha, Albania’s Chieftain, lived in a large house in the fashionable end of the town; and during the long period when he reigned supreme, General Sarrail, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, was often to be seen about. Tall, handsome, white-haired and energetic, General Sarrail graced most functions with his presence. He loved to see and be seen, and had the gift for mixing with men of all kinds. And at various times we had many other striking personalities with us.

But there was one whose presence also meant a great deal in Salonica, who was practically unknown to the

## SALONICA AND AFTER

Salonica public. I refer to General Sir George Milne, the British Army Commander. The two Generals were extraordinarily contrasted, and one avoided publicity as much as the other appreciated it. General Milne spent a very large part of his time up-country. During three years his journeys by motor car averaged 75 miles a day, excluding great distances from point to point on horseback. One may say of our General that he was largely typical of his Army. Out of the limelight, saying little, doing much—this may stand fairly as the motto of the British Salonica Forces.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE CONVERSION OF GREECE.

FEW chapters of the Great War are more interesting and more strange than the conversion of Greece, by which gradually she ceased to be an active enemy under King Constantine, passed through a long and difficult period under Venizelós after the expulsion of the false monarch, and finally emerged as one of the Allies, sending her Divisions into the line of battle and taking a gallant part in the final offensive, which brought us to victory. All nations are prone to think very well of their own virtues and some of the Greeks flatter themselves that it was their help, brought into the Balkan Theatre at a vital time, which won the war. We will let them argue this point out with some Americans. What is certain is that the conversion of the Greek Army from a source of danger at one of our weakest points to a powerful Ally—from a Balkan point of view—fighting for us in its own territory, completely changed the aspect of things in the Balkans and gave us the factor which made a renewed offensive on the Balkan front possible.

And what a chapter it was of intrigue and lying and falseness! When the full story of what happened in Athens is told, it will prove to be the most amazing jumble of espionage and counter-espionage of the whole war. It was mediæval, cloak and dagger work, with spies, mistresses, courtesans, politicians and statesmen all playing their part; with the sinister serio-comic

## SALONICA AND AFTER

figures of Baron Schenk, of Germany—with his millions for propaganda and bribes—and King Constantine (also of Germany) overhanging all. A point that was not quite sufficiently appreciated in those days was that Constantine was first of all a German Field Marshal, and that being King of Greece was, in his mind, a very secondary affair. From his point of view, with his German military training, the one was an infinitely greater honour than the other. He was just as keen on seeing the "field-greys" sweep conquering through the world as was the Kaiser himself. He was in addition a rather stupid and very stubborn man, very much under the influence of his German wife, the Kaiser's sister, and finally he was frantically jealous of Venizelos and his influence with the country.

In those most difficult days of 1916, no man would seem ever to have had such an impossible task ahead of him as had Venizelos. He might, by some almost Divine inspiration, believe in the final success of the Allies, but what was there to make the average Greek feel it? The forces of snobbery were as powerful in Athens as anywhere else. The King was the King: he was closely allied to the great potentate who seemed to have the fate of the world in his hand, and to practically every other royal house as well. The German arms seemed to many people to be invincible. It was quite a big thing for Athenians to follow Venizelos into exile in Macedonia, leaving all that the King and his Court and the pro-German capital meant behind them, and rally round the standard of revolt in Macedonia. Of course it had been done many times before in history, and no doubt will be done again. And there is one point about the Macedonian Revolution, which Venizelos came up to Salonica to lead, which marks it out from most others. It was only made possible by



## THE CONVERSION OF GREECE

the presence of the Allies in Greece, and could not have taken place without them. The movement could declare itself with safety in Salonica, because the presence of the Allies made it impossible for Constantine's arm to reach its followers. The Allies did not at first encourage the revolution, because Greece was still nominally a neutral country. But anybody who took part in initiating the movement, or who came there to join it, was sure of a safe asylum. Venizelos himself would have been quite powerless without this great factor. And there were many Greeks who were quick to see that it had become a "heads I win, tails you lose," sort of situation. If Germany won the war, then Constantine would secure all he wanted from his brother-in-law. And if the Allies won, they would not be able to forget Venizelos and his loyalty to them. The leaders of the revolutionary movement may no doubt be acquitted of the idea of thinking on these lines, but this aspect of the situation certainly appealed to many people.

As has already been made plain, when the Allies landed in Salonica they found themselves in the toils of an extraordinary web of hostile influence which hampered their movements in every direction. Everything we did was known to the Greeks; their Army surrounded us and could at any moment have cut the railways and, during the retreat, left the Franco-British an easy prey to the Bulgars; and Salonica positively swarmed with German agents paid by Baron Schenk from Athens. And the situation was enormously complicated by the fact that Greece was not a declared enemy, but a covert one; and that Constantine, aided by his shifty crew of Scouloudis, Lambros, Dousmanis and Co., knew exactly how to play fast and loose with the Chancelleries of the Allies. The Army Commanders at Salonica had not a free hand in dealing with the menace which

## SALONICA AND AFTER

encompassed them. They were there to be "shot at," but, for a long time, could not reply. Constantine thought he had us in a net, and that sooner or later he would be able to hand us over *en bloc* to his friends the enemy. Even as far as he went he was one of the most successful of Prussia's Field Marshals, but what he accomplished was nothing to what he plotted.

However, General Sarrail was not the man to stand too much nonsense, and following a German air raid on the town on December 30th, 1915, which amounted to a declaration by the enemy that Salonica was no longer neutral territory, he immediately cleared out all the enemy Consulates—German, Austrian, Bulgarian, and Turkish, taking all their archives and packing all the personnel off by sea. All these Consulates were so many organised centres of espionage. In the lull which followed the active military operations of the expedition to try and help Serbia, there was no lack of incident. German Zeppelins and aeroplanes bombed the town, and on the night of May 4-5, 1916, a Zeppelin was brought down, without having dropped a bomb, by the guns of the Fleet and the Allied anti-aircraft guns, falling in the Vardar marshes. It was generally believed that the honour fell to H.M.S. Agamemnon, but the point always rested in dispute. A little before this, the Greek fort of Kara-Bouroun, which dominated the entrance to the Gulf, was captured by a happy operation which was so well and suddenly carried out as to leave Constantine's men nothing to do but gasp. All the time the organisation of the "Birdcage" was going on feverishly, and the troops which came out expecting to fight almost as they landed, found instead that they had many weeks of hard digging ahead of them. The whole of the Greek frontier had become very debateable ground, which the Bulgars might cross

## THE CONVERSION OF GREECE

at any time. The Allies hastened to take up various strategical points, from Florina on the west to the Struma on the east; here and there our cavalry was in touch with the enemy; vital railway bridges were blown up. This was more than justified by events soon to follow. At the end of May, Constantine's party accomplished its greatest treachery up to date. The forts and passes barring his country from the Bulgar—"the beasts with human faces," as Constantine had called them in the days of 1912-13, when he was flattered by the title of "The Bulgarslayer"—were given up, and the Greek Army (with the exception of several stout units) retired under orders before the invasion. The Bulgars swarmed down on to all the strategic points covering Central and Eastern Macedonia. On June 1st, 1916, the Bulgars occupied Rupel. Two days later General Sarrail declared a state of siege in Salonica. It was rather piquant that this was the fête day of Constantine, and the town was gay with bunting in his honour. While a crowd in their best clothes were proceeding to St. Sophia to be present at the solemn Te Deum, Allied patrols and machine-guns appeared in the streets at strategic points, and almost in the twinkling of an eye the posts and telegraphs, the veins and nerves of Constantine's widespread espionage system, were in Allied hands.

When Rupel Fort was taken by the Bulgars, the garrison made some sort of resistance. But the tragedy was complete when later it was learned that by the orders of the Athens clique the shots fired had been blank, and that the surrender had been frankly "greased" by a new loan from Germany. So may men, at the bidding of an overpowering desire or obsession, juggle with the honour of their country. The invasion of Eastern Macedonia continued with little to

## SALONICA AND AFTER

stop it. At Demir-Hissar and Seres, Colonel Christodoulos, commanding part of the 6th Greek Division, made a spirited defence and afterwards retired on Kavalla. But here, early in August, Colonel Hadjopoulos, commanding the Greek 4th Corps, gave up most of his corps, his material and the forts to the Bulgars. This base surrender included 10,000 men, 3 groups of mountain artillery and field artillery; the heavy artillery of the Kavalla forts, 7,000 reserve rifles and large depôts of munitions of all sorts. Hadjopoulos and his men had a splendid time at first and were fêted in Austria and Germany. But their later adventures were quite different. They were interned. Many died of neglect and the rest were put on to work for the Bulgars behind their lines. Christodoulos, with a large proportion of his Division, secured French naval help just in time to avoid capture, crossed to the island of Thasos, and on September 18th made a triumphal entry into Salonica. A large French transport, and two smaller Greek ships, came into the harbour with the four thousand heroes. The excitement was terrific, and the cheering intense as the men, after landing, marched along the front. The gallant Colonel was covered with flowers, and kissed many times. As things were in Greece, he had thoroughly earned it.

Meanwhile Salonica had been very much sitting up and taking notice of the handing over of Macedonia to the enemy. The Press campaign in the Greek papers against the Athens clique was very fierce and bitter. I remember on July 1st being called over to the offices of the *Rizospastis* (*Radical*) to see the outrage done by a group of Royalist officers. The editor had written a fierce article against Constantine. The morning it appeared sixteen Greek officers walked up the stairs. Two stood guard and the others entering the editorial

## THE CONVERSION OF GREECE

sanctum, drew their swords. "Are you the Editor-in-Chief?" they asked. The Editor replied that he was. They thereupon fell upon him and his assistant and wrecked the place.

When I called a little later, the Editor was sitting with a bloodstained bandage round his head writing a fiercer article for the morrow. A French officer was taking notes of the outrage. The pathetic flimsy furniture of the office was smashed; a portrait of Venizelos on the wall was beaten in. Sympathisers crowded in to shake hands. And the Editor went on writing, occasionally lifting his left hand to be seized by an admirer. At General Sarrail's instance the sixteen officers were afterwards sent to Athens for disciplinary action, but nothing unpleasant happened to them.

Monster meetings of protest against Constantine's policy were held in Salonica. The excitement and indignation resulted in the formation of the League for National Defence, and its Headquarters were in the very building near the White Tower from whence was launched, some nine years earlier, the Young Turk Revolution. A vibrant proclamation to the people was posted all over the town, calling on them to join the movement, and calling on the Greek Army to join the Army of National Defence, and resist the handing over of their country to the hereditary enemy. Everybody in Salonica was talking of revolution. We talked of it at lunch in the Club, but one imagined it was too hot for anybody to do anything. The air was full of sensational rumours from Athens, and Constantine was said to have fled. In the afternoon it was reported that the battalion of Cretan gendarmes in the town, Venizelists to a man (Venizelos himself being a Cretan) had really begun the revolution. So it would seem.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

The town was seething with excitement, which approached delirium when Colonel Zymbrakakis, putting himself at the head of the gendarmes, and followed by an enormous crowd, proceeded to French General Headquarters, and offered the support of himself and his followers to General Sarrail. There were loud cries of "Down with Constantine" and "Zito Venizelos" as the procession returned. And on the night of August 30-31st the Salonica Revolution definitely arrived. It was in many ways a comic opera sort of affair, but it was big with consequences. It was the real beginning of the entry of Greece into the war. The Royalist officers and men who would not join the movement were sent to Old Greece and the Committee of National Defence began immediately to mobilize Macedonia.

Venizelos landed in Salonica on October 9th, after having visited his native Crete and other islands. He left Athens secretly on September 27th. The revolt spread to many of the Ægean Islands; Corfu, on the far Adriatic, joined in, and a large part of the Greek fleet came with the statesman to Salonica.

The town and the harbour was smothered in blue and white flags, and portraits of Venizelos were everywhere. All portraits of the King and Queen in the town had disappeared some time before. Noting this at Floca's, I asked a waiter where they were. "In the cellar," he replied unguardedly. "To be brought up again if there is another change?" I enquired. He grinned and passed on to the next customer.

We watched the landing of Venizelos and his followers from the balcony of the club. The crowds below were enormous, and a little before the moment General Sarrail arrived and pushed his way through to the Marble Steps. As Venizelos came ashore all the steam sirens of the ships opened up with their joyous wailing.

## THE CONVERSION OF GREECE

The pleasant and mobile features of the famous patriot were wreathed in smiles. The French Commander-in-Chief shook hands with the head of the new Provisional Government and pushed his way out of the crowd again. A mass of shouting people surrounded the Great Cretan, who was swayed this way and that. One could not help thinking of the chances of an assassin down there, and there were many in Salonica who would have been glad to hear that the new movement had been arrested at its triumphant birth. With Venizelos and his companions still surrounded by a compact mass of people, the procession then moved off down the water front, with everywhere flowers and cries of delight and enthusiasm flying through the air.

Venizelos came to Salonica accompanied by his two great henchmen, the diminutive and distinguished General Danglis, who reminded one rather of Lord Roberts, and Admiral Condouriotis, a popular hero of the sea war of 1912 with Turkey. They made an impressive trio, and under the impulse of their presence the new movement made rapid progress. They formed the National Triumvirate. All the public services in Macedonia were taken over by the Provisional Government, which was almost immediately recognised by the British and French. Lord Granville was sent out as Minister from London, and Salonica grew rapidly in its own estimation. That was the hey-day of life at the club. Many of the better-class Athenians had followed Venizelos. There were distinguished persons in the club, and what is more, handsome women. Officers down from the Line used to sit in deep arm chairs and look at them across the room, fascinated; thinking a hundred things, no doubt, about their "ain folk" at home. Evening dress, both masculine and feminine, appeared. It was a great time. Meanwhile the mobili-

## SALONICA AND AFTER

zation of Macedonia was proceeding rapidly, and one saw constant processions of the most rag-tag and bob-tail people it is possible to imagine, guarded by gendarmes, and preceded by skirling primitive pipes, marching glumly to the various unsanitary places where they were locked up until they could be made into soldiers. To pretend that the great bulk of these people wanted to fight for Greece or anybody else is absurd. They were of all Balkan nationalities, and they did not care a hang to whom Macedonia belonged if only they could be left in peace. What a happy land is England, where we have no ethnological problems, and where we know exactly at what points the race begins and ends. In any string of these recruits there were probably men of Greek, Bulgar, Serb, Kutzovlach, Albanian and gipsy race. There were very few Jews. The Salonica Jew is a clever person, and by an infinity of means managed to "wangle" out of mobilization, though many of them had quite narrow escapes. But one could hardly blame them for being unenthusiastic. The Jew has been by no means pleased with the coming of the Greeks to Salonica. They smack too much of competitors. Many Jews indeed sigh for the old Turkish days, with their mixture of abuses and purchasable privileges. They always knew how to get on with the Turk. In any case they have no national feeling for Macedonia, although they have a distinct civic feeling for Salonica. Many of them, at various times, came to me and said earnestly, "Could not England take over Salonica?" There is no end to what we might do if we listened to everybody.

Only four days after arriving, Venizelos and his two chief supporters were entertained to a great banquet in the White Tower Restaurant. It was a brilliant occasion. The pale blue and white of Greece blazed



## THE CONVERSION OF GREECE

everywhere and leading from the gate to the door of the banqueting room (the scene of many uproarious Allied evenings) was a guard of Cretan Gendarmes in their fine-looking full-dress uniforms, which include the funniest baggy trousers known. The White Tower produced such a show of glass and napery as fairly staggered one. They had kept this very dark up to now, the average drinking glass in a Salonica restaurant being a quarter of an inch thick. Venizelos, sitting between General Danglis and Admiral Condouriotis, seemed radiant with joy and enthusiasm. A Greek officer rose and read out a long heroic poem in ancient Greek which I was informed very few people understand a word of. And when Venizelos addressed the meeting one felt that here was a great man, although I did not understand a word of his discourse either. He was simplicity itself, but he had the true art of the orator. He held them all in his clenched hand, and the "Zitos" that rose after some of his passages were thunderous.

Meanwhile Constantine and his numerous followers down at Athens were surpassing themselves in bluff and chicanery. He was making urgent representations to his brother-in-law to do something, and marking time with the Allied representations until, as he hoped, the "field-greys," having finished their all-conquering bull-rush through Roumania, would come sweeping down through the Balkans, and finish the Salonica Armies once for all. Before the pressure of the Allied Governments, and the presence of their blockading fleet, now off the Piræus, Constantine did amazing tricks of political juggling, and one cabinet of third-rate politicians succeeded another with extraordinary rapidity. The *epistrates*, or reservists, were all served out with arms. Greece was now divided into two definite halves with

## SALONICA AND AFTER

the famous neutral zone in between. Constantine was King in the South, and Venizelos, under the sheltering wing of the Allies, the power in the North. The Allies pressed their demands, and with his eye on the battle line in Roumania Constantine gave way just as much as was necessary, and no more, to keep the Allies dangling. Baron Schenk, with his propaganda millions all spent, and the rest of the German, Austrian and Bulgarian clique, were kicked out of Athens. But things were going beautifully—for the enemy—in Roumania, and Constantine, cheered by his wireless reports from Berlin, judged the moment opportune to show resistance. The reservists were all armed. The hills of Athens were fortified. The Allied ultimatum, which insisted on disarmament of Greece as a guarantee of her neutrality, was drawing to a close. It expired on December 1st. On that day came one of the Allies' greatest muddles and Constantine's supreme treachery. The Allied marines landed by Admiral d'Artige du Fournet, were caught in ambush and shot down by machine-gun and rifle fire, and for the best part of twenty-four hours the French Admiral was a prisoner, and his meals brought to him. The Allies' long duel with Constantine seemed to have fizzled lamentably. For the moment "My dear Tino" was on top.

Salonica was black with foreboding when the news came through. Authentic details arrived three days later. It was a period of heavy rain and the streets were a vile, slippery quagmire, as is usual in wet weather in Salonica. The gloomiest reports and impressions ran round like wild-fire. The mixed local population was exceedingly depressed, and looked at the Allies with glances which seemed to say, "And to think that we have trusted you all this time, and here you are, going to lose the war after all." Constantine

## THE CONVERSION OF GREECE

had at last declared himself. The news from Roumania was the very worst. There would be a move northwards by the Greek Army. The Germans would come down from Roumania. The Salonica Force would be caught like a nut in crackers. People were saying freely in the streets that it was the end of all Allied operations based on Salonica. We should have to evacuate or be crushed. "And then," thought the townspeople, "where shall we be; we who have said openly that we like the Allies and want them to win." I was approached as to whether it would be difficult to get a passage with the British Navy.

One, of course, smiled at all this sort of thing, and said, in effect, "Don't be silly." But whatever one said, it was impossible to feel cheerful. It was a black day. That evening, the town electric light was off—a common occurrence. Outside the office windows, down below in the wet and muddy street, with the rain coming down ceaselessly, some sort of a fight was going on. There was a revolver shot, and we could hear the groans and gasps of struggling men out in the darkness. It was reported that Italian and Greek soldiers were fighting with their bayonets. The depressing news, the pitch-black darkness of the streets, the rain, the gasping noises of the fight below—all this gave an extraordinarily vivid impression of everything going wrong, of ill-luck, of anarchy. There were scared and white faces among the polyglot group of compositors out in the composing room. Down at the Club, later on at dinner, the blackest pessimism reigned, and the people from Athens sat huddled together, talking in low voices and exchanging the wildest rumours and ideas. At last, it seemed, the sinister work of Constantine and his men had borne its full fruit, and the blow in the back, which had

## SALONICA AND AFTER

always been a possibility ever since the Allies came to Salonica, would now be delivered under the worst possible circumstances for us. . . . It was days before the black cloud lifted a little from the town.

Who could have thought then, that within less than six months King Constantine would have become ex-King Constantine, and would have been drawn from Athens as by a magnet, together with his Queen and the Crown Prince, leaving behind his second son Alexander as King? And that a few days later, on June 24th, 1917, M. Venizelos would re-enter Athens amidst wild enthusiasm and find himself again at the head of a united Greece, with full powers, backed by the Allies, to guide his country along the road which he had long foreseen truth and courage had traced for her?

The mills of the Allies ground very slowly, but in the end they ground to some purpose. The bloody events of December 1st, 1916, and the days immediately afterwards, were followed by another ultimatum on December 14th, in which Royalist Greece was ordered to transfer her troops and munitions to the southern province of the Peloponnese, where, joined to the mainland only by the narrow Isthmus of Corinth, they would no longer be a source of danger to the Salonica Allies; and to cease immediately all movements of troops and material towards the north. For nearly six months longer Constantine played his astute game, but always losing a little; never living up to his promises to the demands made on him, but never having quite the courage to defy them entirely. Gradually, but ceaselessly, the pressure of the Allies went on—mixed though it was by a very strong dash of hesitation and weakness—and still German help did not

## THE CONVERSION OF GREECE

come to Athens. And at last we had drawn sufficient of his teeth to make it possible to apply the final pressure without any danger of an armed Greece rising in our rear at the bidding of its pro-German King. A strong French force, joined by a small detachment of British (500 men of the East Yorkshire Regiment) advanced down into Greece with the double object of securing the corn crop of the Thessaly plains, and threatening Athens from the north. The Isthmus of Corinth was occupied, so that all the Greek troops and material south of it in the Peloponnese were cut off. And a strong Allied Fleet had Athens at the mercy of its guns. On June 11th the King departed for Switzerland, the first of the enemy "rois en exil." His fall was partly one of the many quiet triumphs of sea power. Without the sea open to her, Greece sooner or later must capitulate. The blockade was an argument against which the wireless messages from Berlin had no answer.

Greece still had many difficulties to face, but the man at the head pulled her through. With great labour and many ugly incidents—which were uniformly dealt with in drastic fashion—the Greek Army was re-organised and made to right-about-face. In April, 1918, I visited the first complete Greek Division to enter in line with the British. They were on the Struma. Before them the men saw Seres glinting white and enticingly in the sunshine, and they wanted to take it at a bound, and could not understand that they would be annihilated if they tried to. Less than a year before, this had been a Royalist unit—the first Larissa Division. It was disbanded, and had slowly to be reconstituted. "I am a soldier," said General Nider, its commander, "and do not discuss politics. I am glad to be in liaison with the British and I do what I

## SALONICA AND AFTER

am told.” More and more Divisions came into line, with the French and ourselves, until, at the opening of the big offensive, there were nine of them in the field. The aspect of the Balkan situation had undergone a complete change. Greece, no longer threatening us in our rear, was now in line with us. It largely explains both our earlier difficulties and failures and our final success. And it most certainly could never have happened without the inspiration of one man, Eleutherios Venizelos.

There is an authentic little anecdote which makes a suitable *envoi* to this chapter. The armistice under which Bulgaria capitulated was signed in Salonica on the morning of September 29th. M. Venizelos, who was present, returned immediately after the historic ceremony to the house which he occupies when in Salonica, formerly a residence of Constantine himself. As he sat down to talk over what had happened, a friend with him said:—

“This must be a great moment for you. I wonder what Constantine is thinking now?”

And Venizelos replied:—

“I am happy to think that man is still alive to know it.” And one may pardon even a statesman this little common human touch of exultation.

Finally we may close this chapter with a short and amazing poem which was written in honour of the triumphal return to Athens. The author, one George Alexiades sent it to *The Balkan News*, dating his effusion from the Hotel d'Angleterre at Athens. The poem ran:—

ELEUTHERIOS VENIZELOS.

“All in a tide flooded up  
The Germans from their land;  
Innocent souls were frightened  
Of the wild band.

## THE CONVERSION OF GREECE

Miles and miles flooded up,  
Smashing defendless bars;  
But suddenly he stepped in front  
The tallest of the stars.

His helmet wasn't signing,  
His eyes in a frown,  
And on his forehead bearing  
*Steel* thoughts instead of crown.

And all the Greeks are now sure  
That with aid the British skill,  
It's a common thing to bend  
The 'German-made' steel."

At least the author meant well, and we may forgive  
his verse for the sake of his sentiments.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### MUD AND MALARIA.

MUD and Malaria! In these two simple words were enclosed the two outstanding difficulties under which the Salonica Army laboured. Macedonia, when we came to it, was practically roadless. There were only tracks, and tracks, in wet or snowy weather, mean mud. Not the genteel film of mud which one sees in a London street, which energetic municipal roadmen sweep down the handy grids with their squeegees. But mud in the nth degree; mud three or four feet deep; mud which will engulf a motor-car up to its bonnet and swallow a kicking mule. The facetious anecdote of the lorry driver discovered up to his neck in mud on the Monastir Road, who said to his rescuers when they came along, "I'm all right, I'm standing on my lorry," is no more an exaggeration than the average fish story.

And malaria! The history of the Panama Canal shows what malaria may do to strong, healthy men. Malaria helped to produce one of the greatest social and political scandals in the history of modern France, because de Lesseps' failure was largely due to a tiny pest which up to that time (in the 'eighties) science was powerless to combat. The Americans came a few years later, cleared the country of its malarial swamps, and built the canal. But what the Americans could do in Panama in peace time was not possible to us in Macedonia in war time. We knew when we went



## MUD AND MALARIA

there that it was a malarial country. But nobody could possibly have realised to the full how deadly, for instance, was the Struma Valley. It is one thing to hear about a danger and another to experience it. We know that cyclones occur in America, but we do not quite expect to get struck by one if we go there. We knew that malaria existed in Macedonia, but nobody could possibly have foreseen that splendid battalions a thousand strong would be struck down wholesale and in a few days or weeks reduced to a few score healthy men. Even if we had realised it to the full, there was no help for it. It proved to be our rôle to go and fight there, and an army in a malarial country is bound to become infected by malaria. Under peace conditions, men can be protected. But in war, with fighting going on, men have to take their chance.

The crying need of good roads was evident from the first moment we set foot in the country. There were three more or less main routes leading into Salonica—the Monastir, the Naresh and the Seres Roads. They were all—from the modern European requirements of heavy traffic—in a shocking condition. Up to our coming, in all the innumerable wars they had witnessed, they had borne nothing but animal traffic. We came with heavy lorry and motor traffic, and we were like skaters who had no ice to skate on. We had to make roads before we could use our vehicles. It is true that we should have done better if we had been provided with lighter lorries—say like the Italian one-ton motor vans. But that is another story, and does not in any way concern the B.S.F.

The road up to Monastir did not at first much concern us. It was chiefly an affair for the French, and also that region was served by the railway. There was

## SALONICA AND AFTER

also a railway to Doiran, in which direction ran the Naresh road. But there was no railway up to the Struma Front, and there we had an Army Corps, consisting varyingly of two or three Divisions. The laws of modern war say that an Army Corps must be backed up by a line of railway. But on the Struma Sector we had three Divisions fifty miles from their base, and one very bad road with which to supply them. The troops had to be sent up-country, whatever else happened. We then had to improvise the means to keep them supplied in food, ammunition and the thousand and one things of which an army of to-day has need.

The reader will have noticed that the Seres Road occurs as a sort of chorus, a Greek Chorus if you like, in this book. It is always popping in, like King Charles' head. And this is as it should be. The Seres Road largely dominated the Balkan Campaign. It represented only a fraction of our difficulties and our road-making, but it stood for so much in the general scheme of things. The British can no more think of Macedonia without the Seres Road than the country tripper can think of London without Nelson's column. The two go together—and incidentally, the making of the road was one of the finest pieces of work accomplished by any British Army in the war.

In the later summer of 1916 we began to take the road in hand. Previous to this there had been a colossal amount of work within the region of the "Bird-cage." Heavens, but how our poor infantrymen had to dig in Macedonia! Their first task was to construct all the defences and trenches which ran along the edge of the steep line of hills covering the town, and the 10th (Irish) Division particularly had some very heavy strategic road-making to do on the steep slopes



Macedonian mud : Serbian Artillery horses rescuing a Ford car.



## MUD AND MALARIA

of Mount Hortiach (nearly 4,000 feet high) which, in case of an attack to drive us into the sea, would have been the chief bastion of our defence. All this, in a sense, went to nought once we had moved up-country to face the enemy on the immensely stronger line he had prepared up there. We had to start road-making then with a will, to ensure a life-line for the troops on the new front. The infantry could not be employed on this work. They had their own work to do in digging more trenches where they were. Native labourers were employed—in itself a big organisation—and we began on the task of converting the seventy kilometres of semi-track that ran up and down the steep hills as far as the edge of the Struma Valley, into a road that would bear the weight we wanted to put on it.

With great labour the work was done as well as circumstances would allow, and for months—at the cost of unremitting attention and patching—served its purpose. We were not to foresee at that time that we should need the road for three long years, and that the strain on it would become heavier and heavier. All seemed fairly well, although such an imperfect line of communication was naturally always a source of great concern to those responsible. And then came the tragedy. The winter of 1916 arrived, and with it very heavy rains. The road under the terrific pressure and weight we were compelled to put on it went to pieces. The greatest trouble occurred on the high stretch of road from Lahana onwards, to the summit of the hills on the Struma Valley, and particularly from there down the steep, giddy descent that drops 1800 feet down on to the plain. The scenes that happened there for weeks on end in the bad weather can only be faintly conveyed in print. They must have been seen to be believed. The road simply disappeared. It became a

## SALONICA AND AFTER

giant's staircase of mud slides. It was, in parts, like the bed of a mountain torrent, and when the heavy rains were falling the torrent itself was there, all complete. What had been a firm, neat road running down a mountain side, curving in and about in great loops, and with nicely constructed drainage ditches on each side, became merely a disfiguration on the face of Nature. It was a mud hole, twenty miles long, with long stretches of it tipped to such alarming angles that even the mud ran out. The lorries which thudded and churned their adventurous way thirty-five miles up from Salonica had to give up the struggle a little way beyond Lahana. They stuck, struggled forward, stuck again, swayed this way and that, and sank to their final plunge, lying at an angle and looking in their huge helplessness rather like an elephant brought down on its knees by the hunter. For weeks on end the M.T. drivers were out from three in the morning, at which time the convoys started, until ten o'clock or later at night. Chilled through and through with the cold, crushed with fatigue, they would have to be at the wheel again after four hours' sleep. Some of them drove half asleep, or in a sort of drunkenness of fatigue. But there was nothing else to be done. The three Divisions on the Struma had to be fed and supplied, and this was the only possible way to get at them.

When the lorries came to their final morass the mule transport took on. Imagine the scene with the bottom of the road fallen out, the rain dropping in torrents, and the long trains of limbers struggling forward. Imagine the tugging and shoving, the shouts and bad language and despair, with limbers sunk over their axles and the mules in the liquid mud to their bellies. There were gangs of soldiers and labourers shovelling out mud and water, try-

## MUD AND MALARIA

ing to level up what would not be levelled, and make a passage for the badly-needed rations and supplies. For days and weeks on end the rain came down on sodden, hungry and tired officers and men, and on dejected mules, whose eloquent ears spoke of their own misery. Lucky for us that horse-mastership is a cult in the British Army and that the big, bony animals from the Argentine were kept in a condition which enabled them to do their arduous work. A British mule made any other mule in the Balkan Armies look a very miserable object. And they needed all their strength and condition for the interminable, sliding descent down to the plain; with the limber bucking and kicking high in the air behind them as it fell into one hole and was tugged out of another.

All this was not to be endured. In fact, it was impossible to fight a war under such conditions. It was decided to take the Seres Road thoroughly in hand and mould it to our will. In this we were embarking on a very big task. It meant bringing dozens of steam-rollers from England, many sets of stone-crushing machinery, and innumerable other things. The whole of the country through which the road ran was carefully prospected for hard stone, which would make good road metal, but Macedonia's rocks do not produce Aberdeen granite. We had to take what we could get. Quarries were started at many points, convenient and otherwise. Native labour—men, women and children, were engaged by the thousand. R.E. Companies divided the road, from Piccadilly Circus to Kilo 72, into sections. Then all day long the quarries began to rumble and erupt, and primitive native carts, drawn by sleepy oxen or buffaloes, supplemented our own horse transport in carting the chunks of stone to the roadside, where they were piled in nice orderly stacks, ready for the hammers

## SALONICA AND AFTER

of the stone-breakers. At all points one came on these, a wide circle of women and girls, their heads bound up in kerchiefs and cloths of all colours, tap-tapping away all day long, with a few Greek overseers to look after them and perhaps a solitary, thoughtful British corporal in charge of the lot. With the bright sun shining on their many-coloured garments, the women and girls made most effective *tableaux*, and a group of two or three hundred stone-breakers working on a Macedonian road would have been well worth the attention of any artist's brush. Hundreds and thousands of tons of prepared "metal" were thus poured on to the road. On what had been the mud slides leading down to the plain, one saw it thus for long distances piled up two feet high. It was crushed in, Macedonia sucked it up greedily, and two or three days later you would see the same stretch of road dressed with another thick layer, which was in turn crushed in. For weeks and months the work went on; in fact, it was never finished. By night acetylene flares were lighted, and the steam rollers went on with their interminable little journeys up and down, up and down. We had to make a Portsmouth road fifty miles long, and do it under active service conditions, with the submarine doing its worst. By the middle of 1917 the road was made and perfected, but we could never call it finished. It had to be looked after like an ailing infant. The heavy lorry convoys that ground and thudded along it, up and down the steepest gradients and in extremes of weather, would have pulled anything to pieces except solid granite. The suction of their tyres is enormous. We patted the road, watered it, smoothed it and dusted it. On certain sections horses were forbidden to go at more than a walk. The slightest pot-hole was marked down and instantly filled in. At every suitable spot



## MUD AND MALARIA

all along it big, neatly-painted signs, in English and Greek, were put up bearing the legend, "All lorries, limbers and country carts to use side-tracks in dry weather," and other warning indications. We had made the road at last, and did not intend to let it be whittled away by any carelessness. When King Alexander of Greece visited the British front early in 1918 he marvelled to see such a highway. On the way back he announced that he was going to drive the car himself; he did not intend to miss such an opportunity. A despatch rider on a motor-cycle was sent ahead to give the word and clear the way, but the young King caught him up before long and sailed ahead on the first perfect, first-class motoring road to be constructed anywhere in the Near East. On the long "straight" down from Guvesne he touched 63 miles an hour.

What was done on the Seres Road was done, in varying degrees, all over the wide area covered by our operations. In the immediate region of Salonica, other first-class roads had to be made, notably those serving the great hospital regions of Kalamaria and Hortiach. We reconstructed the main Naresh road leading up to Janes, the Corps Headquarters for the Doiran Front, and the great task we had to undertake through the pass from Bralo on to Itea is mentioned in a later chapter. The number of secondary and third rate roads that had to be constructed was legion. There were none when we went there, and when we had finished they laced the country in all directions. From first to last we took over, constructed and kept in repair 430 kilometres (270 miles) of metalled roads and made 280 kilometres (175 miles) of secondary roads and tracks, with all the attendant work of ditching and draining. The value of our road-making experience was immense when the break-through came and we had to advance over the

## SALONICA AND AFTER

usual Balkan conditions of spongy tracks masquerading as roads. Our three years of hard experience in our own territory enabled us to have the proper men and materials on the spot almost immediately, who kept the communications patched up so that the men going forward could be munitioned and fed.

An immense amount of work of an analogous description was done in improving the port accommodation. When we first came to Salonica our ships had to lie off the quays for days on end because there were next to no facilities for unloading. Of the 3,700 feet of quay accommodation the British only had 1,300 feet allotted to them. Munitions, until they were unloaded, might as well still be in England. We had to build piers, connect them up with railways, and improve existing facilities in a hundred ways. Our 1,300 feet were far less than were required for troops and hospital ships. For everything additional to these, which means every ton of material brought from home, we had to provide our own resources for off-loading. For these reasons an immense amount of construction and organisation had to be undertaken at the port. Another difficulty we encountered was the question of water supply, and to make provision for our many hospitals and camps of all kinds we had, amongst many other kinds of work devoted to this end, to bore 70 deep artesian wells, each of which was provided with a pumping engine.

On our roads we had running over two thousand heavy lorries, and many hundreds of motor ambulances, motor cars, light vans and motor-cycles, not to mention the ubiquitous mule limbers. All this enormous organisation of motor transport was the life blood of the Army. Imagine two thousand three-ton lorries standing in a line; how much they represent in work to be done, not only by them but on them. All these, and the rest of

## MUD AND MALARIA

the teeming vehicles, had to be kept in good order, and the workshops that did the work had to be kept constantly supplied with spare parts. "Spare parts" became one of the chief bogies. These all had to come from England. At the Base Motor Transport Depot, which was the cupboard for all the Army, 30,000 separate items had to be kept, and any separate item might run into thousands. Wear and tear was enormously high. If the submarines had a successful spell, and stocks ran low; or if London was slow in sending out the right supplies, then there were difficulties and trouble. Salonica was not our base, but England. Everything—whether spare parts or bully beef—had to run the perilous gauntlet of the submarine. We could buy nothing in the country, either to feed, clothe or equip us.

In three years, then, we transformed Macedonia, and when the time for the final offensive came, there were no lack of communications to support the troops of the various armies based on them. In addition to road-making we did a great deal of railway construction, chiefly of light Decauville lines, and communications with Stavros and our right flank were much improved by a Decauville line built along the Langaza Valley. Up to 1917 the sea route to Stavros had always been used, but the submarines began to make it too difficult. And in 1917 we opened a standard gauge line some fifteen miles long which, running from Salamanli on the line up to Doiran, to the dumps at Guvesne, saved all lorry transport over the first 25 kilometres of the Seres Road and enabled us to have our distribution point for motor transport by so much nearer the front line. These are a few of the things the British did in order to combat the great enemy Mud.

But the Malaria was even worse. Mud does not kill

## SALONICA AND AFTER

or disable people, and if physical conditions are bad, it is wonderful how much the human will can do to overcome them. But Malaria struck our men down like a scythe cutting grass, and there is no argument against a state of things by which an infantryman feels seedy in the morning and by afternoon is lying on his back in a high delirium.

The summer of 1916, as has already been mentioned, was particularly fierce in its heat. There is no need for the summer to be more than usually hot for the malaria mosquito to do its worst, but undoubtedly this factor contributed considerably to the wave of sickness that passed over the Army. Under the severe conditions imposed on them by month after month of blazing heat, the men were used up and of low vitality. In every battalion men went down by the hundred, and there were several cases of one or two officers and two or three score men only being left out of a whole battalion up to full strength. In a fortnight the South Notts Hussars were reduced to 45 officers and other ranks and never went into action at all in Macedonia, though they saw plenty later in Palestine. And one infantry battalion was reduced to one officer and 19 men. The difficulties of evacuating this flood of sick men, a large proportion of whom were extremely ill and helpless as babies, were extreme. Most of them fell ill when they were far from convenient means of transport, and had to be carried two at a time in *cacolets* on the back of a mule, or had to be dragged along in a *travois*, a sort of litter made of canvas stretched between two shafts which trail on the ground behind a mule; or carried on a litter suspended between two mules. The personnel of the Field Ambulances were worked to death at this difficult and exhausting work. The sudden outbreak overwhelmed the medical services, which were

## MUD AND MALARIA

not then organised up to the point of dealing with the startling problem of a fit army suddenly turning into a sick one. Again the Seres Road, which from right and left on the Struma, received the main flood of patients, was still largely in its primitive state, and the men had very exhausting journeys down to the Base.

Down in Salonica it was a common sight in the afternoon to see a long convoy of motor ambulances, dozens of them in line, and each of them holding four or more patients, passing along the main street out to the big general hospitals grouped together at Kalamaria. As they rolled silently along through the busy, hot streets, one saw from behind each ambulance the feet of the four recumbent men within. And to see the long convoys day after day, never failing, gave a dolorous impression of the ravages caused in the Army by the bite of the tiny creature with the spotted wings known as the *anopheles* mosquito; an impression of strong men falling right and left as if struck by a plague—which in a sense is what it was.

In that summer we had 11,500 hospital beds available in Salonica. But the admissions to hospital for malaria alone were a few hundreds only short of thirty thousand. Thirty thousand! and the great proportion of these men from the front line! This gives an idea of what the Army, installed in a barren and inhospitable country, suffered from the evil attentions of a tiny insect; a little brute which does not anger or instinctively disgust you, as does a fly, nor make you feel creepy (if you are built that way) as does a spider, but which has the power suddenly to make populous camps deserted; to set hundreds of motor ambulances rolling ceaselessly up and down, and to turn the tented field of a great hospital into a place of overwork and wholesale sickness, where doctors slave the clock round

## SALONICA AND AFTER

and nurses are run off their legs. It is absurd, but it is so. Man and the mosquito are made that way.

As the generous establishment of hospitals was insufficient to deal with all the malarial cases under treatment, and the fresh ones which constantly came rolling in, patients were sent off to Malta by hospital ship. Some twenty thousand were dealt with in this way during 1916, and some of those who were more or less themselves again felt, as they sailed over the blue sea *away* from Salonica (but not when they were sailing back) that malaria had its compensations. But the unrestricted submarine warfare of 1917, in which the Germans showed themselves base enough to attack hospital ships, put a stop to all this. As a consequence more and more hospitals were brought to Salonica, and soon the great medical settlement of Kalamaria, where the big hospitals gathered together near the sea, formed a large-sized town, was rivalled by the new settlement which sprung up on the lower slopes leading up to Hortiach. And all this tremendous expenditure of time and trouble and work of organisation, of planning and replanning; of big new convalescent camps to take on where the hospitals left off; of a thousand and one arrangements, military, medical and naval, was *negative*. It did nothing to help us to win the war, but was one of the things that had to be done to prevent us losing it. Thirty thousand of our men—including some of the best infantry in all the British Armies—were out of action during the first summer without having a wound amongst them! There are some things which certainly cannot be foreseen.

And 1916 was by no means the end of our troubles from malaria. It was only the insignificant beginning. The problem was tackled most energetically and the medical authorities initiated preventive measures on a

## MUD AND MALARIA

very large scale in the way of oiling and draining stagnant waters, cutting down and burning great tracts of brushwood, making sluggish streams flow swiftly. The healthy men were protected in every way possible—mosquito-proof huts, gloves, head nets and nasty ointments; and the men already infected treated with all the medical skill which a close acquaintance with the disease on a large scale had given us. But the chief difficulty about dealing with malaria on such a scale is that the patient is subject to frequent relapses. Again, each fresh summer gave us, in spite of all the hard work and devotion displayed, many new patients in addition to those who were constantly going sick as a result of their infection one or two summers previously. And this explains why, in spite of our experience and improved methods, the total admissions for malaria rose with each summer; why the thirty thousand of 1916 had become sixty-three thousand in 1917 and sixty-seven thousand (in a much-depleted Army) in 1918. By the summer of the latter year the Salonica Army was full of listless, anæmic, unhappy, sallow men whose lives were a physical burden to them and a material burden to the Army; who circulated backwards and forwards between hospital and convalescent camps, passing only an occasional few days at work with their units, and then being sent away to do the round of hospital and "con. camp" again. And the admissions to hospital did not take into account the great number of men who had constant relapses without declaring them. Practically everybody in the Army had malaria.

In 1916 Sir Ronald Ross, perhaps the world's foremost malarial expert, came out to Salonica to look round. After doing so he said: "You'll have a good deal of malaria this year, and a good deal more the

## SALONICA AND AFTER

following year." Late in 1917 he came out again (being torpedoed on the way across the Ionian Sea from Taranto) and saw to what a striking extent his prophecy had been fulfilled. So it was that the famous "Y" scheme was brought into operation, by which all chronic malaria patients were sent home. It was the subject of innumerable quips and jokes among the men, but was all the same the echo of a very grim and serious business. Under this scheme, in the ten months of January to October, 1918, nearly thirty thousand men were sent home. They were not the victims of shrapnel or bayonet or high-explosive (although many carried their wound stripes also), but none the less they were men broken in the wars. And our country should not be allowed to ignore or forget the fact. In his despatch dated December 1st, 1918, General Milne made this point. In concluding with an expression of his high appreciation of all ranks of the Army he said, "the majority of them will return to their homes with constitutions shattered by a prolonged stay in this malarial and inhospitable country."

Mud and malaria! We have devoted just one chapter to them. But they really loom much larger than that in the story of the B.S.F.



## CHAPTER XV.

### HOME ON LEAVE.

THERE came a wonderful morning when I stood on the platform at the Orient Station waiting to step on the leave train. It seemed far too good to be true. I had been for twenty-seven months in and around Salonica—and it seemed at least twice as long. And my complete joy and satisfaction were tempered by only one regret—that so many people who had been out longer, and who deserved this wonderful morning far more, must be left behind to “carry on” with all prospect of leave apparently still as remote as ever.

This question of leave was one of the chief trials of the Salonica Army, especially in the later stages of the campaign. The will to do it was there, but there were many difficulties in the way. Transport, of course, was one of the greatest of these. Leave parties were organised at a fairly early stage, but the outbreak of the ruthless submarine war of 1917 almost at once made the regular transport of large bodies of troops by sea an extremely difficult and dangerous matter. The submarine problem in the Mediterranean was always a critical one, largely so because of the impossibility of obtaining a united command on sea. All the arguments which were finally successful in vesting the supreme military power in the hands of Marshal Foch applied with at least equal force to the absolute co-ordination of naval operations in the Mediterranean, and few people would deny that everything pointed to the advisability of putting the directing power in the hands of the British Navy—at any rate, as far as the sub-

## SALONICA AND AFTER

marine question is concerned. But alas! many international prejudices and difficulties stood in the way of its realisation. What we did on land our Allies would not do on the sea.

The help given to German submarines in the Ægean Sea and the Archipelago—an ideal region, with its deep waters and innumerable islands, for submarine work—was one of our chief grievances against Greece under Constantine. But even with this aid to the Germans removed, the passage round Greece to Italy remained perilous and costly in the extreme. What use to send war-worn troops on leave if there was a high chance of them all perishing en route? As a consequence of this eternal menace the overland route was, late in 1917, finally set going. After many delays the railway between Salonica and Athens was completed in June, 1916, but it was not until the autumn of 1917 that it could be used for traffic. By means of this railway troops could be taken down to Bralo, two-thirds of the way to Athens, and from there carried 53 kilometres by road to Itea on the Gulf of Corinth, from whence the sea journey to Italy was very short, and splendidly protected by the great Otranto Barrage which, in face of enormous difficulties of many kinds, the British Navy put down and maintained. In theory this seemed perfect and the granting of leave a comparatively easy matter. But in practice it was otherwise. Rolling stock was short, and the single line railway, which runs up and down extraordinary gradients, was only capable of handling a limited amount of traffic. In wet weather landslips were always taking place, which blocked the line for anything up to a week or more. The Greek Army needed the railway for the new task ahead of it. And added to all this, and many other things, the French had first call on the railway for their own leave

## HOME ON LEAVE

troops, and exercised it. But once all this was disposed of, similar difficulties began in Italy. There again transport was limited—and very costly to us—and coal was short. Owing, again, to the submarine, the main line through Italy and France became more and more necessary to our many enterprises in the East, Salonica being only one of them. And the disastrous events on the Italian Front in November, 1917, closed the railway for a long period to any such pleasant function as conveying leave parties. Moreover, the organization on this line of communication was bad. Then in 1918 the available transport was largely taken up by the men going home on the "Y" scheme. These were some, but by no means all, of the reasons which made leave from Salonica an extremely difficult problem; so that although the B.S.F. authorities realised as well as anybody the hardship of men being away from home in a trying climate for three years and more, they were powerless to alter the situation. All the same, it was difficult to understand why, after eighteen months in Macedonia, French and Italian troops should go home in British ships while our own men were left behind. But that has so often been the British part in the war—to stand aside and concede to others what we wanted ourselves. No doubt those who ruled our destinies at home understood why. But it was a mystery to Tommy in Macedonia.

However, I thought only vaguely of all those things as I stepped in the train on that happy morning. Friends were there to see friends off. Ours was a mixed trainload; a handful of British officers, a few hundred men, and some six hundred Bulgar prisoners of the fifteen hundred captured by the Greeks not long before at Skra di Legen near the Vardar, the first action of the new Greek Army on a considerable scale.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

How many of us will remember in after years the happy sensations of being actually in the leave train to Bralo! We were moving, and soon the incredible sight appeared of Salonica disappearing—if one may put it so. It was my second time in a railway train for well over two years, and I felt like an excited youngster. The carriages were dirty, but we were a merry party. Food packages were undone and a wizard did wonderful things with a Primus stove. I had obtained permission to call in Rome and Paris and thus, travelling by *rapide*, was free of the mingled horrors and amusements of the long, long trip by troop train through Italy and France. But the others had prepared for this dreadful journey, and had brought extraordinary outfits so that they might live and eat and wash and be warm on the road. What tales will be told of those days and nights in the leave trains. The officers may find it jolly enough in retrospect (although even that is not likely). But the men had such a thoroughly uncomfortable time in their cattle trucks that many of them on returning to Salonica swore that they would never go on leave again even in the unlikely event of it being offered to them.

At Ekaterina, at the foot of mighty Olympus, the Y.M.C.A. provided us with an excellent tea—one detail of its many good works in the B.S.F. Then through the famed and magnificent Vale of Tempe—the wonderful gorge cutting between Mounts Olympus and Ossa—surely one of the finest bits of scenery in all Europe, with the river running through the majestic limestone cliffs. Then across the wide plain of Thessaly, whose corn Constantine relied on to hold out indefinitely, and so at night to Larissa, where the E.F.C. provided us with an excellent dinner. Life was running on oiled wheels, but although some of us slept extremely badly in the cramped space (we were five, which is a fatal

## HOME ON LEAVE.

number) the wonderful scenery when morning dawned soon made us forget. We washed, hanging out of the window, in canvas buckets attached to the door handle and laughed like schoolboys at everything we did and saw; and then crawled, jogged, and crawled along a giddy shelf cut along the side of a mountain ridge which opened out the most impressive prospect of mountain, plain and sea, looking over somewhere towards Thermopylæ. French engineers constructed the line, and a striking job it is. And so to Bralo station, near where was situated our first rest camp.

The big rest camp was but one small detail of the organization of the new leave service by the overland route, which included hospitals, R.T.O.'s in abundance, M.T. Companies with their lorries, canteens, and the multitudinous things that go to the making of rest camps on a large scale. We only had to stay one night at Bralo, and next day started off in motor lorries on the wonderful ride through the mountain pass to Itea. It is possible that before the war some Europeans, as we understand the word, had made this journey, but I should think they were very few. The pass cuts right through the Parnassus Range, and at the summit the road reaches 2,900 feet. And here in one of the wildest and most isolated valleys in Europe we constructed a wonderful broad highway to take heavy lorry traffic. The major portion of the work fell to us. The French constructed a smaller portion on the further side of the Pass and on to Itea, but in this they were very much aided by the fact that for twelve miles there was quite a good road running through a valley filled with one of the largest olive groves in the world, and this was kept in pretty good condition by the local inhabitants for their own purposes.

Up, up we climbed—twenty-five lorries in line;

## SALONICA AND AFTER

one or two officers on each seat next the driver and the bodies of the vehicles filled with cheerful soldiers all bubbling over with the idea that they were really well-started on the leave journey. We were all tourists; having a good time, and without a care in the world. And the dust! It was incredible. In half-an-hour we could beat it from us in clouds. But what matter? We would have gone through fire and water. And so on, through a wonderful mountain panorama to the summit, and then down, down, with the road twisting round and about into fantastic hairpin corners, until suddenly we saw shining far away the blue waters of the Gulf of Corinth and no Greeks under Xenophon were more delighted to see the sea than we were. On down to ancient Amphissa, prettily situated near the beginning of the vast olive grove. Amphissa, though not really much to talk about, had at first sight quite an air of a pleasantly civilized little country town, delightful to see, and standing on a little balcony as we passed was—veritably—a really beautiful girl with dark hair, who looked down with interest on the rumbling convoy as it passed. After Salonica and Macedonia, she seemed like a vision from heaven. Passing back along the same route a month or two afterwards I looked up at the balcony, but she was not there to greet us this time.

The sun beat down fiercely on the road through the olive grove and we created a dust storm as we passed. The olive trees on either side, with their heavy burdens of fruit, were caked with dust. And finally, struggling up a hill, to the baked and dusty rest camp of Itea, pitched on a bare rocky slope that seemed to be crying aloud for water and greenery. But it was wonderfully situated, with the blue waters of the Gulf of Corinth below, the mountains of the Peloponnese far away, and

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Macedonian "Ladies" breaking stones for road-making.

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The Pass Road from  
Bralo down to Itea.

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*Photo: Cpl. J. G. Grew.*





## HOME ON LEAVE

rising close at hand, over the valley filled with its olive grove, the great rounded bulk of Parnassus. And that evening when we were sitting outside the Camp Commandant's hut drinking a cool drink and a large moon came sailing up over the crest of Parnassus and, peeping down over the valley, bathed us all in its light, it would have been impossible to imagine a fairer scene.

Bralo rest camp was on a plain just north of Parnassus and Itea rest camp on the slopes of a valley just to the south of it, but we had to go round some forty miles to get from one to the other. The organization of a rest camp in Greece was by no means such an easy matter as in Italy or France. But, given the circumstances, they were both excellently done. The reading or lounge room attached to the mess at each place was a sort of clearing house for Macedonia. Here one met every possible variety of men in the Army, and those who were in a position to study them for any length of time together must have had a fairly good idea of what was going on. Generals, experts, drafts, new flying officers, occasional civilians on special missions, the chronic malaria patients going home under the "Y" scheme, reinforcements (if any)—all these passed up or down. The rest camps were the pulse of what was doing in Macedonia. Here were heard many theories and rumours—the spiritual food on which the Army lives. And the difference in optimism between those going and those returning was always to be remarked.

A few miles from Itea, far up a magnificent gorge running into the flank of Parnassus, is the famous Delphi, and what was in modern times only visited by the archæologist or an occasional leisurely and wealthy tourist became a place of pilgrimage for many members of our Army who were using the leave route. But only

## SALONICA AND AFTER

the enthusiast went there, as it was a stiff pull on foot, and transport was not easy to get. Fortunately the excellent Camp Commandant was able to produce one of the ubiquitous Fords which ran a few of us through the olive grove and up the steep mountain road very quickly. Fierce dogs chased us as we passed through the Greek villages en route, and chubby babies—hundreds of them—made noises at us. Unfortunately for one's enjoyment of Delphi, my two companions were in a hurry, but we examined with some care the remains of the Temple of Apollo, where the Oracle—who was not troubled by the irritating by-laws which were inflicted on Bond Street crystal gazers—gave forth through the priestess those cryptic and tremendous utterances which so often decided for peace or war. We sat on the marble steps of the exquisite open-air theatre, and tested its marvellous acoustic properties; paced the Stadium; awakened the echoes in the great red gorge through which runs the Castalian spring; and inspected the unique treasures of the museum; a banal building. Delphi is a wonderful and awe-inspiring place, hemmed in by the towering mountains; a place where the individual feels dwarfed and overpowered by the majesty of nature in this fastness of beetling crags and startling echoes. One could quite understand the pilgrim, whether King or citizen, being in a very receptive mood long before the revelation of Apollo was repeated to him in hexameter verse by the priests. The *mise-en-scène* was perfect, and I should say that in its palmy days Delphi was one of the most efficient and flourishing businesses ever known.

The Ford van rushed us back down the twisting mountain road at a speed and a rotation that made my hair stand up. Even the village dogs judged it well to leave us well alone when we flashed past. I was

## HOME ON LEAVE

sitting on the back, which was merely a wooden shelf, and as we unwound the road behind us it looked like a gigantic, writhing serpent, growing longer and longer; and the high crest of Parnassus frowned upon us more and more overhanging and minatory as we dropped down. Perhaps the Oracle—splendid Apollo himself—was kindly keeping an eye on us. For no other reason can I imagine why the Ford did not turn turtle twenty times. Why motor cars travel like this I do not pretend to know. I sometimes think that the whole race of motor-car drivers is slightly mad.

We arrived in camp to hear that we must be up at two in the morning, in order to embark at three o'clock—a most ungentlemanly hour. Three o'clock saw a crowd of us packing the tiny landing stages of the little port of Itea—French and British and a big crowd of ugly Senegalese. In the process of time we arrived on board the S.S. *Tymgad*, a French ship of large size. Most of us, forsaking the beauties of daybreak over the picturesque Gulf, wisely went to our beds as soon as we could find them. I was awakened by the uncanny chatterings of the Senegalese, and found black faces peering curiously through the deck window of my excellent cabin. (It is a wise thing to be a personal friend of the A.M.L.O.) There was a full battalion of them on board, and they crowded the whole space of the promenade decks, lying down for most of the time and constantly chattering like monkeys, in high-pitched feminine voices. I was told by one of their officers that they were all going to France as N.C.O.'s to take charge of the new black army raised by General Nivelles. They were not really very pleasant companions. “Bons enfants,” said the officer—but not very far removed from savages. I would not trust them too far in a lonely place. In fact I have a friend who in a sudden

## SALONICA AND AFTER

night encounter with three of them on the Lembet Road owed his life solely to his practical knowledge of jiu-jitsu. He was suddenly butted in the chest by one of them, but managed to preserve his balance, got his knee to work rapidly on all three and bolted as hard as he could, leaving one of them at least temporarily disabled and howling.

We had a submarine scare, and put into a little harbour near Corfu that evening, but proceeded after a delay of a few hours. The captain was a gay and pleasant man. "Don't worry," he laughed. "This is a lucky ship. Nothing will ever happen to her." It seemed rather like tempting Providence, but the *Tymgad* came out of the war all right—thanks to the Otranto barrage. And so to Taranto without further incident, through the narrow mouth of the wonderful harbour, and into the British rest camp—the great junction of everything and everybody that lay eastwards.

That evening I sat in a real express train, feeling like a Prince *en voyage*. It was good to see the green of Italy; better still perhaps to walk into a modern hotel at Rome and later splash in a huge bath. And so to Paris—"that is if the trains will still be running through when you get there." Well over two years before, when I had last come through Paris, the war seemed to be ours; nobody talked then about the possibility of danger to the capital. And now with the war nearly four years old, she was menaced as she had never been before. "Big Bertha" was busy, air raids were expected nightly, and the enemy pocket on the Marne grew deeper. . . . And yet Paris was very much herself, and her restaurants smiled a gay (and expensive) welcome as only the restaurants of Paris know how to do.

There came another wonderful morning when we

## HOME ON LEAVE

stood on the dockside at Southampton. I sent off a telegram. The thrill it gave one to hear that it would arrive in London in *two hours* and not (with luck) in two weeks! And then the homely South-Western train, bless it, and the porters, with their red ties, just the same. . . . The long, curving platform of Waterloo, and, thank Heaven, somebody waiting on it. The click of the clock on a taxi, and then the smooth, effortless roll along London's level streets. No cobbles, no bumping. No bullock wagons in the way; no ancient Turk or wrinkled Jewish patriarch wandering sleepily across the road. Something seemed to go click in me too. Was Macedonia a reality? Had one ever been there, or was it just a dream? In any case it was a million miles away.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE ALLIED OPERATIONS.

THOUGH during the long three-years campaign in the Balkans there were many periods of enforced comparative inactivity during which only the regular growling of the artillery and the work of the patrols and the Allied aviators kept up the offensive spirit, there was far more fighting in the aggregate than most people in the outside world realised, and amongst them the various Allies—Serbians, French, British, Italians, even Russians, and, finally, the Greeks—laid down many thousands of lives on the barren mountains that mark the frontiers of Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria.

The Allied move out of the "Birdcage" in the spring and early summer months of 1916 to take up positions along the Greek frontier where the enemy—Bulgars, Germans, Austrians and Turks—had now entrenched themselves on most formidable positions, was followed by a long period during which change, re-arrangement, marching and counter-marching seemed to go on interminably. This was due to various causes; to "bluff" on both sides; to a proposed Allied Offensive along the Vardar, which had to be abandoned because the Bulgars got in first with their own attack on the left of the Allied line, against the Serbs; and also because of the fact that at first, owing to a number of reasons, British and French Divisions were mixed up in rather higgledy-piggledy fashion. The troops, who knew nothing of any of the reasons dictating these

## THE ALLIED OPERATIONS

changes, found themselves committed to a good deal of hard and exasperating marching and counter-marching in exhausting heat which seemed to lead to nothing in particular. Then the Italians who in September took up a twenty-five mile line on the Krusha-Balkan sector, between Lake Doiran and the Struma Valley, came as another dividing wedge between the two wings of the British front. It was not until towards the end of 1916 that the British finally settled down on the line running from the Vardar to Doiran, round the elbow made by the Krusha-Balkan range and so down the long Struma Valley to the sea—a distance of about ninety miles. This very extended front was held for two and a half years. Along its whole length we were dominated by enemy positions which were always markedly superior in strength—and height—and as a rule immensely superior. It was a crazy front, like the whole of the Balkan front, and zig-zagged up and down steep hills, in and out of ravines, ran along the tops of high ridges and finally brought us up on the Struma with its odd mixture of open and position warfare. To hold this very long front, always against superior forces, we had as a maximum four Divisions, much weakened by sickness and casualties. The 10th Division, after its gallantry and hardships in the retreat down from the Bulgarian frontier in 1915, took part in some stiff and successful fighting in the Struma Valley in 1916, and went to Palestine in September, 1917, there to win fresh laurels. The 60th Division, which only arrived in the Balkans in December, 1916, also went to Palestine in June, 1917, and saw comparatively little service in the Balkans, although it was to see plenty under General Allenby later on and to play a big part in his victories. At about the same time the 7th and 8th Mounted Brigades also went to Palestine. The four Divisions

## SALONICA AND AFTER

which are the most identified with the Balkan campaign are the 22nd, 26th, 27th and 28th. Theirs was the task for over two years of holding alone the long British front from the Vardar to the sea, a disposition which was not disturbed until the entry of the Greeks into line in 1918, when we gave up the Struma Valley to the newcomers and for the first time extended our line westwards over the Vardar.

The outstanding feature of all the Allied fighting in the Balkans is not that we were so long in bringing about a decisive victory, but that we did as well as we did, with so many circumstances against us, and were able at least to hold our own until the day when a decisive push could really be expected to bring about such a situation as would materially help towards bringing the war to an end. It is the enemy for whom the impartial historian should reserve his reproaches. They held all the cards in their hands, and ought to have driven us into the sea—as they often boasted they would—long before the day when we at last hurled them from their mountain ranges. They were on interior lines, and for them the Macedonian front was, practically, as accessible as any other front. They could send down men and munitions from Germany within a few days. But we depended on the long and hazardous sea route, and every man, shell or tin of bully beef that made that leisurely journey had, so to speak, a price on his or its head—a price that was often paid, in spite of the vigilance of the Navy. The enemy as a rule considerably outnumbered us. His artillery, direct from Essen, was always superior in weight. And yet never once, with the possible exception of the Bulgar summer offensive of 1916, was there a serious attempt to thrust us out of Macedonia, although there were times when our lines were so thin, and so weakly sup-



## THE ALLIED OPERATIONS

ported, that a full-dress offensive, if backed by the lavish German support so often displayed elsewhere, must almost certainly have broken us. That the enemy forces never really tried to put their boasts into execution must be ascribed largely to the fact that the Bulgars had obtained, at relatively small cost, most of what they expected to get out of the war, and were unwilling to pay on a rapidly ascending scale the price necessary for further successes. They knew the quality of the Allies, and realised that on the defensive we should exact a bitter price. And why should the Bulgars (many of them argued) run up scores of thousands of casualties in striving for Salonica, knowing that even if they reached it the Kaiser would see that after the victory it remained in the hands of his brother-in-law Constantine? Again, the purpose of the enemy was almost entirely served so long as they kept us from severing the communications with Turkey and the East, and this, following the treachery to Roumania and the Russian collapse, was an easy matter to ensure. Further, there seemed for a long period an excellent chance of the intrigues of King Constantine accomplishing at least half the work, and his final elimination was undoubtedly a big set-back for the enemy.

But with all these arguments in favour of the enemy maintaining his defensive rôle, there can be little doubt that it would have paid him handsomely to have forced a decision on the Balkan front. With Russia in anarchy, Roumania enslaved, and Salonica, Greece, and, in fact, the whole of the Balkans in his hands, the German triumph in Eastern Europe would have been complete. Piræus, the port of Athens, as well as Salonica, would have been a submarine base, and what we accomplished in the way of submarine trapping across the narrow waters of the Adriatic would have been an

## SALONICA AND AFTER

infinitely more difficult matter in the deep and broken waters of the Ægean. Our communications with Egypt and the East generally would have been infinitely more difficult to maintain. The Greek Army would have belonged to the Kaiser, and not to Venizelos and the Allies. And the moral effect of an Allied evacuation of Salonica—whether orderly or hurried—would have been immense. It might not have won the war for the enemy, but it would have immensely lengthened it for us, and, as we now see, would have deprived us of that “jumping-off place” for final victory which the Balkan front was destined to become. Half the strength expended on the Italian front in November, 1917, or a quarter of that expended on the Western front in the spring of 1918 must have given the enemy complete victory in the Balkans. Had he obtained this there would have been no back door remaining for us to prize open, and so break up the Unholy Alliance. He could have strengthened the Turks in Palestine and Mesopotamia; the Italian front would have remained in a condition of stalemate. Even if he had still shot his bolt, and failed, in the West he could have held us off for a long time so long as his Allies remained unbroken. It was the props being knocked from under him, as Mr. Lloyd George said, which brought the end so precipitately, and the first prop to go, as we all know, was the Balkan front. In other words, had Salonica and Greece been captured by the enemy in 1917 or 1918, the war might easily have lasted for two or three years longer, and even then might have ended much less to the Allies’ advantage. And if the chief reason which prevailed on the enemy not to undertake a large-scale Balkan offensive was the unwillingness of the Bulgars to engage in an adventure which was bound to be very costly to them, then we can only rejoice

## THE ALLIED OPERATIONS

that the Germans also laboured under the difficulties which are common to most Alliances.

How often in the old days did we in Salonica argue on the rôle of the Balkan front. Even those who were serving on it often asked: "Is it worth while? What can we hope to do here with the forces we have, against the positions that confront us? As far as we are concerned it is stalemate, and always will be." And how often did one argue stoutly something in this wise: "One day the enemy ring will crack. We shall break through in the West, let us say. Then Germany's Allies, seeing Germany definitely losing, will weaken and think of making peace. The fact that we have a force on hand in the Balkans, ready to push in another segment of the weakening circle, will make all the difference to our affairs in the West when the moment comes. That is the rôle of the Balkan Armies: to hang on patiently until the right moment. That is when we shall make our presence felt, so that all our disappointments and our long waiting here will be more than justified."

It was an argument which did not always convince. But who could have foreseen how far it was to be from the truth; and not on the wrong side, but on the right side. The break-through came not elsewhere but in the Balkans itself, and the dramatic disintegration, ending in final and grovelling collapse, came not so much through Germany's Allies weakening because Germany was beaten as Germany breaking because her Allies were beaten. It was more than the most enthusiastic and consistent "Balkanite" could have hoped for.

And a final word to round this off, by way of showing that the writer does not hold an exaggerated view of what was ultimately done in the Balkans, or of what could have been done there earlier. The Allied offen-

## SALONICA AND AFTER

sive in the Balkans succeeded just at the one moment when it was possible for it to succeed. Given the troops we had to dispose of, or perhaps with many more, at no other time *after* the enemy had taken up his mountain positions in 1916 could we have fought through and finally crumpled up the Balkan Front. The idea, for instance, of cutting through and severing Turkey from Bulgaria was never practicable—once the Germano-Bulgars had fortified themselves on the key positions of Macedonia, and once the Russians had collapsed and Roumania had been overrun. The great body of troops necessary for such an operation simply could not have been properly handled and supplied in a country possessing so many disadvantages. Moreover, at any earlier period of the war, whatever advantage we had gained by a successful Balkan offensive could have been almost immediately nullified by Germany's power to rush down reinforcements at a rate immensely superior to ours. We might (given we had possessed the men) have captured—at a very great expenditure in lives—one set of mountain ranges. At the end of it, with our losses heavy upon us, we should have been confronted with another series of positions just as strong, and with powerful, fresh enemy forces to overcome our depleted forces. Throughout the war, almost to its end, Germany was always strong enough to wipe out any advantage we might have gained in the Balkans, and at the very best we should have gained a very barren and costly victory by capturing a few barren mountains.\*

\* This latter point is somewhat modified by the views expressed by General Henrys, the distinguished Commander-in-Chief of the French Armée d'Orient in a conversation I had with him in Salonica, in February, 1919. "Germany still had large forces within call, even at the moment when we broke through in 1918," he said. "There was Mackensen in Roumania with 200,000 men. The reason he could not get them down in time to heal the breach was because of the

## THE ALLIED OPERATIONS

The successful offensive in the Balkans came just at the one moment when we had fresh forces (the Greek Army) and when Germany, owing to her failures on the West, found it impossible to scrape up any help for the Bulgars. We held on and held on—and finally struck just at the right moment. One need claim no more for the Balkan Army than this; that through three years of disappointment and misconception it did its job thoroughly by holding on, occasionally trying the impossible, and that when its moment came it completed its job thoroughly by taking full advantage of the occasion offered and opening the way to rapid and final victory. In September, 1918, it was impossible to put a limit to the length of the war. In October, 1918, following the Balkan offensive, even the least optimistic of us saw the great Colossus was really tottering, and that a cessation of fighting by Christmas was not a wild impossibility. It came in November.

To all this, the Home Critic might reply: "Yes, no doubt there is something in all this, but why didn't we go to Serbia's help sooner? Then you might have done something in your Balkans at a much earlier date." The answer is that we did not possess the men. All our surplus had been committed to the Dardanelles, and by the time the expedition to Salonica had come into question the Dardanelles was as definitely behind us as the battle of Agincourt. It is true that if instead of engaging originally in the Dardanelles campaign we

extraordinary rapidity with which the Serbs, once the breach was made, exploited their success and forged ahead. As the German troops arrived from Roumania they were pushed to right or left by the advancing Serbs, and never succeeded in forming a front." But the Germans and Austrians were by now shaken and hesitating before our continued successes in France, and it is pretty certain that they would have succeeded in doing in 1917 what they failed to do in 1918. Which brings us back to the point that the Balkan offensive succeeded just at the one moment ordained for it.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

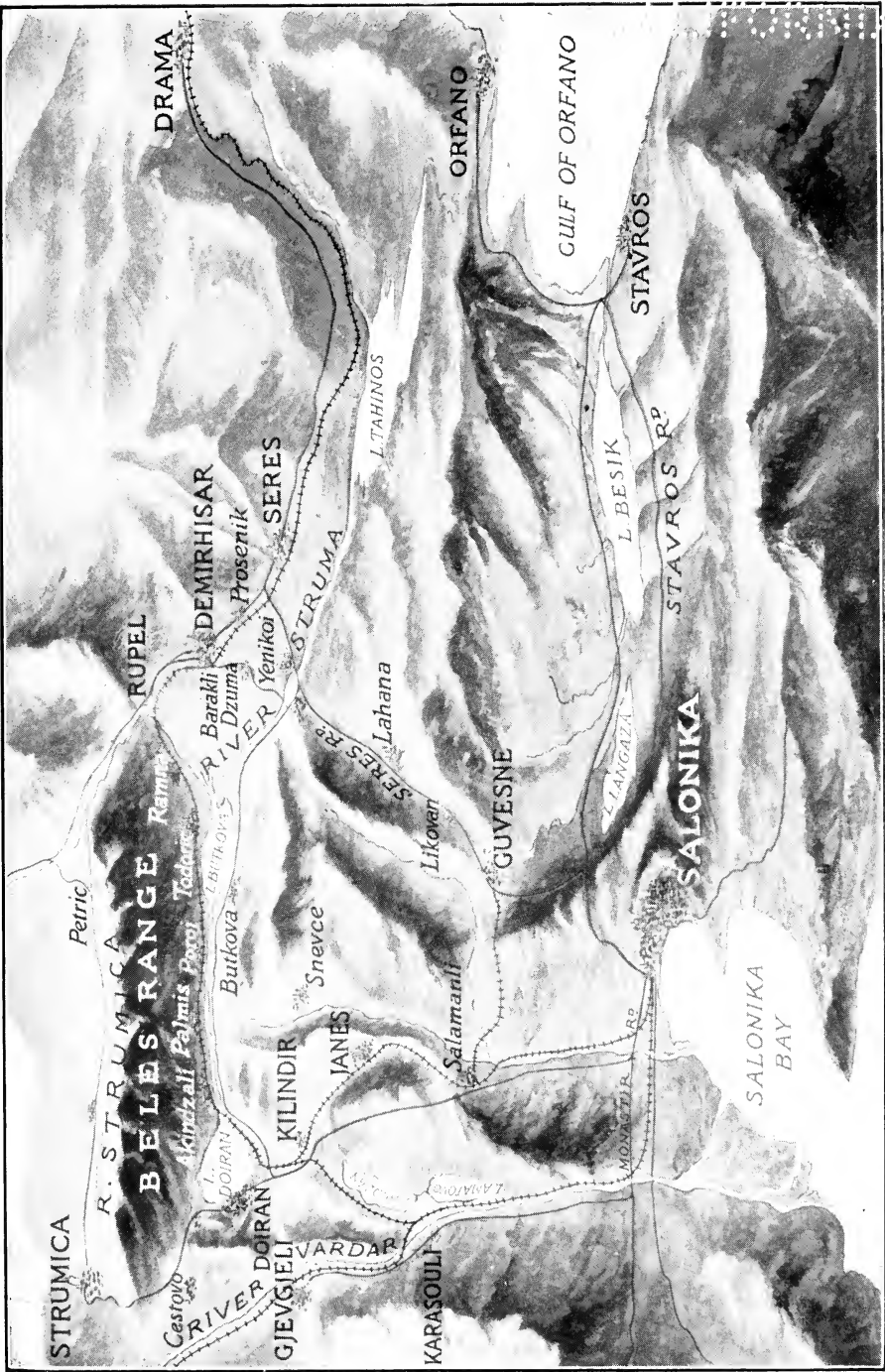
had sent our Divisions to Serbia, the war would have gone much better for us. Bulgaria would almost certainly not have come in and Turkey would never have been joined up to Germany. But this opens up an immense vista which leads back at least as far as the Treaty of Berlin, and perhaps we had better pursue it no further. And though we were fighting for the Right we cannot expect to have all the luck and all the wisdom on our side all the time.

And the Home Critic might say again: "Yes, no doubt you are doing your best to make out a good case. But what annoyed us at home was that on the Salonica Front you only went in for fighting now and again, whereas on the Western Front somebody was fighting *all* the time. How was it you didn't fight oftener?" And the answer is that if the British Balkan Army had fought for a whole fortnight on end as it fought, on several occasions, two-day and three-day battles at Doiran, it would have been wiped out entirely. And then, Mr. Home Critic, you would have had to send out another army.

The fighting in the Balkans may be divided into four main phases:—

(1) The Franco-British expedition to save Serbia late in 1915, which failed in its object because our troops were too few and arrived too late, so that the Serbs were driven down into Albania before General Sarrail could effect a junction with them far away up the Vardar. The Allied Forces had to fall back on Salonica after fighting heavy actions with far superior forces of Bulgars, but the enemy did not try to push his advantage further and remained on or near the Greek Frontier.

(2) The fighting in the summer and autumn of 1916.



STRUMICA

R. STRUMICA

**BELASICA RANGE**

Strumica River  
Cestovo  
DORAN  
GJEVGJELI  
VARDAR  
KARASOULT

RUPEL

DRAMA

DEMIRHISAR

Prosenik

SERES

Yenikoi

STRUMA

L. TAHINOS

Lahana

SERES R.

Likover

GUVESNE

L. LANGAZA

L. BESIK

STAVROS R.P.

STAVROS

GULF OF ORFANO

SALONIKA

MONASTIR R.P.

SALONIKA BAY

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## THE ALLIED OPERATIONS

This began with French and British attacks in the region of Doiran, with the idea of improving our positions there in order to facilitate a proposed Allied advance up the Vardar. The French captured Tortue Hill and the British, Horseshoe Hill. But these operations had to be abandoned because of a strong Bulgar thrust which in August was delivered against the Serbs on our left wing. This attack, generally called the Battle of Ostrovo, was finally, and with difficulty, held up. In September a strong Franco-Serbian counter-offensive, aided by the Italians and Russians, was started, and after weeks of very bitter fighting, particularly on the part of the Serbs, Monastir was captured on November 19th, four years to the day after the Serbs captured it from the Turks in 1912. This success could not be pushed thoroughly home owing to the fatigue and losses of all the Allied troops. To aid in the Monastir operations, the British carried out a number of major actions; first the attack on the Mackukovo lines near the Vardar on September 11th, followed by the very successful fighting on the Struma plain in late September and October when, in several battles, notably those of Bala, Zir, Barakli-Djuma and Jenikeui, very heavy losses were inflicted on the enemy at moderate cost to ourselves.

(3) The Allied offensive of 1917 which opened too early, and on the left, where the French were engaged in the region of Monastir and Lake Presba, was hampered by very bad weather in extremely difficult country. In April and May the British attacked twice the very formidable positions of "P" Ridge and Petit Couronné near Doiran and suffered very heavy losses without achieving any really useful result. The various Allied attacks of this year, for various reasons, lacked cohesion, just as they had done in France.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

(4) The fighting of 1918. Raids by the British on a large scale at Doiran and on the Struma in April and May. Successful action in May by the Greeks against the positions of Skra di Legen to the west of the Vardar, in which 1500 prisoners were taken. In August the British 27th Division, which had moved from the Struma to the west of the Vardar, engaged in continuous raids and attacks which had the effect of completely deceiving the enemy as to our intentions. September 15th saw the opening of the big offensive by the French and Serbs in the Sokol-Vetrenik sector, which resulted in an immediate break-through at a point weakly held by the enemy. To enable the success to be exploited the British, in liaison with the Greeks, carried out strong holding attacks against the formidable positions east and west of Doiran, where they were faced by a heavy concentration of picked troops and artillery on practically impregnable positions. A splendidly timed, cohesive, general action all along the line, which resulted in complete Bulgar defeat and capitulation, and the signing of the Armistice with Bulgaria on September 29th.

This compressed recital of the fighting activities of the Allied Armies during three long years gives no idea of their gallant work, their numerous smaller engagements, and their many trials and disappointments during the course of the campaign. In 1916 the Allied Governments had by no means settled down as to what the Balkan Armies were to be allowed to attempt. Much was hoped for by the entry of Roumania, which promised to hold our Balkan enemies between a vice, but the enemy, just as desirous as we were of impressing Roumania with the idea of who were stronger in the Balkans, opened on August 18th a powerful surprise attack against the Serbs to the east of Lake Os-

## THE ALLIED OPERATIONS

trovo. The situation was complicated by the fact that between the Serbs and the enemy were the Greek frontier guards who allowed, and even aided, the first enemy columns to cross the frontier. The immediate driving in of the Serbian outposts at Florina was followed by an attack in force of some 12,000 Bulgars, and after several days' heavy fighting in fierce heat on stony, barren mountains the position seemed critical. But the Serbians, fighting with their customary fierceness and tenacity, and although very much outnumbered, gave ground only at the price of heavy casualties inflicted on the enemy. Serbian reinforcements were quickly coming into action, and after nearly a week's steady advance the Bulgarian push was definitely stayed, though not until the Serbs were driven right on to Lake Ostrovo. The Battle of Ostrovo culminated in five separate Bulgar attacks in one day on the hardened Serbian line, all of which were smashed, the Bulgars suffering very heavy casualties.

The story of the Allied reaction when, very shortly afterwards, the enemy was driven back over all the ground he had taken and finally out of and beyond Monastir, is a magnificent record of tenacious attack amid physical conditions which cannot possibly be appreciated by those who have never seen the Balkan front. It was an offensive on the grand scale, with nearly the whole of the French forces in Macedonia joined to the First and Third Serbian Armies, with very useful participation from the Italians and Russians, and with general liveliness on our part in order to keep the enemy thoroughly engaged. The counter-offensive began towards the middle of September, and the Serbs went for their hereditary enemies like furies, throwing them first of all off the steep Gornichevo Pass, which winds up and up on the main Monastir Road. The

## SALONICA AND AFTER

Serbs, for the most part, were fighting on the right of the offensive, amid the high tumbled mountains, and the French on the broad plain that runs from near Lake Ostrovo up to Monastir. On September 17th the French and Russians captured Florina, and two days later the Serbs accomplished one of the finest feats of the war in winning the highest crest of Kaimakchalan, a mountain of over eight thousand feet. It was stark, bitter hand to hand fighting up on that windy summit, and nothing but a fierce mixture of bravery and hate won it, for the Bulgars defended themselves like demons and only a hundred of them were captured. The rest were dead. After their first successes the French were held up for weeks against the formidable, strongly-organised Kenali lines running across the plain. It was the amazing onward battling of the Serbs, fighting for peak after peak, and winning them, which caused the fall of Monastir by outflanking it, and the French Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies underlined this point in his communiqué. But the Italians and Russians, as well as the French and Serbs, had an appreciable share in this notable success, which unfortunately could not be pushed further, in spite of repeated Allied attacks. The enemy remained strongly entrenched on the hills a few miles behind the town, brought up strong German and Bulgar reinforcements, and soon Monastir had to submit to continuous bombardment.

The British attack on the Mackukovo lines, just to the west of the Vardar, occurred on the night of September 13th-14th, after a three days' artillery preparation. The attack was intended purely as a holding attack so as to enable our Allies to the west of the line to progress further in their push for Monastir—the kind of part which it was our fate to play throughout the cam-

## THE ALLIED OPERATIONS

9 paign. The attack was carried out by the 12th Lancashire Fusiliers and the 14th Liverpools, supported by the 4th East Lancashires and 11th Royal Welsh Fusiliers. It was our biggest action of this nature so far in Macedonia, and the strong enemy lines, held by German troops, were gallantly carried, over 200 Germans being killed by bomb and bayonet. Our men beat off several counter attacks during the night, but next day they came under the heavy concentrated fire of the Guevgheli group of enemy batteries, suffering severely, and were brought back to avoid further losses.

Shortly afterwards began our extensive operations on the Struma, equally intended to keep the eastern half of the enemy line busy so that no troops could be withdrawn for the reinforcement of the Monastir sector. These operations were carried out in the last days of September and on throughout October. At this time the Bulgars still held in force all the villages to the north of the Struma, and we held the Orljak bridgehead, also to the north of it. The operations included the capture of Karadjakeui-Zir and Karadjakeui-Bala (always referred to as Zir and Bala) and the big village of Jenikeui. On the last day of October we carried out attacks on a forty or fifty mile front in the valley beyond the river, the chief objective being the strongly-held village of Barakli Djuma. Throughout, these Struma operations were uniformly successful, both in holding strong Bulgar forces on that front, and in punishing the enemy wherever we found him. Artillery and infantry co-operation were excellent, and occasionally armoured cars were used. The biggest thrashing administered to the enemy was in the battle of Bala-Zir-Jenikeui, when over 1,500 Bulgar corpses were afterwards buried. His total losses in this battle were at least 5,000; and at the end of it the enemy was

## SALONICA AND AFTER

thoroughly beaten. From that time onwards the Bulgars never gave us an opportunity of meeting them in any great force on the plain (although we often tempted them) but, with the exception of strong patrols, stuck to such positions as could be absolutely smothered by the artillery posted on the commanding mountains in their hands.\*

Following on the long lull in the 1916-17 winter, during which period the menace of Constantine's Army occupied a considerable amount of Allied attention and preparations, the Allied 1917 operations opened with a French attack in March in the wild mountainous region situated between the two big lakes of Presba and Ochrida, away on the far left of the Allied line, in Albania. They were doomed to failure because of the extremely bad weather that broke out shortly after their commencement, so that the country was hidden under a heavy snowfall and the roads became impassable. Another attack was made north of Monastir, but although a certain measure of success was won, the French could not maintain their hold on the chief height, Hill 1248, overlooking the town, and Monastir still remained under the domination of the enemy's guns.

So far, since the enemy took up his 1916 positions,

\* The units of the 10th, 27th, and 28th Divisions engaged in these extensive operations, and in later fighting on the Struma, included the 2nd Gloucesters, 2nd Camerons, 1st Royal Scots, 1st A. and S. Highlanders, 1st, 6th and 7th Royal Munster Fusiliers, 6th and 7th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 1st and 6th Royal Irish Rifles, 5th Connaught Rangers, 1st and 6th Leinster Regiment, 5th and 6th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 2nd, 5th and 6th Royal Irish Fusiliers, 2nd Royal Lancs. Regiment, 2nd East Yorks, 1st York and Lancaster Regiment, 1st K.O.Y.L.I., 1st Suffolks, 2nd Cheshires, 1st Welsh Regiment, 2nd Northumberland Fusiliers, 2nd K.S.L.I., 3rd K.R.R.C., 4th Rifle Brigade, 4th K.R.R.C., 7th Mounted Brigade (S. Notts Hussars, Sherwood Rangers Yeo., Derby Yeo.), 13th Royal Highlanders (Scottish Horse), 10th Hampshire Regiment, 10th Camerons, 2nd The Buffs, and 3rd Royal Fusiliers.

## THE ALLIED OPERATIONS

he had initiated one successful "push" against the Serbs, which had been rapidly turned into a signal defeat from the combined French, Serbian, Italian and Russian forces, resulting in the fall of Monastir. On the Struma plain he had met the British in three or four encounters, and had been thoroughly beaten on each occasion. The French had made two further attempts to dislodge him from his mountain strongholds on the western wing and had failed. It was now the turn of the British to attack him in the very centre and hinge of all his mountain line, an operation which opened under the unfavourable auspices of lack of complete understanding between the Allied commands. We come to one of the greatest moments in the history of the British campaign in the Balkans; the first attacks on those formidable defences known as the "Pip" Ridge and Petit Couronné.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### DOIRAN.

THE Doiran Sector, where our trenches ran across the Serbian-Greek frontier, was the one which pre-eminently gave the lie to the childish idea which existed at one time that the British Army in the Balkans did not fight. This line of trenches, running through very hilly ground from near Doiran Lake westwards towards the Vardar, was always a very uncomfortable region, and at times a very inferno. The conditions here were in every way comparable to trench warfare in France, save that they were complicated by the extraordinarily difficult nature of the ground. Trench mortars, "crumps," hand grenades, trench raids, snipers, massed machine guns, barrages, concrete dug-outs, and all the other devilries of modern warfare played their usual parts. Counter battery work was the order of the day, and round every camp and every twisting, switchback road up which our pack-transport came at night shell holes were to be seen by the hundred. Our trenches were cut in the rocky side of ravines and over the barren tops of swelling hills, and at one point, at Horseshoe Hill, passed over the lower slope of the same long hill, the famous "Pip" Ridge, whose higher undulations, or Pips, were held by the enemy himself. Our position there was much as if one lay precariously in the gutter of a roof top while one's enemy lay on the apex of the roof shooting downwards. For over two years we held on to this particular position, and at one time—to con-



## DOIRAN

tinue the metaphor—established ourselves a little way up the roof tiles, a position which we never abandoned, although what became for a time part of our trench line was held afterwards only as advanced posts, owing to the cost of maintaining them.

For weeks and months on end the same infantry manning our trenches up in these hills would wake to the same scene; the tumble of brown stony hills stretching for miles on either side; with the two main Bulgar bastions, Pip 2 and Grand Couronné, ever frowning down; with entrancing peeps down towards the ruined town of Doiran and the big circular lake, reflecting the most wonderful colours at early morning or at sunset; and beyond the lake the 5,000 feet crests of the impressive Belashitza Range, standing up like a purple wall. On all the nearer hills, amid which the scene of the fighting was set, there was not a single tree, hardly a green blade of grass. Only in the ravines was there to be found occasional scrub clothing the steep sides. And yet with all their unvarying barrenness it was a magnificent prospect amidst which our men lived for so long; with a view that extended far beyond the shining ribbon of the Vardar on the west, away to the mountains overlooking Monastir; with the broad valley running eastwards from the lake, bounded by the Belashitza and the Krusha Balkan Hills and, behind, the flat plain as far as Janesh, with the heights that enclose Salonica to be seen on clear days. One forgot the absence of trees after a time. The effect of light was so magical that there was beauty and to spare, of a wild untamed kind, even for English eyes. In that little classic of the B.S.F., known as *The Song of Tiadatha*, the author, Captain Owen Rutter, pays a tribute to the beauty of the scene he so often saw from the trenches of the 7th Wiltshires down near the Lake :

## SALONICA AND AFTER

“ Very lovely is Kyoto  
In the days of cherry blossom;  
Very lovely is the splendour  
Of the snow-capped Rocky Mountains;  
Lovely are the coral islands  
Strung like jade in the Pacific;  
And the palm trees of Malaya,  
Black against an orange sunset.  
Lovely are the long white breakers  
On the beach of Honolulu,  
Even as the Thames Embankment  
On a misty day in Autumn.  
Gib. at dawn, Hong Kong at evening,  
Lights of Rio, in the darkness,  
And the Golden Gate of 'Frisco,  
All of these are very lovely,  
Yet I know a sight still fairer,  
Doiran red and grey and yellow,  
Clustered on the Serbian hillside,  
Gleaming in the morning sunlight,  
Ever gazing like Narcissus,  
Down upon its own reflection  
In the lake that laps its houses.”

But one may at last have one's fill even of beauty, especially when that beauty conceals within its fair bosom the constant menace of sudden death, and when the fortune of war forces one to gaze upon the same scene of exile for one year, two years—nearly three years. During nearly the whole period in Macedonia the 22nd and 26th Divisions shared this front between them, and from their trenches saw fair Nature's changes; her wonderful, infinitely varied box o' tricks, during three long baking summers and two winters. And always Grand Couronné and the Pip Ridge looked down on them, impregnable, barring the way. They knew that some day they would have to try and take them, and no infantryman on the Doiran front could contemplate that eventual prospect with a smile.

From the arid plain that spread behind our line, the hills rose steeply in a formless jumble. Our lines were planted well into this welter of stony heights and ravines, but ahead of us where the Bulgar was en-

## DOIRAN

trenched the hills rose ever higher and higher. And all this great expanse of treeless, tumbled earth, in which twenty hills looked exactly like twenty other hills, and one depression exactly resembled another, had to be mapped most exactly, and every feature had to be named. The French had christened some of the outstanding features before we came, but afterwards we added scores of names to the map—The Hilt, The Knot, The Blade, The Tassel, Sugar Loaf, The Tongue, Dorset Ravine, Trout Back, Roach Back, Whale Back—and very many more. The most striking feature in our own front line was the long rounded bulk of Tortoise Hill, whose name exactly suggests its shape. It was a big feature in the landscape, and yet, from the Bulgar heights beyond, it seemed one modest hump amongst a hundred others. How safe they must always have felt up there, on top of the roof. No wonder they laughed during some of our attacks, and cried derisively to our men as they toiled up the slopes towards them, “Come on, Johnny, goddam you!” (The Bulgar who spoke American English was by no means a rare bird.)

From our own trenches running along the crest of Tortoise Hill one looked immediately across a great expanse of ravine to where, some six or seven hundred yards away over the gulf, ran the Bulgar trenches along the summit of Petit Couronné, a steep hill of about the same height as Tortoise Hill and the main bastion of the Bulgar front line. This deep cleft which separated the two strongholds was known as Jumeaux Ravine—a name and place of evil memory, where many of our men laid down their lives. Often after the heavy battles of 1917 our night patrols, scrambling in and out of the rocky bed of the tiny stream that meandered along it, would come across the remains or the smashed equipment of some of our poor fellows. It was a grim place

## SALONICA AND AFTER

to patrol in at any time, with the steep side of Petit Couronné running sheer up to the enemy trenches somewhere above. But on the occasions when it was filled with the flame and roar of high explosives, so that in that confined space men were killed without even being touched by the hail of jagged fragments of eight and twelve inch shell, it must have been the gaping, roaring mouth of Hell itself.

There was much else to be seen from the trenches on Tortoise. To the right and left serpented our own line; down towards the lake and up over the crest of Horseshoe. Ahead, looking over and beyond Petit Couronné the ground rose in fold after fold cut across by innumerable ravines running in all directions until at last the eye was arrested by two outstanding summits—on the right near the lake Grand Couronné, and a little to the left of it (joined by the saddle known as the Koh-i-noor), P. 2., the vital point of the Pip Ridge.

As mountains go, these two main Bulgar strongholds were not enormous to look at. In the great panorama stretched before one they were backed by high snow-topped mountains which made the nearer heights look exactly what they were; rolling, rounded hills such as you might find in Cumberland, but as bare of vegetation as the Downs of Sussex. The highest point of Pip Ridge was somewhere about 2,200 feet, and Grand Couronné was some two or three hundred feet less. It needed more than one visit to the front, and more than one study of that rolling panorama, for their full significance to sink in. And then at last it began to be plain that the two bald crests, with the tumble of smaller hills leading to them, constituted, as one General who had much to do with them said, "the strongest natural fortress in Europe." I have seen Messines Ridge, and Vimy, and Achi Baba, but they

## DOIRAN

do not begin to compare with Doiran, although the famous hill at the Dardanelles is a smaller edition of Grand Couronné. All the way up to the crests the ground in front makes a natural *glacis*. Each succeeding ripple or height is dominated by the next above it. The Grand Couronné, securely based on the lake, helps the Pip Ridge, and from the Ridge overwhelming artillery or machine-gun fire could be—and was—directed to smother anything happening on the slopes of Grand Couronné. Every detail in the whole position interlocks with all the others, and running westwards from the Pip Ridge down towards the lower ground, in the direction of the Vardar, were two spurs, Dolina and Little Dolina, which diabolically completed Nature's perfect scheme of defence and made any attempt to advance up the narrow, elevated causeway on top of the Ridge a thing as near the impossible as anything can be.

From many miles away one saw the great hump of Grand Couronné, always in view as one crossed the last plain towards the hills of the front. At its crest was a great white scar, due to the continual pounding of our guns which smashed and re-smashed and then disintegrated the rocks near its summit. And just above the white scar could be discerned a tiny black dot. This represented the narrow look-out slits of the iron and concrete observation post built at the summit. Some body named this the Evil Eye, and nothing could describe it better. Everything we had and nearly everything we did was overlooked by this baleful O.P. Practically the whole of our lines were an open book to the enemy. They could look down on all our trenches zig-zagging across the landscape; look into them even, so that every corner had to have its leafy screen, and, behind, our roads up which the transport came had to be similarly screened at all sorts of points which at

## SALONICA AND AFTER

first one would never dream were overlooked. But nothing could screen the plain beyond, and it was an open book to them, and on the clearest days they could trace our roads practically to the edge of Salonica itself and with glasses could pick out what was coming up them. We looked up and saw only their roof top. They looked down and saw everything that was going on in our drawing-room or garden. We should have been lost indeed without our splendid aviation service which, here as in France, completely outclassed the enemy in individual work and dash and whose photographs, taken by the thousand, were the only offset we had against the Bulgar's superiority of positions. And the big white scar on top of Grand Couronné showed the only method we had of temporarily blinding the Evil Eye. Our shells that burst there in the crumbled and pulverised rock threw up clouds of dust which hung in front of the watchers embedded in their concrete and steel. We put many direct hits on to the O.P., but we had nothing heavy enough to destroy it, as one realised when the opportunity came to examine it. On top of the Pip Ridge was another O.P. much less easy to see, but our gunners knew exactly where it was, and at one time and another dropped hundreds of shells round it.

But much as one realised the strength of the enemy positions by looking up at them, it was only when—after the victory—we were able to ascend them and look down on ours that it became apparent what a tremendous, if not impossible, task we had been “up against” in trying to storm these hill fortresses strengthened as they were by ample heavy artillery, by every device known to the science of modern warfare, and manned by strong garrisons of picked troops, who lived for the most part in security in their great dug-outs blasted in the solid rock and who wanted for nothing,

## DOIRAN

either in clothing, food, comfort, munitions or equipment. Some time after the victory I spent three days in clambering up and down the ground over which our men had fought. And as two of us stood on the summit of the Grand Couronné, just in front of the famous O.P., looking away down the slopes to what were once our lines, my companion, an artillery Colonel, said, " Well, no wonder the Bulgars used to laugh at us and say we were mad ! "

Those three days were really hard work, although the weather was cool and we were travelling light. And throughout them I thought of our poor chaps fighting over the same ground in grilling hot weather, encumbered with their equipment and their bombs, gasping in their gas masks, and knowing that when they arrived breathless at the top of a slope they would, if they were not shot down immediately, have to fight at close quarters with a hardy Bulgar peasant who had only been lying down on the top of the ridge, working the bolt of his rifle or helping to fire a machine-gun. One's legs ached with the climbing and scrambling, but one's heart ached more at the idea that after their three years of sticking it through the campaign so many of our lads from the English shires or from Wales and Scotland should have fallen on these barren slopes; weary men, burdened with their loads, gasping in the heat, perhaps almost welcoming the bullet that added their clay to the clay of this alien land.

To explore Grand Couronné, the little Ford van took us along the lake road, through mined Doiran Town, and so up the steep winding road to the back of the fortress. There were heaps of every kind of munitions and equipment still lying about—treasures for a whole army of souvenir hunters. Then we explored the massive dug-outs with their huge timber baulks support-

## SALONICA AND AFTER

ing the roofs of solid or piled-up rock. For the officers there were wonderful little houses, steel-lined, solid and comfortable; the sort of place a British battalion commander would have blushed to live in, feeling that he was even better off than the gorgeous people who fought their war in Whitehall. For all the men, too, there was accommodation infinitely better than ours dreamed of. The Bulgar is generally a brutish, low-grade peasant, but in the war of positions at Doiran he was a much more favoured individual than our men—with the exception that in the cold weather he suffered more from the north wind.

But it was when we had climbed up the winding, rocky communication trench up to the O.P. at the summit that we realised what Grand Couronné meant. There lay what for so long were our positions, an average of a thousand feet below. Between us and them were three strong Bulgar lines, clearly defined, the nearest only a couple of hundred feet below us down the bare slope with its smashed rocks. And there, just immediately in front of the final Bulgar line, was the position known as the Rockies, to which a few of our men fought their way in the final offensive, and where Lieut.-Colonel Burges, of the 7th South Wales Borderers, won his V.C. We clambered down the slope, and at every step kicked against the fragments of our own shells; marked the steeply rising ground cut across by ravine after ravine up which our men had come on to the attack, and marvelled again how they had managed to win so far with scores of securely placed machine-guns playing on them. From where we were the rounded Tortoise Hill seemed a very modest eminence. It was not a very clear day, but the whole of the Janesh plain was open to view, and at one moment we caught a glimpse of the sea near Salonica. One could imagine how on one of those





Doiran, showing Tortoise Hill, Jumeaux Ravine and Petit Couronné on the left just above the Lake. From here the hills rise upwards, over Doiran Town, to Grand Couronné, with its scarred crest. Dominating Grand Couronné is seen the undulating Pip Ridge, and beyond this again the snow-clad mountains of Serbia.



## DOIRAN

startlingly clear days which are frequent in Macedonia the whole of the British territory was laid bare to the view.

But impressive as it was in its overpowering strength, Grand Couronné paled before the sinister perfection of the Pip Ridge as a place to defend against attacking troops. The day after visiting Grand Couronné, we climbed up to where our trenches crossed over Horse-shoe Hill at a height of a little over 1,500 feet, the same trenches won by the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry in August, 1916. Out of these we scrambled on to the smashed, scarred ground which had been pounded by thousands of shells, trench mortars, bombs and aerial torpedoes, whose fragments (with a considerable admixture of "duds") were lying everywhere. Horse-shoe Hill is really a part of Pip Ridge itself. We walked on through the tangles of wire up the Ridge, churned up, every foot of it, by explosives, until we came to the knolls known as P. 5. and P. 4½. This latter was the furthest point up the ridge on which we were able to establish ourselves in the Spring offensive of 1917, and for a time this murderous spot was part of our trench line. But we had to withdraw from both positions as continuous trenches and retain them only as strong points; not only because of the cost of holding them, but because it was impossible, owing to the exposed position, to run communication trenches directly back to our line on Horseshoe, and communication had to be maintained obliquely up and down the steep sides of the ridge.

Just beyond here, to the right, the hill-side runs down steeply through the Corne du Bois (an isolated patch of stunted trees) down to Jackson's Ravine, a bit of country hidden from the enemy, and on the hillside we could see the lines of white tape still lying there which

## SALONICA AND AFTER

marked out the assembly points in the 1918 attack.

And here also were even more touching relics of an attack which was a sacrifice in order that victory might be won elsewhere. There were many British graves, with sad, gruesome reminders of what we all return to, sticking up out of the soil. Most of our troops fell at P. 4½ and P. 4., but far onwards, up the Ridge towards P. 3., were found the bodies of some of our men who had gallantly struggled forward.

The Pip Ridge is an inclined causeway up in the clouds, in parts no more than forty feet wide and with the sides dropping steeply away to right and left. It may be fairly likened to a railway embankment lifted up to a great height, and with one end tilted up so that a heavy gradient is formed. Up the sides of the hill, over the narrow crest and down the other side, our advanced trenches ran, the Bulgar wire beginning at P. 4¼., five or six hundred yards or so further on. It can be imagined what it was like to charge up this steep road, with the Bulgars barring the way with machine guns. It was hard work even walking up the Ridge. At P. 4¼., the scene of several desperate hand-to-hand encounters, we found the Bulgar trenches practically obliterated. Hundreds and hundreds of tons of metal had been thrown up there by our guns far below. The trenches at P. 4. were also badly smashed. Here the heaviest fighting and our heaviest losses occurred in the opening attack of 1918. A further 500 yards upwards and we came to Pip. 3. Here, to the left, runs out and down the spur of Little Dolina, seamed with Bulgar trenches, an extra buttress to the defences of the Ridge, and if this combination were not enough, a little way beyond runs out the bigger and parallel spur of Dolina which was the final touch of perfection in the defence of the ridge. It was an amazingly formidable combina-

## DOIRAN

tion. At P. 3. the deep trenches were badly smashed by our artillery, but not almost entirely flattened out as were those on P. 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ . Many of the deep rock-cut dug-outs were still intact, even though some of our heaviest shells had thudded on them, and from out of these the machine-guns came which largely caused our attacks to wither away. An unobtrusive little chimney or ventilating shaft poked its nose up above the ground. One traced it down below, and there, thirty or forty feet under the surface of this high stronghold, the enemy sat in comparative security from the "heavy stuff" (eight-inch was the heaviest we had) which we flung from miles away down below.

A further stiff walk and at last we were up on P.2., long known as Hill 535, although its height in metres is really 692. This was the chief objective of the British attacks, both in 1917 and 1918, and standing on it one realised the appalling task set any troops in trying to capture it. From here even Grand Couronné is dominated, away across the saddle of Koh-i-noor, and if we had gained it and held it firmly, the whole Bulgar defence system from the Vardar to Doiran would have fallen. But in spite of repeated bravery and sacrifice of the highest order, in which our precious, sparse battalions lost up to sixty and seventy per cent. in casualties, we never succeeded in driving him off these twin strongholds. They were held in strong force by picked troops who, when our barrage had lifted, came out of their rocky dungeons and raked our men with machine gun fire; our poor pigmies labouring up those vast hill-sides. But the attacks had to be made both in 1917 and 1918, and without the sacrifice paid there victory could not have been bought. But as one stood on the battered observation post at the summit of P. 2. and looked across at the parallel slopes of Grand Couronné,

## SALONICA AND AFTER

one felt sad to think that men who in 1915 could not have told you where Macedonia was, should have to lay down their lives in such an unfriendly and hostile place in attempting the impossible. In January, 1918, General Henrys, the Commander-in-Chief of the French Army in the Balkans, visited this ground in company with Major-General Duncan, commanding the 22nd Division. I talked to him shortly afterwards of his impressions up there, and he agreed that he had never seen ground so wonderfully adapted for defence, and so hopeless for the attacker.

A third day we devoted to an exploration of the Jumeaux Ravine, Petit Couronné, and the ground immediately around it. And in quite a different fashion this was as impressive as the Pip Ridge. When at the bottom of the Jumeaux Ravine, you are in a deep V-shaped cleft whose walls run up the sides of the Tortoise and Petit Couronné to a height of three or four hundred feet. At other times it might attract as a jolly place to explore; the sort of wild spot in which an adventurous boy would feel just a little scared if alone. But as a battleground, a place where men were caught under a barrage of heavy shells, it is too dreadful to contemplate. All along the sandy floor of the ravine we saw the remains of Bulgar heavy shell, eight-inch and twelve-inch, and various unexploded trench-mortar bombs as big as footballs. In no place could one imagine the blasting and rending power of modern projectiles being so terrible as down at the bottom of this gorge, in the darkness of the night with the air split by blinding light and the rocky walls resounding to the deafening crash of high explosive. In the 1917 attack our men came down the tributary ravines—Dorset, Hand, Claw, and the rest—leading from our positions on Tortoise. Each narrow tributary

## DOIRAN

gully was heavily barraged, but the main enemy fire was reserved for Jumeaux, and this was a blazing, crashing Hell. And yet they crossed it and swarmed up the steep sides of Petit Couronné and captured the trenches, and remained there until well on in the next day.

Having explored the entire length of Jumeaux, we climbed up to Petit Couronné itself, and walked along or near the trenches on its crest; in and out of the wire, stumbling, jumping. To our right yawned the deep Ravine, and rising up from it on the other side was the steep flank of Tortoise. The Bulgar never attacked us on our chief stronghold. It was our grim fate to have to try four times to drive him from his.

It was in such country as this, down and across these deep ravines, and up the sides of the opposing hills, and on the long slope of Pip Ridge, that the British Forces had to make their Spring offensive in 1917. The conflicting factors which go to make up an Allied Command, which is in turn one small branch of a world-war, willed that we should attack this iron, impregnable front at a time when no operations were going on elsewhere in the Balkans. The enemy knew that we were going to attack, and made elaborate preparations to receive us. Our new preparations, such as the registration of the artillery, inevitably gave him a pretty shrewd idea of what we were about to attempt. His formidable positions were now organised to the highest pitch of perfection. We knew that his artillery was at least as strong as ours, and that he had far more heavy guns than we possessed, our highest calibre at that time being six-inch. But the battles that followed revealed that he was much stronger than we ever thought; that he had been keeping quite a lot of artil-

## SALONICA AND AFTER

lery "up his sleeve." He had no lack of troops to hold his hill fortresses, and no lack of reserves in easy call. He held ninety-nine per cent. of advantage in the general situation. It was to be an uphill fight for us in every sense of the word. It was understood that there was to be Allied support elsewhere on the line, but this was not forthcoming, and we had to attack the pivot of the whole enemy line with nothing happening to distract him elsewhere.

The chief objectives of the offensive were the Pip Ridge and Petit Couronné. The task of attacking the first, on the left of the operations, fell to the 22nd Division, their line of attack running from the Ridge down to Hill 380. To the 26th Division fell the task of attacking the very strong Bulgar line on a front of about 3,000 yards from a point known as O.6 down to the lake, including the main bastion of this line, Petit Couronné. There were two attacks; the first on the night of April 24-25th, and the second on the night of May 8-9th.

The fighting was on as fierce a scale as any yet seen in the Balkans, and the artillery concentration was the heaviest yet known. In the first attack the 65th and 66th Brigades of the 22nd Division gained a good deal of ground, pushing their way up from Horseshoe for some four or five hundred yards on the Ridge and capturing the Mamelon and Hill 380. At the same time the 78th and 79th Brigades of the 26th Division attacked the Bulgar line from Petit Couronné down to the lake. Our troops entered the Bulgar line at many points but had heavy losses, particularly in the Jum-eaux Ravine, both going and returning, and were forced back to their trenches. The bright side to this costly operation was that between April 26th and 28th the Bulgars launched four heavy counter-attacks against the new line held by the 22nd Division, and were each



## DOIRAN

time thrown back with great losses, the 18th Manchesters and 8th K.S.L.I.'s doing especially heavy execution.

In the second attack the 60th, 22nd, and 26th Divisions took part, but the brunt of the fighting fell on the latter. Their objective was again from Petit Couronné down to the lake. Our men showed amazing courage and fortitude in the most forbidding circumstances. They knew that it was practically a forlorn hope. Again the Jumeaux Ravine claimed many victims, but in spite of very heavy losses the 7th Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry and two companies of the 7th Berkshires fought their way right up the precipitous side of Petit Couronné, and after further heavy losses from a fierce trench mortar barrage finally took and held the trenches on the summit, practically all the officers now being killed or wounded. But their position became hopeless, and they had to withdraw next day. Both battalions were specially commended for their "splendid gallantry and determination."

Further down the line towards the lake English and Scotch battalions (10th Black Watch, 9th Gloucesters, 11th Scottish Rifles, 12th Argylls, 11th Worcesters, and 8th R.S.F.) had some very fierce and costly fighting in the Bulgar lines, but had finally to withdraw. The Bulgar barrage, both artillery and trench mortar, everywhere claimed many victims, and the conditions of fighting in the dark in such rugged ground cannot possibly be conceived by those who do not know the tumbled surface of Macedonia.\*

We had tried the impossible and failed. We had

\* Other battalions who played a gallant part in these operations were the 7th Wiltshires, 12th Hants, 10th Devons, 8th D.C.L.I., 9th Border Regiment, 9th South Lancs., 2/20th London Regiment, 8th S. Wales Borderers, 12th Lancs. Fusiliers, 9th K.O.R.L., 7th S. Wales Borderers, and 11th Welsh Fusiliers.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

fought two major battles, against terrible positions, in which the volume of artillery fire was such as the Balkans had never echoed to before. But it was not a success—and consequently little or nothing was heard of it all at home. It was not altogether the fault either of the Press or the Public that the courage and losses of our men at Doiran were so little known or talked about. The enemy knew that, in spite of the ground we had gained, he had generally repulsed us with heavy losses, but after all it was not the business of our Command to let the enemy know exactly how much we had suffered. In history a nation may be proud of a reverse, but it can quite easily be a piece of military stupidity to blazon it forth at the time. But the men, or the officers either for that matter, could not think on these lines. They were conscious only of the fact that they had fought two battles against great odds, in which two Divisions had suffered over 6,000 casualties, and in which certain battalions had lost up to seventy per cent. of their strength. The men who had crossed over the flaming, crashing Jumeaux Ravine, hung on to Petit Couronné, and crossed back again, or the men who had fought their way from Horseshoe up to the Pip Ridge, or who had won and retained Hill 380 and Mamelon—these men knew that they had been through an ordeal as fierce as anything that could be conjured up in the hell of trench warfare in France, and they naturally wanted it to be known. It was the fact that Home knew nothing of the battles of Doiran, and still talked about there being “no fighting on the Salonica Front,” which accounted in a large measure for the soreness and sense of injustice of the whole B.S.F. Our men felt that in order for it to be good to die for one’s country one should first of all possess a country which appreciates and acknowledges the sacrifice.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### VICTORY.

THE year 1918, which was to bring victory in the Balkans as the prelude to final victory elsewhere, threatened for the greater part of its length to be more difficult than any of those preceding it—at times, indeed, threatened to bring disaster. The grave turn of affairs which came on the Western Front in the last days of March had for everybody in the Balkans a particular as well as a general significance. As we breathlessly followed the giant struggle that was proceeding there we were subject to a twofold anxiety; an anxiety that occupied two separate compartments in the mind. While a decisive German success in the West might or might not mean the end of all things we knew that it certainly would mean the end of everything in the Balkans, and although those at home might easily forget the lesser in the greater, those in the Balkans had their own immediate affairs to think about as well as those of greater majesty that were happening elsewhere. A German break-through in the West must necessarily have meant that sooner or later the Balkan Armies would be attacked in overwhelming force. In the West civilization was really at stake; had fortune and our own strength failed us it is impossible to conjecture all that is dreadful that would have followed. But one sequel was clear in the Balkans, and that was that sooner or later our forces there would have been

## SALONICA AND AFTER

swept away. As the Army has it, we should have been "scuppered."

As far as the British Army in the Balkans was particularly concerned we were never in a worse condition, materially, to meet a great strain than throughout the summer of 1918. We had sustained heavy losses in 1917, which had not been replaced by reinforcements. Our four Divisions were all much below strength, and during the whole of the year the steady drain of the "Y" scheme went on. A large proportion of the men left were in an indifferent state of health. And in June, to meet the great and immediate danger on the West, twelve of our Infantry battalions were sent there, reducing our strength at a stroke by one quarter. The battalions sent to France were the 13th Royal Highlanders (Scottish Horse), 14th King's Liverpool Regiment, 4th K.R.R.C., 7th Wiltshires, 2nd Northumberland Fusiliers, 1st K.O.Y.L.I., 10th Camerons, 3rd Royal Fusiliers, 13th Manchesters, 10th Royal Highlanders, 12th Lancashire Fusiliers and 9th Gloucesters.

The men from Salonica were received rather coldly at first. The general impression among their new comrades was that they had never seen any fighting. Officers in their new messes were asked naïvely if they had ever been "over the top." Their statements of battalions which had lost sixty and seventy per cent. of their strength in attacks in Macedonia in 1917 were received with incredulity, which became amazement when it was realised that such statements were the plain truth. Why had they never heard these things? And the Salonica men soon showed, what indeed must have been plain to anybody who thought for a moment, that they were made of the same stuff as the best in France, and they distinguished themselves signally in the fighting with the 50th and 66th Divisions. Before this heavy

## VICTORY

demand on our Balkan troops came there had been a previous call for commanding officers and seconds-in-command of line battalions for France. This was in the darkest days following March, and the call was answered immediately. I saw one of my best B.S.F. friends off at the dusty Orient Station. He had no illusions as to what he was going out to see, but said, laughingly, "Anything to get away from this damned country." In France he gained a bar to his D.S.O.—but died of the third wound he received on the day he earned that proud distinction.

Summer found the British forces, then, at their very lowest ebb, and with the usual hot-weather ailments playing their usual part. And as if fate had not already been unkind enough a sudden and severe outbreak of influenza, which broke out in August, caused great ravages among our tried and weary troops, who were as little fitted as could be to resist this terrible malady. And though the B.S.F. had long previous to this begun to comb itself out, so as to try and meet its own requirements from within, we see from General Sir George Milne's despatch of December 1st, 1918, that at the moment of the final offensive our fighting strength had fallen below one-half the normal establishment. The epidemic of influenza spread with "almost explosive force," to quote a report on the subject. During September and October there were nearly 12,000 admissions to hospital for influenza and over 1,000 for pneumonia. The mortality amongst the pneumonia cases was very high, the prevailing debility following on malaria largely accounting for this.

In the months of May, June, and July the situation was in a curiously delicate and uncertain condition. It was to be expected that with the Germans obtaining apparently overwhelming successes on the West they

## SALONICA AND AFTER.

would, if possible, stimulate their Bulgarian Allies into a keener manifestation of the offensive spirit than they had shown for two years past. The strength, or lack of it, of the British forces must have been well-known to the enemy. But coincidentally with this critical period in our own affairs a very distinct spirit of war-weariness began to manifest itself in the Bulgarian ranks. There were reports of mutinies, which were later confirmed. Deserters, who throughout the campaign had always trickled steadily over to us, began to arrive in greater numbers. From these and other sources it was learned that the Bulgarians were contemplating an attack in force on the lightest held part of the Balkan line—the long British front from Doiran to the sea. We had every reason not to desire any such trial of strength, because we simply did not possess the forces adequate to hold up a determined offensive. But all the same we took every possible step to meet it and completed the strategic roads which would have facilitated us in getting back to the Lahana ridge in rear, where we had strengthened our second line. From there further strategic roads had long been constructed back towards the “Birdcage” in case it ever came to the worst—or the nearly worst.

On our side, however, there was the favourable factor that the new Greek Armies were rapidly coming into line. How far this weighed with the Bulgarian Command it is not easy to say. The Bulgar has the ingrained habit of despising the Greek—in spite of the drubbing he received in 1913—and the events of 1916, when he was allowed to invade the country, are not likely to have done much to remove this impression. From what we know of him, then, it is not likely that the “Prussian of the Balkans” was very greatly influenced by the coming in of our new ally.

## VICTORY

What did weigh more with the Bulgarian High Command was the increasing war-weariness among its troops. The "fed-up" feeling developed rapidly during the summer. The Bulgars are a mulish, obstinate people. They did not want to attack at any price, and the temper of the troops was too dangerous to try and force them at this stage to play Germany's game. The German element in the Bulgarian Army was now much less numerous. A strong leaven of specialist troops still remained—artillery, trench mortars, machine guns and aviation—with German officers in command and German staffs, but nearly all the German divisions had gone elsewhere. And by the middle of the summer the Allies had every reason to come to this definite conclusion—that the Bulgars were determined not to make any kind of attack on us, but that they were equally determined to resist to the last any offensive by us. They were superbly entrenched, well supplied and munitioned, and had no lack of troops who could be relied on to fight indefinitely on the defensive. *J'y suis, j'y reste* was their policy, and this being so, the Allies made up their minds to try and shift them. As the Bulgars did not feel inclined to attack us we decided to attack them. We had now nine Greek divisions coming into line, and their presence made a vital difference, whatever the enemy may have thought about it.

The coming of the Greeks soon produced a change in the British line. Gradually they took over the Struma Valley, from the Seres Road eastwards to the sea, and the 27th Division, which had held this line for over two-and-a-half years was moved over to a section of trenches running westwards from the Vardar, just south of the important town of Guevgheli. The 28th Division moved a little westwards along the Krusha Balkan, and

## SALONICA AND AFTER

took up a shorter line nearer Lake Doiran. We thus had the four British Divisions concentrated—if one may apply such a word to Divisions which were so much below strength—on a front of some 35 miles, they being, from west to east, the 27th, 26th, 22nd, and 28th. The first Greek troops to come under General Milne's command were those of the Larissa Division. Later they were joined by the Seres and Cretan Divisions. The Seres Division went into line with the 22nd Division in front of Doiran, and immediately on every notice board in the trenches and back areas was seen a Greek legend under the English. The Cretan Division went into line with the 28th, on the Krusha-Balkan hills, just to the right of the lake. On the French front similar re-arrangements were taking place between French, Greek, and Serbian Divisions.

The enemy, still firm in his policy of "Here I am; here I stop," took a great interest in all these proceedings, but was able to find out very little. We kept him "guessing" all the time. The 27th Division (Maj.-Gen. G. T. Forestier-Walker) played a great part in this game. Immediately they went into their new line to the west of the Vardar they began to take the keenest interest in the ground that lay before them. Patrols were out every night, and in two or three weeks the Division knew every inch of the new territory. Late in the month of August a series of heavy bombardments was directed on the enemy lines. Trench raids were of frequent occurrence, and we were constantly capturing prisoners. Our men showed themselves thoroughly superior at the game, and kept the enemy in a state of nervous tension. A month or more of this sort of work culminated on the afternoon of September 1st in an attack against the rocky and strongly-fortified salient of Alchak Mahale, which, after an intensive bom-



## VICTORY

bardment, was carried splendidly at the first assault by the 2nd Gloucesters and the 10th Hampshires. The enemy launched several determined counter-attacks against the lost position, all of which were repulsed with heavy losses. A week later the Greeks in the Struma Valley advanced their line on a wide front without any opposition, taking up positions well in advance of the river. These were the chief operations on the Anglo-Greek front preliminary to the launching of the offensive.

The British rôle was now to await the result of the Franco-Serbian attack to the west. The idea of trying for a really decisive blow on the vital and almost inaccessible but thinly-held line of peaks on the Serbian front between Vetrenik and Sokol was no new one. After the abortive offensive of May, 1917, the plan of this same attack was drawn up by Voïvode Mischitch, the details being worked out at French G.H.Q., chiefly by Lieut.-Col. Errard. The plan of the Serbian Marshal was approved by General Sarrail, but was not put into operation. General Guillaumat's plan was of much smaller scope, its principal aim being to pin down the Bulgars and prevent enemy reinforcements of his front in France. General Franchet d'Esperey adopted the Mischitch-Errard plan, and carried it out practically to the letter. Shortly after his arrival in Macedonia he held a conference, on July 27th, at which were present the Serbian Crown Prince, Voïvode Mischitch (Serbian Chief of Staff), General Boyovitch (Commanding the 1st Army), and Voïvode Stepan Stepanovitch (Commanding the 2nd Army). The Prince was in favour of an attack on the Serbian front. The final decision to put the plan into execution was taken on August 8th.

The idea was by a carefully prepared and powerful surprise attack to break the enemy front at the point

## SALONICA AND AFTER

where it was held in weakest force, and where a break would be most decisive, and by pouring troops through the gap to exploit the rupture to the utmost extent. Nature had here made the enemy lines on the Serbian front immensely strong, but his defensive organization had little depth, and he was weak in artillery. Moreover, a detailed study of the whole of the front showed that this sector was particularly favourable for attack, because, once the line was broken, the enemy would find himself faced with great difficulties in the way of reinforcement and the power to manœuvre; and moreover, once the Allies had forced the line here they would occupy dominating positions, and be almost immediately within measurable striking distance of the enemy's chief communications. The Allied objective was to reach the line running from Demir Kapu on the Vardar westwards to Kavardartzi. By this means it was hoped to arrive at two main results:

(a) Separate the Bulgar forces in the Vardar Valley from the Bulgar forces round Monastir.

(b) Cut the principal enemy communications—viz., the road and railway running down the Vardar and the road and railway between Prilep and Gradsko.

Extensive preparations were made for a powerful attack which would come as a complete surprise. New roads were made and a plentiful supply of heavy artillery was moved up. The French and Serbs had to undertake a great amount of work, and most of it had to be done at night. The enemy had to be kept entirely unsuspecting. The line held by the Serbs was shortened by half—from 38 miles to about 19. To add further to the weight of the attack two French Divisions were incorporated in the 2nd Serbian Army; the 17th (Colonial) and 122nd Divisions. These two Divisions together with the Schumadia (Serbian) Division were to make the

## VICTORY

actual assault on the heights and break through. The Yugo-Slav and Timok Divisions of the 2nd Army were held in reserve to pour through immediately the breach was made. On the left the 1st Serbian Army (Drina and Danube Divisions, with the Morava Division and the Cavalry Division in reserve) was to attack in conjunction, and further exploit the success. The Serbian troops were perhaps the finest in the world for such an operation, which meant pushing ahead rapidly in very mountainous country and being able, if necessary, to do without food supplies for days together.

Even with the nine Greek Divisions now in line the Allies had obtained only a very slight numerical superiority, although in material strength we were at last much ahead of the enemy. The Allies had now 28 Infantry Divisions—8 French, 9 Greek, 6 Serbian, 4 British, and one Italian; the effectives of the latter, however, being considerably larger than those of the ordinary Italian Division. The following table gives a fairly exact idea of the comparative strength of the Allied and enemy forces:

### ON THE WHOLE OF THE MACEDONIAN FRONT.

ALLIES.	ENEMY.
Battalions ... ..	289 ... 268
Effective rifle strength ... ..	177562 ... 172200
Machine guns ... ..	2682 ... 2063
Light machine guns (including very light French gun and British Lewis guns) ... ..	6424 ... ?
Guns, including heavy trench artillery	2069 ... 1830
Cavalry squadrons ... ..	47½ ... 26
Aeroplanes (about) ... ..	200 ... 80

Our greatest concentration was on the Serbian front, at the point where it was intended to break through. On the eve of the attack, following on the rapid trans-

## SALONICA AND AFTER

ference there of the two French Divisions, the comparative strengths were :

### ON THE SERBIAN FRONT ONLY.

ALLIES.	ENEMY.
Battalions ... ..	75 ... 26
Effective rifle strength ... ..	36500 ... 11600
Machine guns ... ..	756 ... 245
Light do. ... ..	2610 ... ?
Guns (including trench mortars) ...	580 ... 146
Cavalry squadrons ... ..	18 ... —
Aeroplanes ... ..	81 ... 24

It will be seen that at the point selected for the first attack we were at an advantage of about three to one all round. But against this Allied superiority the Bulgars had positions of immense natural strength which, without the element of surprise, might easily have more than neutralised our advantage.\*

It is interesting to note that at this period the total strength of the operative Serbian Army was 79,413, and the grand total of Serbian troops of all kinds 83,767. After Corfu they had gone up the line again in 1916 little more than 120,000 strong, and in eight months' time they had lost half these, and of their losses nearly one-half were killed. The above force of roughly 80,000 men included some 10,000 Yugo-Slav troops who had come from Russia (some round by Vladivostock and some via England and France). We see therefore that of the 650,000 men mobilised by Serbia from first to

\* In September, 1918, the entire ration strength of the B.S.F. was round about 175,000, and on the 14th of the month touched 177,865. Our effective Fighting Strength in this month (Infantry, Artillery, Machine-gun Companies, Trench Mortar Batteries, R.E. Field Companies, Cavalry, Cyclists and Signals) varied between 65,000 and 50,000. Our effective Trench Strength (Infantry—less Pioneer Battalions—M.G. Companies and T.M. Batteries) varied between 35,000 and 25,000, and at the time of our attacks at Doiran was about 30,000. At one period during the month the number of sick in hospital reached 20,000.

## VICTORY

last only about 70,000 troops of all kinds, including all services, were left to take part in the victory which gave them back their country. History surely can give few cases of such unswerving loyalty and tenacity.

The region in which the attack was to be launched was on the line of heights known as the Moglenitza Range, whose major peaks, Sokol, Dobropolje and Vetrenik run to an average altitude of 5,000 feet. The enemy, of course, held all the commanding points on this range, and it was the last point at which he expected to be attacked. He had been thoroughly deceived by the Allied preparations, and one of his main concentrations was on the short Vardar-Doiran sector of the British front, where he had 33 full strength Battalions in line and many more within easy call.

By the end of the second week in September the Allied preparations were complete. Our Armies, eager to make an end of the Macedonian stalemate, faced a worried and anxious enemy who sensed that something serious was about to happen but had no idea when or how. On the morning of September 14th the Allied artillery crashed out all along the line. From Monastir to Doiran, along eighty miles of mountain ranges, the enemy positions were heavily bombarded. He certainly had no doubt now that an attack was coming, but there was still nothing to show where the blow was to fall. It came at 5.30 next morning, the 15th, in the place least expected. The 122nd (French) Division attacked the beetling crags of Sokol on the left, and the Schumadia Division attacked on the right. It had been hoped that all the crests would be carried within four hours, and that the Yugo-Slav and Timok Divisions would immediately pour through the gap. But the enemy resistance was strong and the slopes were so steep that in places scaling ladders had to be

## SALONICA AND AFTER

used. The 122nd Division was held off its final objective until nine at night. The Schumadia Division had done splendid work, and on the left the first Serbian Army was now supporting the final attack of the 122nd Division on Sokol. By night a breach of eight miles had been definitely made. Over 3,000 prisoners had been taken, and 33 guns captured. The Serbian Reserve Divisions poured through in the night, and pressed on towards the dominating height of Koziak (about 5,500 feet), which it had been hoped would be taken the first day. It fell at noon on the 16th, and the enemy, knowing its importance, made desperate efforts to re-take it. The enemy flanks were now pushed back until the breach was 16 miles wide. The whole of the six Serbian Divisions, with their one Cavalry Division, were now moving forward, attacking over the tumbled mountainous country, and left and right the action extended, like a prairie fire—to Albania on the west and Doiran on the east. On either side French and Greeks joined in, and at Doiran the British bombardment swelled into a majestic roar. The Serbs in the centre were pushing ever further forward. By September 21st they had reached the Vardar and the Bulgarians, now divided, were trembling on the edge of final disaster.

But before this point was reached the British Front had made its contribution to the beginning of the general débâcle. The breach had been made, but to exploit the success thoroughly and make it finally decisive it must be widened further and further, and the enemy prevented at all costs from mending it by bringing further troops from the east, from the British front. As they pressed forward the Serbian and French troops found practically no fresh enemy troops thrown in to bar their way. This was the result of the fighting on

## VICTORY

the British front, where the attacks against the formidable positions east and west of Doiran had now been launched. On the Serb front the Allies heavily outnumbered the enemy. On the Doiran front the enemy heavily outnumbered us. But not a single enemy battalion must be allowed to proceed from Doiran to help in retrieving the beginnings of disaster which had declared themselves further west. There was little or no hope of the British attack succeeding in itself. It was to be a sacrifice to ensure victory elsewhere. But it had to be done and General Franchet d'Espercy, the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces, gave the word. The British were to try again where they had already twice failed to achieve the impossible. And our men, who had already charged up those pitiless bullet and shell swept slopes in 1917, knew exactly what was before them.

The British attack opened at 5.15 on the morning of the 18th. It was the beginning of a beautifully fine September day—too fine, for the September sun in Macedonia is very hot, and on both days of the Doiran attacks there was a shade temperature of 100 deg. The panorama of mountain lake and valley was looking its loveliest. But the slopes of Pip Ridge and Grand Couronné were already veiled in a cloud of dust from the incessant pounding which our guns were giving them and soon, as the attack progressed and the Bulgar guns opened out to their fullest extent, the whole region of the battle was enveloped in a smother of dust and smoke from the midst of which came the flash and crash of bursting shell. And into this roaring inferno our troops went, with the Greeks by their side, to one of the hardest tasks ever given soldiers to do.

Although our leaders knew only too well the nature of the enterprise to which they were committed, they

## SALONICA AND AFTER

aimed at nothing short of complete success—viz., the capture of Pip Ridge and Grand Couronné. Our objectives were the key positions to the whole of this sector of the enemy front. Though the attack was primarily intended as a holding attack, with little hope of anything more, we were determined, in the unlikely event of fortune smiling on us, to push our success to its furthest limit. In other words, we thought it as well to be killed for a sheep as a lamb. It is a homely phrase to use in such a connection, but it exactly fits the situation. All the odds were against us, but it was a real and not a half attack.

The assault against the jumble of hills and ravines, culminating in the Pip Ridge and Grand Couronné was divided into two halves, with the Bulgar trench position known as O.6 as the central point of attack. From here down to the lake the Greeks of the Seres Division had the right or eastern half to themselves. The western half was divided into three sectors. On the left the 66th Brigade (Brig.-Gen. F. S. Montague-Bates) of the 22nd Division (Major-Gen. J. Duncan) was to attack the Pip Ridge. The 12th Cheshires were to lead off up the side of Jackson's Ravine and captured P.4½ and P.4. The 9th South Lancs. were then to advance through them, and pushing on some five hundred yards beyond up the steep and narrow causeway of the ridge, were to try and capture P.3 and the two fortified spurs, running off west, of Little Dolina and Dolina—a formidable task indeed. And if everything went well the 8th King's Shropshire Light Infantry were to push further on through the South Lancs. and capture P.2. (692 metres or about 2,100 feet high), the point of the ridge nearest to and several hundreds of feet higher than Grand Couronné.

In the centre of the Western half the 2nd Greek



## VICTORY

Regiment (2 battalions with one in reserve) was told off to take the series of rounded hills running up to the left flank of Grand Couronné known as Sugar Loaf, The Tongue, The Plume, and then over the Grand Shoulder to the position known as Koh-i-noor, out-flanking the crest of Grand Couronné itself. And on the right of the western half of the attack the 67th Brigade (7th South Wales Borderers, 11th Welsh Regiment, the 11th Welsh Fusiliers) were to over-run the Bulgar first line up the steep slopes of O.6, and then after taking in their stride the tangle of formidable but lesser hills known as The Knot, the Hilt and The Tassel which formed the second line, were to attack the west face of Grand Couronné itself, which was defended by a strong third line. On the eastern half the two remaining regiments of the Seres Division had to attack Petit Couronné and the formidable front line of which it formed part, advance up over Red Scar Hill towards Doiran Hill, overlooking the little ruined town, and from there push on as far as possible up the western slope of Grand Couronné. In the extent of ground gained this attack proved to be the most successful of all, although it was the 67th Brigade which penetrated furthest into the enemy positions towards Grand Couronné. And while all this was going on between the lake and Pip Ridge two battalions (8th D.C.L.I. and 12th Hants) of the 26th Division (Maj.-Gen. A. W. Gay) were to demonstrate west of the ridge; and east of the lake the Cretan Division, supported by the 28th Division (Maj.-Gen. H. L. Croker) were to advance against the mountain wall of the Belashitza.

For four days our artillery had maintained its unceasing thunder, pounding the triple line of trenches, smashing in many dugouts (but leaving many of the strongest rock-hewn caverns untouched) and smothering

## SALONICA AND AFTER

the Bulgar lines up to the crests with high explosive. We now had several batteries of eight-inch howitzers in action, and they did splendid work. In the hot September sunshine and throughout the nights the gunners sweated away unceasingly, often under a very heavy fire.

On the night of the 17th-18th the bombardment swelled up into a more majestic roar, and for over six hours before the assault we drenched the enemy's positions with gas shells, this being the first time we had used them on the Balkan front. They proved of little service to us, as the fumes had very little effect on the enemy heights, where the slightest breath of wind was sufficient to dissipate them. And whether because of our own gas or—as was probable—the enemy was using gas shell himself, some of our battalions had to assemble and make their first attack up the steep slopes wearing masks, which added much to their exhaustion. The assembly of our troops was a difficult matter as all the roads were in view of the enemy and the night was clear. But we put down a smoke barrage on the enemy's front system, and by this means we were able to assemble in the various ravines just behind our lines and deploy our troops without a hitch.

The 12th Cheshires led off on the extreme left. Just before the barrage lifted at eleven minutes past five they climbed up the steep side of Jackson's Ravine on to the Ridge. The barrage moved on ahead, and "A" Company went with a rush for P.4½. As they reached the first enemy work on the Ridge some forty Bulgars poured out of it, and there was a check and some sharp hand to hand fighting. Three of the Bulgars were taken prisoners and the rest disposed of. During the progress of this the remaining three Companies came on up to P.4½., but as the first of them reached it there was a

## VICTORY

heavy explosion—due either to a mine or an ammunition dump—which caused many casualties. By this time, owing to the unexpected check, our barrage had travelled far up the ridge in advance of the attacking troops. Machine gun fire developed from all directions, and in addition the enemy at P.4. opened with a trench mortar barrage. In spite of serious casualties the Cheshires pushed on up the causeway to P.4. The eastern end of this very strong work was now alive with Bulgars who had come up from their dugouts. As our men reached it a flammenwerfer came into action. The operator was killed, but this apparatus also blew up, causing casualties and delay. On the right of this second fortress "D" Company found itself fronted with heavy rifle fire and bombs. What was left of "A" Company penetrated the centre, and "B" and "C" Companies pushed on rapidly up the long slope leading to P.8., four or five hundred yards ahead. But by this time the trenches on the spur of Little Dolina were manned and from here and from P.3. a sheet of machine gun bullets poured down. Behind them, too, in P.4. the Bulgars turned machine guns on them. Our men just melted away and lay on the parched brown grass of the slope up which they were labouring. Lieut.-Col. the Hon. A. R. Clegg-Hill, D.S.O., fell, mortally wounded. In a few minutes the battalion had practically ceased to exist.

The 9th South Lincs., following close behind the Cheshires, ran into a sheet of machine gun bullets, the enemy now being untroubled for the time being by our artillery, and having only to shoot. By the time they had rushed up the ridge to P.4. they had lost so terribly that they were unable to carry their attack further than that work. Lieut.-Col. B. F. Bishop, M.C., was killed there, and the battalion, as an official report said

## SALONICA AND AFTER

bluntly, was "more or less annihilated." As the 8th K.S.L.I.'s pressed on behind the South Lancs. they also suffered very heavy casualties in that stretch of about three hundred yards. The Bulgars now attacked heavily down the slope on to P.4. and, fighting stubbornly, our men were pressed back down to P.4½. Lieut.-Col. J. D. B. Erskine, of the K.S.L.I.'s, realising that it was impossible to continue the attack, collected what men and officers he could from all three battalions, and withdrew them to the shelter of Jackson's Ravine, down to the right of the slope. For a time he commanded only four officers and 240 men, but others gradually came in. The average strength of the attacking battalions was about four hundred. In this short but murderous attack we lost 37 officers and 800 other ranks, or about 65 per cent. of the Brigade. Later in the morning a further attempt was made to occupy P. 4½, but this had to be abandoned. The enemy's hold on the ridge was quite unshaken. There was no reward for British heroism on this September morning.

The fortunes of the 3rd Greek Regiment of the Seres Division, sandwiched between our 66th and 67th Brigades, were much the same. They went up into the crashing and smoke with great dash, broke through the front line at the hill known as the Sugar Loaf, and half an hour after starting were assaulting the enemy's main line, consisting of the very formidable works of The Plume and The Warren. They captured the whole strongly defended system, killed many Bulgars and took about eighty prisoners. But about this time the dust and smoke clouds of the bombardment began to lift. From the Ridge, now clear of our men but for the dead and wounded, and from Grand Couronné, the machine guns began to rattle and chatter by the dozen, causing many casualties to the Greeks. The Bulgars then heavily

## VICTORY

counter-attacked from the Grand Ravine, and drove the Greeks out of their main line. And as the Greeks had no support on their left owing to our failure on the Ridge, they fell back to their point of assembly, in the shelter of one of our own ravines. As a consequence of this an order to the 77th Brigade, in reserve, to move up to the Warren to the left of the Greeks and attack P.3, sheer up the mountain side from the east, was immediately cancelled.

On the right of the western half of the attack, the Welshmen of the 67th Brigade (Brig.-Gen. A. D. Macpherson) fought their way magnificently up the string of heights leading up to their main objective, Grand Couronné, but it was only at the cost of heavy sacrifices all the way. Two companies of the 11th Welsh Fusiliers (Lieut.-Col. A. H. Yatman), had some stern and bitter fighting before they could carry and retain possession of the strongly defended works in and about O.6 in the enemy front line. The two remaining companies of the battalion broke the line just east of the Sugar Loaf hill, rushed and killed the garrison on The Knot, and pressed on to the very strongly protected hill called The Hilt. The enemy trenches were heavily manned and there was concentrated machine gun and trench mortar fire. This stronghold, too, was overcome, but only after half the two companies had become casualties. They were finally forced back by strong counter attacks from The Knot. The Fusiliers were compelled to wear their gas masks all the way from the assembly point, and were much exhausted by it. They were in no condition to withstand heavy attacks by fresh troops coming downhill. Every officer and all but two N.C.O.'s had become casualties.

Following the Fusiliers, the 11th Welsh (Lieut.-Col. L. H. Trist), also wearing masks, attacked from Shrop-

## SALONICA AND AFTER

shire Ravine. They tried to exploit the advance of the Fusiliers, and from The Tassel got into touch with them over the ravine, on The Hilt. But from the top slopes of The Hilt the enemy launched another formidable counter attack. The Greeks on the left were now retiring, and the 11th Welsh collected its remnants and also retired. Later in the morning they made two further attempts to occupy Sugar Loaf, but were driven back by heavy fire.

The 7th S. Wales Borderers (Lieut.-Col. D. Burges) followed on the track of the Greeks in the centre, but all the same found much resistance all the way from the Bulgars who had filtered back into the trenches. With but few losses they went through the first and second lines and attacked the slopes of The Feather, in the third line. Some Greeks had joined them on their way up, and remained with them. Up to now they had been fighting in a gigantic dust cloud, in and out of which, at very low heights, hovered our aeroplanes on contact patrol. As the S.W.B.'s progressed up The Feather they were met by intense machine gun fire. But they reached the gaps in the wire at the top, and lay there for our barrage to lift. As it did so the smoke and dust cloud cleared. Our men were in full view at close range from many machine guns. The trenches they were now attacking were far up on the slopes of Grand Couronné, only about 250 yards from the summit. The trenches were very strongly manned and a terrific rifle and machine gun fire was poured down the spur, and from the surrounding ridges other machine guns concentrated. A great many of the Borderers fell, but the rest—just a brave remnant—rushed the trenches and, spent and weary as they were, grappled with the defenders, who had done nothing more exhausting than sit in their dug-outs. The gallant few were seen to

## VICTORY

reach the trenches, and were seen to fall. They had attained almost the summit of Grand Couronné, but only to die there. The last to leave those tragic slopes were the sole survivors of the South Wales Borderers—*eighteen unwounded men and one wounded officer\**. Out of all the gallantry and horror and raging inferno of that early morning this was their reward—to come back leaving all their comrades lying on the hot, bare rocks and in the sparse scrub above. True, the battalion only started a few hundreds strong. But is there anything in our history to surpass it? Balaklava grows dim beside it. But it is unlikely that any Laureate will sing the story of Grand Couronné.

In all the murderous and confused fighting of that terrible morning we had apparently made sure of only one thing—our honour. But the sacrifice was a sacrifice to victory. While our troops were falling at Doiran the Serbs were forging ahead, far away to the westward.

On the right half of the attack, which was carried out by the Greek troops, under British direction, and with one of our battalions—the 2nd King's Own Regiment—in support, we had more material gains to register. The British command profited by our previous experience with Petit Couronné, and no direct attack was made on it. This stronghold was “pinched out” by

\* Lieut.-Col. Dan Burges, D.S.O., of the 7th S. Wales Borderers, was badly wounded three times, and was later picked up by Germans and carried into a Bulgar dug-out behind Grand Couronné, where he was attended to. He was recovered in the advance, and was later awarded the Victoria Cross. The award said: “His coolness and personal courage was most marked throughout the advance and afforded a magnificent example to officers and men of his battalion. The ability he displayed in preparing and executing a most difficult operation is worthy of all praise.” Before the attack Lieut.-Colonel Burges had made several personal reconnaissances up to the enemy's first line, and during the attack he was able to keep direction although every landmark was completely hidden in smoke and dust.

Lieut.-Colonel L. H. Trist, M.C., of the 11th Welsh Regiment, was wounded, but remained on duty.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

an advance along ravines to right and left of it. The Greek troops were taken to their line of departure by a body of guides from the 2nd King's Own. Preceded by a heavy barrage (and accompanied by two sections of the 83rd Trench Mortar Battery) they soon breached the front line, and within two hours had taken their first objectives—the line Doiran Hill, Teton Hill and Hill 340. Shortly after nine o'clock they pushed on up the slopes leading to Grand Couronné, their principal objective being the strong work known as The Orb, just above The Hilt. The 1st Regiment got there and held it for a little while, but it had to be abandoned owing to our ill-success to the left. At smaller cost than ourselves, the Greeks had advanced their line in places over 1,500 yards, and were able to hold most of their gains, Doiran Town being one of them. Some 700 prisoners also remained in their hands.

While all this was going on the Cretan Division, supported by the 28th Division, on the east side of the lake, had advanced across the broad plain—some six miles wide at this point—to attack the Bulgar positions at the foot of the high Belashitza Range, and if possible to turn the lake from the north. Advancing from the foot of the Krusha Balkan Hills, under cover of darkness, they went forward over the plain, formed up under cover of a railway embankment, and from here started for the enemy positions, the strange sight being seen of Greek company commanders leading their men mounted on little ponies. It was a difficult operation, which began in the darkness and continued in hot sunshine across the open plain over which the enemy had a perfect view. By half-past seven the strongly defended village of Akindzali had been carried by assault. The main Bulgar line was not reached until late in the afternoon. There was some heavy fighting there and the



## VICTORY

line was breached in two places, but it was impossible to think of holding on against the artillery fire directed against them. Nothing could now be gained by pressing the attack, and the troops were ordered to withdraw.

On the whole the situation remained "as you were," although we had captured some important ground on the centre and the right. And as we found out later the enemy's losses were also heavy, chiefly from our artillery.

But the tale of sacrifice was not yet ended. All day long our artillery hammered the enemy positions. What was left of the 66th Brigade was withdrawn and the 65th Brigade (Brig.-Gen. B. J. Majendie), very weak in numbers, were brought from a camp where they were under observation for influenza, to take their places. They consisted of the 9th King's Own Royal Lancasters, the 8th South Wales Borderers, and the 9th East Lancs. To take the place of the Greeks in the left centre, three battalions of French Zouaves were brought up, and during the night occupied the trenches near the heap of rubble that goes by the name of Doldzeli village. On the right of the western half, the 77th Brigade (Brig.-Gen. W. A. Blake) of the 26th Division (12th Argyll and Sutherlands, 8th Royal Scots Fusiliers and 11th Scottish Rifles) took the place of the 67th Brigade. The 1st and 2nd Regiments of the Seres Division were to attack again on the right, from their new line, their objectives being The Orb and The Hilt.

The second day was much the same glorious but tragic story, with some variations. To the Scotch Brigade fell the task allotted to the Welsh Brigade the day before. The Zouaves were to attack parallel with them and then, swinging left, attack the Pip Ridge direct up its steep eastern side—a most forbidding task—while the

## SALONICA AND AFTER

65th Brigade attacked the ridge along its crest. But the Zouave attack never developed at all, there being much confusion in their trenches due to the Bulgar barrage, and from the first the Scots found themselves with their left in the air and open to flank machine gun fire.

Attacking up over the corpse-strewn way of the day before, the Scots, after heavy fighting and resistance, took Sugar Loaf and The Tongue. Finding nobody on their left they consolidated this position, which the Bulgars counter-attacked three times. The enemy were driven off with heavy loss. The Greeks on the right had now reached The Orb and The Hilt, but following this time (about nine o'clock) there was much confusion.

From the heights of the Pip Ridge and the nearer eminence of The Hilt, a storm of machine gun bullets was poured on the Scottish troops on The Tongue. The Greeks were now streaming back from their advanced positions. As a result of the non-development of the Zouave attack, the 9th East Lancs. were sent up to support the Scotch troops on the left, being diverted from any attack on the Pip Ridge. Gallantly led by Lieut.-Colonel J. A. Campbell, D.S.O., who was twice wounded, they reached the position known as The Corne, but found further advance impossible owing to wire and heavy fire. As the Scots were unsupported on either side, steps were now taken to withdraw them from The Tongue. At this time at least thirty machine guns were concentrating on them. The Scottish Rifles and Royal Scots got back in good order, but before the Highlanders could withdraw the enemy had enveloped their left flank, and they had great difficulty in getting away, the Bulgars pursuing them with heavy shell and machine gun fire. Again the dust had largely lifted, and the enemy had an easy target. Severe losses had

## VICTORY

been inflicted on the Bulgars during their fruitless counter-attacks. But the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders had lost seventy-five per cent. in casualties, and the other two Scottish battalions fifty per cent. each.\*

This time the attack along the Pip Ridge was carried out by the 9th King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment. Owing to the failure in the left centre a message was sent to them not to advance at all, but it reached them too late. P. 4½. was empty, but on reaching the wire at P. 4. they found the trenches heavily manned and the air full of machine gun bullets from all directions. The attack was persisted in and gallantly led by Captain C. M. Whitehead, M.C., who had already been twice wounded. But only a few men were able to enter an advance trench, and the survivors were withdrawn to the friendly shelter of Jackson's Ravine. In this attack Lieut.-Colonel B. A. Jackson was wounded.

By mid-day on the 19th our two attacks had been pushed to their utmost—and failed to dislodge the enemy from either of his major positions. The British casualties in the two days' fighting were 3,871 killed, wounded and missing.† Fortunately most of the wounds were caused by machine gun fire, and many were comparatively light, and when the advance came two days later over a hundred of our wounded men were

\* Lieut.-Colonel R. Falconer Stewart, D.S.O., of the 12th A. and S. Highlanders was killed. Lieut.-Colonel G. W. G. Lindesay, of the 8th R.S.F., was wounded, and Major Scougal, who was in temporary command of the 11th Scottish Rifles, was killed. Major Scougal left his work as a missionary in China to join up, and always insisted on being in a fighting regiment.

† It is interesting to compare with these the losses sustained by the French and Serbs in carrying the Sokol-Vetrenik Ridge. The 17th French (Colonial) Division had 1200 killed and wounded; the 122nd Division about 500 killed and wounded, and the Drina Divisor about 200. The other Serbian Divisions sustained very small casualties. It will be seen, therefore, that the holding attack at Doirar was a much more costly operation than the break-through on the Serbian sector. A French Colonial Division consists generally of six white and three black battalions.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

recovered. The casualties of the 3rd Greek Regiment, who attacked between our own troops on the first day, were 1,350; the losses in the other two Regiments were proportionately heavy. Against this the Bulgars had suffered 4,600 casualties, including the 1,200 prisoners taken, and in their case a large proportion of their casualties were caused by heavy shell fire. When it is remembered that the average strength of our battalions was 400 rifles, it will be seen how heavy was the toll taken. Our poor fellows lay thick up on the roof of Pip Ridge, and on the right the track of the heroic dead ran almost up to the summit of Grand Couronné. There was no question of attacking further. We did not possess the men. There was nothing to do but to hold on to what we had gained. On the night of the 19th the Zouaves went into the trenches on Horseshoe, we not having sufficient troops available to man them. The Bulgars had received a severe hammering, and for four days their troops had been practically without food, cut off by our artillery fire. But the Bulgars still lay on their ridges, looking down, and one wonders what our men must have felt as they were withdrawn into reserve. In four furious battles, in 1917 and 1918, they had tried to carry those rocky heights, and they had little to show for it but the loss of most of their comrades. It is unlikely that they thoroughly understood why the British should have to fling themselves against the Doiran fortress. The bitterness of defeat and wasted effort must have lain heavy on their souls. Their spirit had been simply magnificent. "Rather than miss the opportunity for which they had waited three years, officers and men remained in the ranks until often they dropped from sheer exhaustion," said General Milne in his dispatch. And it all seemed to have led to nothing.

## VICTORY

And then came the magic change—the great reward. By the 21st the Serbs had forged so far ahead that they had cut the vital Bulgarian communications on the Vardar. Our aeroplanes, humming constantly over the enemy lines, reported great signs of movement to the rear, with dumps blazing and exploding. Could it be that the impossible had happened? It really seemed like it. That night the Zouaves creeping forward up the Pip Ridge reported that the trenches there were empty. By Sunday morning, the 22nd, the incredible news was known to everybody. After two and a half years' occupation of that mighty fortress the enemy was at last abandoning it. The news ran through the tired and depleted British forces like lightning. And then gradually the meaning of it all came to them.

Victory! Their sacrifice had brought its reward. Alas that all their comrades lying so stiffly on those peaceful, undulating slopes might not share that moment with them!

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE PURSUIT.

THE whole line moved forward, and though victory was in the air it was in many ways a sad sight to look upon "all that was left of them" pressing in pursuit; skeleton Brigades of a few hundred tired men, many of them weak with fever, with a long string of transport following behind. These the battalions which had ambled through a pleasant campaign! Our troops marched unmolested up the heights they had battled so hard to gain; examined the great dugouts with their many Bulgar dead, and at the summit turned to look down on the positions which had for so long been their abiding place, which they had now left behind for ever.

It was now the turn of our aviators, and they exacted a terrible revenge. In common with the rest of the Salonica Forces, very little had been heard of them at home. In activity and dash they were far and away ahead of anything else on the Balkan Front. Perhaps if they had been merely a good second we should have heard more of them. But their superiority was so obvious to anybody who knew anything of the results obtained on the Balkan front that little was said about the Allied aviators at all.

They had helped all they could in the battle, flying at heights of less than three hundred feet on contact patrols, in and out of the clouds of dust and smoke, maintaining contact with the infantry while themselves

## THE PURSUIT

being hundreds of feet below the enemy machine gunners on the Ridge and Grand Couronné. And now they sailed in to administer punishment. The retreating Bulgarian Army was offering targets such as aviators dream of when they are sleeping badly. Horse, foot and guns were streaming up the narrow, precipitous road—the only practicable line of retreat—leading over into the Strumitza valley, into Bulgaria. Our airmen, like avenging eagles, swooped down on them, dropping bombs at low heights and firing thousands of rounds from their machine guns. For ten days, while the Bulgar retreat continued, this work went on. Guns, motor-cars, transport wagons, every kind of vehicle was abandoned in the hilly roads and passes as the aeroplanes came humming over. And all this was accomplished without the slightest sign of opposition from the enemy aviators. Our own flying men had so thoroughly worn them down that following the aerial combats of the 18th, during the first battle, only one enemy machine was encountered up to the cessation of hostilities, and this was promptly driven down.

Fitted with a specially strong wireless apparatus, one of our D.H. 9's cruised constantly over the country through which the enemy was retreating. Whatever the observer saw that was good to look upon he promptly wirelessed back to the aerodrome at Janesh, and from there machines were sent at once to bomb it. To and fro they went all the time, like homing pigeons, bombing or machine-gunning dumps, camps, convoys and troops on the roads. These were often black with fugitives and traffic and very great execution was done. In the Kosturino Pass the retreating enemy was scattered time after time, and men, transport and animals blown to bits. Wagons were lifted off the road and flung down ravines. But the greatest execution of all

## SALONICA AND AFTER

was done in the narrow Kresna Pass, a wonderful defile through which the Struma River comes down from Sofia, and up which the Struma Army was escaping. Here, as elsewhere, our aviators flew as low as 20 feet above the fugitives, machine-gunning constantly, and killing hundreds. This target was sixty miles from the most advanced aerodrome, and with mountains of over 5,000 feet between.

In those hectic days of aerial pursuit, our aviators dropped just short of 20,000 lbs. of high explosive on the retreating enemy, and fired 30,000 rounds of machine gun ammunition on them. And only the coming of the Armistice saved the Bulgars from further unlimited punishment of the same kind. They would have been harried and scattered and bombed all the way to Sofia, and they would have had no reply to it.

For over two years our aviators in the Balkans worked under a very great handicap. They had to be content with what machines were left over at home, and on these had to face enemy aviators flying greatly superior machines. It was only that wonderful and mysterious "something" which marks the British aviator out from all others which enabled them to more than hold their own. Even the great flying circus of Richthofen himself came to Salonica. On February 27th, 1917, twenty fast German machines suddenly appeared over the Summer Hill camps and bombed them heavily, causing many hundreds of casualties. This squadron caused much trouble during the two or three months it was on the Balkan Front, but with the assistance of the R.N.A.S. our flying men tackled it at every opportunity and brought down a number of machines. Nearly every flying day, for years, they were out bombing the enemy dumps, making themselves a terror by day and night, and the later immu-



## THE PURSUIT

nity of Salonica and the British area was due to their constant and devoted efforts. They cannot be praised too highly for the splendid work they did. And gradually their machines improved, until in November, 1918, the Army Commander was able to write of them, "Once adequately provided with up-to-date aeroplanes our pilots rapidly gained command of the air, and have succeeded in accounting for eight hostile machines for every one of our own missing." The crown of all their work came in the final offensive; it was at once their greatest achievement and their reward. They swept the enemy from the air, and brought terror and disaster among the retreating columns. Never once had they refused battle. And at the end they found no enemy of their own kind with which to fight.

From Monastir to Doiran the pursuit was now going on—Serbs, British, French, Greeks and Italians all pressing and harassing the enemy. The story of the Serbian pursuit is one of the most romantic chapters in military history. Treading their own soil they forged ahead unceasingly. Mahogany coloured men to begin with they became, as the pursuit went on day after day, as white as wax. For weeks on end there was never enough to give them a square meal; they went ahead so fast in front of the transport. There was no bread, and flour had to be served out, which was made into sticky "dampers" when fuel could not be found. They were once told that it was impossible for both food and munitions to reach them, and being asked to choose, asked for the munitions. So they pushed on, living on the country—which had next to nothing to give them. The strange sight was seen of thousands of Bulgar troops, complete with their officers, coming down to surrender to the Serbs as they advanced. The Bulgarian armies were smashed into three portions. Bul-

## SALONICA AND AFTER

garia capitulated—and still they pushed on. There were Germans and Austrians still to fight before their country was cleared. Veles, Uskub, Nish—the towns of Serbia passed one after another into their hands. And finally they entered Belgrade itself, masters once more in their own capital. They reached there on November 1st, forty-five days after the line was broken at Sokol, having covered in that time well over three hundred miles, and fighting most of the way. It was a magnificent achievement and the world would have thrilled to it but for the fact that just then the world had too much to think about.

The British troops followed hot on the heels of the retreating enemy, and we were the first to enter Bulgaria, this honour falling to the Derbyshire Yeomanry, who for three years had kept up their patient watch on the Struma. They led the troops of the 16th Corps under Lieut.-General C. J. Briggs, whose troops now comprised the 26th and 27th Divisions, the 14th Greek Division and the Lothians and Border Horse. The 12th Corps, on the right, under Lieut.-General Sir Henry Wilson, now comprised the 22nd and 28th Divisions, the 228th Brigade, the Cretan Division, the *2me bis* Zouaves, and the Surrey Yeomanry.

Our pursuit now took on a fantastic shape. While the cavalry and infantry of the 16th Corps, overcoming strong opposition, advanced along the Strumitsa Valley, into Bulgaria, the 22nd and 28th Divisions, together with the Cretans and Zouaves, made a combined attack on the towering Belashitza Range, which was still strongly held by the enemy. The Bulgars were entrenched on summits nearly 5,000 feet high. The depleted 22nd Division began to climb the precipitous slopes of the mountain wall which for so long had seemed to them, looming behind the Doiran heights,

## THE PURSUIT

the final barrier to all progress. For years they had looked on them, swathed in a blue mist, infinitely far away, and now they were climbing up goat tracks to the rugged summits. Our progress up the range met with considerable resistance, and once near the summit there followed three days of confused and difficult fighting for the various peaks. Had the enemy still been what he was only a week before it would have been impossible for our troops to win those towering strongholds. But he was now a beaten enemy, fighting only to gain time. One by one he abandoned the peaks, and we were on top of the range and over. We captured five guns up there, and much material. The 8th South Wales Borderers, of the 65th Brigade, specially distinguished themselves in these difficult operations. On September 28th the Cretan Division was ordered to sweep the Belashitza Range from west to east, one regiment to make its way along the crest and another (together with the 228th Brigade) to take a parallel course down the Butkova Valley, five thousand feet below. To the north of the range the troops of the 16th Corps were making their way in the same direction. In three lines we were advancing to cut off the enemy forces on the Struma.

After looking at the Rupel Pass for so long across the valley of the Struma we were now outflanking it from the west. The Bulgarians were streaming up through the pass and on through the narrower defile of the Kresna Pass, where our airmen were causing such havoc. Two days before this, down through the confusion and the slaughter, the Bulgarian peace envoys, M. Lyaptcheff, Minister of Marine, General Lukoff, Commander of the 2nd Army, and M. Radeff, had passed on their way to Salonica. And when our advanced troops were only fifteen miles from the Rupel Pass,

## SALONICA AND AFTER

whose capture would have cut off many thousands of Bulgarian troops, word came that an armistice had been signed at Salonica at 10 p.m. on Sunday, the 29th, and that hostilities would cease at noon on the Monday. The aeroplanes, with their fresh loads of bombs, were retained in the hangars, and as if by magic the sound of war died out among the mountains.

Bulgaria had capitulated unconditionally. There was a general idea at one time, largely fostered by the Bulgars themselves, that her defeat was largely "political." On the contrary, there could not have been a more decisive military defeat. The Bulgarian front had been broken into three pieces, and was on the point of being smashed into fragments, and the various parts had no hope of re-uniting to form a homogeneous front. Under the shock of danger the Bulgarian army had gone to pieces. Its situation following the opening of the offensive was by no means desperate, but it had utterly failed to recover itself, as so many other armies had done during the war. The Allied surprise was not strategical but tactical. The Bulgars knew an attack was coming, but failed to gauge both its direction and its weight and once the first shrewd blow was delivered they—like some over-estimated boxers—fought wildly, and finally went utterly to pieces. Never once were they within measurable distance of staying the avalanche of defeat once it had set in. Nowhere could they throw in a full reserve division (and here we see again the value of the British holding attacks). Their reserves came into the fight by regiments, and each one as it came up was "mopped up" in the irresistible advance, or joined the others in retreat without even coming into action. The difficult lateral communications of the enemy had always been his one great handicap, and the Allies, once the chance of victory had come into their grasp,

## THE PURSUIT

exploited this weakness to the utmost. An army of just on half a million men was broken, hustled, harried, pursued without relaxation, and finally beaten to its knees, with its country already invaded.

On the far left the so-called 11th German Army—a Bulgarian Army heavily staffed by Germans—made at first a desperate resistance and so consummated its own destruction. The French cavalry entered Prilep on September 23rd, the Serbs were forging further ahead, and the French pressed on to Uskub. The 11th Army was cut off, its only possible retreat now being through Albania. The German Staff, seeing the hopeless condition of affairs, behaved in true German fashion, and, first cutting all telegraphic and telephonic communication, fled in their motor-cars, leaving the Bulgarians to extricate themselves as best they could. The Bulgarians continued to resist strongly, and even counter-attacked, and for three days there was heavy fighting on the heights of Sop, between Monastir and Kichevo. But they were now a lost Army. When the Armistice was signed the abandoned Bulgarians refused to believe it. They were practically surrounded and quite without communications with the rest of the Bulgarian forces for two days, and only consented to believe in the Armistice when a Bulgarian officer was sent from Sofia by aeroplane to explain the situation. Then 11,000 of them surrendered to the French and 9,000 to the Italians. The French, with the Serbs, Greeks and Italians under their command, took 77,000 prisoners, including 8 generals and 1,500 officers; 350 guns, 10,000 horses and 20,000 cattle and sheep. The final captures of the Allies amounted to 100,000 prisoners and over 2,000 guns, with an immense booty of all kinds. The British were in Bulgarian territory, and would have taken thousands more prisoners from Struma but for

## SALONICA AND AFTER

the signing of the Armistice. The fighting went on without cessation for twelve days following the break through. The Bulgarian Armies were disunited, routed, scattered. They could not re-form. Their military situation was hopeless. They surrendered unconditionally because there was nothing else for them to do. The Germans could no longer help them, and they could not help themselves. The first prop of the Central Alliance had snapped before the onslaught of the Balkan Armies.

## CHAPTER XX.

. . . . AND AFTER.

AND after? Well, everything happened very shortly after.

The British forces had some extraordinary adventures following on Bulgaria's capitulation. They were first of all ordered to co-operate with the French and Serbs against Austria, and Widin on the far Danube was their first objective. We were already on the move, and the faces of our men were set northwards, when, by one of those brusque changes which emanate from Allied War Councils and make the private soldier wonder whether he is the sport of a gigantic game, our men were turned to march eastwards on Turkey, General Milne having received instructions to take command of the Allied troops operating against that Power. This advance began on October 10th. Less than a month before few people knew that there was to be an offensive on the Balkan Front. And now Bulgaria was out of the war, and we were marching on Constantinople. History was being made at lightning speed. But one shock of success followed so swiftly on another that the world could not realise all that was happening. Allenby's smashing success in Palestine; the Balkan corridor cut, and Turkey left to her own devices; Haig and his victorious armies driving ever forward in the West—there was too much wonderful news in the newspapers for the public at home to digest. They found the *pièce de résistance* of the banquet—

## SALONICA AND AFTER

the Hindenburg Line, Cambrai and Le Cateau—quite enough for their appetite and only toyed with the entrées and savouries from the Near East. The imminent elimination of Turkey from the war—the ardent desire of all the Allies in 1915—was now an event discounted in advance.

But shrouded in its usual fog of silence the B.S.F. was finding the investiture of Turkey no easy matter. The roads in Eastern Macedonia leading to the Turkish frontier were practically non-existent; at the best they were merely mud tracks. The railway between Doiran and Sérès had been largely destroyed, and could not be used in any way. Here our experience in road making and our excellently organised mechanical transport came to the rescue again. An Army without these advantages could not have concentrated on the Turkish frontier in double the time taken by the B.S.F. The 22nd Division trekked down the Sérès Road, along the valley to Stavros, and from there were transported in seventeen destroyers to Dedeagatch, the small Bulgarian port. The Navy did wonderful things in clearing mine-swept areas, and in assisting in the transfer of troops and stores. In less than twenty days, in spite of the enormous difficulties of moving troops, we had concentrated the 26th and 22nd Divisions and the 122nd French Division along the River Maritza, the Turkish frontier line. At Mustapha Pasha we were all ready for an immediate advance on Adrianople. In less than twenty days we had moved the troops 250 miles, and were using the poor little ports of Kavalla and Dedeagatch as bases. It was quite a striking feat.

Meanwhile at Mudros, the port of the big, bare island of Lemnos, a great Allied fleet was concentrated. For some time past the power of mischief which lay in the Russian Black Sea Fleet, now in German hands, had



been taken into consideration. A sortie from the Dardanelles with the *Goeben* at the head of the Russian ships was always a possibility, and we had nothing in the Ægean capable of standing up either to the *Goeben* or the Russian Dreadnoughts. (We did not know then to what a state of inefficiency the Bolsheviks and the Germans had reduced the Russian ships.) The French had no big ships so far East. Consequently the *Temeraire* and *Superb*, sister Dreadnoughts, came out from home to Mudros, where up to that time our biggest ships were the pre-Dreadnoughts *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon*. The British Naval Forces were under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir S. A. Gough-Calthorpe. And soon after the arrival of our two big ships, the warships of France, Italy, and Greece began to concentrate on Mudros. By the end of September some hundreds of war vessels of all kinds—battleships, cruisers, destroyers, aeroplane-carriers, oil ships, store ships, sweepers, patrol launches, and the rest—were lying in the great harbour. Turkey began to feel very alone and friendless. She knew of the formidable preparations going on by sea and by land to exact the payment for her misdeeds, which must follow as the night follows the day on the Balkan victory. Her leaders knew what had happened in Palestine, even if the people in the capital did not. And the “traditional friendship” for France and Britain began to re-assert itself—now that the German game was lost. Turks who whispered that it was time to try and patch up an arrangement with the Entente were no longer in danger of instant extinction. The two chief evil genii of the Turkish Empire, Enver and Talaat, judged it wise to disappear, with as much money as they could carry. A new cabinet was formed with tendencies moderated to suit the hour. Various envoys, more or less official, began

## SALONICA AND AFTER

to filter from the Asia Minor coast, across the Ægean, to prepare the way for others, and to find out what crumbs of magnanimity could be picked up from the table of the Allies. Some of them saw the formidable naval preparations at Mudros, and, impressed, were allowed to go back to spread the news. And finally came the real envoys. They went to Smyrna by rail, drove some distance along the coast, were picked up by H.M.S. *Liverpool* and brought to Mudros. They were Raouf Bey, Minister of Marine, Reched Hikmet Bey, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and Lieut.-Colonel Saadullah Bey, of the Turkish General Staff. They were accommodated on board the *Agamemnon* and from the port-holes of their cabins looked up and down vistas of warships, and across serried rows of warships. There was quite enough to make them think. And on October 30th the Armistice was signed on board the *Agamemnon*, the first clause of which was: "Opening of Dardanelles and Bosphorus, and secure access to the Black Sea. Allied occupation of Dardanelles and Bosphorus forts." Turkey's grasp on one of the world's key geographical positions was at last unloosened—let us hope for all time. The inviolate straits, up which no foreign warship could sail without the express permission of the Sultan's Government, were thrown open.

The second prop was knocked away. The breach in the enemy ring made by the Balkan Armies was widening and widening. Even Germany began to see that the game was up.

Following the elimination of Bulgaria the Turkish Empire had fallen without a blow—if we except our aeroplane raids on Constantinople. Our troops were called off the Maritza line, which they had taken up with so much sweat and trouble. The 26th Division went up through Bulgaria to the Danube, and the 22nd



Photo: Topical.

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The British Fleet passing up the Dardanelles.  
Photo taken from the Flagship "Superb," showing  
"Teneraire," "Lord Nelson," and "Agamemnon" astern.

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. . . AND AFTER

trekked back to Stavros. Ordered to march on Austria, then sent to Turkey, then brought back again; weeks of marching on bad roads and bivouacing in mud—no wonder the man who shouldered the pack and carries the rifle doubts at times whether those who guide his movements really know what they do want. A sore heel or a strap that pinches on the shoulder, and miles of muddy roads ahead—these are not the things that help in a calm and proper appreciation of what lies behind the apparent unreason of his movements.

On November 12th the Allied Fleets passed up the Dardanelles. There had been delay owing to difficulties in sweeping up the mines—a dangerous task which our unassuming trawler skippers and their crews tackled with their usual efficiency. But short as that delay had been in the eye of history—a mere flicker of time, an instant gone before it was perceived—tremendous things had happened to the world while the Fleet was waiting for the “all clear” from the sweepers. Austria, yielding to the imperious message of events, had capitulated, and a few days later the evil Colossus herself, Germany, bowed to the inevitable—while hoping for better luck next time. On the morning of November 11th I read Marshal Foch’s historic telegram posted up in the anteroom of the naval camp at Mudros. People read it languidly and said, “Well, well.” A few trawler skippers playing solo whist while waiting for lunch opined that Germany had done it only just in time to escape a “damned good hiding.” Nobody seemed elated or excited. The earth had thrown a somersault—the firmament had cracked—Germany was definitely beaten! And yet nobody seemed inclined to shout “hooray,” and I did not see one single person shake hands with another. Out in the harbour the impassive Fleet did not shriek with a single siren, nor

## SALONICA AND AFTER

speak with the voice of a single gun. Mudros is a dull place; a place which wears down high spirits, and deadens the soul. No doubt that was the reason for the general apathy. It could not be, surely, that while London was cheering itself hoarse with joy and relief there was something in the air of Mudros which enabled us to see beyond the excitement of the moment; which foreshadowed what may come to be regarded as the greatest error of judgment in all history—that we should have stayed the avenging sword at the very moment when the Brute was finally at our mercy?

And this cataclysmic crumbling of the might of our enemies; this consummation of all that we had been fighting for (and sometimes a little despairing of) during four long years had come within a little over six weeks after the first breach on the Balkan Front. The final props had gone, and we could look on the wreck and ruin of what had once seemed too powerful a structure even for Might with Right to conquer.

But all the same Mudros did move a little in its sleep on that day of the Great Armistice. In the afternoon we heard that the Fleet was certainly moving up to Constantinople next day. I went on board the *Agamemnon* that night, was given excellent quarters by its excellent Captain, and shown the famous table on which the Armistice with Turkey was signed.

The Fleet moved out of Mudros harbour at four o'clock on the morning of the 12th, and by nine we were off Cape Helles. There in the cold, leaden light of an unpleasing November morning was the tragic Peninsula; the *River Clyde*, from which our troops had poured at the first landing; the repellent shore of V. Beach, ugly and unpleasant as earth could possibly be; the ruined fort of Seddul Bahr, and, far off, the rounded crest of Achi Baba. Everybody on the ship

## . . . AND AFTER

was silent as we passed "this corner of a foreign land which is for ever England"; this bare and narrow patch of earth which holds such tragic and glorious memories for our race. For very many on board it was their first sight of the Peninsula, and all gazed at the shore with an intensity of expression which showed how deeply they were feeling, and spoke in low tones as they indicated this point or that. The general demeanour was that of somebody who had suddenly encountered the grave of an old friend. And all our thoughts ran on much the same lines. There on shore was the first tragic chapter of a great epic, and the ships we were now on, steaming majestically up the Straits, represented its triumphal end. This, and not the withdrawal in 1915, was the true end to the Dardanelles campaign.

Preceded by two destroyers and by new high-speed sweepers just out from England, the *Superb*, the flagship, led the way up the Straits, followed by *Temeraire*, *Lord Nelson*, and *Agamemnon*, and with a tail of light cruisers and destroyers stretching far behind. The French Fleet was not yet in sight, and behind them were the Italians and the Greeks. On shore we could see parties of our men of the 28th Division, who had just been put on shore to garrison the forts, waving to us as we passed. The leading battleships seemed to fill the Straits, and we must have looked a brave sight to those on shore. Past Hamidieh fort, with its 14-inch guns, and then the bend past Chanak, and here, as the straight line of great ships suddenly crooked into an elbow, one could look ahead and astern and see all the line, and what a gallant sight we made. It was good to see the string of White Ensigns fluttering here, where for so many centuries the barbarous power of the Turk had been all-powerful. The flag which means

## SALONICA AND AFTER

liberty for all, which meant "the freedom of the seas" long before ignorant or ill-disposed parrots discovered that high-sounding catchword, had taken the place of the flag that stands for deceit and oppression.

And next morning at eight o'clock, as quiet as mice, and with no thunderous broadside to announce the coming of the conqueror, our great ships were lying in line off the Sultan's Palace at Constantinople. It impressed us who were on the ships to see the White Ensign flying there. But there were certain people on shore to whom it meant infinitely more. Some of them stood drawn up on the quay, waiting for the British General, Sir Henry Wilson, to come ashore. They wore slop suits of a curious baggy cut, and caps or wide-awake hats, and many of them had pinched faces. They were British prisoners, survivors from Kut and elsewhere, and they had known in full measure all the hell that Turkish cynicism and neglect, or active Turkish cruelty, could mean. And up on the high Galata Tower were others looking down with hungry eyes as the ships came up from the Sea of Marmora into the Bosphorus; British officers, these, who up to a fortnight before had been treated like dogs in the foetid gaols of old Stamboul, but suddenly found that a magic change had come over everything, so that those who were harsh or disdainful became fawning and amiable, and then announced, with many bows, that liberty was theirs. And to these the White Ensign fluttering down below there, over the waters that know so much of tragedy and cruelty, meant the deliverance from all evil.

Since that day the men of the B.S.F. have scattered far and wide, and have taken the flag to lands they never dreamed of seeing. The quagmires of Serbian mountain passes and the squalor of little Serbian or Bulgarian towns in mid-winter; the ostentatious new-



. . . AND AFTER

ness of Sofia; the broad Danube, and Bucharest; the beauty of the Bosphorus; Batoum, Tiflis, and the flat shores of the Caspian—all these they have known. Already Salonica and Macedonia must seem like the echo of a dream—a long and bad and vivid dream. Their work there is done, and the B.S.F. has ceased to be, and belongs only to history. But the memory of Macedonia will never fade, and in after years they will look back on it all, and let their minds roam through a thousand scenes and incidents, a little surprised, perhaps, that in looking backwards the ugly and unpleasant grows dim, and their thoughts dwell chiefly on the pleasanter side. They will think of the Vardar wind, which scorches and parches in summer, and pierces to the bone in winter—but they will think also of the Struma Plain with its wonderful variegated carpet of wild flowers in early Spring, and its fields of crimson poppies, or of the Krusha Balkan hills in the warm golden sunlight of autumn. What does *Tiadatha* say?

“ There was blue smoke curling upwards  
From a company headquarters,  
And he saw some soldiers bathing  
In a pool beside the village—  
From below the voices reached him,  
In the honey-coloured sunshine.  
And beyond the line of trenches,  
Just beyond the wooded foothills  
Lay the smiling, open valley,  
Threaded by the Hodza Suju,  
By the sandy Hodza river,  
Bright as mackerel in the sunshine,  
Brighter than a string of opals.”

Salonica with its dirty crowded streets, its cheap tawdry amusements and unclean restaurants; the Staff Colonels and M.T. officers in imposing cars; the nurses, pretty and otherwise—English, Australian, Scottish and French; the sunsets over mountain and plain; the wonderful pictures of Olympus seen down the funnel

## SALONICA AND AFTER

of Venizelos Street on those startlingly clear evenings of winter; the cheerful times in mess or canteen; the dust and mules along the Karasuli-Gugunci road; the Serbs; the baggy trousered peasants of all kinds and colours; the thin starved ponies of the Greek transport columns; the ladies of the White Tower, the Odéon and the Skating Rink; the bumps on the Monastir Road; the rumbling lorries; the eternal growl of gun fire; the "crumps"; the night patrols; the happy days at Summer Hill (!); the long-delayed mails from home, and the joy of receiving them; the aching, maddening longing for leave; the Fire and *The Balkan News*; the ration rabbit and the chlorinated water; the misery and depression of malaria and dysentery; the happy days between cool sheets in hospital—all these, and a thousand other things, will blend into one pleasant picture: "When we were out in Macedonia." And perhaps even the terrors of Pip Ridge, Grand Couronné and the Jumeaux Ravine will bring their compensations, for *She* will be all the kinder for knowing of them, and *He* will be able to say with the Moor of Venice:—

"She loved me for the dangers I had passed  
And I loved her that she did pity them."

And now that one has come to the end one finds that there still remain many things that might be talked about. The shooting trips in the marshes, for instance, with the ducks and geese whirring over against the last, faint glow of a winter sunset; the beauty of Macedonia's many lakes; or Vodena, with its tumbling waters, in Springtime. But it is too late and, in the *lingua franca* of the camps, the time has come to say  
*Finish Johnny.*

## APPENDICES

### I.

#### THE WORK OF THE 16TH WING, ROYAL AIR FORCE.

THE Royal Flying Corps, now Royal Air Force, was first represented in the Balkans by No. 17 Squadron, Major F. N. Fuller being in command. This Squadron disembarked at Salonica on July 7th, 1916, one flight being sent to Avret Hisar to work with the XII. Corps, the remaining flights working with the XVI. Corps. During September one flight moved up to Lahana, the remaining flight being located at Salonica. On January 1st, 1917, Major J. H. Herring, D.S.O., M.C., took over the command of the Squadron.

On September 20th the personnel of No. 47 Squadron, No. 17 Balloon Section and 16th Wing Headquarters arrived at Salonica, and 16th Wing, Royal Flying Corps was formed with effect from that date, with Lieut.-Colonel G. W. P. Dawes in command.

On October 20th the flight of No. 17 Squadron at Avret Hisar was relieved by a flight of No. 47 Squadron, who proceeded to Janes. Later in the month another flight of the same Squadron moved to Janes, the third flight proceeding to Kukus, and subsequently to Snevee. This Squadron was commanded by Major C. C. Wigram until relieved on December 23rd, 1916, by Major F. F. Minchin, M.C.

No. 17 Squadron worked wholly for the XVI. Corps from October 20th, 1916, and new aerodromes were occupied at Orljak and Marian. The types of machines used at this time were B.E. 2c's, A.W.'s, De Havilland 2's and Bristol Scouts.

Reconnaissances were carried out daily whenever weather permitted, and artillery co-operation, bombing and photography were also undertaken on a large scale. Contact patrols were carried out on a small scale at first but later developed in accordance with the requirements.

No. 17 Balloon Section were moved up to Orljak, and later to Kopriva, ascents being undertaken whenever the weather was favourable. A good deal of hostile activity was reported on, and new defences when located were also reported. The enemy displayed a good deal of activity, both aerial and artillery, against this balloon, and during its stay on the Struma Front it was attacked a large number of times by hostile machines, being shot down in flames on three occasions. In order to endeavour to stop this an old unserviceable balloon was put up with a heavy bomb in the basket. This bomb was connected to the ground, and was calculated to bring down any machine approaching within 100 yards. On November 21st, 1917, a hostile scout attacked, and approached close to the balloon,

## SALONICA AND AFTER

when the charge was fired, causing the machine to break in half. As anticipated, it was discovered that this machine was piloted by Lieut. Von Eschwege, the German star pilot on this front.

On February 12th, 1917, Nos. 26 and 27 Balloon Sections disembarked at Salonica, together with Headquarters No. 22 Balloon Company, Major J. O. Davis being in command. Both Sections and Headquarters No. 22 Balloon Company moved into the XII. Corps area, the balloons carrying out observations until the cessation of hostilities.

Lieut. W. S. Scott, pilot, No. 17 Squadron, left Salonica Aerodrome with a Greek officer as observer, on December 10th, 1916, in search of a suitable landing ground in the vicinity of Drama, with a view to landing an Agent. On the return journey the machine was attacked by a single-seater biplane, which was driven down by Lieut. Scott, and seen to crash by the Greek observer.

A week later Lieut. Scott succeeded in landing an Agent at Fotolievo, in the Drama Valley. When over the valley the pilot shut off his engine at 6,000 feet and planed down to 200 feet, at which height mist was encountered, and the centre section wires were broken on landing. As it was impossible to see more than five yards around the machine, it was assumed the Agent got away unobserved.

The same pilot again landed an Agent in the same vicinity on January 1st, 1917, and it was thought that he got away unobserved. For these acts of gallantry Lieut. W. S. Scott was awarded the Military Cross.

On December 23rd, 1916, Captain W. D. Bell, M.C., No. 47 Squadron, left the Aerodrome to bomb a hostile observation balloon near Furka. On returning to our lines, after dropping his bombs, he was attacked in the rear by an Albatross two-seater. The hostile machine dived on the B.E. 12 and lost some 200 feet in height, whereupon Captain Bell dived, and as his engine was full on he soon caught up the E.A. (enemy aircraft). When about 50 yards behind, Captain Bell opened fire with his Vickers gun and fired about 20 shots, by that time being right up to the enemy, the faint puffs of smoke from the hostile observer's gun being distinctly seen. At this point the E.A. dived and began to slip and spin, and some part of a plane becoming detached, the machine crashed to earth in no-man's-land.

Towards the end of February, 1917, a German Bombing Squadron commenced to be extremely active on this front, as many as 20 machines taking part in raids on Salonica, Janes Aerodrome, Hadzi Junas Aerodrome, Karasouli, and other targets. This latest type German Bombing Squadron was a considerable source of trouble to the British machines.

The Royal Naval Air Service were asked to co-operate against this Squadron, and they sent over a number of Sopwith Fighters from Mudros, which, with the assistance of our scouts, were made into a Composite Fighting Squadron and were located at Hadzi Junas. Their duty was to engage the hostile formation whenever and wherever possible. The R.N.A.S. also sent over a squadron of bombing machines, and a counter bombing offensive on a large scale was inaugurated.

## APPENDICES

During the various engagements between the German Bombing Squadron and our scouts, one twin-engined bomber was attacked and came down in our lines, although it was afterwards ascertained that it had been hit by A.A. fire. Three others were also brought down over the enemy lines. A Halberstadt Scout was forced to land in the French lines after having been hit by French A.A. fire.

The German Squadron came to the Macedonian Front from Bucharest, where it had been employed against the Roumanians and Russians. Part of its equipment was a special train, which was used for transferring the personnel and stores rapidly from one point to another, the machines flying to their destination. This train was located alongside the aerodrome at Hudova, and during the many times the aerodrome was bombed, both by day and night, a direct hit was obtained on the train.

On May 10th it was observed that the Bombing Squadron and train had left the aerodrome at Hudova, and it was subsequently reported as being identified in Belgium and being used for bombing London.

One of the most successful pilots in the early days of the Royal Flying Corps in Macedonia was Captain G. W. Murlis Green, and the following are examples of his fights:—

Captain Green left Orljak Aerodrome on January 4th, 1917, in pursuit of an Albatross two-seater. He caught it up over Likovan, and in the first burst fired hit the petrol tanks and wounded the hostile observer. The E.A. dived and landed in our lines at Mekes.

On January 14th the same pilot and Lieut. F. G. Saunders, both flying B.E.12's, engaged an Albatross two-seater of the then latest type and forced it to land near Lahana, the machine being captured intact. It was later flown down to Salonica by Captain Green, escorted by two British Scouts. A camera captured with this machine was used afterwards with good effect.

On the morning of February 12th, Captain Green and Lieut. J. C. F. Owen left Orljak Aerodrome on B.E.12's to try and destroy a hostile Fokker Scout at Drama Aerodrome. When our machines were at 7,000 feet over the aerodrome the Fokker was seen to be climbing, and both of our pilots dived at it and attacked at about 50 yards range at a height of 6,000 feet. Unfortunately Captain Green's gun jammed, and while this was being rectified Lieut. Owen fought the Fokker at 2,000 feet, but apparently had his engine or tank hit by machine-gun fire, as he was obliged to land near the aerodrome. The Fokker landed beside Lieut. Owen's machine and the pilot jumped out and ran towards Lieut. Owen, but stopped short suddenly, evidently being covered by the latter's automatic pistol. Lieut. Owen set fire to his machine which blazed up and was completely destroyed. A large number of soldiers from the aerodrome and town ran towards the machines. Capt. Green waited over the aerodrome for twenty minutes, but as no further action was taken by hostile aircraft he returned to our lines.

In the afternoon of the same day Capt. Green again set out on the same mission, this time carrying one 100-lb. bomb. The bomb was dropped and fell about twenty yards south of a hanger. When at 4,000 feet over the aerodrome an Albatross was attacked, but it dived and landed, being placed in a hanger. Another Albatross was

## SALONICA AND AFTER

got out of a hangar and took off, but no action was taken by the Fokker. At this point the engine of the B.E. started to "miss," and as both main spars of the top starboard plane had been shot through by A.A. fire, a start was made for Lahana. The Albatross followed as far as Tolos, where Capt. Green attacked and drove it down, but was himself obliged to land at Monhui, just inside our lines. The ashes of Lieut Owen's machine and the burnt ground around it were particularly noticeable, and there was nothing but small parts, such as separate cylinders, etc., seen lying about.

On March 18th Captain Green attacked one of six twin-engined bombing machines over Karasouli. He attacked from 30 feet below, and after firing one drum of S.A.A. the enemy machine dropped eight bombs at our machine, all of which fortunately fell clear of its tail. Petrol was seen to be flowing out of the bottom of the fuselage of the E.A., and a second drum of S.A.A. was fired at the port engine, which stopped, the starboard engine also subsequently stopping. An attempt was then made to place a third drum on the Lewis gun, but the drum was shot out of the pilot's hand. The enemy machine was seen to fall in no-man's-land, turning over on its back when landing, where it was afterwards shelled by our artillery. Shortly after this Captain Green again encountered a formation of five twin-engined bombers and attacked one from below at 20 yards range, firing three drums of S.A.A. from his Lewis gun. A large amount of petrol streamed out of the enemy machine, and one of the observers was seen to be hanging over the side. The four remaining machines then attacked our B.E., and as the pilot had no more ammunition he returned to our lines at 2,000 feet, being pursued by the hostile machines.

The following morning the same pilot, when on patrol, observed an Albatross, which he attacked from about thirty yards below at 10,500 feet over Lake Doiran. The petrol tanks and observer were hit, and the hostile machine dived very steeply. It eventually got into a spiral and landed on one wing, turned over and caught fire.

For these acts of gallantry and devotion to duty Captain G. W. Murlis Green was awarded the D.S.O., M.C. and Bar.

A large number of combats took place during the time the hostile bombing squadron was active, many instances occurring of a single British machine attacking anything up to 18 E.A. As an instance of this, 2nd-Lieut. J. L. Bamford, who was flying a B.E. 12, on the occasion of a hostile raid on Salonica, on February 27th, with complete disregard for self, flew into the middle of a formation of 18 enemy machines, and attacked four in succession. Unfortunately a Halberstadt Scout, which he failed to see, attacked him from above and shot through his petrol tanks, causing the engine of the B.E. to stop. A good landing was made, however, on the aerodrome at Janes.

On March 27th, 1917, at about 18.00 hours ten enemy machines attempted to bomb Snevece. They were at once engaged by our machines, and all but one were driven back over the lines before any bombs could be dropped. The machine which succeeded in dropping its bombs caused a few casualties. After an engagement the enemy squadron leader fired a coloured light, evidently with the intention of calling the E.A. together for a combined retirement, and they were pursued almost as far as Hudova Aerodrome.

## APPENDICES

In connection with the bombing offensive inaugurated by the British to counteract the hostile activity, many targets were successfully bombed. On April 25th our formation, when on its way to attack an enemy dump, met the hostile squadron evidently on their way to bomb some point in our lines. A general fight took place, and the E.A. were forced to return to their aerodrome. Unfortunately, one of our machines was brought down in flames, but against this one of the twin-engined bombers was shot down, and was confirmed to have been destroyed by fire. Our machines succeeded in bombing suitable objectives before returning to our lines.

One of the targets bombed by our formation during the bombing offensive was a large hostile dump at Livunovo. Two large fires were started there, and the flares were visible for a distance of 20 miles. Confirmation was later obtained that a large amount of stores, etc., were totally destroyed.

On April 2nd, 1918, Major S. G. Hodges, M.C., took over the command of No. 17 Squadron from Major J. H. Herring, D.S.O., M.C., and Major F. A. Bates, M.C., assumed command of No. 47 Squadron, vice Major G. D. Gardner, M.C., with effect from August 1st, 1918. Major W. R. B. McBain, M.C., commanded No. 150 Squadron from formation.

Bombing was persistently carried out right up to the signing of the Armistice.

On January 21st, 1918, a request was received for assistance in operations against the Turkish cruiser *Goeben*, which was reported ashore off Nagara, in the Dardanelles, after a raid in the *Ægean*, in which the *Breslau* was sunk by mines. Two hours after receipt of the request three machines left Salonica for Mudros, where they arrived safely. The following day three additional machines proceeded and also reached Mudros safely. Two raids, each of three machines, were carried out on the *Goeben*, and another in the evening on Galata Aerodrome, 9 miles N.E. of the *Goeben's* position.

Two days later a request was received for a further flight of bombers, and a reply was sent that four machines could be spared and would proceed as soon as possible. It was also asked if a machine could be supplied capable of carrying a 450-lb. depth charge. No machine in this Wing was capable of doing this, but on the French Aviation being approached they agreed to place an "A.R." at our disposal, provided we could supply a pilot. This was agreed to, and on January 28th three R.F.C. machines and the A.R. reached Mudros in safety. The French machine was piloted by Lieut. W. J. Buchanan, of No. 17 Squadron, this being the first occasion he had ever flown this type of machine. It had been impossible to send the machines sooner, owing to unfavourable weather.

On January 23rd three raids with all six machines were made on the *Goeben*, several direct hits being obtained. Machine-gun fire was also brought to bear on searchlights during the last raid.

The following day one raid was made, during which a formation of enemy scouts were engaged and driven off. During the same evening the Royal Flying Corps Flight bombed the *Goeben* at ten minutes intervals, and a night reconnaissance of Galata Aerodrome was also carried out.

From January 25th to 28th strong gales and clouds prevented any

## SALONICA AND AFTER

flying, so the machines were kept ready to take off at short notice, in the event of the weather clearing.

On the morning of the 29th preparations were begun for a morning raid with light bombs, the object being to distract the attention of working parties on the *Goeben*, while a submarine attack was made. However, before the machines got off a report was received that the *Goeben* was no longer ashore, and our machines accordingly returned to Salonica, all landing safely.

On April 1st, 1918, No. 150 Squadron, composed of single-seater fighters, was formed in the field. The Scout Fighters of No. 17 and 47 Squadrons were transferred to this Squadron, and later all three Squadrons were made up to strength. The machines were S.E. 5a's, Bristol monoplanes, and Sopwith Camels, and from its formation No. 150 Squadron helped considerably in bringing the aerial superiority of the Balkans into the hands of the Allied Armies.

With effect from midnight, June 19-20th, Lieut.-Colonel G. E. Todd took over the command of 16th Wing, Royal Air Force, Lieut.-Colonel G. W. P. Dawes, D.S.O., proceeding to England.

During the month of June, 1918, the enemy displayed considerable activity in the air and several times crossed the lines at night.

On receipt of a message during the night of 27th-28th June stating that hostile aircraft were over our lines, Lieut. G. C. Gardiner left the aerodrome at Kirec on a Bristol monoplane at about 01.00 hours, and encountered an E.A. over Lake Ardzan. He dived on it firing several bursts, but lost sight of it owing to being dazzled by flares dropped by the enemy machine. Lieut. Gardiner then proceeded towards Salonica and encountered another E.A. outside the town over Hortiach, which was approaching from the East. When attacked this E.A. turned and was followed by our scout, who fired short bursts whenever possible. A running fight was kept up, the E.A. making in the direction of the Struma river, where it dropped several bombs, evidently intended for Salonica, in the vicinity of Gudeli Bridge and Kahara. When over Porna the engine of the monoplane cut out owing to shortage of petrol, but Lieut. Gardiner glided to our lines and landed by the aid of a grass fire near Nigrita.

No. 150 Squadron had a large number of combats, the following being a few examples:—

During a bomb raid on Cestovo dump on June 1st, 1918, a formation of twelve hostile scouts were encountered. These were engaged by Capt. G. G. Bell and Lieut. C. B. Green, flying S.E.5a's, and during the fight which followed the former fired a burst of twenty rounds into a Siemens Schuckert Scout, which burst into flames. Two E.A. then got on to Capt. Bell's tail and were attacked by Lieut. Green from close range. One was seen to go down out of control with smoke coming from its centre section. The fight was then continued until another E.A., coming head on for Lieut. Green, pulled straight up and rolled over on its back, going down out of control. A third S.E., piloted by Lieut. F. D. Travers, then joined in the fight. He engaged and fired a long burst into an enemy scout, which dived vertically out of control and crashed N.W. of Bogdanci.

While on an offensive patrol on June 12th, 1918, four of our



## APPENDICES

scouts encountered a formation of 8 E.A. near Smokvica. Lieut. D. Davies, on a Sopwith Camel, dived on a D.5 Albatross Scout and shot it down in flames. He then engaged another and sent it down out of control, it being seen to crash and burst into flames. Lieut. C. B. Green, on an S.E.5a, also attacked a D.5 Scout, and after a short burst the E.A. went down and crashed in a field S.S.E. of Pardovica. He also engaged a second machine, but owing to engine trouble the combat was broken off. Lieut. C. G. Gardiner, on a Sopwith Camel, attacked another D.5 Albatross and followed it down to 2,500 feet, when it suddenly dived out of control and was lost to view. This latter machine was subsequently reported to have crashed. All our machines returned safely.

Lieut. D. A. Davies, on a Sopwith Camel, was attacked by five E.A. Two of these attacked from above, and Lieut. Davies turned sharply to the right, when the two E.A. collided and went down. Several other Scouts engaged the Camel on the return journey, and, finally, Lieut. Davies shot one down out of control over the vicinity of Balince.

When returning from escorting a bomb raid on Miletkovo dump on September 3rd, 1918, four of our S.E.5a's sighted six enemy machines engaging one of our monoplanes over Lake Doiran at a low altitude. The S.E.'s were joined by two Sopwith Camels, and all six machines dived from 13,000 to 1,000 feet and engaged the six E.A., but not in time to save the monoplane, which had been driven down into Lake Doiran. The pilot, Lieut. J. P. Cavers, was seen struggling in the water, whilst the E.A. were diving and firing at him. Lieut. Cavers was apparently drowned and was reported missing.

Lieut. Travers, on an S.E., then singled out an enemy machine, and after firing a long burst into it from close range, it fell out of control and crashed at the N.W. corner of Lake Doiran. This was also seen by other of our pilots. Lieut. Travers was then attacked by another E.A., whereupon he turned sharply round and fired a good burst into it and sent it down out of control. Capt. G. C. Gardiner, on a Sopwith Camel, followed this machine down and saw it crash east of Cerniste. Lieut. Spackman also saw this one crash. Capt. Gardiner then returned, and when at 2,000 feet, observed an E.A. which he pursued, firing both guns. The E.A. dived down to fifty feet, when a further burst sent it crashing down to the ground close to the hospital at Cerniste. Our machine was so low at this point that Capt. Gardiner had to zoom the hospital tents to clear them.

In the meantime, Lieut. W. Ridley, on an S.E.5a, attacked another E.A. flying at low altitude just north of Lake Doiran. After a running fight, during which Lieut. Ridley fired 200 rounds, the E.A. stalled and then spun into the ground, crashing about half a mile south of Cestovo.

In preparation for the operations begun on September 18th, 1918, an unusually large number of reconnaissances were carried out, and large numbers of photographs taken. A special photographic map of the district between the Vardar Valley and the Belashitza Mountains, comprising 1,250 photographs, was prepared, and many photographic

## SALONICA AND AFTER

sheets were completed and forwarded to Corps Headquarters. Considerable time was devoted to artillery work, large numbers of registrations being carried out daily. Three bombing raids were also carried out as preliminary to the offensive, the targets being Hudova Aerodrome on September 14th, Demirkapu Station on the 15th, and Hudova Station and dump on the 16th. Good results were obtained during each raid, though on the first day strong Vardar winds made accurate bombing very difficult.

On the day of the attack four contact patrols were carried out in conjunction with the attacking infantry, and messages were dropped on Brigade and Divisional Headquarters. Owing to the intense dust and smoke thrown up by the barrage, the machines had to descend to between 200 and 300 feet in order to carry out their mission, often flying below the tops of the Grand Couronné and the Pip Ridge, and were subjected to intense fire throughout. One machine was brought down in flames by A.A. fire, the occupants being killed.

During a patrol carried out to protect our contact patrol machines, four of our scouts engaged a formation of between nine and fourteen E.A. During the fight which ensued Capt. G. G. Bell, on an S.E.5a, got to close quarters and fired good bursts into one E.A., which went down out of control with smoke issuing from the centre section. Captain Brawley and Lieut. Hamilton got on the tail of another machine, which finally went down out of control. These were confirmed by pilots of artillery machines.

It was probably due to these decisive combats in our favour that the *moral* of the German flying officers was reduced to a low state, as, from the morning of September 18th up to the cessation of hostilities, only one enemy machine was encountered, and this was driven down to its own aerodrome.

During the battle our artillery machines played an important part. Contact patrols flew over enemy trenches at very low altitudes. Observers on reconnaissances watched enemy movements, and our bombers attacked trenches, camps and dumps with bombs and machine gun fire. Patrols were kept up throughout the day from dawn until dusk, and during September 18th and 19th no fewer than 272 hostile batteries were reported active and countered by our artillery. Several times active batteries were silenced by machine gun fire from low altitudes.

A long distance destructive shoot was carried out on Divisional Headquarters at Furka, successful results being obtained.

Continuous reconnaissances were carried out, and one of our D.H.9's was fitted with a special long-distance wireless with a hundred mile range. This machine operated over back areas and enemy lines of retreat, the messages sent being received with ease at the wireless station near Janes. The object of this was to enable bodies of troops and transport to be bombed with the least possible loss of time.

During the whole of the operations bombing was energetically carried out, dumps, camps, convoys, and troops being repeatedly attacked.

On September 21st machines on artillery and reconnaissance duties reported that Tatarli, Cestovo, Furka, Cerniste and Hudova dumps were in flames, and that ammunition dumps were exploding.

## APPENDICES

Numerous fires were reported over the whole of the Vardar Valley, and all day the Rabrovo-Kosturino-Strumica road was seen to be packed with transport and troops moving northwards.

Every opportunity was taken by the Royal Air Force to bomb and harass the retreating enemy.

The retreating troops and transport were followed up from the time the retirement started. The roads running north from Rabrovo, Kosturino, Strumica and Jenikoj were seen to be black with traffic and were bombed continuously by our machines. As soon as the machines had dropped their load of bombs and expended their ammunition they returned immediately to the aerodrome for fresh supplies, everyone showing the greatest keenness, and the fullest advantage being taken of these exceptional targets. During this period our machines came down to as low as 50 and 20 feet and fired into convoys and bodies of troops.

The following telegram from Advanced 16th Corps testifies to the enormous damage inflicted :—

“ The routes from Cestovo Valley to Kosturino show signs of the indescribable confusion that must have existed in the retreat of the Bulgar Army. Guns of all kinds, motor cars, machine-guns, rifles and every kind of war material abandoned. Dead animals are strewn everywhere. Indicate that our R.A.F. must have contributed largely to bringing about this state of things.”

Also the following from the C.-in-C., British Salonica Force :—

“ I desire to thank you and all ranks of the Royal Air Force for the efficient manner in which their duties have been carried out since the commencement of active operations and to express my admiration of the skill and gallantry shown by pilots and observers which have so materially assisted the success of operations.”

The most heavily bombed target was the Kresna Pass, which was 60 miles distant from the most advanced aerodrome, with 7,000 feet mountains intervening. The shooting here was good, and on several occasions whole wagons were seen to be blown off the road into the ravine.

On one occasion one of our machines observing 12 guns of large calibre on the road north of Kresna, came down to about 500 feet and machine-gunned the teams, several men being seen to fall. This machine was badly shot about by machine-gun fire. Confirmation of this was received indirectly from the American Consul-General at Sofia, who stated that he happened to be motoring along this road at the time, and saw several of the oxen and drivers killed or wounded, and incidentally had a narrow escape himself.

These same guns were to have been attacked next morning, but escaped owing to the suspension of operations.

From September 21st up to the cessation of hostilities our machines dropped 19,570 lbs. of H.E. and fired over 29,880 rounds of S.A.A. on the retiring enemy.

To assist during these operations No. 17 Squadron Headquarters and “C” Flight were moved to Amberkoj from Lahana on the night of September 22nd, moving up to Stojakovo, in Serbia, on the 26th.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

On October 2nd this Flight proceeded to a new aerodrome near Radovo, east of Strumitza (Bulgaria), thus establishing the first aerodrome of the Allied nations in an enemy country in Europe since the commencement of the war.

Preparations were begun for a move northwards to the Danube, but this order was cancelled, and a move was instead to be made to the Turkish Frontier. The Flight of No. 17 Squadron was withdrawn from Radovo, and on October 19th "B" Flight of No. 17 Squadron was sent to Philippopolis. The roads were in an extremely bad condition and it was necessary to load the lorries only lightly. A composite Flight of two-seaters and scouts was also despatched to a position near Gumuldzina, later moving on to Dedeagatch. Owing to the rapid movement of the flights, communication could not be established, so it was necessary to maintain communication by air.

Reconnaissances of the new area were carried out, and a new hostile aerodrome was located, but no engagements with enemy aircraft took place. The signing of the Armistice with Turkey being an accomplished fact, the Flights at Philippopolis and Dedeagatch were withdrawn.

Total of enemy machines destroyed over lines ... ..	57
Total of enemy machines brought down in our lines ...	6
Brought down by balloon ... ..	1
Driven down out of control ... ..	35
Total ... ..	99
Number of British machines missing ... ..	28

### CASUALTIES.

Killed ... ..	21
Accidentally killed ... ..	15
Wounded in combat ... ..	13
Wounded by A.A. fire ... ..	5
Wounded, accidentally ... ..	10
Wounded, accidentally—since died ... ..	2
Wounded combat—since died ... ..	1
Wounded during bomb raid ... ..	1
Brought down over lines (P. of W.) ... ..	11
Prisoner of War—later died of wounds ... ..	1
Died in hospital ... ..	1
Total ... ..	81

The figures stated above for enemy aircraft brought down have all been confirmed. Many others were claimed to have been shot down, but as confirmation was not forthcoming they are not included.

## APPENDICES

### II.

#### A NOTE ON MALARIA.

MALARIA is due to the infection of man with a germ inoculated into him by a bite of a mosquito, which has itself obtained the germ by previously feeding upon a patient who has had malaria and who continues to carry the germs in his blood.

The importance of malaria in an Army depends upon the large number of persons infected rather than upon the number of deaths which it causes, and upon the numerous recurrences of the disease in the patient rather than upon the severity of any single attack. It is a disease of continual recurrences tending to make the patient, if he remains in the country, bloodless, debilitated, listless and apathetic, diminishing his physical ability and capacity for work and placing him from day to day under the ever present threat of a sudden acute relapse.

An Army carrying out active operations in a malarious country is certain to have a considerable number of cases during the first season and, if the troops remain in the country, one has to reckon during the following season not only with almost as many fresh infections as in the previous year, but also with the added hospital admissions due to relapses. The number of hospital admissions, therefore, tends to increase year by year.

During 1916 it was possible to evacuate patients from Salonica freely to Malta or England. In April, 1917, the submarine menace compelled us to retain practically all cases in Macedonia, this fact accounting for the increase in hospital beds and the decrease in evacuations shown in the attached figures. This unavoidable retention of malarial patients in the country led to the existence of a large chronically ill population which was fit for little except to circulate between hospitals and convalescent depots, with perhaps an occasional few days of duty, and it was to get rid of this population that the 'Y' Scheme was introduced in the beginning of 1918. Under this scheme nearly 30,000 malarial patients were transferred to England during the ten months ending 31st October, 1918.

It is evident from the introductory sentences of these notes that preventive measures may be initiated in three directions—

Firstly, to protect the healthy man from being bitten by the mosquito.

Secondly, to abolish the mosquito so far as possible, and

Thirdly, to cure or get rid of the chronic malarial patient who is carrying the germs in his blood and by whom only can the mosquito be infected.

Protection of the healthy man was carried out in every possible manner by means of nets, mosquito-proof huts and dug-outs, special shorts, gloves and head-nets, and ointments, obnoxious to the mosquito and, unfortunately, seldom less obnoxious to the user.

The mosquito was attacked chiefly by widespread attempts to get rid of marshes and stagnant water of all sorts in which the insect breeds, and by cutting down brushwood, scrub, long grass, etc., near camps, in which the mosquito rests by day.

## SALONICA AND AFTER

The record of this work in the Base and L. of C. area alone furnishes some surprising totals. In oiling the surface of stagnant water week by week a total of well over a million square yards was covered; over 360,000 square yards of brushwood were cut; streams were channelled and trenches cut or refreshed to a total of over two million lineal yards; and close upon 10,000 pools were filled in or drained.

Attempts to clean up the chronic germ carrier by means of quinine were very disappointing, and it was found much easier to get the patient out of the country under the "Y" Scheme.

### 1.—TOTAL ADMISSIONS FOR MALARIA.

1916	...	...	...	...	...	...	29,594
1917	...	...	...	...	...	...	63,396
1918	...	...	...	...	...	...	67,059

### 2.—TOTAL EVACUATED FROM SALONICA (for Malaria, to England or Malta).

1916	...	...	...	...	...	...	21,902
1917	...	...	...	...	...	...	7,298
1918	...	...	...	...	...	...	3,257

### 3.—MAXIMUM NUMBER OF HOSPITAL BEDS DURING THE SUMMER.

1916	...	...	...	...	...	...	11,500
1917	...	...	...	...	...	...	26,000
1918	...	...	...	...	...	...	26,000

### 4.—MAXIMUM NUMBER OF MALARIA CASES IN HOSPITAL ON ANY ONE DAY.

1916	...	...	...	...	...	...	3,652
1917	...	...	...	...	...	...	12,947
1918	...	...	...	...	...	...	6,855*

\* Accuracy invalidated by the epidemic of influenza in autumn.

### 5.—TOTAL DAYS SICKNESS DUE TO MALARIA DURING THE 12 MONTHS.

1916	...	...	...	...	...	...	—*
1917	...	...	...	...	...	...	1,273,480
1918	...	...	...	...	...	...	1,970,600

\* Figures not available.

N.B.—The figures for 1916 refer to the 10 months ending 31st October, 1916, and for 1917 and 1918 to the 12 months ending 31st October, 1917, and 31st October, 1918. It should also be remembered that in all cases the figures for 1918 refer to an army very much smaller in numbers than in the preceding years.

## INDEX

### A.

Abdul Hamid, 89  
 Admiral d'Artige du Fournet, 168  
*Agamemnon*, H.M.S., 150, 271, 272, 274  
 Adrianople, 269  
 Akindzali, 254  
 Alchak Mahale, 238  
 "Aladdin," 118  
 Alexander (King), of Greece, 170, 181  
 Allied captures, 267  
 Amphipolis, 72  
 Amphissa, 194  
 Armistice: With Bulgaria, 210, 266  
     With Turkey, 272  
 Army System, 145  
 Aviation, British, 259, 260

### B

Balkan Armies, their rôle in the war, 205  
*Balkan News*, 50  
 "Balkan Tap," 57  
 Badimal, 124  
 Base M.T. Depot, 96, 183  
 Belashitza Range, 217, 264  
 Beshik Lake, 112  
 Bestchinar Gardens, 93  
 "Birdcage," 17, 19, 27, 29, 160, 176  
 Bishop of London, 153  
 Bishop, Lieut.-Col. B. F., 249  
 "Bluebeard," 123  
 Blake, Brig.-Gen. W. A., 254  
 Black Sea Fleet, 269  
 "Boiled Owl," Order of, 61  
 British effectives, 234, 242

British raids, 209  
 Bulgarians: Unwillingness to attack, 203  
     Contemplated attack on British, 236  
     1916 Offensive, 210  
     Defeat, Scope of, 266  
 Burges, Lt.-Col. D., 252, 253  
 B.S.F. Boxing Championship, 126  
 Bralo, 190, 193  
 Briggs, Lt.-Gen. C. J., 264  
 British and Foreign Bible Soc., 9  
 Battalions, etc.:—  
     1st and 12th A. and S. Highlanders, 214, 231, 254  
     7th Berks, 9th Border Regt., 10th Black Watch, 231  
     Buffs (2nd), 214  
     2nd Camerons, 214  
     10th Camerons, 218, 234  
     2nd Cheshires, 214  
     12th Cheshires, 246, 248  
     5th Connaughts, Derby Yeom., 214  
     8th D.C.L.I., 231, 247  
     2/5th D.L.I., 123  
     10th Devons, 231  
     2nd E. Yorks, 214  
     4th E. Lancs, 213  
     9th E. Lancs., 254  
     2nd Gloucesters, 214, 239  
     9th Gloucesters, 231, 234  
     10th Hants, 214, 239.  
     12th Hants, 231, 247  
     2nd King's Own, 253  
     14th King's Liverpools, 212, 234  
     2nd K.S.L.I., 214  
     8th K.S.L.I., 231, 246, 249  
     9th K.O.R.L., 231, 234  
     1st K.O.Y.L.I., 214  
     3rd and 4th K.R.R.C., 214, 234  
     12th Lancs. Fus., 212, 231, 234

## INDEX

### Battalions—continued

- Leinsters, 214  
 2/20th London Regt., 231  
 Lothians and Border Horse, 264  
 13th Manchesters, 230, 234  
 2nd Northumberland Fus., 214  
 7th Ox. and Bucks. L.I., 225, 231  
 Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 214  
 3rd Royal Fusiliers, 214, 234  
 10th Royal Highlanders, 234  
 Royal Irish Fus., Royal Inniskilling Fus., R. Irish Rifles, 2nd Royal Lancs. Regt., Royal Munster Fus., 1st Royal Scots, 214  
 8th Royal Scots Fus., 231, 255  
 11th R. Welsh Fus., 213, 231, 247  
 1st Suffolks, 214  
 Surrey Yeomanry, 264  
 7th and 8th S.W.B., 231, 247, 253, 254, 265  
 Sherwood Rangers Yeo., 214  
 9th S. Lancs., 231, 246, 249  
 S. Notts Hussars, 184, 214  
 11th Scottish Rifles, 231, 254  
 Scottish Horse, 214, 234  
 1st Welsh, 214  
 11th Welsh, 247  
 23rd Welsh, 123  
 7th Wilts, 21, 217, 231  
 11th Worcesters, 231  
 1st York and Lancaster, 214

### Brigades:—

- 7th Mounted Bde, 8th Mounted Bde., 201, 202  
 65th Bde., 230, 254, 265  
 66th Bde., 230, 246, 254  
 77th Bde., 251, 254  
 78th and 79th Bdes, 230  
 228th Bde., 264

### C.

- Campbell, Lt.-Col. J. A., 256  
 Cassander (King), 79  
 Casualties (at Doiran), 232  
 Chanak, 275  
 Christodoulos, Col., 162  
 Chalcis, 8  
 "Chocolate Soldier," 124  
 Clegg-Hill, Lt.-Col. the Hon. A. R., 249  
 Comitadjis, 26  
 Comitadjji, H.M.H. the, 60

- Condouriotis, Admiral, 64, 165  
 Constantine, King, 15, 19, 22, 157, 203  
 Constantinople, 86, 269, 276  
 Consuls, Enemy, 160  
 Corinth, Gulf of, 6, 190  
 Corps (12th and 16th): 18, 264  
 16th, Dramatic Soc., 124  
 Croker, Maj.-Gen. H. L., 247  
 C.U.P., 86, 88

### D.

- Danglis, Gen., 64, 165  
 Dardanelles, 273  
 Dedeagatch, 269  
 Delphi, 195  
 Demir Kapu, 240  
 Deposition (of King Constantine), 171  
 Deunmehs, 85  
 "Dick Whittington," 118, 123  
 Dimitric, 75  
 Doiran, 16, 23, 208, 209, 245 (opening of 1918 attack)  
 Doldzeli, 254  
 Dolina, 221, 226  
 Dudular, 67  
 Duncan, Maj.-Gen. J., 246  
 Dushan, Stephen, 136  
 Divisions:—  
 10th Div., 17, 27, 176, 201, 231  
 22nd Div., 18, 124, 126, 202, 218, 269  
 26th Div., 18, 123, 202, 218, 231, 269  
 27th Div., 18, 73, 75, 123, 126, 210  
 28th Div., 18, 123, 202, 214, 254  
 50th Div., 234  
 60th Div., 201, 231  
 66th Div., 234  
 17th French (Colonial), 240, 257  
 122nd French, 243, 257, 269  
 14th Greek, 264  
 Cretan, 247, 254  
 Danube and Drina, 241  
 Larissa, 238  
 Morava, 246, 250  
 Seres, 246, 250  
 Schumadia, 240, 243  
 Timok, 241, 244  
 Yugo Slav, 241, 243



## INDEX

- E.
- B.F. Canteen, 24, 192  
 Egnatia Street, 91  
 Ekaterini, 24, 192  
 Enemy advantages, 202  
 Enver Pasha, 271  
 Errard, Lt.-Col., 239  
 Erskine, Lt.-Col. J. B. D., 250  
 Essad Pasha, 155  
 "Evil Eye," 221
- F.
- Falconer Stewart, Lt.-Col. R., 257  
 Field Ambulances, 184  
     84th and 85th F.A. 118  
 Floca, 1, 22  
 Florina, 161  
 Forestier-Walker, Maj.-Gen. W.,  
     288  
 Franchet d'Esperey, Gen., 239  
 French Club, 45
- G.
- Gallipoli, 27  
 Gay, Maj.-Gen. A. W., 247  
 Germans: With Bulgarian Army,  
     237  
     Surrender of 11th German Army,  
     267  
 Goeben, 271  
 Gough-Calthorpe, Vice-Admiral Sir  
     A. S., 271  
 Gornichevo Pass, 211  
 Gramophones, 35  
 Granville, Lord, 166  
 Grand Couronné, 41, 217  
 Greek Army, 171, 202, 236  
 Gugunci, 128  
 Guillaumat, Gen., 126, 239  
 Guvesne, 113, 183
- H.
- Hadjopoulos, Col., 20, 162  
 Hamals, 82  
 Hamidieh Fort, 275  
 Horseshoe Hill, 72, 128  
 Hortiach, 27, 78
- I.
- Influenza, 235  
 Italians, 29, 189, 211  
 Itea, 193
- J.
- Jackson, Lt.-Col. B. A., 257  
 Jackson's Ravine, 225  
 Janesh, 74  
 Jews of Salonica, 84, 166  
 Judæo-Espagnol, 51, 59, 83, 85  
 Jumeaux Ravine, 218
- K.
- Kaimakchalan, 107, 138, 212  
 Kalamaria, 181  
 Kara Bouroun, 160  
 Karasouli, 67  
 Kavalla, 162  
     Surrender of, 269  
 Kenali Lines, 212  
 Kilo Seventy, 41, 115  
 Kiredjkeui, 18  
 King George (of Greece), 89  
 Kopriva, 118  
 Kossovo, 136  
 Kotos, 78  
 Kosturino Pass, 260  
 Koziak, 244  
 Kresna Pass, 262  
 Kut (prisoners), 276
- L.
- Lahana, 114, 236  
 Langaza, 27, 65, 112  
 Larissa, 192  
 Lembet Road, 38  
 Likovan, 114  
 Lindesay, Lt.-Col. G. W. G., 257  
 Liverpool, H.M.S., 272  
 Lord Nelson, H.M.S., 271, 275
- M.
- Macedonia, Mobilisation of, 164  
 "Macedons, The," 124  
 Macukovo, 209, 212  
 Macpherson, Brig.-Gen. A. D., 251  
 "Madelon," 33  
 Majendie, Brig.-Gen. B. J., 254

## INDEX

Malaria, 174, 235  
 Maritsa, River, 269  
 Marsh Pier, 96  
 Messina, 5  
 Milne, General Sir G. F., 77, 126,  
     154, 188, 235, 258  
 Misitch, Marshal, 139, 239  
 Moglenitza Range, 68, 243  
 Monastir, Capture of, 209, 211  
 Montagu-Bates, Brig.-Gen., 246  
 Moschopoulos, Gen., 135  
 M.T. Units, Serbia, 107, 137  
 M.T., Work of, 178  
 Mules, 179  
 Murad II. 81  
 Mudros, 269, 273  
 Mustapha Pasha, 269

### N.

National Defence, Army of, 163  
 Navy, British, 99, 119, 190, 202,  
     269  
 Nider, Gen., 171  
 Nigrita, 124

### O.

Ochrida, Lake, 214  
 Odeon, 30  
 Olympus, Mount, 42, 47, 192  
 Orfano, 74, 110  
 Ostrovo, Battle of, 209, 211

### P.

Parnassus, 6, 193, 197  
 Pasitch, Mr., 155  
 Peace Envoys, Bulgarian, 265  
     Turkish, 272  
 Petit Couronné, 209  
 Pip Ridge, 214  
 Piræus, 6, 167  
 "Piccadilly Circus," 47  
 Poets, 57  
 Presba, Lake, 209, 214  
 Prilep, 267

### Q.

Quinine, 56

### R.

Rendina Gorge, 74  
 Repoules, Mr., 134  
 Revolution, Greek, 157  
     At Salonica, 164  
*River Clyde*, 274  
 R.N.A.S., 262  
 Road Making, 179  
 "Robinson Crusoe," 123  
 Ross, Sir Ronald, 187  
 Roumania, 28, 167  
 Royalist officers, 162  
 Rupel Pass, 20, 41, 161  
 Russians, 28, 211  
 Rutter, Capt. Owen, 217

### S.

Sabbati Cevi, 86  
 Sanitary Section, 145  
 Sarraill, General, 17, 20, 155, 160,  
     208  
 Scougal, Major, 257  
 Schenk, Baron, 157, 168  
 Serbs :—  
     Arrival in Salonica, 15  
     Attempt to save Serbia, 208  
     Losses in battle, 242  
     The advance, 262  
 Serbian Crown Prince, 155, 239  
 Serbian Slava, 135  
 Seres Road, 47, 64, 142  
 Sisters, 22, 237  
 Skra di Legen, 191, 210  
 Sokol, 34, 239, 243  
 Spies, 24, 26, 159  
 St. Demetrios, 81, 103  
*St. George*, H.M.S., 155  
 St. George's Church, 103  
 St. Paul, 1, 153  
 St. Sophia, 81, 89, 103  
 Stavros, 72, 111, 183, 269  
 Stepan Stepanovitch, Marshal, 138,  
     239  
 Struma, 28, 175, 209, 213  
 Strumitza, 260  
 Submarines, 203  
*Superb*, H.M.S., 271, 275

## INDEX

### T

Talaat Pasha, 271  
Tahinos, Lake, 26, 115  
Taranto, 198  
*Temeraire*, H.M.S., 261, 275  
Tiadatha, Song of, 149, 217, 277  
"Tipperary," 33  
Tortoise (l'ortue) Hill, 41, 72, 218  
Trench Mortar Battery, 83rd, 254  
Tresina, 138  
Trist, Lt.-Col. C. H., 251, 253

### U

Uchantar, 46  
Uskub, 267

### V

Vardar, 28, 68, 237, 240  
Vardar (wind), 277  
Vasitch, Gen., 139  
Venizelos, 22, 64, 132, 157

Via Egnatia, 44  
Vodena, 278  
Volo, 9

### W

Whitehead, Capt. C. M., 257  
Wilson, Lieut.-Gen. Sir Henry,  
264, 276

### Y

"Y" Scheme, 188, 191, 234  
Yatman, Lieut.-Col. A. H., 251  
Yenidje Vardar, 108  
Y.M.C.A., 192

### Z

Zeppelin raids, 160  
Zouaves, 254  
Zymbrakakis, Col., 164

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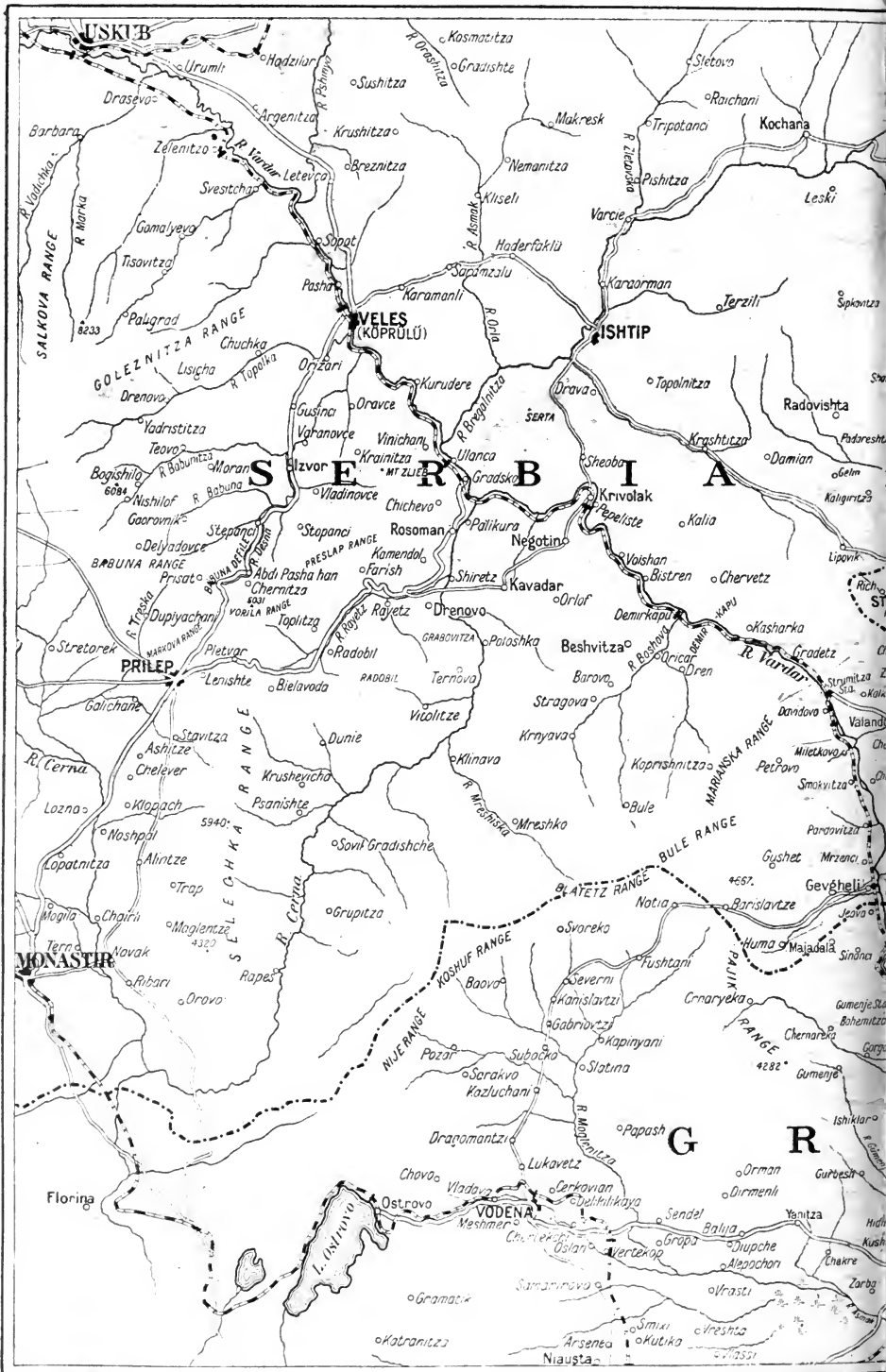
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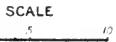
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