THE SALONICA SIDE-SHOW

V. J. SELIGMAN

The title of Mr. H. Collinson Owen's book, "Salonica and After: The Side-show that Ended the War" (Hodder and Stoughton, 10s. 6d. net), is justified by General Ludendorff's admission that our defeat of Bulgaria "sealed the fate of the Quadruple Alliance," and made further fighting on the Western Front hopeless for Germany, though other statements made by Ludendorff in his "Memoirs" show plainly enough that all his Western defences would have crumbled if the war had continued. Mr. Owen, however, is entitled to quote the German Commander's words, which confirm his own conclusion, written before Ludendorff's book appeared. He gives a very clear account of the campaign which was directed from Salonica. Much of it was terribly dull, calling for those qualities of cheery endurance for which French and British alike are to be honoured. He sings the praises of the British Army "because so few other people have done it," and his narrative is very readable. Of the Balkan puzzle, he observes shrewdly, "Whoever takes one Balkan nation under his wing, his opinion on Balkan questions becomes for ever useless." In "The Salonica Side-show" (George Allen and Unwin, Limited, 10s. 6d. net), Mr. V. J. Seligman tells in discursive fashion the whole story of the campaign, and turns aside frequently to discuss other questions, such as English unpopularity in Greece—due to ignorance of English character—the superficial civilisation of Bulgaria, and the behaviour of Constantine. Based on statements made by the ex-King's former secretary, a more favourable account is given of Constantine than has been commonly accepted in this country. His pro-Germanism in the early days of the war is denied, and his ultimate submission to Germany is attributed to our own "diplomatic blindness" and the ex-King's jealousy of Venezelos.

THE SALONICA SIDE-SHOW

A BULGAR AT SVETI-VRAC. OCTOBER 1918.

THE SALONICA SIDE-SHOW

BY

V. J. SELIGMAN

Author of "Macedonian Musings"

WITH TEN ILLUSTRATIONS AND TWO MAPS

LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD.
RUSKIN HOUSE, 40 MUSEUM STREET, W.C. 1

First published in 1919

TO

MY FRIEND

G. A. ATKINSON

PREFACE

THE sketches which make up the first and last parts of this book were written in odd corners of Macedonia during last summer. I have purposely refrained from bringing them up to date; for by robbing them of their spontaneity, I should destroy what little merit they possess. The second and third parts have of course been written since my return to England.

I should like to take this opportunity of thanking my friend, M. Melas, for providing me with, and giving me permission to use, the material for the chapter on "The Tragedy of Constantine." So far as I am aware, no authentic account has yet been published of the inner history of those fateful days; in allowing the publication of much which is of interest and which may assist the general reader to an understanding of Greek politics, M. Melas has had to abandon the attitude of reserve which he has hitherto maintained in the face of the most importunate journalists, but I venture to think he has rendered a real public service.

My thanks are also due to Major H. W. Andrews and Captain L. J. Measures, who have furnished me with the photographs which accompany the book.

V. J. SELIGMAN.

LONDON,
March 7, 1919.

CONTENTS

PART I

ATTRITION (1917–1918)

PART II

BATTLE (September 15–September 30, 1918)

PART III

PEACE (September 30–November 11, 1918)

PART IV

RANDOM SKETCHES

ILLUSTRATIONS

PART I

ATTRITION

(1917–1918)

THE SALONICA SIDE-SHOW

CHAPTER I

THE SERES ROAD

THE Seres Road is the one subject on which I can really claim expert knowledge. For nearly two years I have lived in various camps by its side: for nearly two years it has never been out of my sight. I have been anxious for it, as a mother for an ailing child. For if it were not in good condition, if the weather proved too much for it, then I knew I should have to wait up all night for the arrival of my supplies. And so I take a kind of proprietary interest in it. There are times, I must confess, when I grow somewhat weary of the sight of it: on those occasions I tell myself that a day will come, many, many years after the War, when I shall look back on it with kindly affection and perhaps a touch of wistfulness—for I have spent many pleasant hours by its side.

If a copy of this book were sold for every kilometre of its length that I have travelled during the last two years, I should be rich beyond the dreams of a munition worker. I can tell you to a nicety at any spot along the seventy odd kilos of its length which are British property (the last few kilos and, of course, Seres itself, are in the temporary occupation of the Bulgar), the nearest M.T. Company to go to if your car has broken down; the nearest hospital, if you require that high explosive known as a 'number nine'; the nearest ammunition dump if you wish to shoot the Kaiser; the nearest Rest Camp if you have no intention of resting; the nearest Supply Dump if you are not

ashamed to eat bully-beef ; the nearest Ordnance Dump if you require anything from a bootlace to an elephant ; and above all, the nearest friend in need if you are feeling thirsty. From ' Piccadilly Circus ' in Salonica, through the Anglo-French camps and the little town of refugees at Lembet, where the children and the chickens are always courting death by the roadside ; over the hills and down on the rich Langaza Plain, the scene of many an agricultural triumph, past the busy compact ' army ' centre of Guvezne, winding ever north across two hill-ranges through the villages of Likovan and Lahana, where the road reaches its highest point, till it curves down abruptly into the wide Struma Plain, finally crossing the river at Orljak bridge—thus runs the finest military road in Macedonia to its eventual terminus, Seres, which none of us have seen save from a respectful distance. It is indeed one of War's little ironies that the Seres Road has never led any one to Seres itself.

Apart from a small Decauville railway which leads from the Plain of Langaza along the foothills of the ' Birdcage ' (the semicircle of hills which protect Salonica) to the eastern extremity of our line, where the Struma debouches into the Gulf of Orfano, the Seres Road is the only artery radiating from our Base in Salonica, and connecting it with the seventy-mile front from east of Lake Doiran to the sea. A few sandy tracks to left and right, none of which can be dignified by the name of road, as they are impassable to motor-lorries except during the summer drought, lead to scattered villages a few kilos off the main Seres Road, branch off to camps on the hills overlooking the Struma Plain, or cut across to our positions on the Plain itself. At one or two important places—at the entrance to Depots, where the traffic is particularly heavy—the road forks into two. But if you think to escape from the Seres Road, you are doomed to disappointment, for a few hundred yards further the two forks join together again.

From Salonica to Guvezne (only twenty-six kilos

away) a railway helps to relieve the heavy burden on the road. The question of continuing the railroad further even in the modified form of a Decauville railway has, I believe, often been raised. But in the opinion of expert engineers the difficulties of the terrain are almost insuperable ; so the scheme has had to be dropped, and for a distance of forty-four kilos from Guvezne to the railhead of the small Decauville railway on the Struma Plain, fifty thousand men (at a moderate estimate) are dependent on the one road for their every requirement. Most of us realize by now, I think, that the needs of a British soldier are by no means light. Ammunition, R.E: material, food, equipment, medical stores, canteen stores, the mail—these are but a few of the more important of his daily requirements ; all to be brought as near the Front as possible in the heavy Three Ton motor-lorries. No wonder that although the Seres Road is a pampered child on whom thousands dance attendance, humouring her slightest whim ; an expensive child, the cost of whose upkeep runs into millions yearly ; yet in spite of all the toil and money so lavishly expended, she can barely support the requirements of fifty thousand men—a mere handful judged by modern standards. Those who talk glibly of transporting a million men to Salonica and finishing off the War one fine week-end would do well to ponder over this!

There are many Englishmen for whom the remembrance of the Seres Road will never grow dim. Thousands of Infantry, Cavalry, and Gunners have marched up and down its weary length on their three days' trek, halting the night at a rest camp. On either side of the road, growing thicker and thicker as you approach the Front, in some cases a few yards from its edge, in others separated by a deep nullah (or ravine), are scattered a multitude of camps. Hospitals for man and beast, dumps and transport of every kind, Labour Battalions and Engineers—in short every known and unknown branch of the Service lives on its borders. (Addresses out here are perfectly simple, and the com-

piler of a Macedonian Blue Book would have an easy task. You name your house from the nearest kilo-stone. "Last year I was living up at 61," must sound rather strange to a newcomer. No one thinks of mentioning the name of the road, though some, cursed with the mathematical mind, to whom a spade is essentially an implement for digging, descend to lurid details and talk of 'Sixty-one and a quarter.')

Finally, at a certain stone on the Plain which, to confound the Bulgar, I will term 'Kilo Umpty,' there has sprung up out of a few deserted fields and nullahs a busy, compact little town, complete with houses, an hotel, and railway station. To be accurate, the town was built up round the railway station. For 'Kilo Umpty' is the terminus of the Decauville railway, which runs along skirting the foothills of the plain. Here at a miniature siding the lorries are unloaded, and their contents stacked into tiny little trucks for distribution to the Front-line troops. The engine consists either of the faithful mule, or a 'converted' Ford motor-car. To my mind that elusive figure of speech, 'The Romance of War,' is particularly in evidence at 'Kilo Umpty.' It was my good fortune to be one of the earliest settlers in this idyllic spot, at a time when comforts were few, and a score of dilapidated tents marked the only human habitation. A few months later, when the exigencies of the Service and the importunity of the Hohenzollerns called me away to another kilo-stone, the most luxurious sand-bag palaces had arisen on all sides, each unit vying with the other in the splendour and magnificence of its camps. The hotel had grown from one marquee, where the bare ration of bully-beef and biscuit was provided for the hungry wayfarer, into a substantial camp, where at small cost you could obtain a five-course dinner, good accommodation for the night and 'all the comforts of a home from home.'

The reader must bear in mind that between Salonica and Seres there are no habitable houses, as there are in France. Here and there a few poverty-stricken hovels, built of mud and refuse, nestle together, un-

utterably filthy boils on the fair face of Macedonia. These so-called 'villages' are all of them out of bounds to the troops—a precaution which seems hardly necessary. Most of them, too, have been built some way off the Seres Road. Before the War the unhappy country was infested by bands of brigands, primarily Bulgarians, who went by the impressive name of 'Comitadji.' Consequently the wise Macedonian hid himself in the hills and kept as far off the main road as possible, in the hope that the Comitadji, on the principle of "out of sight, out of mind," would be less tempted to molest him. At first sight Macedonia hardly seems a happy hunting-ground for an ambitious Comitadji, as it contains few 'idle rich.' As a matter of fact, although the Comitadji was not above making a bit if he got the chance, his chief mission was political. For many years Bulgaria has been casting covetous glances at Macedonia; or, to use the official language, "she has been anxious to realize her national aspirations, and to recover her children, imprisoned under a foreign yoke." As the Macedonian is anything you please—Greek, Serb, Turk or Bulgar—Bulgaria determined to organize bands of Comitadjis to impress on the Macedonian that he was really a long-lost Bulgar. Thus she hoped to substantiate her claim to Macedonia in the eyes of the Great Powers of Europe—a very worthy scheme, though fraught with painful consequences for the Macedonian.

In addition to the organized bands of Comitadjis, there were, of course, numbers of more unofficial robbers and highwaymen. Salonica merchants bound for Seres used to wait till they had sufficient numbers to form a good-sized caravan, when they clubbed together for the expense of an armed escort. Many of these brigands are now muleteers or road-menders. I am told that there are two harmless-looking muleteers working for us in the village of Sacavca on the Plain, liable to undergo Field Punishment if their harness is not properly polished, who boast that before the War they killed between them sixty-one men!

This digression leads me away from 'Kilo Umpty,' though it explains its origin. There being no houses ready-made, you must build your own, unless you wish to freeze to death in a tent during the winter. As for material, offices are officially constructed by the Royal Engineers, and in addition a certain amount of corrugated iron and sand-bags is allotted to each unit. But the wise man is not content with his ration. He 'scrounges' more corrugated iron, sand-bags and wood from the R.E.'s, boxes from the A.S.C., beds and matting from anywhere. As to the significance of the Army verb to 'scrounge,' I prefer to think it means 'to acquire'; though if you are punctilious, and if your moral bump is highly developed (which, I thank Providence in all humility, mine is not), you might interpret it as an infringement of the eighth Commandment. The 'Complete Scrounger' must possess the tact of an Edward the Seventh, the unscrupulousness of a politician, the plausibility of a Company promoter, and the ruthlessness of a Reventlow. "The rain, it raineth every day"—but not on the scrounger. I can testify, as a confirmed scrounger, who has lived for eighteen months in different huts, to the degree of comfort which can be obtained in this country from such raw material.

But in addition to occasional wayfarers and those who have fallen into temporary homes by the wayside, the Seres Road has two worshippers *par excellence*—the Engineers who devote all their energies to its preservation, and the Motor Transport who devote all their energies to its destruction. Originally constructed by French Engineers some ten years ago, the Seres Road was in fairly good condition when we landed at Salonica. (It stood the Greeks in good stead in the Second Balkan War.) But it was very lightly metalled and superficially made, for it was never intended for a continuous flow of heavy traffic. In the Spring of '16 we started sending large convoys to Seres, and the road broke up completely. Since then a number of R.E. Companies posted along the road, each responsible for its own sector, have struggled hard and successfully

with the work of metalling, raising and keeping smooth the surface of the road. Three hundred and sixty-five days and nights in the year, you will find every few kilometres a sector of the road under repair. An R.E. officer in charge, a steam-roller, a lorry converted into a water-cart, half a dozen sappers, a score of Macedonian labourers or prisoners of war, a few native women and children breaking into little pieces the stones blasted in a neighbouring quarry, and a couple of policemen at either end, armed with red and green flags, controlling the traffic. It has been a hard struggle, especially in the winter, when the heavy rain and snow falls have added enormously to the difficulties. Compared with this gigantic task, the Field Punishment awarded to Sisyphus was the merest child's play.

The drainage of the road is a most marvellous feat of engineering, when one considers the climatic conditions of Macedonia. Every few weeks during the winter we get snowstorms of exceptional severity—often the snow is two or three feet deep. Yet twelve hours after the heaviest storm the road is absolutely dry! With rainstorms it is exactly the same. After three days of the heaviest rain I have passed up the road twelve hours later, and have found it difficult to believe that there had even been any rain. The different classes of base are interesting, running as they do from sand, through rock, to soft, almost (in winter) waterlogged soil, to more rock.

The work done in the quarries, too, is immense. I am indebted to an R.E. officer for the following remarkable figures. He assures me that in each case the figures are well under the mark. There are seven quarries supplying stone for the road. These quarries employ altogether two thousand persons — sappers, prisoners of war, and natives—actually engaged in working the quarries. The machinery would cost £50,000 at English prices, consisting of stone-crushers with steam tractors driving them, air-compressor sets driven by petrol motors, compressed air jack-hammers or rock-drills, oil-engine pumps and winches. The out-

put of stone can, if required, exceed 1,000 tons daily. Three at least of these quarries would compare favourably with any home quarries. These figures will, I think, give the reader some impression of the gigantic work performed by the Engineers!

At different points along the road live the natural enemies of the Engineers, the M.T. Companies, each composed of anything from fifty to a hundred lorries. Those who talk disdainfully of the 'cushy' existence of the Army Service Corps will "learn something to their advantage" by a careful perusal of the following facts.

It is, of course, impossible to give exact statistics of the work done by the Motor Transport. For the work done by different Companies varies considerably, and the exigencies of the Service are modified by the degree of activity in the firing-line. But I have seen a good many of the lorry charts kept by the Workshops Officer, showing the possible strength of the Company (that is, the total number of lorries available for work after deduction has been made for the 'crocks' undergoing repair), and the actual daily detail of the work done. The latter is generally ninety or ninety-five per cent. of the former. As to the nature of the work they perform, a certain number of lorries are detailed for "Engineers' stone work." They are, as far as possible, dismantled, and carry stones from the nearest quarry to any sector of the road under repair. A few more are converted into water-carts, and secure equal distribution of the none too plentiful supply of water along the road. But the majority carry supplies, equipment, and ammunition from Guvezne to 'Kilo Umpty,' a distance of nearly thirty miles. Wherever his camp is situated, the driver has covered nearly sixty miles at the end of the day. Allowing for the time taken in loading and unloading, and an interval for lunch, he is on the road anything from twelve to fourteen hours. The lorries travel in convoy, led by an officer in a light car. (Recently the majority of Vauxhalls and Sunbeams have been withdrawn from the M.T., and

Ford cars, known as "Tin Lizzies," have been substituted. Useful as Ford cars have proved during the War, they are not much loved on convoy work, as they have only two speeds, one of which approximates forty, and the other four miles an hour. As the Convoy officer is supposed to set the pace at about six to seven miles an hour, their limitations are obvious.)

Five or six days a week on average the Driver does the journey, and the climatic conditions of Macedonia are not favourable to 'joy-riding.' In the winter the snowstorms necessitate considerable delay, due to that enviable pastime known as "digging out." And there is little protection against the merciless Vardar wind, which blows through the thickest overcoat and penetrates your vitals with the ease of a six-inch shell passing through blotting-paper. Really it makes little difference if you are clad in the latest 'Impenetrable' trench-cum-fur-cum-sleeping-bag-cum-waterproof-coat, or yesterday's copy of the *Balkan News*. The gentleman in Victor Hugo's poem who was driven mad by the wind which came across the mountains, must have been a Macedonian. In the summer the dust and glare from the road is so blinding that the Drivers are issued with blue veils; so that the newcomer imagines, until he hears his language, that the lorry-driver is the latest thing in W.A.A.C.S. They are out in the heat of the day when the temperature is anything over 100° in the shade ('In the shade' is really a euphemism; for the word 'shade' does not exist in the Macedonian vocabulary); add to that the heat of the perturbed engine trying to scale a mountain two thousand feet high, and you will begin to understand the comment of a M.T. Driver, "Next blinkin' war, Flying Corps for me!"

Between the R.E.'s and the M.T. strife waxes fierce and unceasing. As a matter of fact nearly every branch of the Service cherishes the conviction that all other branches are as the young men of Alcinöus, useless encumberers of the earth. This belief is, of course—if I may use the expression—only lip-deep, and no doubt

arises from the spirit of competition engendered by England's blind devotion to sport. (See Mr. H. G. Wells.) But especially is this spirit of competition rife between Sapper and Lorry-Driver, threat and counter-threat, oath and counter-oath being exchanged with all the vigour associated with Question-time in the House of Commons. Put yourself in either position, and you will easily understand the reason for this mutual exacerbation. A section of R.E.'s, after endless toil, manage to get their section of the road into perfect condition. The R.E. officer goes back to camp with that deep feeling of contentment engendered by the contemplation of a good day's work done—by some one else ; but none the less under his own supervision. The next morning he goes back to gloat over the product of his vicarious handiwork, and compares it favourably with a 'Burrough's and Watts," for over its smooth surface the Army Commander could pass without so much as disarranging his eyebrows. "Ah," he says pharisaically, "thank God my sector of the road is not as other sectors!" Then, to his intense annoyance, he sees in the distance, slouching towards him, a convoy of lumbering, fat-headed motor-lorries. This in itself is sufficient to embitter the outlook of the sweetest R.E. in the B.S.F. He knows that in five minutes his beloved road will bear more resemblance to a ploughed field than a billiard-table. But perhaps, to make things worse, the Convoy officer will be in a hurry for his lunch, and will exceed the speed-limit by a fraction : perhaps one of the Drivers will round the corner carelessly, and shatter the symmetry of its border. I fancy the R.E. officer hopes something of this nature will occur, that he may vent his spleen in an official letter. It is marvellous what a soothing effect a written 'strafe' will have on the overheated mind.

As for the M.T. Driver, before the War he was used to doing his fifty m.p.h., and he takes it ill that he should be reproached for doing five miles an hour where the speed-limit is four. After all "he has

his feelings, the same as anybody else," and the jaundiced look, with which all Sappers greet him, reacts on his temper, and gives him, although innocent, a feeling of guilt.

Recently the Military Policeman has been called in as an arbitrator, and that pre-War bugbear of motorists, the police trap, has gained a new lease of life. The scheme is not altogether successful, as the policeman, after the manner of all peacemakers since the days of the Serpent, suffers either on the score of leniency or of severity, the combined odium of both belligerents. Recently the M.T. scored a great triumph. An over-zealous policeman forwarded a report to the A.P.M., which was "passed for necessary action please" to the O.C. of the M.T. company in question, to the effect that one of his lorries had been timed on a level stretch of the road and was found to be travelling at the rate of forty miles an hour. As, of course, no lorry can conceivably do more than twenty miles an hour, the case was dismissed, and the imaginative policeman decided for the future that silence was indeed golden. Jokes are comparatively rare in Macedonia, so that the few existing ones are cherished unto extreme old age. This particular jest was immortalized (at any rate 'for the duration,' if immortality can be limited) in one of the Revues given by an M.T. Company. An American millionaire, finding that a beautiful pearl necklace—a wedding-present to his daughter—has been stolen, sends at once for his detective, and bids him get busy finding it. The detective, after a moment's consideration, remarks, "If an Albion lorry can travel forty miles an hour, according to the Police, I guess your pearl necklace has reached the moon by now!"

I cannot leave the Seres Road without reference to a certain R.E. Colonel (wild mules could not drag his name from me), who did more, probably, than any other man to keep it in such excellent condition. In addition to the wonderful service he performed in his official capacity, he has earned our gratitude even more by his unconventional personality, from which a thousand

anecdotes take their source of inspiration. Though Colonel "X" left us some time ago, "X" stories continue to flow as freely as ever. Some are founded on fact, others on their author's vivid imagination—but all are the product of that popular Italian nobleman, Mr. Ben Trovato. I know of a certain camp on the Seres Road, when a new game, in many respects superior to cricket, was originated. It consisted in inventing likely anecdotes concerning Colonel "X." The officer who got the largest number of persons to believe in the veracity of his story won the prize. The anecdotal market was soon so flooded that the most credulous among us began to suspect a 'plant.' To sift out the truth from the mass of legend which surrounds and obscures all great characters, is the peculiar function of all historians. As the modest chronicler of the Seres Road and of its hero, Colonel "X," I must endeavour to perform this function with the impartiality of a Macaulay and the scepticism of a Herodotus.

Colonel "X" was not a 'Regular,' but a Civil Engineer, whose remarkable talent was quickly perceived and rewarded with rapid promotion. To the Regular Army point of view his methods appeared, to say the least, bizarre and unconventional. Such phrases as "Passed to you, please," and "Through the usual channels" were unknown to him. He rode straight over every obstacle with a directness which was sometimes disconcerting to the 'Army' mind. All his considerable fund of energy he devoted to "getting on with the good work"; and the individual suffered at the expense of the community, for he was no respecter of persons. But his chief claim to immortality was his remarkable gift of being able to swear in six or seven languages. At all hours of the day and the night he would prowl up and down the Seres Road, on the look-out for slackers and 'lead swingers.' Now, as has been mentioned before, the worshippers at the shrine of the Via Seres are from every nation—English, Greek, Bulgar, Turk and Macedonian. The average citizen of the Balkans takes not the slightest notice if you

curse him in an alien tongue. He shrugs his shoulders with an air of good-humoured tolerance, after the manner of Miss Pross with the Frenchies, and remarks, "No compree," and the argument, as such, is terminated in his favour. But if you can express yourself fluently and devastatingly in his own language, his admiration and respect are at once aroused. So the Greek, the Bulgar, the Turk and the Macedonian (a mixture of them all) respected Colonel "X"; and if they were of an indolent disposition, lived in hourly dread of a visitation from this wise and terrible bogey-man, who descended on them from nowhere and scourged them with verbal (and perhaps, corporal) castigation. Let me conclude with another quotation from the famous revue, 'Slip Your Clutch.'

SCENE: THE SERES ROAD (on the back-cloth).

(*Enter two Comedians; the first leans carelessly on the Seres Road.*)

2nd COMEDIAN (*sharply*). Now, my lad, look what you're doing—spoiling the road. What did Colonel "X" say about using the road?

1st COMEDIAN. Well, what DID he say?

2nd COMEDIAN (*turning to the audience, where there are probably a few Sisters present*). Do you think I'm going to repeat what he said? Can't you see there are ladies present?

Truly, Fame has often been more easily, but never more deservedly, won!

CHAPTER II

GAMES IN THE BALKANS

(*a*) TENNIS

"Of course you play?" my host asked me. I was lunching with an M.T. Company on the Seres Road.

"Not on purpose," I replied cautiously. "What is the latest game they are playing in Macedonia? If it is shove-halfpenny, I got my half-blue up at Oxford for it."

"Tennis, of course," said Jenkins proudly. "I thought every one had heard of my tennis-court."

"Then I'm afraid I must be a bit behind the times," I apologized; "for the rumour hasn't yet reached me. Do you think the Bulgars have heard of it?" I asked anxiously. "They might decide to attack, just to have a look at your court. If a battle took place here you might get rather a novel communiqué. 'The enemy attacked heavily in the direction of —— M.T. Company's tennis-court. At first they penetrated as far as the net, and a few elements crossed the farther service-line. Towards evening our troops counter-attacked with a brilliant half-volley, and pursued the enemy beyond their base-line. Much booty fell into our hands, including six balls and two rackets (one slightly damaged).'"

"Well, anyhow," said Jenkins, "why not forestall the Bulgar, and play me a single after lunch?"

"Sorry, old chap," I replied, impelled by a strong sense of duty and an even stronger sense of repletion. "I can't. My six-cylinder Rolls-Royce—that is to say, my team of six mules AND limber" ("G.S.," I added proudly) "is fairly pawing the ground outside. You

don't want your camp pawed, do you? Then I've got to go and see the General in an hour's time," I continued, carelessly flicking a speck of dust off my tunic; "and you know what Generals are—they hate to be kept waiting."

"What a pity!" said Jenkins casually. "I've just got two new rackets from the E.F.C." [1]

That settled it. I decided that the General—I mean, the mules—could paw the ground for another hour, without hurting themselves or ruining this camp, whilst Jenkins and I played the final of the Likovan Championship. As for the General—well, he doesn't really exist; but one must assert oneself now and then in these democratic days.

Jenkins went into his hut and came back with a couple of rather dilapidated fishing-nets. "Come," I said impatiently, "put those away. You can show me your souvenirs another day. We must bustle up with the tennis. Go and get the tennis rackets, there's a good fellow."

"But those ARE the tennis rackets," Jenkins protested.

I looked at him sadly. "Jenkins," I said, "you are becoming frivolous in your old age. What about the new rackets you bought at the E.F.C.? You don't mean to say that *those*——"

"When I said new," Jenkins began nervously, "I meant new second-hand ones. These are the best I could get. They aren't making any rackets nowadays—you seem to forget there's a war on."

I began to realize that tennis in Macedonia is not played under the same conditions as, say, in the centre court at Wimbledon. Not that I have ever played at Wimbledon, but I used to know a gardener whose brother kept the centre court in good condition. Jenkins then produced some red rubber balls. "Not now," I said; "the children have gone up to the nursery to rest. You can play with them later." It appeared, however, that these were tennis balls.

[1] Expeditionary Force Canteen.

Jenkins led the way to the court. When I saw it, I gasped painfully. I didn't expect it to be *absolutely* flat—but one end of the court was at the bottom of a deep ravine, and the other end on the summit of a lofty hill. In the middle, some strong barbed-wire defences represented the net. "One moment," I said; "I'll just run over to the Mess and fetch my alpenstock." But Jenkins wouldn't wait, so we started to play. A couple of native children sprang up from a neighbouring village and volunteered as 'ball-boys.' They enjoyed themselves so much that we had the greatest difficulty in getting them to part with the balls.

Jenkins, who started serving from the top of the hill, won the first game, as I was unable to penetrate the enemy's defences. Then we changed over, and I secured the next two games with ease.

When the score reached eight-all, it became obvious that nothing but 'sudden death' (either in the tennis or the real sense) could bring the set to a close. For the player operating down at the bottom of the ravine never stood a chance. Nothing short of four double faults against him could give him game. So we decided to play one decisive game. "But," said Jenkins, whose turn it was to play uphill, "we must change over after every point."

Love-fifteen. Fifteen all. Fifteen-thirty. Thirty-all. Thirty-forty. Deuce. After the score had wavered between deuce and vantage-out (for Jenkins was serving) a dozen times, a miracle happened. Jenkins was serving downhill (score: vantage-out). It was a gentle service, for Jenkins was getting rather weak. I ran a couple of miles uphill, and just reached the ball before its second bounce. Summoning up all my strength, I gave it a mighty smite. The ball sailed several thousand feet into the air, cannoned off an enemy aeroplane, and descended slowly on to Jenkins' racket. Jenkins, standing up at the net, followed it with a contemptuous eye, and raising his racket, prepared to 'smash' it. I repeat, the ball descended on to Jenkins' racket—and remained there, firmly

embedded between two strings. I counted up to ten slowly—and then counted him out. Jenkins demurred : "You can't count me out—there's no time-limit at tennis," and he tried to entice the ball from his racket. But it remained there, firmly stuck—nothing short of a bomb could have dislodged it. I even suggested coaxing it with a 'Maconachie' ration—but it was no good.

It is a nice point. I claim victory : but Jenkins claims that the match is still in progress. Well, tennis in Macedonia is a good game; but the L.T.A. will have to make a special set of rules. This constant uncertainty as to whether or not I am champion of Likovan is undermining my constitution.

(*b*) BRIDGE

They say you can judge a man's character by the way he plays cards. If that is so, I am devoutly thankful I am not Conway's wife : she must lead a terrible life. Conway hasn't been home on leave for two years : so I suppose there are just a few persons outside Germany who bless the Kaiser.

Conway came to 'look' us 'up' the other evening just before dinner. He always 'looks' us 'up' just before dinner : and he can never stay for more than "a few seconds." If only one could give him a tin of bully-beef and tell him to go and worry it somewhere else ! But it can't be done—as Mr. Bagnet would say, "hospitality must be maintained." So we asked him to dinner, and prepared for the worst. We got it.

During dinner Conway told us all about Constantinople : he always does. Constantinople is his pet subject : I might truthfully add, his only subject. What Prescott has done for Mexico, Conway has done for Constantinople. It must be admitted that Conway exercised considerable ingenuity : whatever the subject under discussion—sardines, the Balkan Tap, or the Pemberton-Billing case—he turned it with inimitable skill in the direction of the Sublime Porte. We turned

on the gramophone as a counterblast—but it was inaudible. We plied him with food in the hope of stemming the flood; but Conway is one of those individuals who can eat and talk at the same time.

After dinner, Conway said: "Any of you fellows care for a game of bridge? Just one rubber, and then I must dash off." Conway's 'dashing off' is notorious—it is slower than the pace of a mortally wounded tank. Of course, he drew me as a partner—just my luck. Some men fall down a drain and come up with a diamond necklace; others find their way into a palace and come out with a pair of handcuffs. It is merely a question of luck.

After the first hand Conway opened the customary 'post-mortem' with the suspiciousness of a doctor who has reason to believe that there has been 'foul play.'

"Did you understand my heart-lead, or did you not?" and he fixed me with a glassy stare.

"No," I answered truthfully, "I did not."

"My dear chap," he said plaintively, "in Constantinople that means only one thing: it means strength in clubs."

"Very well," I said penitently, "I'll try to remember next time."

The next hand I dealt and called three hearts; and I won a little 'slam' without any assistance from Conway's hand. But even that didn't seem to satisfy him.

"Why," he asked sternly, "did you call three hearts?"

"Because I intended to get them; and what's more I *did* get them, and three over-tricks as well." (Idiot!)

"The actual result," he began, "has nothing to do with it—the only thing that matters is the Law of Averages" (he looked at me accusingly, as if I had just broken the Ten Commandments). "Now the Constantinople Convention, based on the Law of Averages——"

This annoyed me. "I don't play the Constantinople Convention," I said sharply. "I play the Macedonian Convention."

"What's that?" he asked dubiously.

"There are many fine points embraced by it, but the main object is to win the game," I replied.

For the moment he was silenced.

But the next hand we had more trouble.

"Do you think I am an idiot?" he said.

"Really," I began cautiously, "I am not qualified to form an opinion. No doubt your confidential record at the War Office——"

"Then why did I lead a spade?"

"Search me," I exclaimed with American expressiveness.

"If you will only listen, I will tell you. The Constantinople Convention . . ."

I saw it was useless to argue, so I listened as patiently as I could. The Turks are certainly a wonderful race. The Constantinople Convention, confirmed and strengthened by the Law of Averages (a law which seems to have been passed with the sole object of supporting Conway's arguments), is very subtle; not unlike the Turkish communiqués. If you call hearts, you indicate spades: if you call 'no trumps,' you mean you haven't got a trick in your hand. In fact, the Constantinople Convention embraces all the finer points of *camouflage*. Now in the ordinary way I am just an average bad player, who thoroughly enjoys his game of bridge, but doesn't keep awake at night worrying over his mistakes. But after half-a-dozen of Conway's lectures, I decided to adopt the Constantinople Convention (confirmed, as I mentioned before, by the Law of Averages), and my play rapidly deteriorated. I did my best to please Conway. I called 'four no-trumps' without a trick in my hand. Our opponents doubled, and Conway redoubled with four tricks in his hand. We were only 1,200 points down; you would have thought that would have satisfied the most Conventional Constantinopolitan. But Conway was furious. The next hand I 'lay low' (it is part of the Constantinople Convention, confirmed, as I think I mentioned before, by the Law of Averages, to 'lie low')

with four aces and three kings in my hand. No one else seemed inclined to open the bidding, and the hand passed. Conway was more furious than before. Really there is no pleasing some people.

After three rubbers we were nearly 3,000 points down. "Just one more rubber," said Conway, "and I must simply *dash* off." We dashed instead—under our breath. To my intense relief Conway drew one of the others as his partner. I had been bullied for two hours, and I was feeling the strain. Also I was feeling revengeful; and in the last hand of the evening an opportunity for revenge came to me. Conway revoked. We claimed the revoke, and I remarked casually: "Let me see, I forget—is the revoke part of the Law of Averages or the Constantinople Convention?"

Conway has never 'looked' us 'up' since.

(*c*) GOLF

I

"You really are getting fat," said Smithers to me one day. For some reason best known to himself, Smithers has appointed himself my Mentor Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary (without, I may add, pay or allowances).

"Fat?" I queried. "Let us rather say, ample. Besides, it is part of a deep-laid scheme of mine to retain my—er—amplitude. In another ten years or so I shall be getting leave; and I want to show every one at home what a healthy country Macedonia really is. Perhaps then they will make me a Recruiting Officer in Ireland. When the Sinn Feiners see what Macedonia can do, and has done for me, they will all flock to the Canteen—I mean, the colours."

"What you want," said Smithers, disregarding my patriotic motives, "is exercise."

"Nonsense," I said testily; "why not suggest 'antipon'? I had all the exercise I wanted last week on the Seres Road, when we had three punctures."

"But you didn't mend them."

"No, not exactly. But I worked vicariously. I watched the driver mend them, and that comes to the same thing. After watching him for three hours I was absolutely exhausted."

"Anyhow, come round with me this afternoon and have a game of golf."

"Golf!" I exclaimed in tones of horror. "Golf! Do you think the King pays me twelve and sixpence a day to play golf! Collect yourself, my lad. Besides, I can't play the game—and I haven't got any clubs—and it's Friday, my busy day. Make it spillikins, and I'll play you to the death."

But Smithers is inexorable. He knows quite well that those who are impervious to blustering will eventually give way to importunacy. I argued for half an hour, and then, to please him, I borrowed some clubs and a ball and went out on to the links.

II

Smithers, who is a delightful companion and a hard worker, when he is not obsessed with the golf mania, has constructed his own links with the assistance of Dame Nature. This excellent lady has provided all the bunkers (Macedonia is prolific of nullahs); and Smithers has done the rest by sinking bully-beef tins into the ground at inappropriate intervals. A fair division of labour, he calls it.

"Where is the first green?" I asked anxiously, selecting a Harrytatian driver from my bag.

"See the ammunition dump over there? Well, two fingers right, nine o'clock."

Smithers used to be in the Poor Bally Infantry, and he is very proud of his knowledge of Infantry training. It doesn't do, however, to encourage him, so I said gently: "Come, come, my lad, you forget yourself. I am not a battalion on parade, but a potential golfer. Be good enough to indicate the direction of the first green."

Smithers drove off—"to show me the way" he was good enough to explain. We kept together most of the way. Together we visited two or three ravines, or 'bunkers' (to preserve the sporting parlance), where we remained some considerable time. The club has yet to be invented which will extract a ball from a Macedonian 'bunker.'

"If," I said after the tenth attempt, "we remain here much longer, I am not without hopes that we shall reach down to the foundations of some ancient town."

"We may not be golfers," Smithers agreed; "but we are certainly enthusiastic archæologists."

However, we made a new rule, that after fifteen shots in a bunker we could draw out and play from the farther side. After this desirable rule had been established, progress became rapid. Half an hour later we reached what Smithers was pleased to term "the first green"—actually a spot where there were not more than a dozen thickets growing. My score, not counting 'wides' (which we agreed to exclude—another very excellent rule) was 45, and Smithers's 37.

"Is this really the best green you could find?" I asked petulantly. "It's simply overgrown with bushes."

"Overgrown!" echoed Smithers in amazement. "Why, it's the clearest spot for miles around."

So I fought my way through half a dozen thickets, and managed to steer my ball to within three yards of the bully-beef tin. Smithers's ball lay next to mine. As he had played eight strokes less than I had, I told him generously that I would give him the hole.

"Better play it out," said Smithers; "there's a steep ravine about a foot beyond the hole."

A ray of hope pierced the dark horizon. I stood still for a moment and thought deeply.

"Got a fly in your eye?" Smithers asked anxiously. "No? Well, it's your shot."

Now, Smithers may be a better golfer than I am, but I know a vast amount more about military strategy. This, I said to myself, is clearly a case for a War of

Attrition. So with infinite caution, I approached the hole.

"Bad luck," said Smithers, as the ball trickled along the ground about six inches in the direction of the hole.

"Ha! ha!" I laughed mirthlessly (rather a difficult thing to do), "the fool thinks I have 'fluffed' my putt!"

Smithers prepared to win the War—I mean the hole—with a Grand Offensive. Unfortunately—or fortunately (for me)—his ball bounced in and out of the hole, and wandered on down the nullah. Cursing heartily, Smithers followed it. With another five shots, averaging about six inches each, my ball went down the hole.

"Down in 62," I shouted triumphantly to Smithers, who was still trying to get out of the nullah.

"Your hole," he said without enthusiasm: and we walked on to the next tee (one up).

III

"By Vardon," said Smithers three hours later, in the Mess; "I could eat a centipede."

"I'm a bit peckish myself," I admitted, helping myself to a seven-pound tin of bully-beef. "It was a great game."

"Yes," said Smithers; "you played jolly well, and you deserved your victory."

"What I like about Macedonian golf," I said generously, "is that the best player doesn't win, but the greatest military strategist. Hindenburg, old son, I'll play you again to-morrow."

CHAPTER III

THE GREEK ARMY AT THE FRONT

(*Written June* 19, 1918)

ABOUT three months ago mention was made for the first time in the official British communiqué of Greek troops fighting side by side with their British comrades on the Struma Front. As a matter of fact, I believe the majority of our fellows first learnt of the impending arrival of Greek troops on this Front through notices posted up in the Bulgar trenches to that effect. So I hope that in the following chapter I am not giving away any information which is likely to be of use to the enemy.

From a political point of view, it was inevitable that the Regular Greek Army (as opposed to the Army of National Defence raised by M. Venizelos, which has been at the Front over a year) should, when it was ready, take up its position on the right flank of the Allied line, facing Demirhissar, Rupel, Seres, and Kavalla. The avowed object of Greece's entry into the War is the recovery of these places from the Bulgar. They were ceded to Greece after the Balkan Wars, and were subsequently sold to the Bulgars by Constantine in 1916. Though, properly speaking, there is but one Front in Macedonia, fighting is actually taking place in three separate countries; and as far as possible it is advisable that each nation shall fight where its own interests and aspirations are directly concerned. The extreme left of the Allied line runs through Albania,

which from its propinquity to her own coast-line chiefly affects Italy. The left and centre of our line as far east as Doiran fringes the Serbian frontier: it is in this sector of the line that the Serbians have always been fighting to recover their own territory. From Doiran to the sea our line runs through Greek Macedonia; and it was obvious that the majority of the Greek Army would eventually take over this sector of the line.

Much has been said about the difficulties of choosing the right friends. I wonder how many people realize the difficulties out here of choosing the right enemies? In theory there are two combatants or groups of combatants—the Entente and the Central Powers. In practice, however, a good deal of discrimination must be used by both groups to secure that as far as possible each nation be opposed by its own national foe. On the Macedonian Front all the four Central Powers are (or have been) represented, and the 'Armée d'Orient' is recruited from the Armies of seven nations of the Entente. So that it requires the greatest delicacy on the part of our Higher Command to secure the most favourable disposition of our forces. In this case, Greece's real foe—one might almost add, her only foe—is Bulgaria. Against Germany and Austria, at any rate, if not against Turkey, Greece could not fight whole-heartedly. We know in our own case that a section of the British public, misled by a small but noisy set of politicians and publicists, was for a long time disinclined to regard Austria as an enemy. The average Greek peasant is far less in a position to appreciate the higher moral issues at stake in the War, or to distinguish between the cause of civilization and the cause of militarism. He cannot be expected to be influenced by stories of German and Austrian 'frightfulness,' for it must be admitted that hitherto no war has been fought in the Balkans unaccompanied by atrocities on both sides of incredible ferocity. But there is one thing that every Greek peasant does understand with a directness and intensity which is surprising:

deadly hatred of the Bulgar. Although the rank and file must largely take their opinion and their politics from their officers, and although at one time many of the officers were, thanks to Constantine, violently pro-German, yet the projected Royalist attack against our Armies never materialized. We know now how imminent was the peril at the beginning of 1917; and it is probable that the deciding factor, which turned the scales against this attack in our rear, was the deep-rooted hatred of Bulgaria which inspires every Greek alike.

On the Struma, then, the Greek is fighting for the recovery of his own territory and against his deadliest enemy, the Bulgar. Those who fought in the Second Balkan War are familiar with the country. It will be recalled that in June 1913, after the Turks had been soundly beaten by the combined Armies of Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria, a quarrel ensued over the division of the spoils. Bulgaria, incited thereto by Germany and Austria, and flushed with victory, made such exorbitant demands on her Allies that a second war inevitably followed. The Bulgars were driven out of Salonica by the Greeks after some bloody street fighting, and a large force retreated along the Salonica–Seres road. At the village of Lahana, fifty kilos from Salonica, the Bulgars made a stand against the pursuing Greek Army. After a desperate battle, in which both sides suffered heavily, they were utterly routed. A marble tombstone by the roadside marks the spot where a brave Greek General fell as he was leading his men forward against the enemy. A few kilos further, from the summit of the hills, a magnificent view of the Plain from the Rupel Pass to the sea discloses the country which was so gallantly won and so basely sold. In 1913 the Greeks had the satisfaction of driving the Bulgars through the Rupel Pass, and though it was abandoned, partly owing to the pressure of the Serbian Army on the Bulgar lines of communication, the Greeks met with stubborn resistance, and justly lay claim to a magnificent achievement. The villages

of Orljac and Nigreta within our lines were the scene of appalling atrocities on the part of the retreating Bulgar, not likely to be forgotten by the Greek. Without being unduly imaginative, one can picture the emotions which the sight of these familiar landmarks must have aroused in the hearts of those Greeks who fought in the Balkan Wars.

The arrival of the first contingent of Greek troops in our area was not marked by any official demonstration. Quietly and casually the Greek soldier and Thomas Atkins began to fraternize. There is no one who can give a stranger that little assistance, which means so much, more simply than a British soldier. He does it so naturally and with such goodhumour that in five minutes he has made a friend for life. No ceremonial banquet, no solemn parade of friendship; just a little act of kindness. Let me give just one instance related to me by a Greek officer. A small party of Greek troops halted by the side of the road on their way up to the Front. They had marched a long way, and they were tired and thirsty; in a word, they were 'fed up.' Ten minutes later some English soldiers from a neighbouring camp had boiled some water, and offered each man a mug of strong English tea. Now the Greeks didn't know that Tommy's tea-ration is small, and that he cherishes it more than any other part of his ration (as a matter of fact, they firmly believe that every Englishman is a millionaire). But they did realize with overwhelming gratitude the kindly thought which prompted this action. And so the British soldier and the Greek 'hoplite' became friends and chatted together—for friendship needs no interpreter. . . . Not much in that, you say. But these are the things that count. This incident is typical of a thousand others. In this manner a real friendship has sprung up between the officers and men of the two Armies. The Englishman likes the Greek as a good comrade and a good fighter. Their love for us, which amounts to hero-worship, is naked and unashamed. It shines forth as bright as the day; and its sincerity cannot be doubted.

For though an educated man has learnt to prophesy smooth things and to flatter with his tongue, the peasant does not understand these subtle arts. He shows plainly his likes and dislikes, without attempting to disguise them.

Without endangering the Anglo-Greek Entente, I think I may mention one matter in which we do not see eye to eye, and that is the question of sanitation. We are sometimes laughed at for our veneration of the twin Deities Spit and Polish; but one must attribute to the remarkable cleanliness of the British soldier, both in his person and in camp, the complete immunity we have hitherto enjoyed even in Eastern countries from any form of plague. The prevalence of cholera and typhus in these countries is entirely due to the lack of sanitation both among the civilian population and the Armies. (One must bear in mind that in the Balkans the ironical panacea against all complaints, "There's a war on," loses much of its significance—for war is the rule rather than the exception.) It seems amazing that the Balkan States, smitten so often with the plague, should not have paid more attention to sanitation. They are fully armed and equipped against possible enemies among their neighbours: against the deadliest foe of all they are absolutely defenceless. For it must be admitted that in this respect the Greek Army is woefully deficient. In spite of all the precautions we had taken before their arrival, to provide their camps with the necessary sanitary arrangements, they persisted at first in fouling all the ground in the vicinity. Stern measures (known in Greek as 'Draconian measures') were found necessary to instil into their minds the rudiments of cleanliness in camp; for our safety as well as theirs depends on this. They have, however, learnt much in this respect during the last three months; and it is devoutly to be hoped for their own sakes that the lesson we have taught them will be remembered after the War.

As to personal cleanliness, which is scarcely less

important, the Greek soldier has a fairly smart appearance, and is quite reconciled to the use of soap and water. Unfortunately, the smartness of the men (and, I am bound to admit, even of the senior officers) is marred by the insuperable objection they appear to entertain against shaving. Whereas a kindly Government presents each of our men with a razor, the Greek 'ration' is less generous; one razor per company. Moreover, the Greek is of a more swarthy countenance than the Englishman, and his beard grows more quickly. Perhaps the reader will recollect the tale of Colonel Christodoulos, who refused to allow himself to be kidnapped with the Greek Army Corps in 1916 and brought back a faithful remnant to Salonica. He and all his men registered a solemn vow never to shave again until Greece had recovered the bartered territory. An unfortunate resolve this, for alas! two years have elapsed, and the territory is still in the hands of the Bulgar. Sometimes I wonder if there are not more of these Nazarenes in the Greek Army than we suspect.

The general health of the troops, however, is excellent. Malaria, which has knocked out so many of our men, affects them far less. They are all of them more or less acclimatized, and many of them (especially those from New Greece) have had malaria so often that it ceases to affect them. When they have an attack, they take a dose of quinine and carry on with their ordinary work. The health of the troops, of course, largely depends on the quality and quantity of their food. The Greek ration (almost entirely provided by our Army Service Corps) is a generous one. Their bread ration (no 'War' variety, but real white bread of a quality unknown in Greece since the War) is considerably bigger than ours. Their meat ration is only a quarter of ours, for the Greek is not a big meat-eater. Of the remainder of the ration, rice, olives, and olive oil are his favourite diet. A fair test, by weighing certain men on their arrival on the Struma and again three months later, has proved the excellence of the ration. The summer is fast

approaching, but it may be confidently predicted that their health will remain excellent, in spite of the trying climate in the Struma valley—one of the most unhealthy spots in Macedonia, or, for that matter, in the whole world.

With the exception of a few big horses provided by the French, the Greek Cavalry are mounted on tiny ponies, as are the Bulgars. At first they caused much amusement to our men; the appearance of a heavy man seated on a diminutive pony is certainly very comic. But although they would stand little chance in an encounter with our own Cavalry (I may mention the Bulgar fully realizes this, and has never yet attempted to cross swords with any of our Cavalry patrols—he finds it simpler and safer to shell them), yet they are by no means to be despised. Granted anything like equality of weight with their opponents (and in Cavalry warfare it is advisable to 'hit a fellow of your own size'), they will be quite capable of holding their own. Their ponies are very sturdy, and since they have been down on the Plain, where the forage ration is supplemented by plentiful grazing, they have improved enormously in condition. No one loves his horse (or even his mule) as the British soldier does; but the Greeks treat their ponies very well, if not as an equal, at any rate as a cherished subordinate.

The work of liaison between the two armies presents a certain amount of difficulty. But in addition to official interpreters, a surprisingly large number of Greek soldiers have learnt English in America; perhaps it would be no exaggeration to say that one soldier out of ten can make himself understood in English. The poorer class of Greek often serves an apprenticeship in America for a few years, and then returns home. It may be remembered that at the outbreak of the First Balkan War a very large number of Greeks—said to exceed 20,000—returned from America to Greece to fight for the liberation of their country. But even without the extra stimulus of patriotism, the emigrant Greek is happy to exchange the fleshpots of his

temporarily adopted country for the humbler living of the land of his birth. "Once a Greek, always a Greek" is perfectly true. Among the officers, few speak English, but nearly all speak excellent French. Recently I was up at Headquarters for a short spell whilst my C.O. was taking a well-earned holiday. In addition to the ordinary work, I had to act unofficially 'in loco parentis' to the Greeks in all matters of supplies. Their Auxiliary Services are quite efficient, but they are very casual. The Greek Senior Supply Officer, whose duty it is to meet the lorry convoy at railhead every day and note any deficiencies that may have occurred, failed to turn up for six days in succession. Inquiries were made at Greek Headquarters, but no one could say what had happened to him. He had vanished mysteriously and completely, and we began to suspect some sinister plot on the part of the Bulgar. A few days later he turned up casually one morning, and informed us he had gone on a 'lightning' ('Lightning' was his own word—I can only say it was unusually slow 'lightning') trip to Athens to meet an old friend! And there the incident closed, for there was nothing more to be said. On another occasion I realized through bitter experience the difficulties of liaison work. I was given a Greek ration account showing what they had actually received during a certain period. This I had to compare with their actual 'strength' (i.e. numbers) as shown on the British return. For three hours I struggled ineffectually; I could not make a single figure agree. I was about to abandon the attempt in despair, when I suddenly remembered that the Greek calendar is thirteen days behind ours. These little misunderstandings occur now and then; but on the whole, the work of liaison runs with admirable smoothness.

We are beginning to acquire a smattering of modern Greek. One particular favourite, "idey bross," has been added to that wonderful vocabulary which Thomas Atkins has culled from the four quarters of the globe. Literally it means "Hi! You!" or "Look out!"

But both 'to idey,' and 'to bross' are used freely as verbs meaning 'to superintend' or 'to chivvy.' 'Finish Johnny,' another popular favourite (although, strictly speaking, it does not come under the heading of Greek—ancient or modern), was originally acquired from the lethargic Greek labourers on the Seres Road, and means much the same as "Napoo." When the troops finally come back to Blighty from the different theatres of war, the English language will be enriched—if not embellished—beyond all recognition.

Of the fighting qualities of the Greek Army I know little, but I have heard nothing that is not good. I can testify that their march-discipline—the only form of 'warfare' which the A.S.C. have occasion to observe closely—is really excellent. (On this subject a Greek officer explained to me that the Greeks have of necessity always been remarkable walkers, because the means of transport in Greece are so restricted. The average Greek thinks nothing of walking twenty or twenty-five miles a day. 'Marathon runners' have existed in Greece since the days of Philippides.) Beyond a doubt the Greeks distinguished themselves greatly in the Balkan Wars. Not only did the troops fight with great bravery, but their Staff work was excellent. (To this latter phenomenon we must ascribe the admiration of his soldiers for their ex-Commander-in-Chief Constantine—an admiration which has not even yet disappeared. It is immaterial who actually planned out the campaign: in the eyes of the Greek rank and file, the honour and glory of the achievement rest with Constantine, and Constantine alone.) The recent Greek victory at the "Serra di Legen" (May 29th) is an earnest of future successes. It is obvious that the rapid development of the Greek Regular Army is causing the Bulgars considerable anxiety. They have, of course, much to learn of modern warfare and all the latest products of European civilization. But the "Mission française," a small body of French officers under General Bordeaux, sent out last year from France to adapt the Greek Army to modern conditions, are more

than satisfied with the progress that has been made in the last few months. Less than a year ago the Regular Greek Army was demoralized, indifferent to the causes for which we are fighting, and miserably equipped. To-day, thanks to the wonderful statesmanship of M. Venizelos and the untiring work of the Mission française, Division after Division of fully trained and equipped soldiers, eager to get to grips with the Bulgar, are reinforcing the Allied line. Those at home whose sole method of helping us out here is to inquire petulantly "What is the use of the Salonica Army?" may perhaps find herein some answer to their oft-repeated question.

But one must look beyond the present. This War is only a transitory period in the life of European nations; and it will have been fought in vain if we cannot secure thereby some system in the world which will "make Democracy free" by eliminating the thousand misunderstandings between nations which bring about ill-feeling and eventually result in hostilities. Of our enemies it is useless to speak at present; it can only be hoped that they will eventually realize their criminal folly, and come into line with the rest of civilization. But first of all it is necessary to have a complete understanding, a complete sympathy amongst the Entente nations themselves. It is well known that differences have arisen in the past which have required the utmost tact and goodwill to overcome. In the Balkans especially the difficulties have been acute: some due to thoughtless and hasty action, but the majority to sheer ignorance and misunderstanding of each other's motives. Though the differences have all been overcome, much harm and ill-feeling have been caused. This ignorance is the deadliest foe of the safety of Europe. It is vital that we should learn something of the characteristics of each other. It is not sufficient to employ trained diplomats: *the man in the street must see for himself*. Thus only can we make allowances for each other, and keep the peace of Europe; and that is why the brotherhood in arms

of Greece and England has such an immense significance.

I have met many Greek officers in the last few months, who have spoken to me freely on this subject—especially in relation to the complete ignorance of England that existed among Greeks before the war. Among the educated classes England was fairly popular in a vague, indefinite way. They realized the help England had given to the liberation of Greece nearly a century ago. Indeed, it is significant that the poetry of Byron is more widely read by educated Greeks than the poetry of Homer. They acknowledged that England had always sympathized both in word and deed with their legitimate aspirations, though they could not understand how, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, we had been hypnotized by the 'gentlemanly' Turk. (This strange obsession of the 'gentlemanly' Turk persists even during the war. Perhaps, after all, it is a matter of comparative value. A Turk is certainly more of a gentleman than a Hun.) But of the ordinary Englishman the ordinary Greek knew absolutely nothing. Generally speaking they seem to have divided Englishmen into two classes: the cold, haughty Englishman, who remained at home in his tight little island, because he utterly despised any country but his own; and the familiar tourist, who complained that the Acropolis is out of date because it does not include a tennis court. The ordinary Frenchman they knew fairly well; and, in recent years, the ordinary German only too well. But the Englishman was a shadowy, mythical being, utterly unknown and utterly misunderstood. For all they knew to the contrary, we might have been as extinct as the Dodo. But now through this brotherhood-in-arms they have become acquainted with the real Englishman, Thomas Atkins; and their admiration is only exceeded by their amazement. Truly, Thomas Atkins is the finest propagandist in the world, because he is quite unconscious of the meaning of the word. This personal contact between the average citizen of the two nations is worth a thousand Diplomatic Treaties,

SOUTHERN ENTRANCE TO RUPEL PASS. [OCTOBER 1918.

couched though they be in the most flowery language and signed by all the Ambassadors Plenipotentiary in the world.

The debt we owe to the priceless civilization of Ancient Greece is immense. Modern Greece has only begun to emerge as a nation within the last half century. For hundreds of years she was down-trodden beneath the heel of the Turk. But once again she stands forth to take her part in history. She has within her all the fine qualities of a Great Nation; she needs only a wise Government and a noble example to bring them forth. The former she possesses in M. Venizelos: may we not hope that in the latter the example of France and England may be of some real assistance? If so, the thousands of Frenchmen and Englishmen who have fallen in Macedonia will not have died in vain.

CHAPTER IV

GUVEZNEANS

SOME twenty-five kilometres from Salonica, scarcely a mile from the Seres Road, lies the village of Guvezne, with its little church standing out prominently on the edge of the Langaza Plain. Considering the sparse population of Macedonia, Guvezne is a large town; for it harbours some two thousand souls, Bulgar and Greek peasants, who gain a modest living from the fertile soil of the Plain. Like so many other villages, unknown before the year of grace 1914 to all save a few, Guvezne has been brought into prominence by the freakish chances of War. It is now a centre of considerable military importance by reason of the number of British Camps which surround it. There is even an important personage known as "The Commandant of the Guvezne Area," little less important than "The Commandant of the London Districts." When we first moved up country from the "Birdcage" in early 1916, the Guvezneans shrugged their shoulders and prepared for the usual outrages which they associate with War—robbery, rapine and slaughter. To their intense surprise they were left unmolested. A proclamation [1] was read in the villages bidding them carry on

[1] A certain Cavalry subaltern entrusted with this task (the proclamation being read in English and translated by an interpreter), soon grew tired of the stilted official language, and substituted for it the famous speech of Antony, beginning, "Friends, Romans, Countrymen." This he delivered with full oratorical gestures, and created an enormous impression on the mystified natives!

with their ordinary peaceful pursuits, and assuring them that if they gave no trouble they would enjoy complete security. After they had recovered from the first shock, the Guvezneans went about their business in the ordinary way, and took no notice of us. Their sheep and their cattle continued to graze on the country, even where our camps were thickest. Their womenfolk continued to work on the fields or in the village, unmolested and unnoticed by the soldiers. A few eggs were bought from them at a generous price for our hospitals; but no cattle were 'requisitioned'; fortunately the British Army has always been independent of the meagre local resources of the country. Later, when we called for volunteers to work on the Seres Road, they came forward at once, only too delighted to work for us. Three drachmas (about 2s. 6d.) a day and a loaf of bread is a generous wage in any country: in Macedonia, where drachmas are scarce and white bread is scarcer, it represents affluence. A few months later there came a call for women and children to do light work, breaking up stones, etc., and the volunteers came forward with the same readiness. It is noteworthy that, for the first time in their history, the Turkish women in Macedonia appear in public without the veil prescribed by their religion. Surely there could be no finer tribute to Thomas Atkins than this!

I have never visited Guvezne village, but have been content to worship from afar. For, like most Macedonian villages, it is 'out of bounds to the troops.' Perhaps this is just as well, for undoubtedly in such cases "distance" (and I may add, a pocket-handkerchief dipped in eau-de-Cologne) "lends enchantment to the view." But though we cannot go to Guvezne, its inhabitants can come to us; and a few Guvezneans are worthy of passing notice.

(*a*) CHRISTO

Christo is our Mess-waiter. He is a Guveznean by adoption and not by birth. In 1914 he emigrated from

Batoum, in the Caucasus, where he was born, to Salonica. He left Batoum "because it was too cold." I must confess that to me it seems an inadequate reason for leaving a place where you have spent the first twenty-two years of your life. But no doubt Christo knows his own business. Christo's nationality is one of the Balkan problems, which will have to be settled at the Peace Conference, though I don't think the problem keeps him awake at night. At any rate, he has at least a strain of Greek in him. This no doubt accounts for his choice of Salonica as a home, for indeed I can think of no other inducement. From Salonica he drifted to Guvezne, where he became a ploughboy. About a year ago he wandered over to our Mess; and, as our Mess-waiter had temporarily succumbed to the ravages of malaria, he was accepted as a substitute. He promptly installed himself in the kitchen, and ingratiated himself with the cook by initiating him into the mysteries of the latest Macedonian 'game of chance.' I don't know how the game is played.' It appears to be a cross between auction bridge and 'shove-halfpenny.' The cook soon learnt the rules—though he had to pay a large sum for the knowledge. In return, Christo was taught the secrets of Mess-waiting. He is very adaptable, and soon acquired the necessary qualifications: cleanliness, deftness, discretion, and a smattering of English. Before he had been with us a fortnight he was as spruce as a Guardsman, as deft as Cinquevalli, and as discreet as Sir Edward Grey. In addition, he could deliver himself of such breakfast-table small-talk as "Frite ache, or soshisez and badada, sir?" (which being interpreted signifieth, "Fried egg, or sausages and potatoes"). After six months he could anathematize the cook in language which would have reflected no discredit on one of Mr. W. W. Jacobs's sailormen.

We hear little of that War which, according to the best authorities, is at present being waged in Europe; for most of the news from the outside world we have to rely on Christo. Twice a week he goes to Guvezne village 'for a bath' (also, I fancy, to serenade his

' inamorata ') ; and comes back full of the latest rumours. Most of his rumours, I fear, savour rather of intelligent anticipation. Ferdinand is constantly being assassinated by an infuriated populace ; the Rupel Pass is captured at least twice a month ; and Bulgaria declares war on Turkey with monotonous reiteration. None the less, Christo is every whit as reliable as the newspapers, and we look forward eagerly to his bi-weekly return from the centre of the universe.

Christo's military record dates farther back than the day he became a camp-follower in the British Army. His previous service has been summed up admirably by him in a dozen words : " Me no soldier. Me get papers. Me soldier. Me lose papers. Me no soldier. Finish." I have read many histories of famous Generals, written in the most ornate English, set forth in gilt-edged books bound in the costliest vellum. But I think Christo's military autobiography is unique for its brevity and its suggestiveness. Though it is a work of super-erogation, amounting almost to desecration, I should like to elaborate these few simple words of a simple soldier. I can picture the scene so well : Christo, a blithesome lad, dwelling in his native fastnesses, content with the simple pleasures that life in Batoum could afford. We get some key to his youthful sentiments from his words " Me no soldier." He was one of nature's civilians, to whom the very thought of War was abhorrent. Then suddenly the thread of his peaceful existence was snapped by the note of the bugle, the call to arms. " Me get papers." Holy Russia needed him, and Christo answered her call without a murmur. " Me soldier." Hence-forward his services were dedicated to the Little White Czar and the Big Black Rasputin. What promotion did he earn? How long did he serve his country? What heroic deeds of valour did he perform? Alas ! these questions can never be answered ; for with the simplicity of true greatness, Christo has drawn a veil across his life in the Army. We know only that his military career came to a sudden end. " Me lose papers. Me no soldier." What mystery, what romance surrounds those

missing papers! Were they lost by misadventure or by treachery? Was it carelessness, indiscretion, or 'Act of God' which prompted their disappearance? Who shall say? Christo, who alone can disclose the truth, remains silent. We know only that he was enabled to return once again to the "Arts of Peace," to doff his arms and don his toga. But Russia holds him no longer; he seeks other pastures across the sea in fair Macedonia. And so this dramatic episode in his life is concluded, and the curtain falls on the first scene of his career. No elaboration of mine can equal his own impressive conclusion of the whole matter, summed up in a single word: '*Finish*.'

There I would gladly leave the matter. But at the risk of anti-climax, I have just a few more words to add. Recently, Christo has been wearing a worried look: for his 'class' may be called to the Colours any day. Whenever a Greek officer comes into the Mess, Christo vanishes mysteriously. Perhaps after all Christo's military career is not yet over. Perhaps he is destined to add yet another page to its glorious story. Perhaps he has been singled out by Providence to perform those very feats—the capture of Rupel and the assassination of Ferdinand—which he has rehearsed so often in Guvezne. Devoutly I pray that this may be—but Christo will have to be more careful not to lose his papers a second time.

(*b*) HERACLES

Heracles in an actor of unusual versatility, whose fame has spread like wildfire from Salonica to the Struma. For a whole week he 'starred' in an M.T. Company 'révue.' I have seen the révue a dozen times, and I have seen many actors in his part. But Heracles alone played the part to perfection—he alone is the *beau idéal* of my histrionic dreams. Lest I exhaust myself (and my readers) in adulatory superlatives, I will merely state of his Art that he combines the dignity of a Forbes-Robertson with the daintiness of a Pavlova:

in addition, he possesses the whimsicality of a George Robey.

In this respect Heracles—a simple Guvezne peasant—is superior to other world-famous actors ; that whereas they require a four-act drama or a three-spasm révue in which to ' express ' themselves, Heracles obtains his effects in an all-too-brief ten minutes. Let me describe to you the scene of his triumph, and you will see for yourselves.

At the end of the Second Act of " Slip Your Clutch," a comedian, dressed in the clothes of a Greek labourer, sings that mirth-provoking song " Idey ! Johnny," to the tune of " The Rag-Picker." The words are excellent, replete with topical allusions of an ironical nature, as you may gather from the last few lines :

See them working,
Never shirking,
Three good " drachs " their pay.
You'll hear a lot of them say :
" Soldiers a shilling a day,"
But not for Johnny, " finish " Johnny !
Not for Johnny Greek !

So much for the song. But the Producer, not satisfied with its intrinsic merits, decided by a stroke of real genius to *produce the genuine article on the stage!* Accordingly, in whatever district the révue was touring, he obtained at enormous expense the services of a dozen Greek labourers, led by a native foreman, who came on to the stage and joined in the chorus as best they could. Imagine the uproarious laughter of the audience at this unexpected ' dénouement ' !

Eventually ' Slip Your Clutch ' came to Guvezne, and Heracles was given his chance. One hears much of the ' discoveries ' made by this or that theatrical manager. But the discovery of Heracles, who was selected from several hundred Guvezneans to play the part of the foreman, is surely the most astounding example of managerial perspicacity in the annals of the stage ! It was as the foreman that Heracles made such an immense

sensation, and awoke one morning, or rather, went to sleep one night, to find himself famous. I have seen dismal foremen and hilarious foremen ; bashful foremen and drunken foremen. But Heracles was the ideal, the only *possible* foreman. One felt instinctively, as Heracles came on to the stage at the end of the second act, that here was an actor of no mean talent. An elderly man with white whiskers, of venerable and dignified appearance, he trod the boards with that impressive stateliness which can only be acquired by ten years' study of the part of Hamlet. His dress and cap, multi-coloured as the trench-coat affected by Joseph, modified the austerity of his demeanour. Though he was making his début as an actor, he was handicapped by none of the nervousness and stage-fright which afflict so many. Suddenly he discarded his cap and his dignity, as, with an unmistakable wink at the delighted audience, he advanced gallantly towards the leading ' lady ' and kissed her hand. (This, I may add, and his subsequent performance, was an unrehearsed effect, and took the leading ' lady ' considerably by surprise.) Encircling her slim waist with mid-Victorian courtesy and his right arm he accompanied her in a Macedonian gavotte. Then with the same old-world grace he took leave of his partner, and danced by himself. Never have I seen an audience so convulsed with laughter. It was a strange, rhythmical measure, handed down, no doubt, through countless centuries, from the Nymphs and Dryads ; perhaps originated by the Greek god Pan himself. A dozen times Heracles was recalled to repeat the dance : and still the audience thundered for more. Had it not been for the exigencies of the service, Heracles would have danced all through the night.

For six nights Heracles played the part of foreman to delirious audiences. Generals and Lance-Corporals (on full pay) alike, Admirals and Nursing Sisters, Frenchmen and Italians, flocked to the theatre from all parts of Macedonia to witness Heracles' performance. The Bulgars, who had heard of him (as they hear of most things), deserted in their thousands in the hopes

of catching a glimpse of this astounding man. And then at the end of the week Heracles retired from the stage for ever, back to the Seres Road, where you may see him to this day breaking stones—with a far-away look in his eyes. Unlike Mr. Crummles and a thousand other well-worn actors, who continue, long after their brilliance has been dimmed, to give ' farewell ' performances *ad nauseam*, Heracles was content, with supreme abnegation, and in spite of the entreaties of the Commander-in-Chief, to quit the stage whilst still in the hey-day of his powers, and to resume his path of obscurity on the Seres Road.

(*c*) PETER

Peter is our mascot. He was born in Guvezne last year of dubious parentage. His mother was a Macedonian mongrel, and his father had more than a touch of the Dachshund about him. But though by birth hyphenated, Peter is as staunchly British in his sympathies as any dog whose ancestors came over with Wilhelm—I mean William the Conqueror. He came to live with us when he was a month old ; and his earliest impressions are of a strange, friendly race of khaki-clad men. To him khaki has always been the *sine qua non* of existence. He shows no mercy to any native who crosses his path, clad in gaudy ' civvies ' ; but barks furiously, " Why aren't you in khaki? " Really, in the days of the Voluntary system Peter would have been invaluable as a recruiting agent—even those who continued to shirk their duty unmoved by the patriotic posters in the streets could never have resisted the stern appeal of his bark.

Peter is not a very beautiful dog : he would never win a prize at a dog show, unless it were a consolation prize. He is very long, and has short stumpy legs pointed out at an angle of 45 degrees, so that he stands permanently ' at ease.' But he has a delightful way of puckering up his forehead and frowning in a thoughtful manner when you talk to him. He is not really

clever, but he is a great thinker. If he is not beautiful, what does that matter? Beauty is only skin deep, and no dog could be more faithful or more loving than Peter.

Every one worships Peter. For the roughest and the least demonstrative among us feels a longing now and then to "make a fuss of" some one. With our dear ones so far from us, we lavish all our loving affection on Peter. To us he represents, however imperfectly, mother, sweetheart, or sister. And Peter receives all our affection quietly and proudly—not arrogantly, but conscious that it is his due. Sometimes wild dogs come down from the hills, and prowl round our camp trying to entice Peter to join them in their lawless pursuits. But Peter barks contemptuously; not a step will he stir unaccompanied by one of his sixty masters, from whom he has learnt the "Service which is perfect freedom." To him wander-lust, the call of the wild, makes no appeal; for environment has overcome the promptings of heredity.

But you must not imagine that Peter is merely an adornment of the camp, satisfied to live in pampered idleness. Far from it. Peter is a strict disciplinarian. Never a parade but Peter is present, wandering in and out of the ranks, admonishing those who are late and encouraging those who are punctual. Roll-call over, he marches down to the Depot with the men and helps them —or thinks he helps them, which is a distinction without a difference—to load the lorries. Even in the depth of winter, which he hates (for Peter was born on a sunny day), when the snow lies thick on the ground, Peter never 'swings the lead,' but still attends all parades, sustained by his unconquerable sense of duty. He says as plainly as a dog *can* say, "I know it's a rotten day, and it's a rotten War. But whatever happens, *I'm with you.*" I think the men understand, and go about their work with a lighter heart.

Peter is something of a misogynist—but then, he has only met two ladies in his life. One day, last year, two Sisters came to lunch with me; and of course I intro-

duced Peter to them. At first it was quite plain that he disapproved—why weren't they in khaki? True, they had soft hands, and caressed him lovingly. So Peter determined to make the best of a bad business, and treated them with condescending, but rather heavy, kindness. Like most of us, he dislikes what he cannot understand.

Though he makes no favourites, but treats all of us alike, irrespective of rank, with truly Bolshevician impartiality, Peter is attached for special duty to the Postal Orderly, to whom he lends moral and material support—moral, in that he compels him to go over to the post even in the dirtiest weather ; material, in that he brings back my letters in his mouth. This is the only trick in his répertoire, but one which I never grow tired of witnessing. Every morning and evening I look anxiously for Peter returning from the post, to see if he has brought me anything. He knows perfectly well that I am longing to get those funny, square bits of paper, and he is so pleased when he can come back with his mouth full of them. Sometimes for a whole week or even a fortnight he comes back looking very dejected, with nothing for me ; and I say to him, " Come, Peter, can't you do better than that? Peter, old chap, I don't think you're really trying—and you know how badly I want a letter." Then Peter wags his tail sympathetically and seems to say, " Never mind, old sport—buck up. I tried awfully hard to bring you something back ; but that silly old ass of a postal man said he'd got nothing to give me. You wait till to-morrow, and I'll bring you back *thousands* of bits of paper."

Peter, Peter ! what will happen to you when we go back to our homes? They won't let us take you away with us. I can picture you, Peter, watching us forlornly from the Quay, as the great transport weighs anchor and carries us away from you. Amid all the rejoicing there will be one lonely, sorrowing little heart. Will you go back to your Macedonian mountains and join a pack of wild, savage dogs? No, I don't think

you could, Peter. You have known all the comforts of civilization ; and you have known true pals, who have loved you and petted you. Without them you would be lost. But cheer up, Peter ; don't look so miserable. As the Irish farmers say, there's no fear of the War being over just yet !

CHAPTER V

MACEDONIAN MADNESS; OR, THE BALKAN TAP

YOU cannot go into a Mess, you can scarcely read a letter home, you certainly cannot go to a Concert in the B.S.F., in which there is not some allusion to the 'Balkan Tap.' It is from a conscientious desire to allay the British Public's anxiety (or at any rate the greater and nobler part of the B.P.—that is, those who read my books) that I take up my pen to describe the causes, the stages, and the symptoms of this fearsome disease. Moreover, as a confirmed Macedonian madman myself, I speak as one having authority. The causes are twofold: solitary confinement for an indefinite period in the wilderness of Macedonia (solitary, in that there are no inhabitants except the Macedonian peasant, who is neither a congenial nor an intelligent companion, and no villages except an occasional conglomeration of stricken hovels, made of mud and other refuse) and the appalling monotony of the life. In France a soldier's existence may be more precarious; but at least he is certain of leave fairly frequently; and when he is out of the line, he sees a little 'life.' But here leave does not come till after three years' active service; and the only 'life'—in the town of Salonica itself—is of the kind that makes one pray for death, as a happy release.

There are four stages or degrees of 'Balkan Tap': the first, loss of memory; the second, vacuity of gaze, conversation and intellect, due to mental atrophy; the third, strange talk and unnatural behaviour, due to the intrusion of alien matter into the mental vacuum; and finally, a mild form of delusion. The latter, however,

merely an aggravated and acute form of the third, is not very common. I propose to take each stage in turn, and illustrate its symptoms by appropriate anecdotes and examples.

But lest I create alarm and despondency at home, let me hasten to say that the 'Balkan Tap' is rarely fatal. Its victims never shoot anybody—not even a Bulgar. On the contrary, they become—if it is possible—more amiable than before. The only case I have heard of which was attended with fatal consequences was that of a man of an inquiring turn of mind, who extracted a pin from a hand-grenade to see what would happen. He was not disappointed, though "the subsequent proceedings interested him no more." I might also mention that it is not necessary to live in Macedonia to be infected with this disease. Any one who reads through a Parliamentary Debate in the House of Commons may convince himself of this. But though the 'Balkan Tap' is not confined to the Balkans, it becomes more emphasized and more universal in these parts.

The first stage then, as an M.O., who consistently forgot to pay his Mess-bill, informed me, is complete loss of memory. This generally comes after six months in the B.S.F., though the finer intellects sometimes hold out for a year. There are just a few supermen (Staff Officers, of course), who retain their memory indefinitely. This loss of memory is often attended with very painful consequences. One hears of poor fellows who spend an evening at the White Tower, the Skating Rink, or some other place of entertainment in Salonica, and towards midnight suddenly forget their own names. One sees an officer towards lunch-time walking straight in the direction of the Mess suddenly falter, and look round aimlessly, wondering where he was going. Frequently Orderly Officers forget to turn out the guard; and occasionally—*very* occasionally—the men forget to attend a 'rum issue' parade.

After loss of memory of the past, failure to grasp the present supervenes, and a complete vacuum is created in the mind—this is the second stage of 'Balkan Tap.'

It manifests itself in many ways. The victim's conversation is unusually futile ; and when you speak to him, he looks at you in an inane way. In addition, his mind is so weak that it is impossible to inoculate him against 'rumouritis.' Within five minutes he will tell you that his Division is bound for Egypt, India, France and Mesopotamia, and that it is remaining in Macedonia for the term of its unnatural life. Not only will he tell you all this, but he will honestly believe it : for his mind is so empty that it becomes the shadow of the last rumour that it hears. Again, the victim embraces with the utmost heartiness strangers he has never met, and cuts his own brother.

The third stage of the disease, and in most cases the final stage, is this : a vacuum having been established, stray thoughts and convictions of alien growth find their way into the sufferer's mind, and he behaves and talks in a strange, unnatural manner. You hear men say that the politicians are winning the War for us, that they (the sufferers) wouldn't take leave if they were offered it, and that they intend to settle in Macedonia after the War. It affects the behaviour of all branches of the Service alike. Staff Officers travel in motor-lorries ; Engineers live in tents ; Supply Officers in the A.S.C. live on bully-beef and biscuits, and their men run short of cigarettes ; Ordnance men pay for their own clothes ; Medical Officers take their own prescriptions ; A.P.M.'s place themselves under arrest for being improperly dressed ; R.T.O.'s refuse to wear blue 'tabs' ; Field Cashiers only draw 250 drachmas a month ; and Motor Transport Officers refuse to have electric light in their Mess. It affects all ranks alike : Officers' servants clean their boots with their own boot-polish ; Office clerks write home on their own note-paper ; Sergeants invite Corporals into the Sergeants' Mess ; Quartermaster-Sergeants grow thin ; Sergeant-Majors are sympathetic with the dullest recruits ; Subalterns admit that their Senior Officers have deserved the distinctions they have gained ; Junior Officers beg to be allowed the privilege of being Orderly Officer 'till further notice';

Adjutants disagree with their C.O.'s ; Field Officers complain that their Subalterns do all the work, but get no reward ; Senior Officers in the Administrative Services refuse the 'D.S.O.' on the grounds that they have not deserved it ; Generals—but I have said enough to show how all ranks suffer alike. In any case, I have said enough. I could relate dozens of anecdotes to show the effects of this, the third stage of the disease. One victim was granted three days' leave, which he spent riding up and down the Seres Road in various motor-lorries, "so as to have a look at the scenery." Another man tried to make a pet of a centipede—he was last heard of in hospital. A third told me he loved the excitement of bombing raids—they were more enjoyable than any melodrama. But the most remarkable case I have ever heard was that of an officer, whose servant managed to 'scrounge' for him half a dozen sheets of corrugated iron, with the intention of building his master a hut. The poor fellow was so far gone that he actually returned the corrugated iron to the nearest R.E. dump, as he had "no authority" to draw it ! Scarcely less sad is the case of a C.O., who went out to inspect the rations which had returned from the dump. He had them carefully weighed, and discovered that he had been issued with four pounds of sugar more than he was entitled to. This he returned to the Supply Officer with a polite note, saying he much regretted the error which had occurred.

The last stage of the disease is comparatively rare—it does not develop till after two and a half years' active service with the B.S.F. It takes the form of a fixed delusion in the mind of the sufferer, as distinct from unnatural behaviour. One poor fellow I know of took three days' leave in Salonica ; and when he came back, he assured his friends that he had met an honest Salonican shopkeeper—though he afterwards admitted that the shopkeeper was half-witted. Another officer confided to me that it was he who had started the Salonica fire, by throwing a cigarette-end into the Struma. You often hear English officers in Salonica talking a strange

and incomprehensible language to our Allies—they call it "cementing the Entente." The poor fellows actually suffer from the delusion that they are linguists!

But the most common example of this acute form of the disease may be found in the delusion of the sufferer that he is a Caruso, an Irving, or a Robey in embryo. He starts a concert-party and tours round the country, giving the most excruciating performances that it is possible to imagine. All the time he believes that his concert-party is immeasurably the best and the brightest in Macedonia. One would not mind so much if he confined his efforts to his own camp: but he always insists on inflicting his concert-party on his neighbours as well. Recently, one of these concert-parties came to our camp, and out of courtesy we were all compelled to attend. It was difficult to imagine anything more painful. Not a single performer could sing a note in tune, and the jokes were enough to dishearten Colonel Maude. After the show I retired to the Mess to fortify myself with a whisky and soda. Never have I needed one more urgently—not even after a bombing raid. There were several strange faces in the Mess—unsuspecting visitors who had come to be 'entertained.' A rather foolish-looking subaltern came up to me and asked me my candid opinion of the performance. After assuring myself that there was no Padre within ear-shot, I told him; and I added that although, where all are to blame, it is difficult to single out any one for special vituperation, yet I considered the baritone was slightly more vile and abandoned than the rest of the conspirators. He took it all quite calmly. "I," he said, "sang baritone." Of course, I apologized—I was far too short-sighted to recognize him—besides, for the greater part of the performance I had closed my eyes and suffered in silent agony. "I am sorry," I said. "If I had recognized you I would not have told you of my sufferings. And if you had not asked for my candid opinion, you would not have got it. The fact is, we are both suffering from the 'Balkan Tap.' Let's cry quits." We did.

There are, of course, a few 'old soldiers' who try

to extract advantage from the sufferings of their fellow-mortals. A certain abandoned old ruffian, undoubtedly the sanest man in Macedonia, was brought up before his C.O. on five separate charges. His defence was brief, but to the point. " Please, sir, I'm suffering from the ' Balkan Tap '—same as you might be, sir." I am sorry to record that his ingenious apologia was not accepted.

The B.S.F. has not yet been in being for three years. If the War lasts much longer, may we not expect to see something of this nature in General Routine Orders?

G.R.O. *Umpty-Um.*

April 1, 1928.

Balkan Tap Personnel.—As the effective strength of Units has been reduced by three-quarters through the withdrawal of all " B.T." men, it has been decided to draft a certain proportion back to each Unit. They will be employed on light duties only : viz. staff work and concert-parties.

All " B.T." men will be shown separately on the weekly Nominal Rolls of Units, under the heading " Detached."

A daily issue of straw (in lieu of hair-brushes) will be made to " B.T." personnel by the A.S.C.

Cells—padded, mark 13—may be drawn from Ordnance. The scale laid down is as follows : 1 cell per 10 men.

Officers commanding Units must ensure that all " B.T." men suffering from delusions—e.g., imagining themselves to be the Army Commander or an unserviceable pair of Ordnance breeches —be as far as possible humoured. If practicable, they should be employed on work conformable with their supposed identity. For instance, a man who imagined himself to be the sixty-first kilometre stone on the Seres Road was employed on a control-post at that point with excellent results. Another man who conceived himself to be a tin of strawberry jam was usefully employed in conveying rations from the dump to his Unit. At first, however, considerable difficulty was experienced in persuading him to leave the dump. . . .

But by far the most alarming symptom of the ' Balkan Tap '—one which is mercifully rare—is what Public School magazines call *cacoethes scribendi*. A harmless creature, who would never have thought of robbing an offertory-box or stealing rum from the Sergeants' Mess, suddenly takes it into his head that he can write a book. For this there is only one remedy—Death. Pity the poor author.

CHAPTER VI

KEEPING COOL

I AM not referring to coolness under fire. Fire (apart from the mosquito-strafing bush-fires which burn fiercely during the summer throughout the length and breadth of Macedonia) is more or less unknown to the Army Service Corps. We too, of course, have our cross to bear, but it is not a fiery cross. I refer to keeping cool in the summer—a difficult feat in these torrid climes. As Lewis Sidney used to remark, "Some says one thing, and some says another. But *I* says." In other words, some parts of Macedonia are warmer than others, and some days are warmer than others. But, as a working average, we may take anything from 90° to 95° in the shade as the mean temperature during the hot hours of a summer day—and we shall not be erring on the side of exaggeration. The summer, I may mention, begins in May and ends in October. Hence the story of the Macedonian who died and went to Hell, and after twenty-four hours there, wired back for his blankets.

From 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the summer we are allowed to 'rest'—unless there is any urgent work to do, which will admit of no delay. (I do not mean, for instance, to imply that if the Bulgars opened an attack at 11 a.m. we should refuse to fight because it was 'after hours'—for unfortunately that pleasing phrase 'after hours' has no significance in the Army.) As far as possible, official work is suspended and we retire to 'rest.' Perhaps the word 'rest' is not quite

the correct term—for there are few men who can achieve it. Rather, we lie in our tents, our huts, or our bivouacs, and try to forget the flies and the heat. Both the latter are insistent, and—if I may be permitted the paradox—it requires a great brain to forget them. I would far sooner have to learn the whole of *Paradise Lost* than have to forget a million flies or a hundred degrees of heat—the latter feat requires more concentration of effort and detachment of mind. Indeed, the science of war is largely the power to forget.

Sleep is, of course, out of the question. I have heard of fellows who stayed up all night, playing cards or reading, in the hope of dropping off to sleep the next afternoon through sheer fatigue. But this was not a success.

Lately I have made an experiment which has not been altogether a failure. I have decapitated a barrel of Samos wine, and converted it into a bath. Here I sit, Diogenes-like, during the heat of the day, and read and transact such business as comes my way. It has its disadvantages, of course. The water soon begins to boil, and I have the unpleasant sensation a lobster must experience when he changes colour. The smell of the Samos wine, too, has never entirely disappeared. As a result, my presence can always be detected from afar by its clinging odour, and I am unfairly accused of bibulous propensities. Also, it is difficult to preserve one's dignity when addressing words of exhortation from a wine barrel to a nonplussed N.C.O. Diogenes, I imagine, was a very dignified old gentleman ; if so, he has my cordial admiration. I suppose I too shall grow ' barrel-hardened ' in time. But it is difficult to get used to the position—one can't help feeling at a disadvantage. Besides, I am so helpless. The barrel was never intended for my ample proportions, and when the time comes to get out, I can never extricate myself without the help of my servant. Sometimes I think with horror : supposing a General came to inspect my camp, and it was found that the barrel and I were *fixtures*. . . .

If ever I become a teacher of philosophy, I know what I shall do. I shall take—no, I shall send my most promising pupils to merry Macedonia, dump them down in the middle of the Struma or the Langaza Plain, and tell them to obtain a practical knowledge of philosophy 'first-hand.' If they come safely through the ordeal, uninfected by Macedonian Madness, then they will have learnt all the philosophy there is to learn, and will require no further assistance from me. Really, there is much to be said for Mr. Squeers' system of education. He understood the one essential—that education should be practical. For it is easy enough to be philosophical about other people's troubles. So long as I am living comfortably in London, I can bear with equanimity the news of an earthquake in Sicily, a revolution in Russia, or a famine in India. But the study of philosophy should be practical. Let the student see with his own eyes the earthquake, the revolution, or the famine—and then let him philosophize, if he can. In the same way, if a politician decides on an expedition, let us say, to Timbuctoo, and declares it to be a 'legitimate gamble,' I should insist on his gambling partly with his own money. That is to say, he should be compelled to accompany the expedition to Timbuctoo. The ancient Greeks had a better way of dealing with their 'Amateur Strategists' than we have, as the following story will show.

The Athenian Government had sent an Expeditionary Force to reduce the island of Sphacteria; and Nicias, the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for War, was making a report on the progress of operations in the Athenian House of Commons. Everything, he said, was going according to plan (though he didn't mention whose plan). There had been, he admitted, strategic withdrawals, and the difficulties of the terrain were immense. In addition, the operations had been hampered by the weather, which throughout had favoured the enemy. (I have never yet known of any weather which *wasn't* favourable to the enemy—but that is by the way.) In conclusion, Nicias pointed out that the Spring

was at hand, and that great things might be expected of the 'Spring' offensive.

It was, I suppose, rather a hot day, and the flies were a nuisance (the very conditions under which I am now writing). At any rate, the House of Commons were not satisfied with the statement of the Secretary for War. Progress had been very slow, and they were growing rather weary of those eternally promised 'Spring' offensives. When Question-time came, the Right Honourable Member for the Peiræus (Mr. Nicias) was—to use a vulgar expression—'fairly put through it.' Between ourselves, I fancy Nicias was rather tired of the splendours—*and* the cares—of office. He had just bought a delightful little cottage on the banks of the Strymon (now the Struma), and he was an enthusiastic angler. With his pension of 25 drachmæ a month, he could live quite comfortably. Besides, in those days an ex-Member of the Cabinet would be offending no rules of etiquette by opening a fish-shop and selling the produce of his skill as a fisherman. . . . Still, he listened as patiently as he could to the questions that were poured in on him. Among other allegations, it was stated that (1) the Heavy Howitzer battery, under Colonel Ares, had only been permitted to fire one shell during the current year, owing to the break-down of the Ministry of Munitions; that (2) the Army Service Corps arrangements had completely failed, and that the entire Expeditionary Force had subsisted for the past six months on stewed rice; and that (3) the Cavalry, under General Hippopotamos, had mutinied at the instigation of the local Bolsheviks. To these, and other questions, Nicias replied that he had nothing to add to his previous statement; that he must have notice of these questions; and that it was not in the public interest to give away information that might be of use to the enemy. Although by nature a mild man, he was rapidly becoming exasperated, and in reply to an unusually futile question he remarked heatedly that the Honourable Member for Eretria (Mr. Pringleiades) seemed to forget there was a war on.

At the crisis of the debate, his arch-enemy, the leader of the Opposition, one Cleon, remarked sarcastically that if *he* were given command, he would undertake to win the war in twenty days.

"Very well," rejoined Nicias unexpectedly; "take over command by all means. I shall be only too delighted to hand over to you."

Now Cleon had once served in the Athens Militia for three weeks, and in consequence he thought he knew all there was to know about Higher Strategy. He was, in fact, an Amateur Strategist of the most virulent type and a confirmed 'Easterner' (that is to say, if his country were at war with Sparta, he had an infallible plan for defeating her viâ Sicily). But, all the same, Cleon was rather flustered by this unexpected turn of events; for he had never for a moment expected that his offer would be so readily accepted. He realized that it is one thing to criticize a campaign, but quite another thing to take charge of it. So he began at once to 'climb down.'

"Of course," he remarked nervously, "I should be only too pleased to take command of the expedition, and I am quite confident I could end the war in twenty days—or at any rate thirty days (loud jeers from the Government). But I assure you, whilst retracting nothing, that I have no wish to turn out the present Government. I was merely offering helpful and intelligent criticism. Let me assure the House that my remarks were not intended as a Vote of Censure on the Government."

But, alas! it was too late to back out of it. For the Athenian people (who were their own House of Commons) were delighted with what had happened. They disliked Cleon intensely. For whenever things went wrong (and even in those good old days, mistakes *were* made), he would turn round on the people and say sarcastically, "There—what did I say? I told you what would happen. But of course you wouldn't listen to me." And now, the House thought, we are in an excellent position. For of two pleasant alternatives,

one is bound to happen. Either Cleon will make a ghastly mess of things (their language—not mine. The Athenian people weren't really very cultured), and he will be killed ; or—and this on the whole was less hoped for—he will ratify his promise and win the war for us in a few weeks. It will be jam either way ; and the joy-bells will soon be ringing, either for Cleon's death or for Peace. And so (as Thucydides remarks, with wonderful insight into mob psychology), " the more Cleon endeavoured to extricate himself from the position, the more the crowd—as is their wont—urged him on " ; and a unanimous but half-ironical vote of confidence was passed in favour of the new C.-in-C.

What happened after is beside the point—as for once the Amateur Strategist proved himself to be in the right—and may be summed up in a few words. Nicias retired gladly to his little cottage on the banks of the Strymon, and is reported to have caught some incredibly large fish, which he sold to the populace. His retirement did not last long, for he was recalled to power a few years later by the will of the people and the swing of the pendulum. Cleon—whether by good fortune or by good leadership one cannot determine—(Thucydides, who had been ' stellenbosched ' by him, inclines to the former belief), actually fulfilled his promise, and won the war within the stipulated time.

Perhaps the reader is wondering what all this has got to do with keeping cool. For a few minutes I had imagined that we had followed the excellent example of the ancient Greeks, and that all the Amateur Strategists who sent us to Macedonia, and who were so confident of winning the War from Salonica in a few months, had been compelled to come out here too and visit their own Eldorado. I imagined that they were being baked by the same pitiless sun, and were being harried by the same remorseless flies. Alas! the illusion has quickly sped, but for the moment it was as cool and refreshing as the iciest streams of limpid water!

CHAPTER VII

THE SOLDIER'S PHILOSOPHY

At a moderate estimate it will take at least a hundred years to evolve a partially true and unbiassed history of the War. But posterity will be far more interested, I imagine, in the mental attitude of the average individual, and especially of the soldier, in war-time, than in the dry facts and statistics which will eventually emerge. The thousand 'pushes,' battles, incidents and campaigns, which at the time seemed so vastly important, will be summed up in one word—Victory. Except to the student of military history, the details of the fighting will not matter greatly. This or that battle will be carefully docketed and remembered—but only as a dry, lifeless date. This or that great General on either side—Foch, Haig, Hindenburg—will survive, but as a mere name, a peg on which to hang dates.

But the views, opinions and impressions of Thomas Atkins and Second-Lieutenant Jones may be of some real value to posterity, in that they reveal the attitude of ordinary human beings under exceptional circumstances. To my thinking, Cicero's letters to his friend Atticus are more interesting than any other writings of that period : not for the facts of history they contain, not even for the light they throw on the characters and actions of his famous contemporaries, but for the picture of everyday life they portray. I am much more interested in the details of his private life, in his ordinary doings and sayings, than in his suppression of the damp squib of rebellion raised by Cataline. Though none of us, of course, can hope to rival him, though

our ideas be feeble, and our style halting, still, the millions of letters written on active service by ordinary citizen-soldiers and the whole bulk of War literature have this merit, that they serve to illustrate the emotions of the man in the street during the prolonged crisis of the War, and they immortalize that which would otherwise be transient and elusive. For a few years after the signing of peace, our impressions will have faded away into lethal blankness, as if they had never been. From one's own experience one realizes how impossible it is to recall after the event one's emotions during any particular crisis. Unless they are actually recorded at the time, they are lost beyond hope of recapture. Incidentally—if I may be excused a digression—we find herein the explanation why a really valuable school story has still to be written. School stories are of two kinds—they are either crude or they are untrue to school life. As an example of either we may take *The Loom of Youth* and *Stalky and Co.* Either the writer broaches the work when he is young, and the memory of school-life is still fresh—in which case he fails through lack of experience in the art of writing ; or he waits till he has acquired the experience—by which time he fails because the memory of school-life has faded. Perhaps a really valuable school story could be written if Barrie and any imaginative schoolboy, straight from school, were to collaborate.

Let me then, whilst the War still continues, try to set forth the attitude of the average citizen-soldier in the British Salonica Forces towards the War. I think it may be summed up in the paradox, dogged apathy. I write of the time when the fourth anniversary of the War is about to be celebrated. At the beginning we all had our "first fine careless rapture." But that was long ago : it is impossible to maintain enthusiasm for four years. Enthusiasm wanes quickly, and something of a sterner growth is required to fill the void. War is no longer something novel : from the extraordinary, it has become the ordinary state of life. We no longer ask each other eagerly, "When will the

War be over?" For we feel that it is a question out of our hands, beyond our comprehension, which must eventually answer itself. Rather we say, "Do you think there is a possibility of peace breaking out?" just as in the good old days before 1914 we discussed the remote possibilities of a European War. We are apathetic, but we are as determined as ever to carry on till the goal of victory has been reached.

This apathy shows itself in the amazing ignorance and lack of interest in the War, shared by all but a few. Apart from official maps, the property of the Staff, practically no one has a map of France. No one tries to follow day by day the movements of the swaying line. Unless we happen to have fought in France before we came out here, we have not the vaguest conception where to locate on the map such famous places as Arras, Béthune, St. Quentin: and be it remembered that when I say "we," I mean not only 'other ranks,' but the vast majority of officers. Even during the tremendous battles which are now raging in France, not more than five minutes in the day are spent in discussing the situation. "Seems to be pretty 'eavy fightin' in France, mate." "Yes," comes the phlegmatic but confident reply. "Yes; but we're giving them Hell." Or in the Officers' Mess, "I see the Hun claims fifteen thousand prisoners yesterday." And the reply, "Probably *camouflage*." That is all—we go on with our ordinary work. Not more than one man in three reads the *Balkan News* (the only source of information we have out here, except for the official wireless news published by the Army, from which the *Balkan News* is largely derived). Those who read it, glance casually through its columns and remark, "Nothing in the *Balkan News*—never is." Occasionally we are aroused to greater interest by a humourous article in its columns, and there will be a rush to buy a copy. But all official news is treated with the same apathy. An enterprising editor, conceiving the idea of issuing evening 'speshals' (in the morning), containing the latest War news, would not sell more than a dozen copies in

Macedonia. Whether the news be good or bad, it matters not : it is treated with the same indifference, or (to use the newspaper correspondent's favourite phrase) "the unconquerable optimism of the British Army."

Perhaps out here we show greater indifference to the passing show of war than elsewhere. For we are so isolated and cut off from the rest of the world, despised, rejected and misunderstood. What bright hopes our first landing nearly three years ago aroused, when viewed through the rose-tinted spectacles of the Easterner! We were to finish the War in a few months, we were the one bright speck on the darkened horizon —in fact, we were IT. Column after column poured forth in the newspapers from the pens of the military critics, who were incredibly ignorant of the conditions which we had to face. Though we never could have realized their optimistic ambitions, we were dogged with misfortune from the beginning. We came too late to save Serbia : Greece under Constantine played us false. Instead of an ally, she was a potential enemy. Roumania came in, but she was sold by Russian treachery. Instead of proving an immense asset to us, Roumania, through her entry into the War, actually left us in a worse position than before, when she was a neutral. Then the greatest and most unexpected blow of all. Russia herself made a separate peace. This unfortunate series of disasters, whilst creating consternation among the Powers of the Entente, had by their proximity a paralysing effect on the activities of the Salonica Army. And so, partly because exaggerated hopes were placed in our powers, and partly because we were betrayed by Greece and Russia in turn, we gradually declined in favour. To-day you may search the daily papers from cover to cover without finding any mention of the Salonica Army—even the most fervid Easterners have abandoned us in disgust. Occasionally a small paragraph in the "general news column," sandwiched in between the latest scores of a billiard match and the death of an alderman, announces to an expectant

public that "there have been reciprocal artillery actions in the Balkans." Apart from this, one might read the papers for months without suspecting our existence.

Privately, and in public utterances at home, it has been tacitly agreed that the less said of the B.S.F. the better. Those who have relatives out here refer cautiously to a husband, a lover or a brother in the East, hoping to convey the impression that the loved one is in Palestine or Mesopotamia. As for public utterances, 'Blanche' in the *Tatler* and Mr. Lloyd George in the House of Commons—the sublime and the ridiculous alike—omit to 'mention' us in their 'dispatches.'

It has even been found necessary to give a public and official denial to the report that the discipline of the Salonica Army was low. The British public, stirred for a moment to recollection of our existence, not unnaturally assumed, by comparing this with similar utterances of the Government in the past, that "where there is smoke there is fire." Not only then were we useless and inefficient, but we were also mutinous. And so our reputation, tinged hitherto with the grey of forgetfulness, has now assumed the deepest shade of black.

In return we meet indifference with indifference, and we are determined to disregard the War in other theatres. We just 'carry on' with the work before us—"the daily round, the common task." We talk our own 'shop'—each branch of the service has its own 'shop'—but that is the only verbal tribute we pay to the War.

We have become indifferent to our own fate. Our indifference is a mixture of wilful ignorance and fatalism. Let us take a concrete example. A narrow salient is formed in our line. Those at home, who realize the danger, are kept awake at night through fear of the salient being pinched by the enemy and its occupants being killed or captured. That same night the actual dwellers in the salient are sleeping as unconcernedly as if the Kaiser had never been born. Either they don't know what a salient is, and don't want to know,

or else they calmly accept the salient as if it were a slice of cake. "If it is fated that I shall be killed, I *shall* be killed, and I can't make things better by keeping awake to-night." Or again, Hindenburg and Mr. Lovat Fraser are continually informing the world at large that the Salonica Armies will shortly be driven into the sea. They talk of us dispassionately, as if we were an inanimate object, devoid of volition. Hindenburg—or Mr. Lovat Fraser—has only to give the word of command, and we shall automatically drive ourselves into the sea. It is as if a man were to say, "To-morrow I will move that arm-chair into the drawing-room." Eminent politicians, apparently believing Hindenburg—and Mr. Lovat Fraser—deliver grave speeches about the Salonica Army, calculated to allay, but actually increasing, anxiety: and all those at home who have relations in the B.S.F. live in continual dread of this untoward event. Meanwhile the Salonica Army itself either wilfully ignores the dictum of Hindenburg and Mr. Lovat Fraser (which is surely grave impiety), or accepts it with equanimity. The latter view is well illustrated by the remark of an Infantryman, who had marched some twenty miles under a scorching sun. "Push us into the blinking sea, will they? And not a bad place either!"

It is only to be expected, if we are indifferent to our own fate, that we should become indifferent to the fate of others. Outwardly we may seem callous, but this callousness is deliberately assumed to shield our minds from the horrors of reality. One hears grim tales of men relating how a pal was knocked out, as if it were something humorous. "I turned round to Bill, and asked him for a match. But he didn't answer. 'Bill,' I said, 'pull yourself together, my lad'—and then I turned round and saw that Bill had caught it proper. Not much of him left after the shell had finished with him. 'Pull yourself together,' I said; poor bloke, he couldn't have done it. Funny, wasn't it?" Perhaps it is better so: man was not meant to bear such harrowing incidents as this War inflicts on sensitive natures.

We can scarcely bear our own misfortunes and the misfortunes of a few loved ones.

We do not surround the dead with a fictitious halo : we talk of them naturally, as if they were still alive. If a man is killed, his friends do not endow him with posthumous qualities which he never possessed—they feel that wherever he is, he would be indignant if they did. In life he is just ' Bill ' or ' Harry,' with all his qualities and defects : in death he remains the same.

We have learnt to mind our own business. Unlike the servant in Arnold Bennett's latest book, *The Pretty Lady,* who went about her work as if the entire responsibility for the War rested on her shoulders, we are—beyond a certain point—essentially irresponsible. We have our own particular duties ; these we endeavour to perform as thoroughly and efficiently as possible. Beyond this we have nothing at all to do with the War. Amateur Strategists do not exist in Macedonia : we leave the Higher Command to manage its own affairs. There is always a certain amount of genial abuse of branches of the Service other than one's own—it is natural to think that the other man is lazy and inefficient. But no one imagines that, were he C.-in-C., he could finish the War in a few months. It is realized that the War is a long business, and that every one, at any rate in the Army, is doing his best.

Really we are astonishingly patient. Of course we ' grouse '—it has always been the unquestioned privilege of the British Army to do so, and we like to keep up the old traditions. ' Grousing ' clears the air like a summer storm, without doing any harm. An army with " no complaints " would be a suspicious, dangerous thing. If the steam cannot escape naturally and regularly, there will eventually be an explosion. But it is the little unimportant things about which we grouse : the unequal distribution of the rum ration, the maddening buzz of the mosquito, the accidental breaking of a favourite pipe, the vagaries of the Macedonian climate, the sinking of a parcel mail. It is, I believe, a fact that a man suffering from toothache is insensible to

any greater calamity that may have befallen him. So we forget the horrors of war by concentrating our anger and disgust on a mosquito.

Of the real dangers and hardships we have to undergo, there is little or no complaining. Let us for a moment exclude the ordinary troubles of an army—troubles intimately connected with the casualty list—and turn our attention to two hardships, which together seem to form the monopoly of an Eastern campaign. The majority of us, sooner or later, are infected with malaria or sand-fly fever. I do not know the precise difference between the two ; possibly sand-fly fever is less severe. (Cynics will tell you that the latter is a 'camouflaged' form of malaria, so called in order to reduce—on paper—the number of malaria cases. But I detest cynics, and I have no doubt that this is a gross libel on the authorities.) However that may be, malaria and its *pars altera*, if not attended with fatal consequences, cause acute discomfort and misery. Also they are difficult to shake off, and it is probable that long after the War we shall continue to have 'attacks.' Yet you seldom hear a man complain about his malaria ; on the contrary, we boast of the number of relapses we have had and the incredible height of our temperature.

Take, again, the question of leave. Though strenuous efforts have been made of late to accelerate it, it does not come to most of us till after three years' active service. Now, three years' active service—especially in Macedonia—is a long affair. Yet we don't complain. We accept the statement that the difficulties of transport are almost insuperable with good-humoured resignation. We know that Macedonia is like the lion's den in the fable : there are more foot-marks pointing towards its entrance than pointing away. As a consequence—let it not be thought that philosophy is not its own reward—the time passes quicker. It is only the fixed advent of the holidays which makes the term seem so long. Once the realization is firmly fixed in your brain that your term in Macedonia is three years, you cease to count the months : even the passage of years becomes

imperceptible. I know that the six months I had in France seemed much longer than the two years spent out here, because the prospect of leave was so tantalizingly near. Even when a shameless politician, adding insult to injury, announced that no one in the B.S.F. had been out longer than eighteen months without leave, except those who had been 'crimed,' we continued to smile. Some of us made a mental note of the politician's name, but the only action we took was to write a humorous letter home, protesting with mock solemnity that we were not undergoing Field Punishment at the time. The whole thing was regarded as a capital joke.

But it must not be thought that, because we are indifferent to everything, we are prepared to shake hands with the Hun. Hatred of the Hun is not often expressed, but it is the foundation-stone of our creed. The mentality of a vast country, which from end to end can echo and applaud the grotesque 'Hymn of Hate,' is still to me incomprehensible. It is so childish, so futile, a confession of weakness. The hate one really feels is kept in the silent depths of the heart. It needs no expression ; indeed, it avoids expression, for its intensity would be weakened by words. Such is our hatred for Germany ; seldom spoken, never paraded, but fierce, grim, relentless. We could never sing a 'Hymn of Hate' : our sense of humour alone would save us from that ludicrous exhibition. The most we ever say is that the Hun is not a sportsman : he hits below the belt. Consequently it is our manifest duty to 'out' him. We do not regard the Huns as human beings, but as a plague of rats, which must be exterminated, or at any rate rendered harmless. You can't compromise with rats : that is what your pacifist cannot, or will not, understand. It is possible that after a severe defeat they may become human beings once again. We do not think for a moment that the average German is a harmless individual who has been led astray by a wicked minority. The German people are every whit as bad as their rulers. Before we can treat with them, they

must admit and atone for the monstrous crimes they have committed against humanity. We are not fighting for power or for territory, but we are fighting to bring the German to his senses. When he realizes his crimes, we can begin to talk of peace terms. Until then 'pourparlers' are useless and humiliating. The simple creed of the soldier realizes this, though the ignorant Russian peasant and the highly cultured Lansdowne cannot.

For our chief enemy out here, Bulgaria, our feelings are necessarily different. It is not so much on account of her short-comings, great as they may be, that we are fighting her. Rather are we at war with Bulgaria by accident. We try just as hard to exterminate the Bulgar as the Hun: because we are thorough, and we realize that it is futile to wage war by halves. The chance alliances of war have thrown certain Balkan States on our side and others against us. It is therefore our duty to support our Allies and to overcome our enemies. The soldier realizes this from the analogy of sport. He knows the team, to win, have got to play together, even though it be a 'scratch' team, got together by accident, the majority of players unknown to each other. At the same time, if Bulgaria were to abandon her national aspirations, if she were to cease from pursuing the phantom of 'Greater Bulgaria,' if she were to admit the right of other Balkan States to exist—in a word, if she were to shake herself clear of German ideas—we could discuss peace terms with her to-morrow. Even if nothing came of the negotiations, we should not be humiliated.

But though we fight the enemy with all our might, our attitude towards the fighting becomes more and more impersonal, as the War goes on. At the beginning, blameless old ladies, who would have shrunk from killing a fly, used to gloat over the announcement of "hecatombs of dead lying in front of our lines." Most of us, I think, dreamt with a fearful joy of spiking half a dozen Germans on our bayonet. But that phase has passed: war is more and more a scientific business, remote from personal, hand-to-hand conflict. Out here, with our

extended lines of communications, two men out of three stand no chance of coming to grips with the enemy: for them war possesses no reality. They may be shelled by long-range guns, they may be bombed. But they feel no personal resentment against the enemy for this; they accept bombs and shells, like a thunderstorm, as the 'act of God,' rather than the act of the enemy. Graphic posters used to announce that each five shillings subscribed to the War Loan helped to kill a German. But an M.T. driver carrying rations is not inspired by the thought that each tin of bully-beef he conveys to the Front will help indirectly to exterminate a Bulgar. For him his share in the War is impersonal—he only realizes he is doing the same job day after day. Even the third man, whose duty it is to tackle the enemy whenever and wherever he meets him, does not envisage a *personal* enemy. The Gunner will say that he has done 'good shooting'; the Flying Corps pilot reflects on a good 'stunt.' Even the Infantryman looks on a trench-raid or an attack as a 'show'—a mechanical labour that must be performed efficiently. The time-table and plan of action are explained to him; and the exact part he is to play, if the attack is to be successful. He realizes he is just a cog in the scientific machine of War. Perhaps when the moment for the attack comes, he will 'see red'—but this passes quickly. As a matter of fact, an Infantry Officer, who had seen much fighting in France and elsewhere, once told me that 'seeing red' is only a form of intense annoyance. Supposing your attack is held up and your time-table upset by machine-gun fire, you feel extraordinarily angry that a mechanical object should prevent you from gaining your objective. Even then your anger is impersonal, for it is directed rather against the machine gun itself, than the man who serves it. He explained this to me by a rather striking simile. Supposing four men walking abreast come across another four hostile men along a narrow road, with a precipice on either side. The first four men attack the other four methodically—they endeavour to kill, lest they be killed. There is

no passion—they merely try to save themselves. But supposing they meet, instead of four other men, a motor-car ; then they ' see red.' That is to say, in addition to the natural instinct of self-preservation, they are impelled to furious anger by a foolish, clumsy, mechanical contrivance that stands in their way.

However that may be (I am not speaking from personal experience : the A.S.C. never have an opportunity of ' seeing red '—except when a Staff car passes by, covering them from head to foot with mud), one ' sees red ' for a brief space only ; and an hour after the attack the old mood of passive indifference reasserts itself. One endeavours to shield oneself from reality. The bomber, whose successful bombing is rewarded by a paragraph in *Comic Cuts* (the local news published by G.H.Q.), to the effect that in such and such a trench ' groans were heard,' feels pleased with himself, just as a successful bowler, who has taken a wicket, rejoices. He does not picture—he does not try to picture —the actual result of his handiwork : wounded, panic-stricken men fleeing hither and thither from the swift catastrophe which has overwhelmed their comrades, tearing the very life out of the body, bloody, cruel, ghastly. . . .

Some of us have had to struggle hard to overcome our sensitiveness, to narrow our outlook. For we realize that this attitude of indifference is indispensable to victory. Consider a battalion of Mr. Britlings, wracked and tortured with doubts, unsteady, quivering with emotions, acutely sensitive ! As a battalion they would be worse than useless : they are of the stuff of which panics are made. I remember that in a revue given out here, in a recruiting scene, the recruit was asked if his eyesight were good. " Not too good," he replied. " That's splendid," said the recruiting sergeant. " Wouldn't do for you to see too much." There is many a true word——

We start with a firm, unshakable belief in the justice of our cause, with the determination to fight to a finish, and with the assurance of ultimate victory. Those are

the tenets of the soldier's faith ; he allows no doubts or subtle questionings to obscure his vision ; he is not led away by side-issues. Consider the eminent sanity of this attitude : it perceives more clearly and more directly than a subtle mind the issues of the War, because of its naked simplicity. "The Hun is a pest, that must be hunted down and destroyed. When that is done, we'll stop—not till then. No dealings with him till he's beaten. Win? Of course we shall win. It's a just cause, and victory will come sooner or later." That is the soldier's creed : that is why he is neither elated by successes nor depressed by reverses. That is why, in spite of a thousand blunders, we are bound to win the War eventually.

Trench warfare is peculiar to this War, and it is symbolical of our mental attitude. We make sure of our ground, we clear away the débris of doubts, and establish ourselves firmly behind our beliefs. Then we dig a mental trench deliberately, to keep out the treacherous fancies which would render us unstable, and the ghastly phantoms which would drive us to insanity. So we endure in the trench, determined to defend it to the death.

Our indifference is the happy mean deliberately chosen between hyper-sensitiveness and brutish insensibility—between the attitude of Mr. Britling and that of the Russian peasant. Supposing an order is given, Mr. Britling, before obeying, must first reconcile a thousand doubts and promptings of his conscience. If he obeys at all, he obeys too late. The ignorant Russian peasant must be compelled by immediate authority to obey the order. Once compulsion has been removed, the order is disregarded. But we understand the order, we understand that it must be obeyed. We do not require compulsion to obey, nor do we stop to question.

Everything which conduces to this sanity of outlook is heartily supported by the authorities. Our much-derided love of sport is given every opportunity. Whenever the men are off duty they play football. Even in the heat of the summer, football has ousted cricket.

Though a number of cricket sets have been provided, the game never seems to have 'caught on' with the rank and file. Football reigns supreme. Say what you will against athleticism, even H. G. Wells must admit that in war-time it has a very salutary effect on the Army: for it keeps the men fit, mentally and bodily. The private of the London Irish who dribbled a football across No Man's Land at the battle of Loos is typical of our love of sport, and of our desire to preserve as far as possible the illusion that war is a pastime. Herein we may find an explanation why, after four years of war, we are as unshaken in our determination to fight to a finish as we were in 1914. It may of course be argued that the Hun, though not a lover of sport, is still just as determined as we are, because of, or in spite of, the fact that he takes the War in such deadly earnest. Well, we shall see: after all "c'est le dernier pas qui coûte." It is a war of attrition: and it is the last "five minutes," as Clémenceau says, which will decide the war.

Then we cultivate a sense of humour. In the most horrible situations it peeps out and saves the reeling brain. Let me give just one example—the story was told me at first-hand by the officer himself, a Canadian 'R.A.F.' pilot, who wears on his chest a decoration for every year of his life. (Perhaps I exaggerate; at any rate, there are two rows, and he is broad-chested.) One day early last year he was doing a reconnaissance over the Bulgar lines. He was rather 'fed up,' because his escort had failed to meet him. So he said to himself, "Hang it all, let's have some 'sport.'" Accordingly, he sailed down to within a few score of feet of the town of Seres. (In those days 'low-flying' machines were an unusual phenomenon.) He saw quite clearly groups of officers, sitting outside the cafés of Seres, hurriedly disperse in alarm. He must have caused a considerable sensation in the little town. But the Bulgar is not a coward; after the first few seconds, in which he was too astonished to do anything, a heavy fusillade of rifle fire was directed against the intruder, and the machine was struck several

times—fortunately not in a vital place. "Gee," said my friend to himself, "this is getting too hot; I'd better steer off." But at that moment his experienced eye detected something which made him forget his precarious position: a fat, elderly Colonel, riding pompously down the Seres Road. (He couldn't see his badges of rank, but he is quite certain he was a Colonel. "Anyhow," he said to me, "if he wasn't a Colonel, he ought to have been." Bulgarian War Office, please note.) His sense of humour compelled him to give chase to the Colonel. He swooped down on him like a hawk, and flying a few feet above, began to chase him down the Seres Road, in the direction of our lines. The Colonel at first gazed above him with a doubtful eye, pretending he hadn't noticed the aeroplane. Then suddenly his pompousness burst like a bubble, and he galloped panic-stricken towards our lines, as if pursued by the Devil. (The simile is apt.) Our friend, travelling slowly in spite of the fusillade of bullets, followed him. He had exhausted his ammunition; but the position was so delightfully, so exquisitely humorous, that he pursued the Colonel for two miles. At that point contact was broken off, the Colonel and his horse collapsing through sheer exhaustion into a ditch. Our friend waved his handkerchief at the inanimate Colonel, and flew back over the lines.

This story illustrates well our love of sport and our sense of humour. A witty Frenchman, in *Les Silences du Colonel Bramble*, remarks that "for an Englishman the right of man is the right of humour, the right of sport, and the right of primogeniture." This is perfectly true; as to the former 'right,' we are perhaps inclined to carry it to extremes. Certainly we cultivate a sense of humour more than the French. One has only to read the War books of the two countries to realize this. Whilst no doubt the *poilu* is just as full of good spirits as Tommy, yet the mass of French War literature, written by soldiers who have been through the thick of the fighting, is more sombre, more in earnest than ours—their grimness relieved only occasionally by flashes of

wit. English War-books, except for a few realistic tales of mud and blood, are in a lighter vein, insisting on the humorous side of War, and only allowing a brief and almost apologetic glimpse of "the real thing." Recently I chanced on a French translation of Ian Hay's *The First Hundred Thousand*. The translator's attempts to render in colloquial French some of the Scotch slang were very edifying. But what impressed me most forcibly —for to my mind it seemed to strike at the root of the difference between the War literature of the two countries —was a note in the Preface. In this note the translator took great pains to explain to the French readers that when an English soldier talks about the "gentle Hun" he does not mean that the Hun is gentle. On the contrary, he explains naïvely, this is an ironical expression, and is just as virulent as the French phrase "sale Boche." "Volumes could not say more."

In conversation, too, one notices a difference between the French and the English. The Frenchman really takes an interest in the War; he is astonishingly well-informed even about such campaigns as those of Mesopotamia or Palestine, where he has no direct interest. He imagines that although we rarely discuss the War, we think a great deal about it. We don't—our ignorance is amazing. We know nothing even of other sectors of our own Front. Just the short slice of territory we have to defend, or across which we have to attack, that we know perfectly. Of our next-door neighbour's Front we know nothing. Not one Englishman in a hundred of the B.S.F. has the remotest conception of the local conditions on, say, the Monastir Front. It isn't his sector, so he is not interested. Again, the Frenchman, describing his own share in the fighting, gives all the facts. "I made the attack of the 9th May," etc. Dates, details, and descriptions are liberally supplied. An Englishman, unless he is pressed to do so, won't mention his share in the War. If he does, he will only remark casually, "I've been out in this old country three years." No details; just the length of his service. Perhaps he will recall some humorous incident, which has nothing at

all to do with the fighting. It is not that we are more modest than the French : it is that we try to forget, where they try not to forget.

We have learnt then in Macedonia a little practical philosophy : to be patient under hardships ; to complain of the lesser, and so to forget the greater, evil ; to do our own work to the best of our abilities, but not to interfere in the work of others ; to keep as healthy in mind and body as conditions allow ; to see that every cloud has—if not a silver lining—at any rate a humorous, a grotesque lining, which will make a man smile, though he be wet through to the skin ; to take no thought for the morrow ; and above all,

To see life steadily, and see it whole.

CHAPTER VIII

MAXIMS OF A SUPPLY OFFICER

I HAVE always tried to avoid writing anything in the nature of A.S.C. 'shop.' In the case of an Infantryman, a Gunner, or a Sapper, it is quite permissible ; it is even commendable to tell of one's experiences in this or that battle. But the battles fought by the A.S.C.—except on paper—are few and far between. Modern warfare is such a scientific business, so orderly, that, except on rare occasions such as a hurried advance or retreat, one can live in comparative security only a few miles behind the lines. Except for occasional long-range shelling and the inevitable aerial activity, one can move about behind the trenches for years on end, without fear of any personal molestation from the enemy.

The work of the Army Service Corps—transporting and accounting for supplies—is of course of tremendous importance. One has only to quote the dictum of Napoleon, which has probably afforded more innocent amusement to the public and more 'copy' to aspiring humorists than any other historical *mot*—that an army moves on its stomach. But though we are an essential part of the Army, our daily work, which has become regularized into monotonous routine, cannot afford any interest to the general public. It is as if one tried to extract romance from the dull and lifeless labours of Carter, Paterson and the running of a large grocery stores. There exists, I know, a school of realistic literature which portrays the life of a humble artisan—a miner, a bootblack, or a crossing-sweeper—and endeavours to atone for the inevitable absence of interest in the subject

by supplying a wealth of minute and superfluous detail. In the case of such 'realists' I feel inclined to adapt the remark of the tradesman to the street-musician: "Is that book hard to write?"

"No, why do you ask?"

"Because it's darned hard to read."

Of course, we do everything on the grand scale; and millions talk, where the whisper of thousands is inaudible. Also, even during the most trying times—the retreat from Mons may be cited as a case in point—we have always managed somehow or other to feed the Front-line troops. That is certainly an achievement, and points to admirable organization. But when one has said that, one has said all there is to say: for it is not a subject on which one can enlarge with advantage.

"The writer," says Horace, "who combines information with entertainment, wins the set—or scores the rubber." (It matters not whether these metaphors are anachronistic. One can only regret that Horace never knew the joys of tennis or of auction-bridge.) This is my trouble: I am frightened that if I write about the A.S.C. I shall only get "two pairs" instead of a "full house." (Further change of metaphor. See note above.) I have been a Supply Officer for over three years, and I am positively a mine of information on such subjects as officers' diaries, 'fat' returns, ration scales, and the rest of the A.S.C. supplies paraphernalia. But whence am I to provide the entertainment? The man has yet to be born (a super-realist indeed!) who can extract the kernel of entertainment from the dry shell of an Army Form; at any rate, I know that I am not he. Besides, the information that I can supply is not even novel. Why should I retail facts and figures which can be studied just as well in any *Manual of Supplies*? The Gradgrinds of this world, with their insatiable appetite for facts, are to me incomprehensible. The wonderful memory of Macaulay is constantly being acclaimed; but if I were in possession of an *Encyclopedia Britannica*, I could provide more information on a given subject than a dozen Macaulays relying only on their memory.

A man who memorizes facts that he can obtain from any book of reference in a few seconds is as futile as the man who, when he goes out for a walk, instead of wearing a wrist-watch, carries a grandfather clock on his back.

Having said so much, I hope my reticence on the subject of A.S.C. 'shop' will be condoned, and that silence will not be mistaken for ignorance. I propose, however, to deal with the Supply Officer's duties from a personal point of view. The system of supplies adopted by our Army is analogous to the old adage of "big fleas and little fleas"—or, to be technical, it is known as the system of decentralization—a long word which expresses the undeniable truth that the big flea gets the ha'pence and the small flea the kicks. Beginning with a Director of Supplies at G.H.Q. (a Major-General or a Brigadier), and continuing through a vast number of assistants, deputies and directors, and a combination of the three, in descending order of magnitude, whose relative unimportance may be gauged by the length of their titles (a D.A.D.S., for instance, is a lesser being than an A.D.S.), you eventually reach the bedrock, the last and the most important link in the chain, the Brigade Supply Officer.

It is of him that I wish to speak. His actual duties are simple, and may be dismissed in a few sentences. He is 'mobile'—that is to say, he moves with his Brigade, takes over daily, from the nearest 'railhead,' rations for the men and animals of his Brigade in bulk (that is, in cases, tins, drums, etc.). Then he has to 'split up' the bulk on his 'dump' (any suitable spot by the side of the road which has easy access to transport) according to a recognized ration scale, issuing the correct quantity to each Unit in the Brigade. After he has made his issue, he fills up numerous accounts designed to prevent him, *inter alia*, from stealing two ounces of mustard, and waits for the dawn of another day. Sometimes he will remain on the same dump for several months at a time; and he has an opportunity to settle down comfortably. But if the Brigade is on the move,

or 'there is a war on,' he packs up immediately after the issue and moves on with his Brigade. Probably he feeds some five thousand troops and half that number of animals—anything from twenty-five to fifty 'Units.' (A 'Unit' is an elastic term: it may mean a battalion a thousand strong or a 'Sanitary' Detachment, composed of three men and a dog.) In Macedonia the further complication arises that he may have to feed 'foreign' troops attached to his Brigade: Indians, Greeks, Muleteers, Civil Labourers, Prisoners of War, Maltese, etc., who are all entitled to a different ration. It is then that the mild Supply Officer curses, and the imperturbable tears his hair. To tend the stomachs of this motley collection of human beings, the Supply Officer has a 'Staff' of one Requisitioning Officer, who makes local purchases (in Macedonia, "R.O.'s" have been abolished, as there is nothing to purchase up country), and about ten men—butchers, bakers, issuers and clerks. (I may point out that the expression 'on the Staff' is often used very loosely, and does not apply only to gentlemen wearing 'red tabs.' A friend of mine was rather surprised when his servant informed him that he was on Lord Methuen's 'Staff' in the Boer War. Eventually he explained that he was Lord Methuen's Mess-cook!) So much then for the actual duties of a Supply Officer, as laid down in books of instruction—this information, to make the subject intelligible, I reluctantly provide. But by far the most important side of his duties is the personal side. It is here that the experience of a man of the Odysseus type is required, a man who has seen many men and many cities, a man who is in fact 'polutropos' (whatever that may mean). A Supply Officer must get to know all his Units; he must study their idiosyncrasies, and—as far as is consistent with the conduct of an officer and a gentleman—he must endeavour to allay with honeyed words and syrupy promises their natural misgivings. I do not mean to suggest that he should become a deliberate liar, but he will find it difficult to carry on without an occasional 'terminological inexactitude.' He will

constantly have to 'smooth down' his ruffled Units—the best-humoured Units become ruffled occasionally. Although he is only a Subaltern or a Captain, he will probably 'get up against' Colonels and Brigadiers: and he may find it difficult to enlighten them tactfully, even if he has right on his side. (In spite of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, a Supply Officer will find that Right bears a perilous resemblance to Might.) In theory the supply system looks absolutely fool-proof; the Supply Officer receives, let us say, ten rations, which he has to distribute among ten Units, one ration for each. What could be more simple? Theory, however, does not allow for 'scroungers' or 'equivalent' issues. With 'scroungers' I will deal later—they are of two kinds, the Staff scrounger and the ordinary scrounger. But equivalent or alternative issues form a problem which requires the utmost tact to overcome. Supposing you receive a sack of potatoes and six cases of a horror known as desiccated (generally called 'desecrated') vegetables. They are 'equivalent' issues—that is to say, a man is entitled to two ounces of dried vegetables or eight ounces of fresh vegetables. But to whom are you going to give the potatoes? It is a moral certainty that if you give them to A; B, C and D will get to hear of it, and they will come down to the dump in massed formation, united by a common grievance, and they will revile you. You can't very well give two potatoes to each Unit—that would only be sufficient to whet their appetites and make them emulate Oliver Twist. "So-and-so had some strawberry jam; why do I get plum-and-apple?" That is the kind of complaint with which the unfortunate Supply Officer is overwhelmed. Is it to be wondered at if he keeps the strawberry-jam for himself and his men, and consumes it surreptitiously! Apropos I may quote a dialogue in a Pierrot Party, *not* run by the A.S.C.

"What's that place over there?"

"That's a dump."

"Oh! the place where they keep strawberry-jam?"

"Yes, they *keep* it there."

It is only by getting to know all his Units personally that a Supply Officer can hope to lead an unmolested existence. Mistakes, too, will occur from time to time. A side of bacon 'goes west'—at any rate it is not received by the Unit. Unless the Supply Officer is on good terms with the Unit, they will send in a 'strafe' to their H.Q. Thence it will be forwarded on from office to office through the usual channels, till it eventually reaches him, the size of a snowball suffering from incipient elephantiasis. (For an official 'strafe' always *vires acquirit eundo*.) But if he knows the Unit well, he can nip the complaint in the bud, thus saving himself and others a deal of trouble.

Again, it happens from time to time that some commodity is not available, through unavoidable delay or the sinking of a ship. Last year, when the submarine campaign was at its height, this occurred frequently in the case of relatively unimportant commodities such as matches and candles: and though the men never went short and the vital part of the ration was never cut down, it is now permissible to say that the stocks of meat and flour were at times perilously near exhaustion. Happily this menace has now definitely been removed—though at the time it caused considerable anxiety, as cargo after cargo went down. When a commodity is 'not available,' the reputation for moral integrity of the Supply Officer is heavily taxed, and he needs all his powers of persuasion to satisfy his Units that they are not being 'done.'

If ever there should be another war (which God forbid!) and I, an aged and hoary 'dugout,' should be called out to instruct the young idea on the subject of supplies (issued presumably from an immovable balloon and collected by 'ration' aeroplanes) I would lay down the following maxims for their guidance:

Don't worry too much about your accounts. Your clerk is probably a much better accountant than you.

Don't memorize ration scales—unlike the laws of the Medes and Persians, they change every week.

But get to know your Units—make friends with them,

entertain them ; and, if they will have you, be entertained by them.

Don't pretend you know your job too well. Simulated ignorance disarms suspicion.

Assure each Unit that they alone give you no trouble, that they alone, as soldiers should be, are satisfied with their due.

Beware of Gunners. There will be more sorrow over one Gunner who is lost to all sense of decency than over ninety and nine Infantry soldiers.

Give way generously in a matter of no importance, or if you are wrong. But be sternly unrelenting in any matter creating a precedent.

Don't ' let yourself go ' on paper. Avoid official correspondence as far as possible—for it is a two-edged sword. If you lose your temper on paper, you may obtain temporary satisfaction, but the documentary evidence of your wrath will survive, and may subsequently be used against you by a malevolent adversary. You can ' let yourself go ' in conversation just as well, and no *iræ monumenta nefandæ* will survive. Conversational ' strafes ' have this additional merit, that, having relieved yourself of your righteous indignation, you can then reconcile yourself with your adversary over a bottle of wine.

If you are entertaining friends to a meal, *don't* provide them with rations which are scarce. If there are no kidneys available at the time (and there never are), don't produce them when a Quartermaster is dining with you. Indignation is more enduring than greed—he will remember their scarcity long after he has forgotten their relish.

Be firm, but not despotic, with the Staff. When molested by a young A.D.C. or Staff-Captain on the ' scrounge,' make it quite clear that there is the same ration for the private and the General alike. At the same time, unless you temper your firmness with tact, indirect pressure of an unpleasant nature may be brought to bear on you ; and, in the words of the poet, " You'll be for it in the morning."

UNLOADING TRAIN UP-COUNTRY.

SERBIAN PACK MULE TRANSPORT.

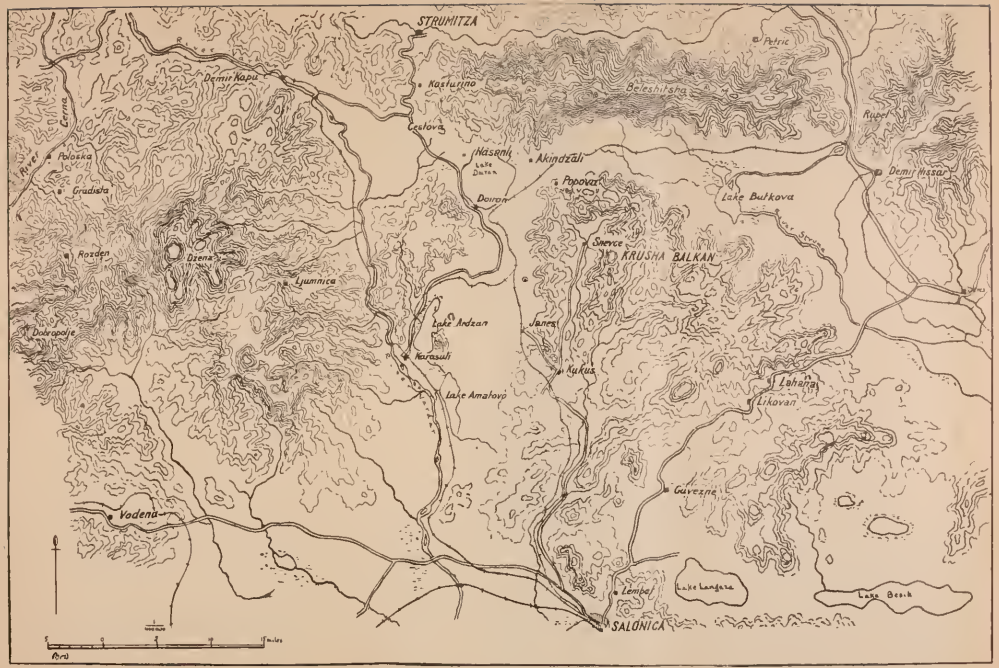
As far as possible, ward off the importunities of the Staff by surrendering to their demands *in parte*, but not *in toto*. Thus, if they ask for some extra bread ("for the General's Mess"—it is astonishing what a large amount of bread Generals can consume), give them a stone, or a box of matches, or a red herring—something, at any rate, to show them you have done your best.

Deal more summarily with 'scroungers' not on the Staff. But be careful to base your refusal on material rather than moral grounds. Inability to meet the exigencies of a 'scrounger' will be condoned; but moral scruples are sure to be suspected and misunderstood. The Supply Officer who explains, "If I had some 'backshee' (surplus) flour, I would willingly give it to you. Unfortunately I haven't," is cheerfully forgiven, and loses not one jot of his reputation for open-handedness. But if he says, "I *have* some 'backshee' flour; but my conscience will not permit me to give it you. Instead, I intend to take it on charge again, and assist the economy campaign," his integrity—or his sanity—will be doubted.

Feign ignorance of the existence of strawberry-jam.

In dealing with Engineers, never forget that a *quid* of 'backshee' rations is often rewarded by a *quo* of corrugated iron.

In a word, look after the Units, and the rations will look after themselves.


STRUMITZA
Petric
Demir Kapu
Kosturino
Beleshitsha
Ruper
Cerna
River
Cestova
Naserik
Lake Dalsen
Akindzali
Paloska
Gradista
Popovat
Demir Hissar
Lake Butkova
Doiran
Sheruca
KRUSHA BALKAN
Rozden
Dzena
Lumnica
Lake Andzan
Janes
Dolcapolje
Karasuli
Kukus
Lake Amatovo
Lahana
Likovan
Guvezna
Vodena
Lembet
Lake Langaza
Lake Besik
SALONICA
Miles

PART II

BATTLE

(September 15–September 30, 1918.)

CHAPTER I

COMING EVENTS

It was early in August 1918, when the tide had definitely turned in France, and the Kaiser's armies were displaying that wonderful 'elasticity of defence' for which they have become so famous, that the Winged Goddess, Rumour, began to prophesy of a "Great Salonica Offensive." Those of us who were 'old hands' and had seen so many 'offensives' "melt into thin air," or dwindle into an ordinary affair of raids on a large scale, shrugged our shoulders sceptically and declared our unbelief until a sure sign were given us.

Vague activities, however, of a bellicose character were not lacking. The summer, which is generally given to an unequal contest with flies and mosquitoes, in which the British soldier always emerges a bad second, was spent by many of us in "intensive training" —a form of activity which, I am told, has little to commend it. The British Army Corps which since early in '16 had been holding an extended front of seventy miles from a point some ten miles east of Lake Doiran to the sea, was gradually being relieved by a Greek Corps. Towards the end of August the relief was complete. On the whole of the British Front, in fact, movements of troops were being effected. This might, of course, only mean that the Staff had woken up and wanted a little much-needed recreation: on the other hand, it might also mean that the Bulgar was about to receive a nasty shock. Those of us who have experienced the pleasures of sitting in a comfortable office and ordering the movement of troops

from A to B, from B to C, and then from C back to A, were inclined to the former explanation. Still, it was plain to all that such few 'reserves' as we possessed (mostly artillery) were being concentrated around Lake Doiran, the scene of our bloody defeat in the spring of 1917.

This sudden demand for intensive training led to a very amusing remark filed now in the archives of G.H.Q., which is worthy of disinterment. Early in 1916 a Brigade of 'P.B.' (Permanent Base, or infirm men) was formed, with the primary intention, I believe, of making roads and doing Pioneer work just behind the Front line. Owing, however, to the chronic shortage of men which had always hampered our movements, this Brigade (known officially as the Two-Two-Eight (228th) Brigade, and known unofficially, to the irreverent, as the 'Too-Too-Late' Brigade, by reason of the shortage of their daily march, which was not allowed to exceed five miles) was sent early in '16 to hold a 'safe' part of the line; and there, in the face of the good-natured jibes of the rest of the B.S.F. and the frightfulness of the Bulgar, they continued to reside for several years. Indeed, it was whispered by the irreverent that they had, as it were, 'taken root' in this part of the line, from which, in spite of the frantic efforts of the Staff, it had been found impossible to dislodge them. The 'Too-Too-Late' Brigade became, in fact, one of the features of the landscape and one of the few sources of humour in a country where humorous features do not abound. In the spring of '18, those bright persons, the Intelligence Department, got wind of a Bulgar 'Too-Too-Late' Brigade, which was supposed to have been combed out from Bulgarian Infirmaries and Homes for the Half-witted with the express purpose of joining battle with our own stalwarts. As No Man's Land was nearly ten miles wide at this point, the irreverent declared that the battle royal could never take place, as the opposing armies would never be able to get into 'touch' with each other. The Bulgar Brigade,

however, much to our disappointment, never materialized. Either they were a figment of the imagination of our 'intelligence,' or the Bulgars were short of politicians at the time and needing their half-witted elsewhere.

This, however, is a digression—the matter in hand is far more serious. When 'intensive training' became the fashion, a copy of orders to that effect was sent to the Brigadier commanding the Two-Two-Eight Brigade. Imagine his disgust! For several years his Brigade, which was never intended for that purpose, had been holding the line and worrying the Bulgar with distinction to itself and extinction to the latter, and now it was asked to 'train intensively'! There are some things which are more than flesh and blood can stand. He replied tersely and indignantly to 'G.H.Q.' that he did not see the wisdom of "training decayed cab-horses for the Derby"! The Two-Two-Eight Brigade remained where it was.

Distinguished Generals, too, began to arouse themselves from their summer torpor and to inspect all the troops who were 'resting.' After the inspection was over, to the gratification of all concerned (except of the troops themselves), the distinguished General (why are all Generals referred to as 'distinguished'? It is a problem I have never been able to solve—the prospect of an 'undistinguished' General defies imagination) would mysteriously call aside the Commanding Officer, and ask him if he and his men would be ready 'for all eventualities' by ——. The date was kept a profound secret by the Commanding Officer concerned, whose conceit over the secret he shared with the General (and incidentally with every other C.O. for miles round) waxed unbearable.

It was during the first days of September that I was 'let in' to the secret. I was at a Corps Headquarters at the time, doing the work of Senior Supply Officer, as my C.O. was on leave. I was summoned into the office of the chief "Q" Officer at Headquarters, and, surrounded by maps of the Balkans, ancient and modern, I was given just sufficient informa-

tion of the forthcoming plan of attack to enable me to make preparations for the feeding of troops by means of advanced 'dumps,' supposing the line were broken and our attack should prove entirely successful. I made innumerable jottings on slips of paper (quite unintelligible to any one, even myself), which I tore up a few minutes later in fear and trembling lest they should fall into the hands of some malicious person.

At this point it might perhaps be of interest to set forth the advantages and disadvantages of an offensive on a big scale, as they appeared to the average man on the spot (as opposed to the strategist in Fleet Street), with no 'inside' knowledge of, or access to, mysterious documents, but with a certain knowledge of the conditions prevalent in Macedonia and a nodding acquaintance with the strength and capabilities of our own Army and those of our Allies. Let me frankly admit that Marshal Foch never consults me before planning an offensive, and that any statement I may make, any opinion I may express, is based on the worst possible authority—my own.

The disadvantages, then, of an Autumn offensive appeared to be as follows :

(1) To meet the gigantic Spring offensive of the Germans, every available man had been needed in France. In consequence, 'side-shows,' such as the Salonica Army, inevitably suffered by the withdrawal of considerable forces and by the failure to obtain any reinforcements. In the case of the French, I cannot speak with exactitude. In our own case, however, in addition to the withdrawal of two divisions in the summer of '17 to reinforce General Allenby's Army, twelve battalions (one from each Brigade) were sent to France in the spring of '18. Furthermore, a large number of men from every Unit in the Force had become incapacitated for military service through malaria. These men were finally returned to England early in '18, and it had been agreed that they should be replaced by fresh drafts from home. Their papers

(A.F.B. 122's, or Conduct Sheets, as they are called) duly arrived, but not the men themselves. For on their arrival in France they had been diverted for service 'elsewhere.' By a strange irony, too, leave, which for three years had suffered from a practical stoppage, termed by some a regrettable incident and by others a disgrace, had suddenly begun to flow freely. Not only were those who lived at the Base and on the Staff granted leave, but actually men in the front line were sent home. Take into account the withdrawal of whole battalions, the shortage of reinforcements, the further weakening of Units by the absence on leave of many of their best men; add to that the usual admissions to hospital, which are heaviest during the autumn season: and it will be readily understood that from a numerical point of view the British Forces were at their lowest ebb. As a matter of fact, I think I am right in saying that although every available man had been drafted up country, no battalion could muster more than a third of its strength on the eve of battle.

(2) In the case of the French, the Italians, and ourselves (and to a lesser extent of the Greeks and the Serbians), the autumn is by far the most trying time of year. As the long, pitiless summer drags to its close, even the strongest are physically tired and weakened, as though they had passed through some terrible illness. It is then that malaria is most dangerous and that dysentery takes its toll. But even those who have escaped fever or sickness are affected by an appalling lassitude. In the spring, after a bracing, if cold winter, every one feels fitter. Many of us had had two or three summers out there; were such men capable of taking the offensive, breaking the enemy, and then following him relentlessly? For to break the line, and then, through lack of staying-power, to be unable to seize the fruits of victory—this would be worse than useless, and might easily invite disaster. In any case, after three years, during which we had sat in practically the same positions,

it was doubtful whether we should be sufficiently mobile to take an active part in a serious advance. The mountains of Macedonia do not afford an easy promenade; and a certain sluggishness is inevitably induced by prolonged inactivity.

(3) We had at the time little, if any, numerical superiority over the enemy. Though the Greeks were reinforcing us heavily, their Army had by no means reached its high-water mark, and many of the troops at the Front had not had the time or the opportunity to become perfectly trained. The French and English troops, as I have shown, were greatly reduced in numbers. Against us we had the whole of the Bulgarian Army (not a "few Bulgarian Divisions" as Colonel Repington sarcastically remarked), an Austrian Corps operating in Albania, and a sprinkling of German troops —in all, some two hundred and ten battalions.

(4) It cannot be sufficiently emphasized that in Macedonia all the advantage lies with the defender, more especially so in the event of an Allied attack, for along practically the whole Front the enemy positions overlooked, nay, towered over ours. We paid the inevitable price of the man who arrives too late at a railway station. All the best seats had been taken, and we were compelled to squeeze in where we could. When we withdrew at the end of '15 to the Salonica defences, after our unsuccessful attempt to rescue Serbia, the Bulgar had six months during which, unmolested by shell-fire, he was able to select the most admirable positions along the whole Front against our eventual attack. The positions were well-chosen, magnificent natural defences, strengthened by every device known to man. These positions are so easy to hold, so hard to attack. No artillery could pulverize their enormous concrete defences—however powerful the preliminary bombardment, the Infantry must be exposed to a withering fire across No Man's Land from artillery cunningly hidden in the solid rock of the hillsides. It is no exaggeration to say that on the greater part of the line a battalion of boys, armed only with stones

and catapults, could have kept at bay a division of trained men.

(5) I have said that the Greek Army was not yet ready: to them we looked especially for assistance. Consider for a moment the disastrous effect a heavy reverse might have had on such an army. I do not for a moment wish to cast a slur on such as have covered themselves with glory by their wonderful bravery, but it must be remembered that Balkan foreign politics are bewildering in their mutability. Though ninety out of every hundred Greeks were ready, nay, eager to die for the cause of freedom, there were still ten left who, for various reasons, all foolish but not all treacherous, would have been only too delighted to see us defeated. The psychology of the Greek is difficult to grasp, incalculable in its impetuosity. How far could the Greek Army stand reverses of fortune? Would they remain steadfast in adversity? In this cosmopolitan macédoine of the Salonica Armies, where Englishman, Frenchman and Greek are fighting literally shoulder to shoulder, so much mutual forbearance is required to avoid disaster. I hope I shall not be misunderstood if I hint at a danger which fortunately we were not called upon to meet.

(6) Finally, from a military point of view, we had suffered a set-back on the extreme left of the Allied line in Albania. The Italian advance in the summer, which culminated in the capture of Berat and Fieri, had opened up a wide vista of possibilities. Even if it had not necessitated the withdrawal of the Bulgar north of Monastir, it is clear that this advance would have greatly facilitated an attack in the centre, or on the left of our line. Unfortunately, the Italians were not able to withstand the counter-attack made by a strongly reinforced Austrian Corps; and although they were successful in attracting and holding large forces in that direction, they were unable to maintain the precious ground they had won. How big a part the Albanian advance was meant to play in the strategic conception as a whole, it is of course impossible to say,

but it is evident that only partial success had been obtained.

These then, I consider, were roughly the disadvantages of an immediate offensive in the autumn. The advantages, which outweighed them, may be summed up as follows :—

(1) The wonderful reversal of fortune in France, begun by Foch's dramatic counter-attack on July 18th and continued in a series of unbroken successes, had completely revolutionized the position on the subsidiary Fronts. We of the Middle or Near East were particularly sensitive to the turn of events in France. The conception of "One Front from Belgium to the Adriatic" should really be extended—for the Salonica Front was just as much part of the "One Front" as was Italy. So long as the Germans were attacking in France, the Salonica Army was on the defensive, fortifying its lines by every conceivable means. For if the Germans could keep the initiative till the winter, it was tolerably certain that they would turn their attention to us in the late autumn, when the campaigning season ceases in France and begins in the Balkans. Until the middle of August we were busily building line behind line, toiling overtime to perfect our defences. Then the change came in France, and automatically we turned from the defensive to the offensive. By the middle of September it became clear that the Germans could never extricate any large force from France for service in the East—every man and gun were engaged there. This gave us the opportunity we had been waiting for so patiently—an opportunity for turning to account all the suffering and bitterness of three years' enforced, profitless inactivity. It was an opportunity which might never occur again, an opportunity that we could not miss.

(2) If we were sensitive to the turn of events in France, so too was the Bulgar. Among his qualities devotion to a friend does not figure conspicuously : even the customary "honour among thieves" was lacking in his composition. A man who chooses a highwayman

for a partner is not to be commended : but if on the untimely arrival of a policeman he turns ' King's Evidence ' and betrays his former friend, I fail to see that his character shows any marked improvement. The Bulgar has remarkably good eyesight (it is not for nothing that Ferdinand was known as ' King Fox '), and he saw the policeman coming down the road quite plainly. Even before the policeman was in sight, even before the turn of the tide in France, the moral of the Bulgar Army was deteriorating. The Bulgar is a dashing fellow in the rough-and-tumble, win-or-lose fighting which has hitherto characterized Balkan Wars : but when it comes to sitting down in the same trenches for three years and holding on grimly (even to the best positions), tenacity is required as well as bravery. In a word, the Bulgar soldier, who is only a peasant, wanted to get back to his farm—he was ' fed up ' with the War. In the spring an offensive on a large scale against us had been prepared for the delectation of the Bulgar. But the soldiers refused to be fired with the joy of battle. The battle, to use a military phrase, was a ' dud '—the only fighting that took place resulted in the murder of several Bulgarian officers by their men. All this we knew, and we were justified in hoping that, if the ' Prussian of the Balkans ' were heavily mauled, at a time when things were not going well for his big brother, he would squeal for mercy. We did not expect a walk-over—for human nature makes a powerful call, and no one likes to be trampled on—but we hoped that the Bulgar would not have his heart in the fight. In consequence, we could take the risk of attacking positions which, under ordinary circumstances, would be impregnable. I may mention, *en passant*, a curious legend, which I have often heard repeated not only by our own men but subsequently by Bulgarian officers, that Bulgaria had a ' contract ' to fight for Germany for *three years*. When the three years elapsed (as they did in the middle of September), Bulgaria was no longer under an obligation to fight for her ally. Whether this was true I cannot, of course,

say; but undoubtedly it was believed by many Bulgarians.

(3) The one incalculable element in fighting, on which success depends so much, is the 'moral'—spirit or confidence, call it what you will—of the troops. At this time the spirit of all the Allied troops was excellent. Of ourselves and the French I need not speak; but among our smaller Allies the same wonderful spirit prevailed. The Greek Army, although it was not completely trained, and numerically had not reached its high-water mark (one of the Divisions which took part in the successful pursuit of the Bulgarians had been hastily brought up from the south and had had absolutely no experience of modern warfare), was simply spoiling for a fight. With the exception of a few doubtful elements (chiefly in the Corps d'Officiers) the Greeks were animated by a hearty hatred, and an even heartier contempt, of their national enemy. They had had their first taste of battle at the Skra di Legen in July, when they had inflicted a sound defeat on the enemy, captured very strong positions (on the Vardar), and taken a couple of thousand prisoners. Indeed, the French, who had planned the attack and prepared the ground with their artillery, admitted that the clean break-through had exceeded their expectations and had completely taken them by surprise. Had they counted on such a success, they could have held reinforcements in reserve to exploit it, which might have had far-reaching consequences. As it was, the affair had been purely local, but it had created an enormous impression of confidence throughout the whole Greek Army. "Only give us a chance," they said, "and we will wipe out the Bulgar for ever." On the other hand, they were not sufficiently disciplined to endure the dullness and inaction of trench warfare with the necessary equanimity.

As for the Serbs, words fail me to describe their marvellous spirit and enthusiasm. After nearly ten years' fighting, they were now pitifully reduced in numbers: but the tiny remnant which was left sought only the chance to redeem its poor, mangled country.

When they opened the offensive in September, the Serbian Army numbered 27,000 bayonets, of which nearly ten thousand were supplied by the Yugo-Slav Division which had recently joined them—yet this tiny force was to achieve a miracle of heroism and endurance which, in my humble opinion, cannot be exceeded by any in the annals of history. They had been withdrawn from the line during the summer for a short time, and were now recuperating themselves for their final effort with an enthusiasm which boded ill for the Bulgar. But all of us alike had the same feeling, an intuition that there was "victory in the air."

(4) There are only two possible campaigning seasons in the Balkans when any extended operations can be carried out; the one from September till the end of the year, the other from April to the beginning of June. The winter, during which the roads are a morass of mud and snow, does not generally begin till the New Year; by the end of March the worst weather is over, though April is sometimes very rainy. *En revanche*, the summer from June till the end of August (neither May nor September can be termed 'cool') is so severe as to preclude all possibilities of arduous campaigning. If, then, we did not attack in the autumn, we should be compelled to wait till the next spring: in the meanwhile, the Army, although inactive, was enormously expensive in men and tonnage. Apart from any casualties inflicted by the enemy, the climate of Macedonia is such that after a year or eighteen months the average man is practically incapacitated from further fighting. Sometimes he may recover his health if he is sent to another Front; but in many cases he is useless as a soldier, and in most cases he spends a large part of his time in hospital. By attacking in the autumn we were just as likely to succeed as in the following spring; and if things went badly, there was always the possibility of cutting our losses and retiring to a much shorter Front, covering Salonica itself and the mountain passes into ancient Greece. Such a withdrawal would not be pleasant; but the strategic

position as a whole had to be considered : and hitherto, considering the drain they made on our resources, the Salonica Armies had undeniably failed to ' pull their weight.'

(5) Another consideration which must have influenced us in choosing this psychological moment to attack was the development of what are called the ' diplomatic ' conditions in Bulgaria. It is a matter on which I can only lightly touch, because, though I have heard many rumours and reports (mostly unlikely and all unreliable), I have no certain knowledge of the truth. There is a certain school of ' thought,' if it can be dignified by such a name, which attributes all our military failures to the shortcomings of the Staff and all our military successes to the cunning of diplomatists. We have been told over and over again by persons ' in the know ' that our withdrawal from Gallipoli was only made possible because the Turks had been ' bought.' Consequently, I was not altogether surprised, when I returned recently to England, to be told the exact figure in pounds, shillings and pence which it had cost us to ' buy over ' the Bulgarian Army. In reply, I gave my friend some idea of the cost we had paid for victory in something far less important than money : the cost of human lives. My friend seemed rather surprised and pained. I am the last to underestimate the power of ' The Almighty Dollar '; but I think some credit—*quantuluscunque*—might occasionally be given to the soldier. Certainly the wise decision of America not to declare war on Bulgaria gave us a valuable *point d'appui* through the medium of the American Ambassador at Sofia—an opportunity, if not to pave the way of victory with gold, at any rate to form a valuable estimate of the precise sentiments of Bulgaria. I do not believe for a moment the figures in pounds, shillings and pence given me so confidently by my friend : but I fancy that our Higher Command was well aware that in Bulgarian diplomatic circles (as well as in military circles) one well-directed blow would be sufficient to bring the country to its senses.

DEMIR-HISSAR BRIDGE OVER THE STRUMA. OCTOBER 1918.

(6) In view of the subsequent course of events, it seems almost unnecessary to emphasize the overwhelming consequences a decisive victory over Bulgaria would bring in its train. Though the issue of the War depended entirely on the fighting on the Western Front, the defeat of Bulgaria must—and did—shorten the War by a considerable period in the opportunity presented to us of turning the flank of each of our opponents in turn. Though the risks were great, the stake was even greater. This, of course, was realized by the all-pervading genius of Marshal Foch, who inspired the plan which General Franchet d'Espérey so ably put into execution.

CHAPTER II

THE OFFENSIVE BEGINS

In the pages that follow I am only too conscious of my shortcomings both as a writer and an individual. As an ordinary scribe, endowed with none of the gifts of the professional military critic, who knows and can describe exactly what has happened, and who knows further what should and would have happened, had he been Commander-in-Chief, I can only give a very vague idea of the general plan of the offensive. As I have said before, Marshal Foch never consults me on these matters (as he appears to consult some learned writers), and I can only deduce his original intentions from subsequent events. For the absence of erudite, Bellocian diagrams I must humbly crave the reader's pardon—I can only plead that I am an amateur in such matters, and cannot hope to propound what I do not understand myself. As an individual, too, I am painfully conscious of my limitations. I admire, but cannot hope to rival, the special correspondent who, when a battle is raging on a hundred-mile Front, seems to be everywhere at the same time, is the first to enter any important towns that are captured (followed, presumably, at a respectful distance by the advance-guard of an admiring army), and who generally, by his omnipresent activities and almost bewildering ubiquity, dominates the whole of the proceedings. To my shame I must confess that I was never mistaken by the enthusiastic population of a liberated town for Lord Northcliffe, Ramsay Macdonald or Dr. Crippen. I was never

even kissed, except once by an inebriated Greek soldier. In every way my adventures were unsatisfactory and unromantic : for during the fighting and the subsequent pursuit of the defeated Bulgarian Army my movements were restricted by the humble but inevitable duties of revictualling a portion of our Army, and I was relegated to a position well in the rear. The only claim that I can put forward with any confidence is that of being the last Englishman of the advancing Army to set foot on Bulgarian soil.

Before the great attack the Salonica Armies were holding the arc of a circle of ground with left and right flanks resting respectively on the Albanian coast at a point south of Durazzo, and on the Gulf of Orfano at the mouth of the Struma, near the site of old Amphipolis, with Salonica itself approximately the centre of the circle. The nearest point of the line to Salonica, and due north of it at a distance of about forty miles, was Lake Doiran. Roughly speaking, there were at that time three opposing groups of armies. In Albania the so-called 11th German Army (composed chiefly of General Pflanzer-Baltin's Austrian Corps, a large number of Bulgarian troops and a smattering of Germans) was faced by the Italian Army and a few French troops. In the centre, from a point nearly north of Monastir to the Vardar River, which cut our old line some fifteen miles west of Doiran Lake, the 1st (and most powerful) Bulgarian Army was opposed by the bulk of the French Army, the Serbian Army, a Greek Corps (operating with the French) and one British Division. Finally, in the east, from the Vardar River to the Gulf of Orfano, the 2nd Bulgarian Army was opposed by the remaining three British Divisions and a Greek Corps, operating under our orders. To this were added for the actual battle, as assaulting troops, two Greek Divisions (the 'Seres' and the 'Cretan' Divisions, both of them well-tried, and generally acknowledged to be the finest Greek Divisions at the Front), a French regiment of Zouaves, and a composite Brigade of Cavalry, consisting of British

Cavalry and Cyclists and one Greek regiment of Cavalry. All of these troops were under the orders of General Sir George Milne, the British Commander-in-Chief. Both the 1st and 2nd Bulgarian Armies, I may add, were almost exclusively composed of Bulgarian troops, though many of the machine guns and most of the heavy guns were manned by Germans and Austrians. All the Turkish troops had been withdrawn from the Front in the summer of '17.

The general plan of attack, which had probably been largely thought out by General Guillaumat (who succeeded General Sarrail as C.-in-C. of all the Salonica Armies, and was subsequently recalled on June 8, 1918, for the defence of Paris), was founded on the experience of previous Balkan campaigns (more particularly the Greek campaign of 1913 against Bulgaria), and was simplicity itself. The main attack was to come in the centre opposite the mountainous range of Dobropolje, on a comparatively small front of fifteen miles. If a complete break-through were effected, the attack was to be extended on either flank from north-west of Monastir to the Vardar, involving all the central positions of our Front on a seventy-mile front. All depended on the rapid advance of the spear-head of the attack, which position of honour was entrusted to the Serbian Army. By an advance of fifty odd miles due north they would cut the main Bulgarian line of communication, which ran down the valley of the Vardar, at a point on the Salonica–Belgrade railway near Demir-Kapu (the exact spot where the Greeks cut the line in '13). By an advance still further north to Uskub they would definitely split the opposing armies into three, each of which could easily be dealt with in turn. The 11th German Army in Albania would be cut off, and would be compelled to an ignominious surrender. The 1st Bulgarian Army would by this time be reduced to a mere rabble, incapable of offering any serious opposition. Finally, the 2nd Bulgarian Army in the east would have lost its main line of communication, which would be cut north of the famous Kresna Pass, near the

Serbo-Bulgarian frontier, and could be dealt with at leisure. Concurrently with the attack in the centre, a partial attack had been planned on the right, to be undertaken by the Anglo-Greek forces from west of Lake Doiran to the Vardar. The attack was only to be a subsidiary action, not intended to break through the Bulgar lines, yet on a considerably larger scale than the ordinary demonstration, with the object of immobilizing the 2nd Bulgarian Army and preventing them from detaching troops for the assistance of their comrades of the 1st Army in the centre. As, however, this subsidiary operation would involve a useless sacrifice, unless the main attack were successful, the Anglo-Greek attack was timed to take place three days after the Franco-Serbian operations.

Such, briefly, was the plan of the French Commander-in-Chief, General Franchet d'Espérey. For its success secrecy was not so much necessary as rapidity in following up the initial break-through. The Bulgar Higher Command, as we learnt subsequently, were not taken by surprise : they were kept in touch with all our movements by their elaborate system of espionage. Nevertheless, they were in doubt till the last moment (even after the initial Serbian successes), whether or not the main blow was to come from the Anglo-Greek forces at Doiran. But, however secret we had kept our movements, no great advantage could be obtained unless we were able to press the defeated enemy and allow him no breathing-space in which to reform his ranks. The mountainous country of the Balkans, even where it has not been previously fortified, affords ideal defensive positions, and unless the enemy were so hustled that he had completely lost breath, he could choose a dozen different lines further back on which to reform and offer determined resistance. Practically speaking, one may say that unless we could bring the Bulgar to his knees in a fortnight we could never do so at all.

For another reason, too, it was essential that it should be a whirlwind campaign. The Germans, though hard-pressed on the Western Front, had not yet completely

exhausted their reserves. In view of the enormous importance they rightly attached to the solidarity of Bulgaria, they might still come to its rescue if they were given time to collect the troops. (Those who glibly move divisions—on paper—from here to there in a couple of days are, I'm afraid, optimists.) Apropos, I may tell this story, which, though I cannot vouch for it, was given to me on fairly reliable authority. When the Bulgars were first hard-pressed, they telegraphed to Hindenburg at length, asking for assistance. They received a terse reply that no reinforcements could be spared from the Western Front. Two days later they wired again, this time more urgently, that they were nearly at the end of their tether, and that unless prompt assistance were forthcoming they would be compelled to surrender. Hindenburg, now seriously alarmed, sent a long telegram, the substance of which was that five German Divisions would be sent to their assistance from Odessa, but *that these troops could not be expected for a month*. Whereupon the Bulgarians sent over envoys offering what was, in effect, unconditional surrender!

On the dawn of September the 15th the Serbs, assisted by a French Division (which, however, did not take any part in the fighting after the first day), attacked on a fifteen-mile front near Dobropolje. The first day's objectives, which included the capture of a mountain range over 7,000 feet high, were all gained by the Serbs, a large number of prisoners and guns were captured, and a complete breach was effected of the enemy lines. The French attack on the right was, I believe, not quite so successful, and resulted in heavy casualties for the attacking division. The Serbian casualties, on the other hand, both on the first day and subsequently, were amazingly small. Indeed, I have been credibly informed that their total losses in killed, wounded and missing from the commencement of operations to the conclusion of the Armistice (fifteen days, during which they were continuously attacking), did not exceed four thousand, or barely half the Anglo-

Greek casualties in the two days' fighting of September the 18th and 19th. With the main attack I do not propose to deal. I saw nothing of it, of course, and I have no desire to write (nor, I imagine, my readers to read) a stale *réchauffé* of official reports and newspaper comments. So much wonderful fighting has taken place on every Front during the last few months, that the average man, I suspect, is getting rather tired of the recital of what, to him, are stale battles. When all is said, one battle is very much like another, and one feels, now that the War is over, that "the time has come to talk of many things," other than warlike excursions. Of the Serbian Army's achievement I can only say that it went exactly "according to plan." Yet I would not have any one forget the debt we owe to the Serbian Army, for to them unquestionably belongs the palm of glory. Literally they outdistanced us all in the race. The British motor-lorries charged with revictualling them were soon left behind, so that for the first fortnight (and long after the Armistice, when they were still driving the Austrians from the last corners of their beloved country) the Serbians were compelled to live on the miserable resources of their country —a few grains of rice, an occasional loaf of black bread. The lightly-equipped French 'Divisions de Poursuite' soon found the pace too killing and dropped out; even the French cavalry was outdistanced. However fine their spirit, however great their endurance, no Western troops could have accomplished what the Serbs accomplished. An Englishman or a Frenchman cannot subsist on air—he must have plenty of food or he cannot fight. Food means transport, and transport means delay. But even if his food dropped like manna from Heaven, he has not the physique of the hardy Serbian, who has lived all his life in mountainous country, and, irrespective of enemy opposition, he could never scale huge mountainous ranges with the rapidity and ease of a Serbian. Yet even in the annals of their own wonderful history I do not think the Serbs could find anything to surpass their last amazing effort.

The great offensive, then in its initial stages, thanks to the forethought of the French Staff, who had drawn up a plan as simple as it was brilliant, and thanks still more to the amazing élan of the Serbs, was being crowned with complete success. After three days' fighting, on September the 18th, the Bulgars were preparing to retreat on the whole Front from the north-west of Monastir to the Vardar River. Everything was ripe for the Anglo-Greek attack on the right wing, which hitherto had not been involved in the fighting.

CHAPTER III

THE ANGLO-GREEK ATTACK AT DOIRAN

(September 18th–19th)

"EVERYTHING was ripe for the Anglo-Greek attack." I am conscious that these words, with which I concluded the last chapter, tend to prejudge an issue concerning which I have heard much bitter controversy. Let me say at once that I am not in a position to form any accurate judgment on this subject, because the full facts of the case are quite unknown to me ; in any case my judgment would be quite insignificant and valueless. I will therefore confine myself only to stating what I know of the point at issue, and the reader may come to his own conclusions. The Anglo-Greek plan consisted of a frontal attack on the Bulgar positions known as 'Pip Ridge,' 'Petit Couronné' and 'Grand Couronné,' with a subsidiary attack to the right of the Lake. These positions are generally acknowledged to be the most powerful on the whole of the Macedonian Front. They are, indeed, the key to the whole of the first line of the Bulgar defences from Lake Doiran to the Vardar, invaluable as an observation post and a *point d'appui*. Yet, although their capture would have greatly relieved our position by robbing the enemy of his opportunity for impertinent observation, it would not have involved him in any general retirement. For they are well in front of his main defensive line along the Belashitza Ridge, which, north of Doiran, runs in a north-westerly direction to the Vardar. The subsidiary attack to the east of the Lake was, in a manner, still-

born, and was only briefly referred to in our own and the enemy communiqués. With it I will deal later. To most of us the names of "Grand Couronné" and "Pip Ridge" were already fraught with bitter memories. In 1916 the French had unsuccessfully assaulted them. In the spring of 1917 we had undertaken, with the object of capturing them, the biggest attack in which the British troops had hitherto been engaged. The attack had been unsuccessful and had cost us five thousand casualties. On several occasions during the bitter fortnight's fighting, known as the "first Battle of Doiran," we gained our objectives, but, owing to lack of reinforcements and the terrible fire to which our men were subjected, we were compelled to retire before the Bulgar counter-attacks to our original positions.

The Anglo-Greek attack then of September the 18th was to be practically a repetition of the "first Battle of Doiran," undertaken, it is true, with rather larger effectives, and with the further extension of an attack to the right of the Lake, where hitherto there had been no fighting. Briefly, the attack failed, as it had failed in '17, with even heavier losses. On the evening of the 19th we withdrew practically to our original positions, though Doiran Town on the left of the Lake (once the summer resort of jaded Salonicans, but now a battered ruin), together with Teton Hill and 'Petit Couronné,' remained in our hands. On the 21st the Serbians reached Demir-Kapu, higher up the Vardar, and the Bulgar began to retreat on the whole of this front. We walked on to 'Grand Couronné' and 'Pip Ridge' eighteen hours after they had been abandoned by the Bulgar.

The controversy arose over the question whether or not this costly attack was necessary. It was argued that, to prevent the 2nd Bulgarian Army sending reinforcements against the Serbs, a grand attack was not necessary, but that a prolonged artillery bombardment accompanied by demonstrations would have been sufficient to immobilize the enemy. Further, it was argued that on the morning of our attack the front of

the 1st Bulgarian Army had so completely collapsed before the Serbian onslaught that the enemy's position was already hopeless, and that his withdrawal from his powerful positions opposite us must have been foreseen as inevitable. In view of subsequent events, this contention certainly seems sound ; for his eventual withdrawal was in no way attributable to the Anglo-Greek attack, but followed inevitably on the Serbian successes in the centre. Finally, it was said that in view of our failure in '17—a failure not attributable to any shortcomings on our part, but to the enormous strength of the enemy positions—a renewed attack on the same positions offered little, if any, prospect of success. These were the chief reasons given in support of the argument that our attack was an unnecessary sacrifice of lives. Against it one might reply that the Bulgarian position was by no means hopeless as yet, and that every effort had to be made, no matter at what cost, to support the main Serbian attack and to prevent the diversion of reinforcements ; that for this purpose a demonstration would not have been sufficiently cogent ; finally, that the attack was more likely to succeed this year, because the Bulgar 'moral' was known to have deteriorated, and because the Greek troops fighting with us were more accustomed to mountain fighting than we were. Briefly, then, these are the 'pros' and 'cons' of the controversy, and there I will leave the matter to give a slight description of the battle itself.

The main Anglo-Greek attack on 'Pip Ridge' and the two 'Couronnés' was undertaken by the Greek 'Seres' Division, the 22nd (British) Division, the 77th Brigade, which formed part of the 26th Division, and a French regiment of Zouaves. All these troops were under the supreme command of the British C.-in-C., and under the direct orders of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Wilson, commanding the 12th British Corps. The 78th and 79th British Brigades of the 26th Division, also part of the 12th Corps, did not take part in the actual fighting.

The preliminary bombardment, which lasted forty-

eight hours, was not of sustained violence, resembling rather spasmodic bursts of fire. As far as artillery is concerned, we have always been inferior to the enemy, both in the calibre of our guns and in numbers. Except for one battery of eight-inch howitzers, we have never had anything more formidable than a six-inch gun. The Bulgar, on the other hand, had several batteries of nine-point-twos. Nevertheless, the artillery did useful work, successfully destroying the barbed wire defences of the enemy, inflicting considerable damage on his trenches, and engaging with counter-battery work such of his gun positions as were known to us. The enemy positions, however, were so enormously strong that nothing but a concentration of guns far more numerous and far more powerful than we possessed could have made any real impression on them. None the less, when the attack opened shortly before dawn on the 18th, the Anglo-Greek troops swept forward with irresistible dash.

On the right and in the centre, Greek and British troops respectively reached their objectives, securing to a depth of a mile the enemy positions between 'Pip Ridge' and 'Grand Couronné,' and storming on the right the enemy trenches as far as Doiran Hill. Unfortunately, on the left the British Brigade which had been detailed to lead the attack on Pip Ridge, although they displayed the most wonderful bravery and self-sacrifice, were unable to reach their objectives. In consequence, the troops in the centre, who had actually secured the lower slopes of 'Grand Couronné,' were compelled to fall back gradually, fighting all the way, to their former positions.

During the night of the 18th-19th the bombardment was sustained, and at dawn the assault was renewed. Again we reached the slopes of 'Grand Couronné,' and again we had to retreat owing to our failure to secure 'Pip Ridge' on the left. On the afternoon of the 19th the engagement was broken off, and we consolidated our initial gains, which included Doiran Town, Teton Hill, and 'Petit Couronné.'

During this terrible fighting the wonderful self-sacrifice of the British troops was beyond praise. General Milne in his dispatch mentions how, during the retreat on the afternoon of the 18th to our former positions, the last to leave were the survivors of the 7th Battalion South Wales Borderers—nineteen unwounded men and one wounded officer. Practically every British Battalion engaged could point to a similar glorious record. As for the Seres Division, the most reliable tributes come not from the official congratulatory addresses, which are necessarily effusive, but from the testimony of our soldiers, who fought side by side with them.

Disparagement of the qualities of one's Allies is, I'm afraid, common enough : to the Greeks especially, with whom two years previously our relations had been—to say the least—strained, it is not likely that our men would be inclined to give undue praise. Yet from all the officers and men who fought shoulder to shoulder with them, I never heard anything but words of unstinted admiration for the bravery and the dash of the Greek ' Johnnies ' (' Johnny ' is a generic term applied by Thomas Atkins to friend and foe alike in the Balkans).

During the confused fighting that lasted without respite till the evening of the 19th, when the engagement was broken off, two facts emerge clearly from the perplexed and complicated turmoil of battle. The first, on which I should like to lay particular emphasis, lest, in the light of subsequent events, it should be overlooked, was that against us, at any rate, *the fighting spirit of the enemy was as fine as ever*. Indeed, many of those who took part in the two battles of Doiran aver that the Bulgar showed more resolution in defence even than in the first battle. I cannot reconcile this undoubted fact with the stories of supposed bribery and treachery, which were apparently prevalent in England at the time. Whatever may have been the moral of the Bulgarian people, the 2nd Bulgarian Army fought as well as ever. It is true that the position was far easier to hold than

to attack, and that our losses were far heavier than theirs ; none the less, an irresolute enemy might have well given way before the combined Anglo-Greek onslaught. The second fact, largely dependent on the first, which appears, is that in the face of a determined enemy these positions were impregnable, unless attacked by an overwhelming force. If we had been able to throw into the battle a hundred thousand men instead of twenty thousand, we might have overrun the enemy lines and, what is more important, we should have been in a position to secure the conquered ground. As it was, however, the net result of the two days' fighting was the gain of a few hundred yards of ground and the capture of between eight and nine hundred prisoners. On the other hand the Greeks had, at a moderate estimate, four thousand casualties and the British about three thousand. In addition, a number of our wounded fell into the hands of the enemy. Some of them, including a British Infantry Colonel, were left behind by the Bulgar in his retreat, on the reverse slopes of the ' Grand Couronné,' and were found by us later in a pitiable condition. They had lain out in the open for more than three days, their wounds uncared for, their only nourishment a little water and some tomatoes, given them by the Bulgars. War is, at the best, an inhuman thing, but there is no apparent reason why the ' humane ' Bulgar should not have done more to succour them than he did. At any rate, our prisoners fared better than those of our Greek Allies, who were for the most part, I believe, promptly bayoneted.

Concurrently with the operations of 12th Corps, a ' surprise ' attack was executed on the right of Doiran Lake by the 16th (British) Corps, under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Briggs. At this point, to render the situation explicable, I will endeavour to give the reader a slight idea of the configuration of the land. From the north-west corner of the Struma Plain, where the chain of mountains is broken by the Rupel Pass, the Belashitza Range runs due west, for about twenty-five miles ; a few miles north-west of

Lake Doiran it gradually slopes down in a north-westerly direction to the Vardar River. Parallel with the Belashitza Range and south of it, separated by a Plain about ten miles broad, runs a smaller range of mountains known as the Krusha Balkans. At the eastern end of this Plain, which forms as it were a corridor between the two ranges, lies Butkova Lake, at the western end Doiran Lake. Near Doiran Lake, however, the two mountain ranges branch off the one to the north, the other to the south, and the corridor is opened. The Krusha-Balkans are nowhere more than 2,500 feet high, whereas the crest of the Belashitza is anything from 5,000 to 6,000 feet high (the highest point, known as 'Signal Allemand,' is, I think, rather over 6,000).

Ever since the spring of '16, when we came out of the Salonica defences to find the Bulgars holding all the best positions, we had sat on the top of the Krusha-Balkans and gazed across at the enemy on the top of the Belashitza. On a fine day one had an embarrassing feeling, as though one were walking about naked, for the sheer wall of rock opposite towered over one, and gave the enemy an indecent chance of satisfying his curiosity. Indeed, I know nothing so exasperating as this feeling of being looked down upon. The heroines of novels occasionally meet a tall man with piercing eyes (generally of the 'gimlet' variety), whose gaze penetrates them and "seems to strip them of all their clothing." One felt just like those denuded maidens; indeed, Staff Officers would unostentatiously divest themselves of their red tabs before coming into view on the skyline of our miserable hills. For two years, fighting on this part of the Front had been conducted on the most approved Balkan lines. In the winter and spring both sides came down on to the Plain, and made themselves as objectionable to each other as possible. Continued raids by our Infantry and Cavalry would disturb the peace and quiet of the Bulgar, who would occasionally retaliate. In the summer both sides retired to the hills, and let the mosquitoes fight it out on the Plain.

This part of the line was generally conceded to be 'cushy.'

The idea of our attack, which was admirably conceived, depended entirely on secrecy for its success. The attacking troops were to be brought down on to the Plain to our winter positions, which we had not yet officially taken up, the night before the night of the battle. During the night before the battle, they were to get as far across No Man's Land as possible, and overrun the enemy's outpost line at dawn on 'the day,' the 18th. They were then to press in a north-westerly direction between the foot of the Belashitza and the north-western corner of Doiran Lake, and attack the main Bulgar defensive line on the range of hills known as the Blaga-Planina. If they had been successful in capturing these hills early in the day, the 'Grand Couronné' and all the objectives of 12th Corps would have been turned from the west, and the consequences for the Bulgar would have been unpleasant. As, however, it was vitally important that the Bulgar should be taken unawares, no preliminary bombardment was possible ; the plan being for the artillery to come down to the Plain the night before the battle, and follow up the Infantry as closely as possible, rendering what assistance they could to cut the wire on the Blaga-Planina, *after* the outpost line had been overrun. For these operations the following troops were at the disposal of General Briggs : the Greek Cretan Division, which had formed part of the Venizelist National Army, and had been at the Front over a year ; the 28th (British) Division in reserve, and a composite brigade of Cavalry and Cyclists to exploit the success, if open fighting were possible.

The Cretan Division, with the 28th Divisional Artillery temporarily under the orders of General Spiliades (the Cretan Divisional Commander), moved up in accordance with the pre-arranged plan on the nights of the 16th and 17th. Ammunition dumps had been formed on the Plain ; the supply dumps, however, were to remain on the Krusha-Balkans, to avoid congestion, and were only

BULGAR TRANSPORT, STRUMNITZA VALLEY. OCTOBER 1918.

to move down on to the Plain the evening after the attack, if we attained our objectives. Most of the night of the 17th I spent at our observation post of "Signal Grec de Popovo" on the hills, waiting for the dawn. It was a scene of weird beauty. Beneath a glorious Eastern night of stars, which seemed so cold and remote, the poor tired earth shook with a hundred explosions. To the left the guns never ceased their mad din; at our feet the Lake seemed almost reluctantly to mirror the red flashes on her tranquil bosom. Opposite loomed the shadowy outlines of the great mountain, dark, gloomy, terrible. What would the morrow bring? Success—or failure?

Simultaneously with the attack of 12th Corps, the Cretan Infantry went to the assault of the enemy outpost line at dawn on the 18th. It was lightly held, and the Cretans had no difficulty in overrunning it. But as they approached the Blaga-Planina, they were met by a murderous fire, which showed plainly that the attack had not come as a surprise. In the meanwhile the 28th Divisional Artillery had not followed up the Cretan Infantry quickly enough, and for two whole hours they were unable to reply to the Bulgar fire, or to cut a path through the barbed wire entanglement at the foot of the Blaga-Planina. When they came into action later, they were met with a violent fire from all sides, being particularly harassed by a battery of four-point-twos, which the Bulgars had hoisted to the top of the Belashitza, and which lobbed shells down on them. But in spite of heavy casualties the gunners gallantly kept up the unequal fight, till they were eventually withdrawn under cover of night. One battery in Akinzali Wood suffered particularly heavy casualties, as the wood caught fire, and burnt many of the English and Greek wounded who had been removed there for shelter. Meanwhile the Cretan Infantry gallantly attempted to tear a way through the barbed wire, and actually succeeded in many places in getting to grips with the Bulgar and inflicting casualties with the bayonet. Wherever they were given a chance, they

fully maintained their reputation for dash and bravery. But it was plain that the attack had failed, because the element of surprise on which it depended for its success was lacking. On the evening of the 18th the Corps Commander decided to cut his losses, and gave orders for the Cretans to be withdrawn, and for the 28th Division, which had not been thrown into the fighting, to take up a defensive line on the Plain, roughly approximating our ordinary winter line. This movement was carried out during the night in good order.

Thus ended the 'surprise' attack. It is true that through a misunderstanding the Artillery was two hours late, and consequently the Infantry did not receive the necessary support. Such misunderstandings are almost inevitable when the armies of two nations are mingled together. In this case the difficulties of liaison work were further increased, because the Cretan Division had only recently come under British orders for the battle itself. It was unfortunate that one of the Greek Divisions, the 1st, the 2nd, or the 13th, with whom we had been associated on the Struma, and whom we knew very well, did not share the attack with us. For it is possible that with them the misunderstanding might not have occurred; no doubt, however, other considerations outweighed the advantages of this plan. But even if this unfortunate contretemps had not arisen, the attack could never have been successful, because it failed to surprise the enemy. It is difficult to say for certain how the enemy got wind of our plan. I may, however, I think, mention, with all possible reserve, a statement which is attributed to a Bulgarian Staff Officer in conversation with one of our own Staff Officers after the Armistice. He is reported to have said, "We guessed you were going to attack us east of Doiran, where, in the ordinary way, we should never have expected an attack, for two reasons. Firstly, because, quite by chance, we blew up an ammunition dump of yours at Popovo on the Plain at the beginning of September. We did not know then that you had come down to the Plain; in any case you would not have

had an ammunition dump so far forward unless an attack was being prepared. Secondly, for at least a month before the attack we noticed whole processions of Staff cars coming over the skyline of the Krusha-Balkans. This seemed very unusual, as this part of the line is generally so quiet, and it confirmed us in our suspicion that you were up to some mischief." As to the first, it is true that a dump was blown up. This was particularly unfortunate, as it apparently occurred accidentally. The Bulgars were in the habit of lobbing over a few shells about once a week from the top of Belashitza on to our foothills. On this occasion they were, it appears, firing at a party of men working nearly a mile away, and one shell fell a long distance away from the target and set fire to a hidden dump in Popovo village. As to the second, I know from personal experience that on the two or three occasions before the battle on which I went over the skyline with a Staff Officer, the car was always left the other side of the hill, out of view of the enemy.

Such, then, is a very bald account of the Anglo-Greek attack at Doiran. I regret that I have been unable to collect sufficient information concerning the great gallantry of individual British regiments. On the exploits of the two Greek Divisions I have perhaps laid particular emphasis, but it is well that they should not be forgotten. Of the amazing bravery and endurance of the 22nd Division and the 77th Brigade, who were practically wiped out, I can only say that they were worthy of the fine name which the British Salonica Forces have won for themselves in the Balkans.

By the evening of the 19th the fighting had died down on the whole of the Anglo-Greek Front. We had succeeded—at a heavy cost, it is true—in pinning down the Bulgar to his positions. Not a man nor a gun was detached to assist the stricken 1st Bulgarian Army.

CHAPTER IV

THE PURSUIT AND THE ARMISTICE

(September 22–September 30, 1918.)

THE nearer a man gets to the fighting, the more short-sighted he becomes. This, as it might at first seem, is by no means an unmitigated advantage. Those who were watching our little effort to amuse from afar off were no doubt more than satisfied with the progress of the Balkan Campaign ; for their vision was not limited, and they were enabled by their very distance from the scene of war to obtain a clear, comprehensive view of the whole panorama. Those, however, who had actually taken part in, or were immediately connected with, the battle round Doiran, were blinded by their proximity to the scene of action, and could therefore hardly be expected to have a nicely balanced sense of proportion. They felt that they had done their best, and yet that there was very little to show for these two days of bitter fighting. Many, alas ! had succeeded only too well in ' doing ' and ' dying ' : yet without the least intention of ' reasoning why ' we could not help feeling disappointed with the results of the attack. The brilliant results achieved by the Serbs, to whose success we had materially contributed, had so far failed to produce any tangible reaction on our own Sector, and were consequently ignored by our unbelieving generation, which sought for a sure sign.

September the 20th was a day of deepest gloom for all the ' B.S.F.' Wherever one went, one heard the same expression, " There seems to be a blight upon the poor old B.S.F. ; nothing ever seems to go right for us."

I went to 16th Corps H.Q., and found there the same feeling of depression. "Back to the Seres Road for the winter—the show is finished." Indeed, I believe orders to that effect were actually drafted. Only those who have sat in the same positions for over two and a half years, enduring the same wearisome monotony of life in an unwholesome climate, can realize the bitter pang which those words brought with them. At the back of all our minds there lingered the haunting fear of what those at home would think of us—the fear that we had not 'made good' in the eyes of those who would judge us without understanding.

Yet even as we were bemoaning our fate, constrained to dwell on the part and failing to grasp the whole, the campaign was swiftly, inexorably rushing to its grand finale. I was sitting in the Mess at Corps Headquarters after lunch on the 21st, when a radiant Staff Officer brought in the news that the Serbs had cut the enemy lines of communication higher up the valley of the Vardar at Demir-Kapu. As a result of this, only an immediate retreat between Doiran Lake and the Vardar (involving also the abandonment of the impregnable Belashitza) could save the enemy from utter disaster. A few minutes later this was confirmed by the report of our airmen, that along the whole of this Front the enemy was withdrawing hastily, setting fire to ammunition dumps and depots. That night along the crest of the hills the fires and explosions could be plainly seen with the naked eye.

The pursuit was taken up forthwith. The official Allied communiqué laid great stress on the fact that the Bulgarians were retreating in 'indescribable disorder.' There was, I am bound to confess, disorder, if not 'indescribable' at any rate considerable, displayed by us in the advance. Fortunately, however, the disorder of an advance is always imperceptible to a retreating enemy, and eventually things were straightened out. After nearly three years' stagnation, every one was suddenly on the move, and it was inevitable that Units should lose touch. To make matters worse, the two British Corps changed over—the 16th, composed of British Cavalry, the 14th

Greek Division (hastily summoned from the south), the 26th British Division, and the 27th British Division (which had been operating on the west bank of the Vardar and had been cut out by the Franco-Greek force advancing in a north-easterly direction) passing through the 12th Corps. The change was inevitable, as the two Divisions now forming 12th Corps, the 22nd Division and the 28th Division, the former owing to the attack, the latter through sickness, had been reduced to skeleton formations. In addition, the Cretan and the Seres Divisions were also withdrawn—the former for services elsewhere (on the Struma, where an attack which never materialized was preparing), the latter to a well-earned rest.

With all these changes, aggravated by the paucity of good roads in Macedonia, it was inevitable that chaos should reign. Many Units, especially among the transport, marched and counter-marched for days on end in a circle, only to find themselves at the exact spot whence they had set out. Yet every one bore these contretemps with good-natured indifference (though of course the Staff were heartily belaboured), and Units gradually sorted themselves out as best they could. It is of course the fashion to abuse the Staff—many men make a living by doing it—but I honestly fail to see that they could have done more than they did. It is so easy to move a Division 'on paper': it is so hard to do it in practice.

Now that his communications up the Vardar valley had been cut by the Serbs, the only line of retreat for the enemy lay on the road which runs due north of Doiran Lake through the little villages of Hasanli, Dedeli and Cestova, up the steep pass of Kosturino on to the broad Kosturino plateau, which forms part of the extreme west Belashitza, and marks the beginning of Bulgarian soil, then down again on to the Strumnitza Plain, through the little town of that name—in all a distance of some thirty-five miles. How often we had seen the enemy traffic along this road—now, at last, we were to use it!

The pursuit, as such, may be dismissed in a few words. All the bridges and culverts had been blown up on

the Doiran–Strumnitza road by the retreating enemy, and, in spite of the gallantry of the Cavalry (composed of three Squadrons of the Derbyshire Yeomanry, three Squadrons of the Lothian and Border Horse, and two Squadrons of the Surrey Yeomanry) and the spirited advance of the 26th British and the 14th Greek Division, the bulk of the 2nd Bulgarian Army made good their escape, unmolested—except from the air. That they did not retreat in good order is almost entirely due to the magnificent work of our Flying Corps. From the 22nd till the 30th, when the Armistice was signed, our airmen gave them no respite by day or by night, ceaselessly bombing and machine-gunning the enemy troops on the line of march. Had it not been for them, I cannot see why the enemy should not have been able to reform farther north and offer us a stern resistance. But this terror by night and by day proved too much for the 'moral' of the Bulgarians—it was the last straw, and they rapidly lost any semblance of an organized army. They became just a rabble, each man fighting for himself. Several days before the Armistice, the soldiers began to desert freely, each man demobilizing himself automatically and betaking himself home to his farm, as best he could, on foot.

It is only during a rapid advance that the actual traces of the work done by the Flying Corps may be seen and understood. In the ordinary way one reads of a raid carried out thirty miles behind the enemy lines, and one thinks little of it: for the ordinary man has not the imagination to picture for himself the horror of the thing, unless he sees it for himself. I have in mind one particularly gruesome sight that I saw, as I passed along in the wake of our army up the Kosturino Pass. One needed little imagination to picture the ghastly terror of the scene which had been enacted but two days before.

A large mixed column of men and transport marching slowly on the dusty road which leads back to their homes, the midday sun beating down pitilessly on their heads. In the heart of each man there is a feeling

of depression, for they know that they are a beaten army, retreating whence they have come. Yet perhaps there is a sense of relief that the strain is nearly over, that the end is in sight. They feel secure—for they are many hours' march in front of the advancing enemy, and soon, soon they will be able to return to their farms. Yet if the enemy should pursue them relentlessly into their own country, they will fight resolutely to the last man in defence of what is theirs. Why do they move so slowly? Why are the halts so frequent? They are at the foot of the winding tortuous pass with its steep incline and with the deadly precipice on its right—the Kosturino Pass which marks the boundary of their country. Slowly the transport drags up the incline—oh ! so slowly. Yet soon it will all be over.

Suddenly our aeroplanes swoop down from the skies on their defenceless prey. In a second the orderly column is scattered to the four winds—remains a frantic rabble, pushing, scrambling, beating, tearing to escape. Swiftly the dusty Pass is converted into a shambles—there is no escape. Some, in blind, mad fear, throw themselves over the side of the Pass down the steep precipice—to fall at the bottom in a broken, twisted heap. The wretched animals, innocent of war, are pushed over the side with their wagons by the pressing mob from behind, surging this way and that in a frantic attempt to clear the road. Even lorries are overturned. A Staff Officer jumps from his car, and falls headlong beside it, mangled by the fragment of a bomb. Five minutes of Hell, and the column has ceased to exist ; only a few broken, terrified creatures flying away from the ghastly scene.

In one field alone we counted nearly four hundred corpses. The whole road from Doiran to Strumnitza was strewn with dead oxen and horses, dead Bulgarians, carts and lorries, some smashed, others left behind intact —everywhere confusion and the débris of a broken army. In these last few glorious months Allied advances and enemy retreats have been common enough, and I suppose, whether the setting is France, Palestine, Italy or the

Balkans, the scenes are much the same. Yet the pursuit of a beaten foe is a wonderful thing—this feeling of elation that you are on the move, and in the right direction. Nothing else seems to matter much.

For the rest, we advanced along the Strumnitza road, encountering fairly severe opposition from enemy rear-guards. For the most part these were German machine-gunners who fought to the last. On one occasion, a troop of the Derby Yeomanry charged and captured two batteries of mountain guns, taking prisoner, amongst others, a German Battery Commander. His first remark to the astonished subaltern who had accepted his surrender was, "I'm fed up with this damned war!" A number of prisoners were captured, and some fifty guns in all, together with enormous quantities of ammunition and stores of every kind, were abandoned by the retreating enemy.

On the 25th, Units of the 28th and 22nd Divisions, assisted by Greek troops, after a long and arduous climb from north and east of Lake Doiran, attained the summit of Belashitza. Simultaneously the Derbyshire Yeomanry reached Kosturino, thus gaining the proud distinction of being the first Allied troops to set foot on Bulgarian soil. On the 26th our advanced troops descended on to the Strumnitza Plain and captured the town.

During the next four days fighting took place in two places: on the hills some fifteen kilos north of Strumnitza, and to the east along the valley, in the direction of Petric, where the upper Struma and the Strumnitza valleys join. Considerable resistance was met with near Yenikoy (about half way between Strumnitza and Petric). Nevertheless, on the morning of the 30th we were only fifteen miles away from the only line of communication (which runs through Rupel Pass) open to the Bulgarian Corps operating on the lower Struma. Had it not been for the Armistice, it is probable that the whole of this force would have had to lay down its arms. But by this time the Bulgarian Army was in a hopeless position. To the north-west the rapid advance of the Serbs had brought them to the passes which lead from Serbia to

Central Bulgaria. Sofia, although some fifty miles away, was at their mercy—and whatever local resistance might have been offered, the Bulgarian armies were surrounded and defeated. At midday on the 30th of September, hostilities ceased in accordance with a military convention signed between Bulgaria and the Allies in Salonica the previous evening.

Every one knew about the Armistice three or four days before it was signed. For the first (and second) Bulgarian Peace Delegates surrendered to us, and came through our lines, blindfolded, in two big cars. The first delegates, it was rumoured, included the Bulgarian Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had merely come to arrange about a little matter concerning a loan ! The second deputation who came through our lines, on the 28th, accompanied by the American Ambassador in Sofia and including General Lukoff, commanding their 2nd Army, were armed with the necessary credentials, and accordingly at midday on the 30th the Armistice came into being ; and we found ourselves suddenly in an embarrassing position : that of a fighting force without an enemy. The next month was to be spent in a gallant, but unsuccessful attempt to find some one to fight.

So, a fortnight after its inception, before Mr. Bottomley had had time to insert a single admonitory ' Watch the Balkans ' in his famous paper, ended the briefest, and, in many ways, the most brilliant campaign of the War. The first knock-out blow had been scored against the Central Powers from the most unexpected quarter. The Army which they derisively termed ' the Anglo-French Internment Camp ' had at last broken loose, and had dealt them a blow, from the effects of which they were never to recover. But before I bring this chapter to a close, it would perhaps be well to remind the reader that, as it was in France, so too it was in the Balkans ' the last ten minutes which counted.' To the casual observer it might appear that the Balkan Armies, after three years' somnolence, had suddenly woken up and achieved an astounding victory. Yet if ever there was a cumulative victory, surely this was one. The Salonica

Armies were never given to advertisement ; indeed, for some obscure reason, known only to those in authority, their very being was shrouded in an impenetrable covering of secrecy. For three years we had gradually worn down the enemy power of resistance ; and we had ' stuck it ' under unfavourable conditions, such as it would be difficult to parallel even in this war of horrors. Until the last fortnight, nothing sensational occurred ; yet by the thousand activities of modern warfare—by ceaseless bombing from the air ; by almost daily encounters with his patrols ; by sudden bursts of fire which conveyed the menace, if they did not proclaim the advent, of an attack ; by raids, some insignificant, some on a large scale ; by big offensive operations on his main positions, which, although only partially successful, none the less cost the enemy heavy casualties, and secured for us valuable gains of ground and a large number of prisoners —by such means we gradually wore down the enemy, till he was ripe for the swift, sudden *coup de grâce*. Therefore, in paying tribute to those who took part in the wonderful fortnight, we should not forget the thousands who during the three years of attrition paved the way to victory with their lives.

PART III

PEACE

(September 30–November 11, 1918.)

CHAPTER I

THE PROSPECTS OF ANOTHER WAR

THE associations of that blessed word, Peace, have been sufficiently belauded throughout the ages ; and the average soldier of the B.S.F. looked forward on September the 30th to a period of comparative ease : occupation of conquered territories, pleasant billets—in a word, the life of a gentleman. His expectations were to be rudely disappointed ; for the period of ' Peace ' which followed the capitulation of Bulgaria brought with it trials and discomforts undreamt of under the ' peaceful ' conditions of war. For myself, I know that during the next few weeks I became a militarist of Bernhardiesque ferocity.

When, at the close of September, Ferdinand and his merry men abandoned their dreams of a ' Greater Bulgaria,' and decided, to use their own quaint phrase, that there had been " a sufficient effusion of blood " (presumably of their own), I was in charge of the Supply Depot hastily formed in what subsequently, and disastrously, proved to be a river-bed at the entrance of Strumnitza. We had settled in two days after the capture of the town, only expecting to remain a few days ; and this charming sandy spot, although surrounded with dead horses and oxen, seemed ideal. There was free access to all transport, and ample room for the dumping of supplies. The weather was absolutely perfect. A fortnight later, however, the rain came down in torrents, and Strumnitza Depot gradually disappeared in the river-bed. Dan Leno once mentioned that he had a charming little river at the bottom of his garden : but unfortunately

in the winter the garden was at the bottom of the river. I only mention this little incident *en passant* to show that life in the A.S.C. is not always the bed of roses some persons imagine it to be.

I should like to be able to say that the unconditional surrender of Bulgaria filled our hearts so full of joy that we were speechless. But it did nothing of the sort—every one was quite pleased, but there were no demonstrations. For one thing, the necessary stimulants were regrettably absent, as the Canteen had been unable to keep pace with our advance, and, say what you will, it is difficult to feel very merry on Army lime-juice and ditch-water, even if a tot of rum be added. In connection with this, I am reminded of Jack Humphries' delightful reply, when asked what he did in the Great War. "Well," he said, "I didn't do very much—but I cheered like Hell on Armistice Night!" I will say no more.

Those who are gifted with a pleasing sense of the ironical (and among them may be numbered the majority of the B.S.F.) were immensely tickled with our victory—for it was indeed rather ironical that the first knock-out blow of the War should have been dealt not by the mighty armies of France, not by the conquerors of Baghdad or Jerusalem, but by our unknown, motley collection of ruffians, the Salonica Army. The papers from home, commenting on our victory, were full of interest. It was really rather delightful to know that those very men whom we in our ignorance had suspected of pouring vitriolic abuse and ridicule on our armies in the Near East had, in reality, "always advocated and supported the maintenance of a strong army based on Salonica to seize just such an opportunity as had now offered itself." After three years in the outer darkness, we suddenly found the limelight turned full on us, and awoke one morning, as it were, to find that we were "blinkin' 'eroes."

As for the good, honest British public, it simply rubbed its eyes in amazement as it read of the victory. "Salonica Armies," it said in a bewildered voice; "now

NORTHERN ENTRANCE TO RUPEL PASS. OCTOBER 1918.

where have I heard that name before? I seem to remember years ago that we sent a few men out to Salonica—but I'd no idea they were still there. Anyhow, this is splendid—we ought to show these gallant boys that we haven't forgotten them." Consequently, the Bishop of London, the Columbus of the twentieth century, departed on a voyage of exploration to Salonica, to tell us how pleased everybody was with our success. Let it not be thought for a moment that we were churlish enough to resent our 'discovery' after all these years—on the contrary, we welcomed the excellent prelate with open arms. Indeed, we only needed the arrival in Salonica of Horatio Bottomley (complete with tin-hat and gas-mask) for our cup of joy to overflow.

Some papers were cautious in their anticipations of further triumphs in store for us: and that old, rather war-worn phrase made his thousandth bow to the public—"Whilst it would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of this victory, it would be unwise to expect too much from it." Others, however, with unbridled exuberance and an inaccurate map, indicated the series of enemy capitals on which 'd'Espérey's mighty armies' (as we were now known) were to march. For them it was the easiest thing to 'march on' any capital you chose. All you had to do, apparently, was to take the nearest train, detrain outside the capital, blow a trumpet, and walk in. If any opposition should by some remote chance be encountered, the writer relied on our indescribable dash and incredible bravery (both of them only recently discovered) to overcome it. (I have often wondered why, if dash is 'indescribable,' the writer wastes so many columns trying to describe it; and why, if bravery is 'incredible,' he expects his readers to believe it.)

However that may be, the fact remained—Bulgaria was *hors de combat*, and by the terms of the Armistice we had unrestricted use of her country and her railways for further offensive operations. Practically the only stipulation made by Bulgaria was that Serbian and Greek troops should not be allowed to enter Sofia. This

caused considerable heartburn in the latter countries, where suspicion of Britain's Bulgarophile tendencies still lingered, and where the majority were not unnaturally eager to humble Bulgaria to the dust. It must be remembered that all Serbia and a part of Greece had been overrun through Bulgarian treachery: and the Mosaic law, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," is popular in the Balkans—and for that matter in the rest of the world too. The decision, however, to exclude these two nations from the Bulgarian capital was, I think, wise, for it precluded the possibility of regrettable violence, and so paved the way to an eventual understanding between Bulgaria and her enemies. It was, moreover, consented to and approved by M. Venizelos, who thus gave one more proof of his conciliatory unselfishness and far-sighted statesmanship.

But although the free use of Bulgarian territory facilitated further offensive operations, especially against Turkey, the line of communications from Salonica to the Turkish frontier was perilously long and insecure. Had it been possible, too, the British troops were badly in need of a rest. Although they had not marched a great distance, and the fighting, after the attack at Doiran, had not been severe, the effects of the climate were beginning to tell on us. General Milne mentions with admiration in his dispatch how many men, in their eagerness to get to grips with the Bulgar, fought on till they fell down by the side of the road through sheer physical exhaustion. As long as the line was stationary, any man who had a slight attack of malaria could be knocked off duty for a couple of days, and was not evacuated into hospital. But now that every Unit was on the move daily, it was impossible to leave a few men behind, and all the sick had to be evacuated. In addition, Spanish 'flu' now had us in its grip, and further reduced the thinned ranks.

Altogether we were a very top-heavy army. A certain Colonel with a gift for satirical humour once remarked dryly that at Salonica the fighting Divisions (of whom incidentally at least half were not fighting men) "formed

an outpost line for the protection of the Army at the base." Unfortunately and inevitably this was true. And now our line of communications gradually stretched out, eating up more and more men, whilst the fighting force dwindled and dwindled. Towards the end the condition of affairs was almost farcical—the thirty-nine battalions which comprised the British Salonica Army could only muster, on an average, about a hundred bayonets each. Behind these four thousand wretched men there was an enormous force of over one hundred and fifty thousand at the base and on the lines of communication, engaged in various subsidiary jobs ! It is the inevitable penalty one has to pay for waging war in a country with absolutely no resources, few roads, and practically no railways. Supplies, supplies, and again supplies have been our stumbling-block in the Balkans.

As I have endeavoured to show, then, we were not really in a fit state to carry on the War into other enemies' country. But none the less we could not let the grass grow under our feet, for if only we could without delay bring an effective force against Turkey's flank, it seemed certain that, weakened as she was by the deadly blows of Allenby, she would be compelled to surrender. The Turk, however, is a curiously obstinate fighter, for experience has taught him in the past that by hanging on to the end he may, through some unexpected turn in the wheel of fortune, suddenly recover all he has lost. No time, then, could be lost in pressing home our advantage and assuring his complete collapse.

The Salonica Armies now split into two. The Serbians, the majority of the French, and the Italians pressed north, to deliver the whole of Serbia, Montenegro and Albania from the enemy. It must be borne in mind that the Armistice was signed only with Bulgaria, and that its sphere did not extend west of Nish. Consequently the so-called 11th German Army, composed chiefly of Bulgarians and Austrians, had still to be dealt with. The Serbs met with very severe opposition from the Austrians south of Nish (during which both sides had heavy casualties), but the bulk of the 11th Army were

cut off in Albania and had to surrender. Fighting, however, still continued against hastily summoned Austrian reinforcements, till the end of October, when the Serbs made a triumphant entry into Belgrade. Those of us who knew something of the extraordinarily fine character of the Serbs and who understood the magnificent contribution they had made to the final victory of our cause were filled with the deepest joy at this achievement. At last, after three years' misery and exile, they had come back home. Though the face of their country had been torn and disfigured almost beyond recognition ; though their houses had been razed to the ground ; though many, many wives and children had been massacred by a fiendish enemy ; though every man, woman and child who had been left behind was slowly dying of starvation, yet this was their country, rendered even more dear to them by its gaping wounds and long-drawn agony.

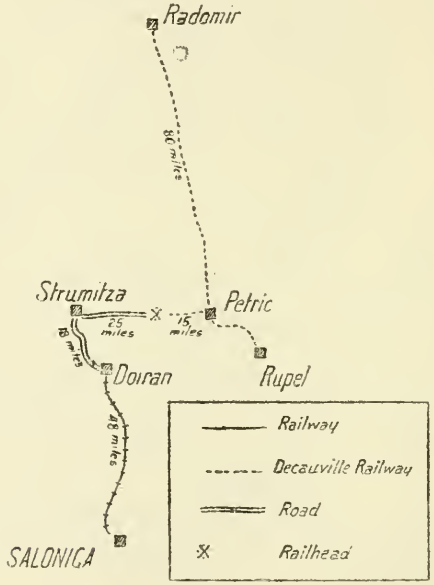
The British and the Greek Armies, under the supreme command of General Milne, moved east against Turkey. Immediately after the signing of the Armistice, the Bulgars withdrew from Eastern Macedonia, and the 1st Greek Corps occupied their lost province, which had been sold by Constantine, and settled down once again in Demir-Hissar, Seres, Drama and Kavalla. Everywhere they were received with enthusiasm ; and when, a few days later, M. Venizelos visited Seres, he was given a wonderful ovation. Another portion of the Greek Army, together with the 12th British Corps, went round by sea to the Bulgarian port of Dedeagatch, and gradually took up positions along the Turko-Bulgarian frontier between Mustapha Pasha and the sea. The latter town is practically at the gates of Adrianople, not a hundred miles from Constantinople. The 16th British Corps, to which I was attached (composed of the 26th and 27th Divisions), was to march from Strumnitza due east along the Strumnitza Plain to Petric ; there they were to turn north on the main Sofia road. At a point south of the Kresna Pass they were to entrain on the Decauville railway, built during the War

by the Bulgar, for Radomir, a town some twenty-five miles south of Sofia, through which the main Berlin–Sofia–Constantinople line runs. Here they were to entrain again on the main line, and, passing through Sofia and Philippopolis, they had to detrain at their eventual destination, Mustapha Pasha. On arrival they were to join hands with 12th Corps and the Greeks, and form one continuous line from Mustapha to the sea.

It was, of course, absolutely necessary to send a number of troops by this devious route, in order to overawe any Bulgarians who might still feel inclined to show fight, and to guard against a possible descent of the Germans from Sofia. The position in the capital was still obscure ; and it was felt that the only argument the Bulgars would readily understand was the display of men and guns. From the point of view of supplies, this route, which, as the diagram shows, committed us to a line of communications three hundred and fifty miles in length, offered endless difficulties : indeed, it was only by the greatest exertions that the auxiliary services avoided a complete breakdown. The road from Doiran to Strumnitza had been very little used by the Bulgars and was lightly metalled. (Their main line of supplies had run down from Serbia further west along the valley of the Vardar, and the Doiran–Strumnitza road had been rather in the nature of an afterthought. This is clear, because their Decauville railway, which should have connected Strumnitza with Radomir, stopped short twenty-five miles east of the former place—at the spot marked ' Railhead ' on the diagram.) After our lorries had pounded up and down the road for a few days, it rapidly began to lose shape, and the heavy rains which came in the middle of October completed its destruction. At the best of times the road was distinctly dangerous ; for there were many hairpin bends and corkscrew turnings, with an ugly precipice waiting for careless drivers. Yet with the exception of two days during a storm, when the road was quite unpassable, the M.T. drivers went gaily to and fro, taking anything from six to twenty-six hours to cover these thirty miles. The next link

in the chain, from Strumnitza to railhead along the Plain, was less unpleasant, for there were no mountain ranges to cross, but here the road was even more lightly metalled—indeed, it was scarcely more than a track. On a wet day half the lorries would get stuck in the mud, but by dint of helping each other they were eventually extricated.

There were some anxious days in the middle of October when our reserves were perilously low. The animal ration had to be cut down to five pounds of rather damp



grain (hay was far too bulky to be brought up), but the men's ration was maintained throughout. It was of course impossible to get frozen meat or bread : but when you are hungry, biscuits and bully are quite acceptable. After a regrettable lapse of three days, during which everybody who was anybody (and a good many persons who weren't) bombarded advanced G.H.Q. with frantic and indignant telegrams, the rum came up regularly. About the 1st of October the cigarette and match ration made a welcome appearance, and aroused far greater

joy than the Armistice. Officers and men alike were dependent on the weekly 'issue' of cigarettes: for the luxury of Canteen stores could not be allowed on a road which could barely support our necessities. Before the arrival of the ration, the first since September 18th, 'Woodbines' were 'changing hands' at a shilling apiece!

The next link in the chain—the Decauville Railway—deserves a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER II

RAILHEAD OF THE DECAUVILLE

I

THE advance of the 16th Corps from Strumnitza began on the 5th of October. Until the railway was in working order, and until a sufficient reserve of supplies had been built up, it was not considered safe to move more than one Division (the 26th) and a number of Corps troops. The 27th Division remained behind Strumnitza and did not move up till nearly ten days later. G.H.Q. had suddenly discovered that there was a railhead at Strumnitza (a railhead should be run by Army and not by Corps), and sent a Major to relieve me on the 6th. So I managed to escape from this charming spot just in time, for the rains came on a couple of days later and flooded everything.

So I pushed on behind the 26th Division on the Petric road, dumping the supplies from the lorries, as best I could, by the roadside, and issuing straight away to Brigade Supply Officers and any Units who happened to find themselves there. There was still a certain amount of confusion, and stray Units were continually turning up from unexpected places. We trekked about ten miles a day, did our work, camped the night in the rain, and waited for the dawn of another day. For the Infantry, especially, it was an unutterably miserable existence, for they had to travel 'light'—there were no tents or even bivouacs carried, and the men for several days had not even got their great-coats. So that for four days, whilst it rained, every one was wet through to the skin. "If

this is Peace, give us War." I don't know who originated this remark, but I know that every member of the B.S.F. said it on an average ten times a day for the next month. As long as the enemy were sitting in a semicircle round Salonica, the eccentricities of the Staff were checked —there was a limit to the distance you could be moved. But now that the enemy had had the bad taste to give in, we felt that the Staff were unbridled.

We reached Petric in four days. Each day the distance to be covered by the lorries with our supplies from Strumnitza grew ten miles longer, and the road grew worse. The position was becoming serious, when on the 10th the Decauville railway was opened. As will be seen from the diagram, the terminus of the railway is only twenty miles from Strumnitza ; so that the motor-lorries carrying supplies between these two points could comfortably do the double journey in a day.

It was on the 8th that I was definitely told about the new railhead. I was summoned to Corps H.Q. to see the 'Q' Colonel. For the benefit of those unacquainted with Army parlance, it is sufficient to say that 'G' branch of the Staff are the brains who control warlike operations, whilst 'Q' 'feed the brute.' At the present moment 'G,' including the Corps Commander, had moved forward in front of the Division to 'Advanced Corps H.Q.,' and were shouting frantically to 'Q' to hurry on the troops. It is, however, one thing to move forward yourself in a Sunbeam motor-car, but quite another thing to push on twenty thousand men and ten thousand animals. Which accounts for the fact that 'G' were growing impatient and 'Q' were growing old. But when I entered his office (a bell tent), the Colonel's face was illuminated with a seraphic smile. He exuded geniality from every pore.

"The railway," he said radiantly, as I stood severely to attention, "the railway will be opened on the 10th. All our difficulties are at an end ! You will be in charge at railhead." (I nodded glumly—I had guessed as much.) "A large convoy of lorries will report to you on the 9th and subsequently each afternoon. At 0900 hours "

(Anglice, nine o'clock breakfast-time) "on the 10th the first train will arrive empty. You will load the trucks in detail, according to ration strengths given you the previous night. Ten five-ton trucks to each train ; five trains daily at intervals of one to one-and-a-half hours. Between two and three trains will be required for supplies ; accommodation on the remaining trains you must distribute fairly between Ordnance, R.E.'s, Ammunition, and Postal Services. But supplies come first : after that use your discretion."

"Yes, sir." (When in doubt, the Staff always tell you to 'use your discretion.' No Staff Officer can get on without it. If things go wrong, your discretion, and not his instructions, is to blame.—Extract from *Hints to Young Staff Officers*.)

He continued : "You will be told nightly the location of all Units ; and you will direct the engine-driver or the guard to leave the trucks at the nearest station or siding—there are sidings every five miles. You will then wire to the Unit or Brigade the name of the station and the probable time of arrival. The Unit will arrange to meet it and take over."

"Excuse me, sir," I said, interrupting the flow of instructions ; "you said I was to give the engine-driver instructions. I suppose he'll belong to one of our Railway Companies?"

"Oh no," said the Colonel casually, "all the railway service is being run by the Bulgars. We haven't got enough men to take over."

"But," I said indignantly, "I can't speak Bulgarian."

"I have made provision for that," the Colonel said sternly, after a moment's pause, which showed quite plainly he had made no provision whatsoever ; "I will —that is to say, I have instructed an interpreter to report to you. Besides," he added grandly, "*I* will be there the first day to see everything is running smoothly."

"Then of course," I said ingratiatingly, "everything will be all right," though I must admit I failed to see how his presence would greatly help matters—for he couldn't speak a word of anything but English.

"I suppose, sir," I said, "there will be an R.T.O." (Railway Transport Officer) "to—er, to" (I couldn't for the moment remember what an R.T.O.'s duties are) "to—er, regulate the traffic?"

"No," said the Colonel, "you'll have to carry on by yourself for the present. And that reminds me [NOTE.—Whenever a Staff Officer is 'reminded,' get out of the room quickly and unostentatiously], "you'll be getting reinforcements—drafts, returning leave parties and what-not. Knock up some sort of a rest camp for them—you'll find plenty of empty huts there; and pack them off next day on top of the trucks. They'll do as a guard."

"Yes, sir," I said again.

"Oh, by the way. The French, English and Italian Prisoners of War will be sent down to you from Radomir. You must do all you can for them—I'll give you detailed instructions later. I've applied for an officer to take on this job. In the meanwhile you must carry on."

"Is that all, sir?" I asked faintly.

"Yes," he said, after a moment's consideration. "That's all for the present. I may think of something else later. Get out a time-table and everything will go like clockwork. If you have any trouble with the Bulgarians, just point your revolver at them—they'll understand that" (I blanched visibly: I have never had any practice at shooting engine-drivers. Besides, supposing the engine-driver retaliated! Already I saw the flaming headline: "EXTRAORDINARY OCCURRENCE. DEATH OF AN A.S.C. OFFICER!") "For the rest," he concluded, "er——"

"Use my discretion, sir?" I asked maliciously.

"Yes," said the Colonel with a twinkle in his eye, "use your discretion. Good-morning."

II

I don't quite know whether I expected the railhead to be a kind of Charing Cross in embryo, but I admit I was rather disappointed with it. It consisted of the

one main line of Decauville *in esse* with one siding *in posse*, on which the R.E.'s were working frantically. On either side of the rails there stretched the dreary flat plain, covered with gorse-bushes. A good loop-road led from the main Strumnitza–Petric road, which was half a mile away. But before the lorries could be discharged, it was necessary to clear the shrubbery from the side of the track, to have a space for 'dumping.' So a gang of Maltese labourers set to with a will, and in a few hours the space was cleared. In the meantime I searched for a billet. There were a number of huts on either side of the line, but the only habitable one had been occupied by the R.E. Company for the Officers' Mess. The others were so indescribably filthy that I decided to live and sleep in a tent. The jaded and moth-eaten appearance of the Sapper officers the next morning proved clearly that I had chosen the better part.

The next morning (the 10th) I was up at dawn in case the first train should arrive before scheduled time. After four days' incessant rain the sun rose in a cloudless sky, and gradually warmed the chill air. Slowly the snow-white mist that shrouds the earth at dawn dissolved, and disclosed sweet, laughing Nature in her glorious raiment of dew. Autumn is the most pleasant season of the year in the Balkans. The first few hours of day, before the flies are awake, lend a meretricious charm to the bleak landscape; again, when the golden rays of the setting sun light up the mountains with a halo of barbaric splendour, and Darkness gently covers the earth with the voluptuous folds of her mantle, one feels something of the mysterious charm of this strange country. These are moments to live for, moments which even the monotony of two years' incarceration in the Balkans cannot rob of their pleasure. The burning glare of the midday sun truthfully reveals the country in all its bare, unsympathetic ugliness, but dawn and sunset, rather by what they conceal than by what they disclose, lend it an illusionary but comforting air of majesty. It is futile, you may say, to be so childishly deceived:

yet there are times when illusion is more acceptable than reality.

The scenery was much the same in Bulgaria as in Macedonia. To the north the plain, flat and dreary, yet less dreary than the uncultivated waste of the Struma, stretches as far as the eye can see, till far away in the distance the snow-clad peaks that protect the heart of Bulgaria stand out dimly in the background. To the south, blocking out everything, rises up the great wall of Belashitza, at whose feet the railway runs. Yet though the scenery is the same, how different the situation! Every child knows of some room which is barred and locked. He knows only that behind it lies enchanted ground, where the fairies dwell—so much he may know or he may guess, but he cannot enter, for he is a mortal and his hands may not hold the divine key. So too, for many weary years, we had sat in front of the Belashitza door, wondering what was behind it, our curiosity stimulated by glancing through the peep-hole of the Rupel Pass. And then suddenly we had been given the key, and we had walked into the sacred room, and Belashitza, once a forbidding, Charon-like spoil-sport, had become a steadfast friend and helper. So much difference does it make to view your obstacle—from the farther side!

About nine o'clock the Staff began to arrive. Though they had to motor forty miles, they realized the importance of this, the first train, and had sacrificed their breakfast on the sacred altar of duty. There were four Staff Officers altogether—just a nice number for bridge, I thought inwardly. There were, however, no signs of the train or the interpreter. (The latter arrived three days later: like most native interpreters, his knowledge of English was so poor that he misunderstood his instructions. There are two varieties of interpreters, and two only: Englishmen who cannot understand the language which they are supposed to interpret, and natives who do not understand English. Some day, I hope, the two breeds will be crossed, and we shall get an ideal interpreter.)

Towards ten the Colonel began to grow impatient, and telephoned to all his friends to find out if any one had seen the train. (If there was any one I pitied more than myself during the next three weeks, it was the two 'Signals' orderlies in charge of the telephone—they led a dog's life.) At last he was informed that the first train had just left Petric. Five minutes later this message was supplemented by another—the train had left Petric, it is true: but it had now come back. There was apparently trouble with the engine-driver. After another false start the train was reported to be full-steam ahead. Whereupon the Colonel left the harassed 'Signals' orderlies, mounted on to an enormous stack of bully-beef, and started playing that game so dear to Staff Officers, that of 'scanning the horizon' through field-glasses. Considering that Petric was fifteen miles away, and that it was effectually concealed from view by a dip in the land, this seemed rather futile. But Staff Officers are as imitative as children. Ever since some one painted a picture of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo scanning the horizon through his field-glasses (searching apparently for the Mess-cook who had absconded with his luncheon), all betabbed gentlemen have performed this solemn rite as in duty bound. Indeed, there are only two kinds of Staff Officer—those who scan the horizon, and those who are returned to their regiments as 'unfit.'

Meanwhile, two other Staff Officers were dispatched on separate errands—one to go along the Petric road (which ran beside the Decauville track) until he came upon the train, and then to "put a bit of ginger into the engine-driver, and hustle the train along," the other to pick some mushrooms for lunch. Of which two errands the latter appeared to me the more sensible.

By midday the Colonel grew tired (physically, but not mentally) of the Napoleonic stance, and descended again to earth. I suggested lunch.

"It is no earthly good worrying," said the Colonel with ill-disguised impatience; "we've got to wait till the damned thing turns up. In the meanwhile there

is no reason why we should starve—if you don't mind giving us a bit of grub."

So we sat down on some empty boxes and partook of a hearty meal. The *chef-d'œuvre* and *hors-d'œuvre* consisted of a large plateful of succulent mushrooms. (Who dares to say the Staff are useless?)

At two o'clock we were aroused from our postprandial siesta (the day was hot, and we were determined to keep calm) by the unmistakable sound of a shrill whistle not more than a mile away.

In a moment every one was on his feet—I might almost say on each other's feet. For the next ten minutes I was bombarded with questions: "Have you got everything ready?" "Is the loading party here?" "Where are the checkers?" "Have you got the rations split up all right?"—to all of which I answered impartially in the affirmative. Then the great moment arrived—and the train, making a final spurt, dashed in at five miles an hour.

None of the men had had any experience of train-loading. (It is not so easy as it appears to load an uncovered truck, at any rate up to the full weight allowed. "Ce sont les dernières tonnes qui coûtent." However, we soon learnt to stack the cases pyramid-fashion, three feet above the top ledge of the truck, in such a way that, although apparently in imminent danger of falling off, they always saved themselves at the last moment.) After satisfying myself that, thanks to (or in spite of) the fervid exhortations of the Staff, the work was going on all right, I walked up the train to the engine-driver, to instruct him what stations to stop at. The position was really Gilbertian, like most situations in the Balkans. Ten days ago this self-same engine-driver had been doing all in his power to assist in the destruction of my friends and myself, and now I had to give him casual "Home, James" instructions. I advanced towards him with a quiet, dignified, 'parcere-subjectis-et-debellare-superbos' attitude intended to suggest that

(*a*) although he was the conquered, and I the conqueror, we British, etc. Consequently,

(*b*) if he behaved himself, he could be assured of good treatment from me. But,

(*c*) if he made a nuisance of himself, he would be "for it in the morning."

As an outward symbol I placed my right hand on my revolver (or where it would have been had I been wearing one), and with my left I presented him with a tin of 'bully.' Whether or not he noticed the revolver business, I cannot say. He certainly noticed the tin of bully, and became very amicable. I gathered from his gestures that the fare provided by the Bulgarian A.S.C. had not lately been quite up to form. I then produced a map from my pocket, and tried to show him with the assistance of pantomime where the trucks were to go. "First two," and I raised two fingers and pointed to the two trucks nearest the engine, "Livunovo—compree?" But it was quite plain he had *not* 'compree'd.' The Staff came along and joined in the conversation, but after ten minutes' hard work we had got no further: the engine-driver and the guard grinned cheerfully, apparently under the misapprehension that we were acting a little play for their benefit. The difficulty was at last solved by the arrival of a French-speaking Bulgarian officer, who was only just in time to save the Colonel from an apoplectic fit. We then discovered that most of the places marked on our map were called by entirely different names in Bulgar. 'Livunovo,' for instance, was called "General Todoroff's Junction." The connection is not apparent—indeed, I have always wanted to know who General Todoroff really was; I feel sure he must have been a great man.

At three o'clock the train was loaded, and we waved to the Bulgarian officer to 'let her rip.' My suggestion that the engine, which was palpably 'made in Germany,' should fly the Union Jack was only defeated because we had no flag. Finally, after a comic interlude between the engine-driver and his officer, during which the former declared he had no water for the engine, the train steamed out, the men cheered, and the Staff motored away in triumph, thoroughly satisfied with the day's work.

KRESNA PASS. OCTOBER 1918.

CHAPTER III

A HARD LIFE

If life really consists in overcoming difficulties, then I can safely say that I lived for the first—and I pray, the only—time of my life during these three weeks. The neat little time-table of hours, which I had drawn up at the Staff's behest, was never destined to work out 'according to plan,' partly owing to the adhesive quality of Bulgarian mud, partly owing to the eccentricities of the Bulgarian railway services. Instead of a convoy of fifty lorries arriving together once a day, they came in driblets at all hours of the day and night. They could not be kept waiting; for they had to return to camp the same night, and get back to Strumnitza early the next morning to reload. Most of the drivers spent their twenty-four hours as follows: ten hours on the road, ten hours stuck in the mud, four hours for meals and sleep. The Company was so reduced in numbers that it was out of the question to have a spare driver for each lorry, as there should be; it was all they could do to find enough men to keep the lorries going. Yet the men 'carried on,' although red-eyed for want of sleep, with the utmost goodwill and without a murmur of discontent. They knew they were 'doing their bit,' and they understood that the success of the campaign depended as much on their efforts as any one's.

I have said the Bulgarian railway system was eccentric, but I have understated the case. According to the schedule, five trains were to arrive at intervals of an hour or an hour and a half during the morning.

In actual practice we never had more than four, and as a rule, not more than three a day; and these arrived at any time during the twenty-four hours—except the morning. I know nothing more exasperating than train-loading at night, with no flares, but only a few candles and the fitful light of the moon. As long as the moon lasted, as it did from the 10th till the 20th, we carried on, but when the moon struck work, we were forced to strike too, as we had no flares, and confined ourselves at night to the impossible task of squaring accounts. The men—I had only eight A.S.C. men—'stuck it' wonderfully. Any one can work well in the daytime, but when you have to work most nights as well, never sitting down for a minute, the strain is severe. The men had been on the go ever since September 18th, but their energy never showed any sign of flagging. The work was too much for the poor little Maltese who did most of the loading. They started a hundred strong; but after a week, two had died and another forty were in hospital. They couldn't grow accustomed to the severity of the climate (it was beginning to get very cold at night), and the nightwork overtaxed their strength. They were all rather undersized, and the cases and sacks they had to shift, weighing anything from a hundred to two hundred pounds, were too heavy for men of their size. Yet they were wonderfully plucky, working till they dropped. During the occasional intervals of rest during the day, they would practise 'turning cartwheels' amongst themselves! The Maltese is the only man I know of who cannot work without talking. At first I mistook their fire of repartee for a sign of laziness, and told the foreman that they must work without this constant babble. The effect of this order was amazing—they suddenly seemed to lose all power of working. After that, I let them chatter as much as they pleased. Later, they were reinforced by fifty men from a British Labour Company, who worked silently and steadily, and later still by native labour combed out from the neighbouring villages. With these I will deal in a later chapter.

But the eccentricities of the Bulgar were not confined to unpunctuality. On three occasions they succeeded in derailing an engine, effectually holding up all traffic for twenty-four hours. Most people believed that this was done on purpose, but I am inclined to doubt it. The Bulgars were certainly 'fed up'—their war was over, and they wanted to go home, having no further interest in the matter. (This craving for demobilization is not confined to Bulgaria, as recent demonstrations in England have shown.) But, beyond that, they bore us no animosity, and they had little to gain from these 'accidents.' Moreover, the track between railhead and Petric, where all the accidents occurred, had been very badly laid—indeed, I fancy it had never before been used; and had it not been essential to cut down the motor transport stage to a minimum, it would have paid us better to use Petric as railhead.

Journeys on the line, on top of the loaded trucks, were often sensational. I never undertook one myself, but a friend of mine back from leave, who was going up to join his battalion, told me the following tale afterwards.

"When I left you the other day *en route* for Krupnic" (just north of the Kresna Pass), "reckoning eight miles an hour to be on the safe side, I calculated we should get in about ten o'clock that night. My calculations soon proved wrong, for three reasons. First, we ran out of water for the engine." (This was always happening, in spite of a number of tanks placed at suitable stations. No journey was accomplished without a shortage of water—or, if not of water, then of coal. The Bulgars are an extraordinarily improvident race.) "This put us back three hours. Second, it was soon apparent that the engine-driver was suffering from an acute attack of dysentery, and was compelled on that account to stop the train every ten minutes to ease himself. But the third trouble very nearly proved the most serious of the lot. We got to Kriva Livada" (the southern entrance to the Kresna Pass) "as dawn was breaking. All around the station were masses of Bulgarians—demobilizing centre, I expect. There must

have been ten thousand of them at least. Seemed a bit funny—about six Englishmen in the middle of a whole Bulgar Division. But they seemed as quiet as sheep—when suddenly I saw a big man, a nasty-looking bruiser, coming in a threatening sort of a way towards the train. I got out my revolver, to be on the safe side. But it wasn't me he was after—it was the engine-driver. I saw that at once, and I guessed they were enemies. I could have guessed it from the look in their faces, even if I hadn't heard their chatty little conversation. They weren't just ordinary enemies, mind you—they must have been in the professional vendetta line. They slanged each other for a bit—I couldn't understand a word they were saying, but it made me blush to the ears." (I smiled incredulously.) "Then, my friend Bill, the engine-driver, got off, and they had a regular rough-and-tumble set to. I put five drachmas on Bill with another chap who was on the train. I'd nearly won my money, when the enemy got hold of a stick. Bill wasn't far behind him, and got a stick too. They set to again, belabouring each other like the devil. Then, all of a sudden, the 'enemy' put his hand inside his tunic and produced an ugly-looking knife. Bill followed suit—only a size larger. Things were looking pretty serious. If Bill had got knifed, I should have lost my five 'dracs'—and what's more, we should have been stuck there for ever. It seemed a shame to spoil their fun, but there was nothing for it—so the other officer and I got off the train and disarmed them."

"Did they take things quietly?" I asked.

"Yes; after a time, Bill got up on the train and we started off. It was a merry little meeting though—I should like to have seen the end of it. We got through the Pass all right—fine sight, isn't it? Twelve miles in and out of it—the railroad built out of a ledge on the side of the mountain, with the Struma down below, simply imploring you to 'drop in.' We got there at ten in the morning—and the battalion gave me the finest reception I've ever had."

"I'm sure they were glad to see you back, old chap," I said.

"Oh! it wasn't that. You see, they had had no breakfast, and their rations were on board the train."

Gradually we managed to build up a small reserve at Radomir, the far terminus of the Decauville, where the troops were entraining on the broad-gauge for Mustapha Pasha. The Infantry entrained just south of the Kresna Pass, on the Decauville for Radomir, but the Transport and the Gunners had to march to a point thirty miles south of Radomir, where they turned east and reached the main Berlin–Constantinople line at Kostenetz, not far south-east of Sofia. The leading battalions reached Radomir somewhere about the 20th, and entrained immediately for Mustapha. It was consequently essential that, in addition to the rations sent up daily for the troops moving up along the Decauville, a substantial reserve should be held at Radomir for the troops that had reached Mustapha. It was a hand-to-mouth existence, especially when the breakdowns occurred; but I don't think (except for one day at Mustapha) that any Unit had to go really short. At first, when we formed small dumps in advance of the Infantry, the trains were rifled by the demobilizing Bulgarian Army, who were very hungry, and stray portions of the ration never reached their destination. But after that we adopted sterner measures; a guard of six men and one N.C.O. from a Cyclist Battalion was placed on each train, with strict orders to fire at sight on any Bulgar who showed a disposition to approach the train. The threat was sufficient; no blood was shed, and the pilfering ceased.

So much, then, for supplies—that was only the beginning of my troubles. It may be remembered that any trucks on trains not required for supplies were to be distributed amongst various claimants 'at my discretion.' All the discretion I ever had (and then some—as the Americans say) was needed for this invidious task. At all times of the day I would be

besieged by the representatives at railhead of the following departments :—

(1) R.E's.
(2) Ammunition.
(3) Ordnance.
(4) Postal.
(5) Medical (not to mention Veterinary).
(6) Staff Captain of the 228th Brigade.

The first five representatives were probably only N.C.O's, or subalterns like myself—with them I could deal briefly. "I'm sorry," I would say; "there are only three trains to-day; they're all required for supplies. I can let the Post have one truck on the last train [murmurs of discontent from the remaining four representatives]. That's all I can do for you. If there are three trains instead of five, it's not *my* fault." After that, I would be left in peace for at least twenty minutes. But with the Staff Captain of the 228th Brigade more tact was required. It had been decided that Varna and Burgas (Bulgarian ports on the Black Sea) should be garrisoned by the British. Too-Late' Brigade, with a mixed force of Gunners, R.E.'s, doctors, etc. They were to be given a month's R.E.'s, doctors, etc. They were to be given a month's rations—and after that they were to fend for themselves, and live on the resources of the country. In official language, they were to be an 'Independent Force.' On the 10th of October, the Brigadier commanding the Independent Brigade came to see me. "I'm going on ahead," he said, "to make the necessary arrangements, with my Brigade Major and Staff Captain. I'm leaving behind my Assistant Staff Captain to see the Brigade off. They'll march in here to-morrow, and I want you to move them off by train as quickly as you can. I shall expect them all at Radomir not later than the 17th. Now," he concluded with a charming smile, "I look to you to see this through." I saluted smartly and promised to do my best. So the General motored off in a Ford Car and an optimistic mood.

His expectations were not to be realized. For the next three weeks the same dialogue took place daily between the Staff Captain and myself (when, after several successful attempts to evade him, I was at last collared).

Staff Captain: "Good morning."

I: "Good morning."

S. C.: "Well! What luck to-day?"

I: "Afraid I've only got room for fifty men—they can go on the loaded supply train to Radomir."

S. C.: "But what about stores?"

I: "Sorry—can't be done."

S. C.: "But look here—the General's getting very impatient. I've had three wires from him already this morning, and two from the Brigade Major."

I: "Sorry, old chap—not my fault. I get impatient, too—at times."

For the rest of the day, the Staff Captain would follow me round in a mournful, more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger manner, apparently in the childish belief that I kept a spare train hidden up my sleeve.

About six o'clock at night the fun would begin. A Signal orderly would come along and say: "Five 'Priorities' for you, sir." (Before the 'show,' when things were slack, few wires were marked 'Urgent.' But once the offensive began, every one marked their's 'Very urgent.' Then some bright fellow started marking his 'Priority'—which signifies in Americanese, "Get off my toes. I'm the big noise in this push." Soon every one adopted 'priority' wires—which left things very much the same as they were before the offensive. The only certain way of obtaining priority is to sign your wires 'C.-in-C.' This method, however, is not to be recommended.)

I would read the first one:

R.S.O.[1] Kilo 24.

No "R.E." stores received by 26th Div. for forty-eight hours aaa wire cause of delay aaa stores most urgently required aaa

(Signed) C.E.[2] 16th Corps.

[1] Railhead Supply Officer. [2] Chief Engineer (a Brigadier-General).

Then the next one :

18-pounder ammunition most urgently required Mustapha Pasha aaa Send at once train-load Radomir aaa in future ammunition to be given priority to every service but supplies aaa

(Signed) 16th Corps.

The next one :

Absolutely essential great-coats be despatched forthwith aaa Dispatch four truck-loads to-morrow destination as follows aaa—etc.

(Signed) A.D.O.S.[1] 16th Corps.

And so the merry game went on. At first I tore my hair; but I soon grew hardened, for I realized how useless it was to worry. Each day some new service was made 'priority'; and generally when the trucks had been loaded, say, with ammunition, I would receive a wire, 'Cancel previous instructions and send R.E. stores in lieu ammunition, as same no longer required.' No wonder I was told to 'use my discretion.'

Every day some hundred stray officers and men would come along from Strumnitza (either out of hospital or from leave) to rejoin their Units. (After the 20th of October, when the 27th Division had moved up the line as well, there were many more.) We did the best we could for them—two or three would sleep in my tent, but the remainder had to lie out the night on top of the grain-sacks. In those days it took about ten days (if you were lucky) to get from Salonica to Mustapha. One party of men—a draft of twelve M.T. drivers—I remember particularly. They were sent from Doiran to join an M.T. Company 'attached to 26th Division.' They reached me after five days (the majority of them spent stuck in the mud). I had never heard of this particular Company, but the instructions were explicit; so I gave them a week's rations, and sent them along via Radomir to Mustapha, which the 26th Division had already reached. They returned ten days later, having journeyed some five hundred miles. "There ain't no such a Company no-

[1] Assistant Director Ordnance Services (Lieut.-Colonel).

where, sir—we was told to come back." So back they went to Doiran. I afterwards learnt that by a clerical error their instructions read '26th Division' instead of 28th Division.' The Company to which they should have reported was sitting comfortably two miles from Doiran. Probably by the time they had got back the Company had moved (for the 28th Division went on to Constantinople)—I often wonder if they have found their Unit yet.

In a rough sort of way, one did a good deal of entertaining. Just a mug of tea and a plate of bully in company make all the difference to a man who has a long journey before him. Naturally, one tried to do all one could; for travelling in the Balkans is about the most uncomfortable thing I know of. From railhead to Radomir alone meant two days and two nights sitting in an open truck on top of a stack of cases, with nothing to warm you except a tot of rum. I often wonder how many lives were saved by rum during those five weeks. Just imagine what it must have been to be evacuated sick from Mustapha to one of the hospitals at the base under such conditions.

I suppose, in addition to dozen of friends who passed through or came to see me, I must have met and rubbed shoulders with at least three or four hundred officers and literally thousands of men at Strumnitza and railhead, during those few weeks. I was struck by the extraordinary cheeriness and good humour of everybody during the whole of the 'show.' Indeed, every one laughed at their discomforts, and had a cheerful word and a grin for everything. This comradeship in arms, which brings all officers and men, irrespective of their rank, together on the same footing, members of a family, is one of my pleasantest memories of an unpleasant campaign. One cannot but hope that it will survive after the War, and be a determining factor in the settlement of 'class' difficulties which are bound to arise in this foolish, fretful, struggling existence. Few men can have gone through this War (I speak of soldiers)

without acquiring an added confidence in, and an added admiration for, the good qualities of their fellow-creatures. One realizes how many controversies in the past were due to misunderstanding rather than to any basic difference. For that at least we have to thank the Kaiser.

On one occasion only I lost my temper. I had been up all the previous night loading a train, and in the morning the Staff rang up to say there had been a mistake, and that the train wasn't really required. They much regretted, etc., etc. When I got back from the 'phone to the railway, I was conscious of that uneasy feeling, common to criminals, that my footsteps were being dogged. Turning round, I beheld a young officer whose face betrayed all the marked features of the congenital idiot.

"Excuse me," he said, "are you busy?"

"Yes, very," I said as graciously as possible.

"Well, I want to consult you. Can you tell me how I can get leave to go to Montreal?"

"I'm sorry," I said shortly; "I'm afraid I can't."

"Oh!" he said, with a blank look, as if he hadn't understood, and I walked away.

Three times during the morning, and always when I was most busy, he came up to 'consult' me about leave to Montreal. It was plain that he was a 'sticker.' The fourth time, I lost my temper. He had got no farther than 'I want to consult you,' when I shouted angrily:

"As far as I am concerned, you can go to Montreal right away. Go to Hell, if you like—but for the Lord's sake, leave me in peace!" After that he ceased to molest me personally. But in the afternoon the 'Q' Colonel paid me one of his frequent visits. I thought it fair to warn him—for Staff Officers are precious things.

"I am bound to tell you, sir," I said in that whisper dear to stage conspirators, "that if you remain here any time you will probably be molested, and possibly

assaulted, by a lunatic who is here at large. You can't mistake him : he has only two features—a receding forehead and a receding chin. It's a bit of a race, but I think the chin get's there first. If, sir, he should ask to consult you about getting leave to Montreal, I strongly advise you to—er, use your discretion."

" Thank you for warning me," said the Colonel gratefully.

A few minutes later, I saw the ' man for Montreal ' approach the Colonel, and I overheard their conversation.

" Excuse me, sir, are you Colonel ——? "

" Yes," said the Colonel apprehensively.

" Then I should like to consult you, sir——"

But the Colonel didn't wait for more—he was off in his car like a flash of lightning.

Then there was the French Admiral. He ' blew in ' one afternoon in a breezy, nautical way. The first thing one noticed about him was his absurd likeness, in his manners, in his appearance and in his speech, to the Frenchman of the English stage : what we used to call before the War a ' typical ' Frenchman. (Of course, there is no such thing really as a ' typical ' Frenchman.) I knew instinctively, before he opened his mouth, that he spoke broken English and lived on a staple diet of frogs.

" How will you, sir? " he began graciously. " You are ze Commandant of ze chemin-de-fer, ees eet not? "

I bowed and we shook hands. I asked him (in French) whom I had the pleasure of addressing.

" I am," he said, his chest swelling visibly, " ze—how you say?—Admiral commanding ze flotte of ze Danube. I arrive now with fifty marins. I 'ave in my pocket a letter from ze Commandant-en-Chef des Armées Alliées, autorizing my immediate voyage to Radomir, and from zaire to ze Danube."

I looked at his papers—they were signed ' Franchet d'Espérey.'

" I am sorry to tell you," I began in French, " that

there has been a breakdown on the line. Perhaps to-morrow we might find an empty truck for you."

He interrupted me: "But I 'ave also twenty large —how you say?—booms. Zey are very dangerous—zey must make ze voyage carefully."

"Booms!" I said to myself; "what on earth does he mean—bombs?" We walked out together—he to find his men, I to inspect the 'booms.' To my horror, I saw his sailors discharging from lorries in the very middle of my dump twenty enormous evil-looking mines. Even the mines didn't appear real—they looked like stage properties. But this decided me; I took out my pad and wired to Headquarters:

"French Admiral, fifty sailors, and twenty mines reported for destructive duty on Danube aaa wire disposal aaa safety of railhead demands immediate removal from vicinity aaa." In a quarter of an hour I got a reply: "Reference your [number given], hasten departure by all means aaa. Treat Admiral as priority aaa."

In view of the breakdown on the line, I could not expect any more trains till the morrow. After casting an anxious glance at the 'booms,' I led the Admiral into my little hut (it had just been vacated by the R.E's, and I lived there with the Prisoners of War Rest Camp Officer), and asked him to make himself at home for the night. This he did.

With extraordinary volubility and in incredibly vile English, the Admiral proceeded to lay bare the secrets of his heart. I do not feel justified in revealing all he told me, save to mention that he was "ze complete sportsman. He played ze golf, and he made ze swim." Under the influence of mixed rum-punch and 'pinard' (the wine issued to French troops), he admitted that the fleet of the Danube consisted only of one Bulgarian gun-boat, which, under the terms of the Armistice, we were to take over. There also appeared some little doubt about his claim to the rank of Admiral. He was a Lieutenant in the French Navy, but this rank (for some obscure reason on which he dilated at

length) 'corresponded' to the rank of Admiral in the English Navy. We had a capital evening; and on the morrow I got him and his murderous weapons safely away. But I don't believe he will ever murder anybody, all the same—he was not that kind of man.

About the 25th of the month, to complicate matters further, a French Division (the 16th Colonial) began to dribble in. Originally, I believe, they were intended to come under the orders of the 16th Corps and reinforce us on the Turkish Frontier. But five days later, Turkey followed the example of Bulgaria, and the French turned north to reach the Danube and join hands with Roumania.

The French Colonials are generally admitted to be splendid fighters, but rather a 'tough' crowd, from the social point of view. They were certainly not as gentle with the natives as we were—but then our universal kindness is rather exaggerated, and is apt to be misunderstood by the ignorant for weakness. I do not for a moment mean that the French Colonials were addicted to real violence, but, in the matter of eggs, chickens and other portable property, they took what they wanted at their own price. With us it was always necessary to obtain the consent of the natives first, and then to pay them whatever sum they demanded. One or two 'misunderstandings' occurred at railhead, where Frenchmen were seen calmly walking off with English rations. (The French had one train a day for supplies, and a 'dump' next to mine.) But the French 'Intendant,' with whom I worked in liaison, always made them return the loot, and no serious trouble arose.

One day the 'Intendant' came to me in great excitement, and told me his Divisional General was at railhead, and wished to be introduced to me. This was my first experience of French Generals, and I was rather nervous. "It's quite simple," the 'Intendant' reassured me. "Always end with 'mon Général,' and all will be well. Besides, the General is a charming man." I spotted the General at once, standing beside

a big grey car, and hurried forward to meet him. (N.B. Always approach Generals 'at the run.' If you don't trip up over your spurs, it's impressive.) He was beautifully dressed in multi-coloured garments. I searched in vain for any portion of his anatomy which was not covered in gold braid or ribbons—there wasn't any. Behind him stood a French private, dressed in plain blue uniform, apparently his chauffeur. "My General," I began breathlessly, saluting, and anxious to begin with 'le mot juste,' "My General, I am proud, indeed, of the honour of meeting you, my General." The General smiled, but did not reply. I was conscious of the 'Intendant' breathing in my ear: "That's not the General, you fool—that's only his A.D.C. The one behind." Good Lord! It was the man I had mistaken for a chauffeur who was the General. Now I noticed that he had three small stars on his cap—but appearances are deceptive. I had to begin all over again—this time I forgot the 'mon Général' business, but he didn't mind at all; for, even as the 'Intendant' had said, he was a very charming man.

Another acquaintance of mine at railhead was the French-speaking Bulgarian Railway Officer who lived there, and with whom I was necessarily thrown into contact by our joint work. If there was trouble with the engine-driver (and there generally was), I would first try the persuasion of a tin of 'bully.' If that failed, I sent for the Bulgarian officer. The extent of my intimacy with him, however, was continually being changed and modified in a maddening way by a succession of contradictory Army Orders. First of all we were told that, an Armistice having been signed with Bulgaria, we were expected to show the utmost moderation and amiability to the natives, or to any Bulgarian officer or soldier in conjunction with whom we had to work. That was quite clear—and I soon adjusted myself to these conditions. I treated my Bulgarian acquaintance not, of course, as a friend, but not as a member of a hostile race. Occasionally we would talk of the War. For the last two years he had been 'R.T.O.' at Petric.

He said frankly that he hated soldiering, and that he was only too delighted to get a job out of the line. He was the only Bulgarian officer with whom I had much to do, and I do not think he was in any way representative of the race. One day another Army Order was published : " The Commander-in-Chief notices with surprise and regret that English soldiers are fraternizing in a friendly way with Bulgarians. In spite of the Armistice, the Bulgarians are still our enemies. The British must be courteous in their official dealings with them, but no further intercourse is to be permitted. The Commander-in-Chief directs that all familiarity shall cease forthwith."

After that I had no further conversations with the Bulgar—he must have thought my behaviour very strange.

On the 2nd of November the new route was opened (see diagram opposite p. 151). The Constantinople railway had been rebuilt as far as the left bank of the Struma, a mile west of Demir-Hissar. Here the line crosses the river over the big Demir-Hissar Bridge. It was impossible to carry the reconstruction further, as the bridge had been blown up by the French in 1916, and it would have taken months to construct even a temporary one. So the trains were unloaded west of the Struma, and the supplies taken by mule transport to Rupel railhead, a distance of five miles. Here they were loaded on to the other fork of the Decauville (the two forks join just north of Petric) and proceeded onwards.

As a consequence, my railhead was no longer required. The various depots on this now extinct line of communication (at Doiran, Hasanli, Cestova, and Strumnitza) sent me all their remains, which I passed on to Radomir. For this I was allowed one train a day—the remainder being diverted to Rupel. A few odd parties still remained (including oddments of the hapless ' Too-Too-Late ' Brigade), and the débris was not finally cleared till the 11th of November—a day which thus became doubly famous.

I did not remain behind to 'wind up'—for on the 3rd of November my Senior Supply Officer 'wrangled' a job as A.S.C. 'attaché' to the British Military Mission in Sofia, and I was sent for to take his place at 'rear' Corps Headquarters, Sveti Vrac. Of that more anon.

BULGAR TROOPS, STRUMNITZA VALLEY. OCTOBER 1918.

CHAPTER IV

LAST DAYS IN BULGARIA

(*a*) RETURN OF THE PRISONERS OF WAR

THE returning Prisoners of War, about two hundred a day, began to reach railhead on the Strumnitza Plain about the 14th of October. Most of them had been in the big prison-camp at Philippopolis, and had come back through Sofia and Radomir, after a long and tiring journey, the last two days and nights spent in open trucks. They remained the night at railhead in a camp a few yards away, where by the profuse application of disinfectants the Bulgar huts had been comparatively cleansed.

Altogether there were about 2,500 of them; a thousand British, a thousand French and five hundred Italians. In addition there was a smattering of Russians, Montenegrins and Serbs. About thirty thousand of the latter, all that had survived of the hundred and twenty thousand prisoners lost by the Serbs during the retreat of '15, were still at Radomir, for they were unfit to be moved. A friend of mine, an R.A.M.C. Major, who went specially to Radomir to superintend all our medical arrangements for their relief and care, drew the most horrible picture of their condition. Many more than half had been either murdered, or left in a corner to die slowly of starvation. Those who had survived the terrible ordeal (God knows how!) were completely broken in body and spirit. Though they had been told that their captivity was at an end, they were far too enfeebled even to feel, much less to express,

joy. It is not my desire to harrow my readers' feelings, but when Bulgaria comes to the Peace Conference in the pleasant guise of Injured Innocence, it is to be hoped that her abominable cruelty will not be overlooked. The man at home who has seen nothing of the Balkans is apt to think that there is nothing to choose between the various Balkan States. "They're all of them savage, barbarous brutes." How often since I came home have I heard this monstrously unfair judgment passed! Here was no occasional atrocity (as occurs too frequently in the Balkans), but the deliberate, cold-blooded extermination of tens of thousands of men.

In appearance the French prisoners looked by far the healthiest. But this appearance was only illusionary, on the surface, for they had recently been fitted out by the French authorities with new uniforms. Our own men and the Italians were scrappily dressed, in civilian clothes with an occasional sprinkling of uniform —here a pair of breeches, there a cap. This gave them a rather ragged, forlorn appearance.

I spoke to many of them of their experiences in captivity, but it is rather difficult to sum them up, as they differed so widely. Generally speaking, I should say that the officers were well treated: many of them were given a surprising amount of liberty. But the men did not fare so well. Most of them had been at Philippopolis, where the conditions were disgraceful. Not only were the men deliberately neglected, but in many cases they were subjected to brutality. The parcels sent out to them were stolen from them beneath their very eyes. I was delighted to see the other day the announcement of Mr. Balfour that the Bulgarian Commandant of Philippopolis would be brought up for trial: if a tenth of the charges brought against him can be proved, he richly deserves to be shot.

Several hundreds of our prisoners had been taken in 1915, during the retirement of the 10th Division from Serbia; others, again, had only been in captivity three weeks. Those who had been prisoners for three years had had a terrible experience. They had been

sent up to the north of Bulgaria, to work on the land. There they had been treated by the ignorant farmers with a mixture of savage neglect and brutality. An Englishman is far more sensitive than a Bulgarian peasant : what the latter is accustomed to, will kill the former. And so many of our poor fellows had lacked the endurance, and had fallen down dead in the fields where they worked.

All the prisoners complained that they had been terribly short of food : had it not been for the parcels they received from home, they would have starved. All alike had that pinched, tired look in the face which comes from underfeeding. Even in the midst of their happiness at release, a shadow of pain would from time to time flit across their faces.

One night the men, at the suggestion of the officer in charge of the rest-camp, who did all in his power to make their night's stay as happy as possible, decided to have an open-air concert. I strolled over after dinner with some friends.

It was a glorious night. Above the mighty pile of Belashitza a full moon was slowly rising into the starry heavens. In the centre of a deserted field a mighty bonfire of wood from a dismantled hut had been kindled. Every few minutes the fire would blaze out afresh, as more wood was piled on to the glowing heap. In a circle round the fire, chatting quietly, laughing and smoking, were gathered together as strange a collection of men as I have ever seen, about four hundred of them—English, French, Italian, Serb, Greek, Russian, Cochin-Chinese—sitting or standing together. To complete the picture, half a dozen Bulgarian railwaymen joined the party, unnoticed and unmolested. They seemed so happy, so contented together—even the presence of the Bulgarians did not strike a jarring note—that one's thoughts turned instinctively to the great League of Nations which may one day arise from the ashes of the War. . . .

There were two memories of that evening which will ever be unforgettable to me ; one of a little Italian

who had spent most of his life working at the London docks. He was the life and soul of the evening, the self-appointed Master of Ceremonies. Never for a moment was he silent. On each nationality in turn he called for a song, speaking to each in their own language. "Now then, you lads, give 'em some ragtime—that's the stuff to give them. Come on ; let her rip, boys." He spoke perfect Cockney English, and he fluttered from one group to another, gaily chirping, just like a little Cockney sparrow.

The other memory, strangely in contrast, is that of a French sergeant singing 'La Marseillaise.' He had sung a sweet, sad love-song with beautiful but rather restrained expression, as though he did not choose to lay bare his heart and the sad melancholy that it nurtured. In response to our hearty applause, he stepped forward a few paces nearer the fire, his well-knit features and pointed beard lit up by the glare, and said simply, "Camarades, je vous remercie ; maintenant je vous chanterai la Marseilleise."

He paused for a moment, then the golden notes poured forth in magnificent, unrestrained profusion. With one accord we rose to our feet and stood listening. I can never forget the thrill of passionate, almost divine, enthusiasm in his voice as he sung, and the tender, mysterious glow that shone forth from his face. He seemed to lose all personal identity, as though his spirit had flown away and become absorbed in 'La Patrie.' One realized vaguely something of what France means to Frenchmen. It is no vague abstraction, as with us, but a vivid reality. For the first time since I went to school, I cried unrestrainedly. . . . Two minutes later the cheers had died down, and a Tommy was singing 'My Home in Tennessee' . . .

(*b*) SVETI-VRAC

When the Armistice was signed with Bulgaria, some humorist 'up the line' remarked malevolently that the only genuine emotion displayed by the British Army

at our victory was one of pained sorrow on the part of the 'Base-wallahs' (i.e. any one who lives at the Base), who felt that our success had deprived them of their 'cushy' job. I need hardly say that this remark is libellous and unfair in the extreme, but a similar thought occurred to me when I arrived at Sveti-Vrac, which was, but a few weeks before, the Headquarters of the 2nd Bulgarian Army. For I felt that, had I been on the Staff of this Army, I should have been all in favour of another "Hundred Years' War."

Sveti-Vrac (which means 'Saint' Vrac, whoever that gentleman may have been) was at the beginning of the War a little village, some fifteen miles north of Petric and a couple of miles away from the main Sofia road. Early in '16, when both sides had settled down to trench warfare, the 2nd Bulgarian Army made their headquarters here. Large buildings, rather in the 'Neo-White City' style, were cunningly added to the straggling village, completely sheltered from the prying eyes of our airmen by a thick forest of trees. All that was visible from the air was an ordinary innocent little village at the edge of a forest—it appeared the sort of place on which no one but a lunatic would think of dropping bombs. Enormous concrete 'funk-holes' had been constructed, but it was clear from the rubbish and dirt piled up inside them that they had never been used by even the most timorous Bulgarian Staff Officer.

When 16th Corps Headquarters 'took over' from the Bulgarian Army (who left behind a forlorn Camp Commandant, presumably to keep an eye on the umbrella-stands), they found here the most luxurious palace. It is true that for the last month they had been living in tents, and were not disposed to grumble at any building which had a roof to it. But even the most palatial residences on the Seres Road were mere hovels compared with this. It must be remembered that Macedonia is barren of every material which is required for the construction of dwelling-places, whereas the Bulgars were actually in their own country, where there

is an abundance of everything necessary—bricks, mortar, wood and glass.

Exclusive of servants' quarters, there were at least two hundred bedrooms, all fitted out with electric light, and an ample water supply. There were three or four 'suites' for the Army Commander and the Chiefs-of-Staff, the walls beautifully papered and decorated, and filled with complete sets of furniture, which would have reflected no discredit on the 'Ritz' or the 'Savoy.' The offices and messes were built of wood, at least twenty feet high, with enormous window-panes on two, or in some cases three sides. They must have been wonderfully airy during the summer, though they seemed rather draughty for the winter. About half-a-mile away from the main buildings, separated by a beautiful park, was a smaller but even more luxurious palace which had belonged to the Hun officers attached to the Bulgar. It is noteworthy that the Huns kept themselves apart from their ally—though I gather that this arrangement was by no means displeasing to the Bulgar.

But what appealed to us most were the Turkish baths. Just outside the entrance a spring of sulphuric water, nearly boiling, comes out of the earth. The Bulgars had utilized this for the construction of a house, with small swimming baths, each hotter than the other. If you wanted to see any officer, and he was not in his office, it was a safe assumption that he was in the Turkish baths.

When I reached Sveti-Vrac, to take over "Senior Supply Officer," the strenuous efforts of the last month had been brought to naught by the capitulation of Turkey on the 30th of October. In consequence of this, the 27th Division, which had barely reached the Turkish Frontier, was being brought back, ultimately no doubt to join the French and the Serbs in a great joint attack against Austria. The surrender of the latter, however, on the 4th of November rendered this unnecessary. At nine o'clock on the night of the 5th, a 'Signal' Orderly at G.H.Q. 'phoned through to a friend at Corps Headquarters, informing him that Germany had

surrendered unconditionally. There seemed no reason to doubt the authenticity of this report, and we gave ourselves over to somewhat premature rejoicings. At the entrance to Headquarters there stood a large, ugly monument, "dedicated" (so the inscription in Bulgarian ran) "to the victories of the 2nd Bulgarian Army in the glorious liberation of Macedonia." (Considering the appalling atrocities committed by the Bulgar in Seres, Demir-Hissar, and other towns in Macedonia, 'liberation' was good.) On each stone was inscribed the name of some Bulgarian 'victory,' including such places as 'Rupel' and 'Kavalla' (which had been sold by Tino without so much as a rifle being let off), 'Homondos,' 'Christian Camilla,' and a dozen other villages on the Struma Plain, where fighting had taken place between patrols, nearly always to our advantage! Perched on top of this egregious 'trophy' there were about twenty shells. I may add that these monuments appear to be very popular with the Bulgar—I saw two others myself, one at Livunovo and the other at Demir-Hissar. A grim-faced little Serbian Colonel, who was sent to the 'liberated' country after the Armistice to collect evidence concerning 'Bulgarian atrocities' (with what a bitter irony this phrase now rings!), asserts that at the latter place, as a 'dedication,' twelve Serbian soldiers were interred *alive* beneath the monument. Ever since our Corps H.Q. had occupied Sveti-Vrac (advanced H.Q. were far ahead, at Mustapha Pasha), they had felt that this erection was an eye-sore, an indignity not to be tolerated. Accordingly, when the false news of the Armistice was received, an R.E. Major was deputed to obtain some ammonal to blow it up. This he failed to do; but a select party (wild mules would not drag from me their rank—though I may say I was the only Subaltern present, and that the Church of England was represented) removed all the shells as souvenirs, and placed instead on the top a tin object, the nature of which I need not specify. The next morning, amid the general disillusionment at finding the rumour of Peace was unfounded, the Bulgar Com-

mandant sought an interview with the Senior British Staff Officer, and said that we had desecrated their monument to the Bulgar dead (this was a lie—there was no mention of Bulgar dead on the inscription); furthermore, that he had taken a moonlight photo of the 'tin object' on top, which he would be compelled to submit, together with a formal protest, to the authorities in Sofia. To this the British officer replied that on the same evening some hundred Bulgar soldiers in the neighbourhood, apparently through joy at the defeat of their former ally, had indulged in a *feu-de-joie*, letting off their rifles in every direction. This was of course a most serious offence, one which, as Senior British Officer, he could not but report, etc. Eventually he came to the point, that both parties should keep silent and cry 'quits.' The Bulgar at once accepted, and we thought the incident was closed. But four days later a letter was received from the British Military Representative at Sofia, saying that a very serious charge, supported by documentary evidence (presumably the photograph!), had been made against us; that unless the shells were replaced forthwith, the 'tin object' removed, and a personal apology tendered to the Bulgar Commandant by all the officers concerned, he would be compelled to refer the matter to British General Headquarters. So much for the good faith of a Bulgar!

On the 11th of November, when the real Armistice was signed, we tempered our jubilations with discretion. An extra issue of rum and a liberal supply of beer was provided for the men, and a concert was held in a big band-stand in the park. But there was nothing to distinguish the evening from any other, and the men, although very happy, were not excited. It is typical of them, and of the British race, that the most popular song of the evening was a so-called recruiting song, concluding with the earnest request to the authorities to

> Send out the Army and the Navy—
> Send out my brother,
> My sister and my mother,
> But, for GAWD'S sake, don't send me!

On the morrow, after over two and a half years' active (more or less 'active') service without leave, I had orders to 'proceed' (no one in the Army ever 'goes'—you always 'proceed') 'forthwith to the Base for transfer to Home Service!' If I had been my own master, I could not have chosen a better moment for leaving the 'B.S.F.' The War was now over, and the Army was rapidly disintegrating. Of the four British Divisions, the 28th were in the Dardanelles and at Constantinople; the 27th Division, or part of them, were about to embark for the Caucasus; the 26th were preparing to occupy the Dobrudja; the 22nd only was left near Salonica.

But before closing this book, it would perhaps not be inappropriate to give a short sketch of the qualities and characteristics of the Bulgar peasants and of the Bulgar Army, the latter as they appear to a non-combatant.

CHAPTER V

THE BULGAR

(*a*) THE PEASANT

My stay in Bulgaria was limited to six weeks, during which I had no opportunity of visiting Sofia or any of the other big towns. I can therefore only speak at first-hand of the villagers on the Strumnitza Plain, with whom I came into contact. I tried very hard to obtain permission to visit Sofia, but the only persons allowed there (except the 26th and 27th Divisions, who passed through the station *en route* for Mustapha Pasha) were the members of the official British Military Mission. Apparently I did not miss much, for all those who were compelled to live there agree that it resembled a town of the dead. In spite of the swift *volte-face* which characterizes Bulgarian politics, the inhabitants of Sofia could hardly be expected, after three years' alliance with Germany, to welcome us with open arms. There is no doubt that they cordially detested the Germans (fortunately for us, the Hun cannot conceal even from his friends the inherent brutality of his character), but of us, too, they were considerably suspicious. How were we going to behave? Their fears were largely the promptings of an uneasy conscience, for they dreaded lest Sofia should witness the atrocities that they themselves had inflicted on Belgrade. It is a sufficient tribute to our moderation, and a sufficient tribute to Bulgarian resilience, to say that, a month after the Armistice had been signed—an Armistice which placed their country unconditionally at our mercy—Bulgarian

politicians were openly aspiring to a Peace which would not only absolve her from any form of reparation for the crimes she had committed, but would actually give her territorial compensation at the expense of her victorious neighbours!

Not only was Sofia very short of food: the town was suffering also from a severe wave of the influenza epidemic, which kept the streets deserted. There was little to be bought in the shops except 'attar of roses.' This was in great demand. For on the conclusion of the Armistice the daily papers, for want of more edifying matter, laid great stress on the fact that the chief product of Bulgaria was 'attar of roses.' Immediately the 'B.S.F.' was besieged with demands from home to secure the precious liquid. By a delightful touch of irony, I received a letter beginning, "No doubt you are sleeping in a field of roses," at a time when my dump was surrounded by decomposing buffaloes!

My first encounter with the Bulgarian peasant was at Strumnitza. After we had been there two days, an appeal was made to the Strumnitzans to come and work on the dump for the equivalent of 2s. 6d. a day. In Macedonia native labour had been properly organized into "Macedonian Labour Battalions," who wore uniform and were subject to military law. But when we advanced into Bulgaria, it was not considered advisable to bring up the "M.L.B.'s," for they were of every race, and the majority of them would probably have got out of hand in Bulgaria.

At first the Strumnitzans were a bit shy, and only a handful could be induced to work for us. As usual, however, the children stepped in where the men feared to tread. Three days after our arrival the entire infantile population of Strumnitza had gathered together round the dump. At first they confined themselves to watching us from a respectful distance of a hundred yards. By the afternoon they were mixing freely with the Tommies, moving in and out of the transport, and picking up bits of broken bread or anything else they could lay their hands on. By the evening they had grown so bold that

they were a positive nuisance, and I had to obtain a party of policemen from the A.P.M. to keep them off. For the next few days the policemen and the children indulged in a prolonged game of 'hide-and-seek,' in the course of which the policemen were consistently defeated.

After that we obtained as many men as we wanted. They were quaintly dressed in picturesque multi-coloured garments. One of them I remember particularly, who added a curious touch of modernity to an otherwise exotic garb by the assumption of an old bowler hat. He was very proud of that hat, and even when unloading heavy grain-sacks from the lorries he declined to take it off. They were, of course, unskilled labour, and their work was correspondingly slow. Twenty men take twice as long to unload a lorry as ten men—for they get in each other's way. One morning when they arrived on the dump (about a hundred of them), I tried, with the assistance of an interpreter, to split them up into squads of ten men, each squad under the charge of an English-speaking, or pseudo-English-speaking, foreman. When the game was explained to them, they thought it was capital fun. But an hour afterwards all semblance of squads had disappeared. Twenty or thirty men would crowd in a bunch round one lorry, and leave the other two lorries to unload themselves. If I had had more interpreters, something might have been done; as it was, I abandoned them in despair to their own devices.

Their work at night was less satisfactory. As the evening set in, they would slink away gradually, one by one, either back to the village or to sleep behind some stack. Indeed, in this remarkable gift of being able to snatch a few minutes' sleep at any hour of the night or day, they resembled Napoleon—or the fat boy in *Pickwick*. They were supposed to work in relays, one party from seven in the morning till two (with an interval for lunch), the other from two till ten at night. But the second party would gradually dissolve in the

darkness, and when the hour came to dismiss, there would be no one left.

The men were constitutionally lazy ; it was plain that many of them had never done an honest day's work in their life. The few who worked really hard were, I have good reason to suspect, deserters from the Bulgarian Army who had automatically demobilized themselves during the retreat. As in Macedonia, the man relies almost exclusively for his daily bread on the efforts of his womenfolk. The wife works in the fields, whilst the husband remains at home, lounging in the village street and exchanging gossip with his neighbours.

Just before the Armistice an English Major was sent to Strumnitza to administer the town, as ' Governor of conquered Bulgaria.' Later this grandiloquent title was whittled down to ' Governor of Strumnitza,' and finally to plain ' Administrative Commandant, Strumnitza.' He was called upon to settle all local disputes, to obtain such civil labour as was required by the Army, and to listen to any complaints or demand for ' damages ' which might be brought against the British. Apparently his administration was popular, for all the villages for miles around sent deputations, begging to be included in his ' Province.' Although in such a highly disciplined and admirably behaved force as ours it seemed hardly necessary, orders were published threatening the most drastic punishment for any soldier found ' looting ' or committing any violence against the natives. Except for the disappearance of a few chickens, not a single charge of any kind against the British troops was brought before the ' A.C., Strumnitza.' The discipline and behaviour of the 14th Greek Division, who were withdrawn shortly after the Armistice, were equally good. There is one incident, however, which, although rather improper, I cannot refrain from setting down on paper. One day a horrible old hag, who could not have been less than seventy, paraded before the Major and complained that she had received unsolicited demonstrations of affection from five French Colonial soldiers. (Inci-

dentally I may mention that there were no French Colonials in the district at the time.) For a moment the Major eyed the old woman intently ; then he turned to the interpreter. "Ask the good woman," he said, "whether she considers this a matter for condolence or for congratulation!" Apparently the interpreter (for once) interpreted correctly, for the old lady was removed in a paroxysm of laughter, thoroughly satisfied and delighted with the interview!

Except for a little hay, which was the property of the Bulgarian Army, we requisitioned nothing from Bulgaria. Private transactions, however, involving the *quid* of a tin of bully for the *quo* of a chicken or half a dozen eggs, were frequent. Indeed, I have never eaten so much chicken in my life as I did in Bulgaria, and there were few mornings on which I did not have a couple of new-laid eggs for breakfast. These transactions were always in the form of a barter, for the natives were suspicious of any form of money, whether Greek, English, or Bulgarian. Paper money they flatly refused to accept, but silver they valued a little more highly. As an illustration of the value of money in those days, let me relate the experience of a friend of mine in Sofia. I forget exactly what he was buying, but it was something fairly expensive. I imagine it would be worth about five pounds in English money (pre-War value). The shopman asked five hundred 'levas' for it. (At that time the nominal rate of exchange was forty-five 'levas' to the pound. In normal times a leva has the same value as a franc.) This was equivalent, therefore, to about £11. "Look here," said my friend, "I haven't got any Bulgar money—but I'll give you five pounds for it," and he produced five 'Bradbury's.' "That's no good," said the shopman, contemptuously fingering the notes. "Tell you what, though—give me two English pounds in gold, and the deal's done." My friend was fortunate (and unpatriotic) enough to possess a small gold reserve, and the bargain was accordingly sealed.

How near the population of the towns were to starva-

tion I cannot say for certain. In the country, at any rate, there was ample food, though variety was lacking. It was significant that what the villagers clamoured for especially, in exchange for their chickens, was not so much food (though jam was much in demand) as empty petrol-tins and empty rum-jars! Of these the Army had a superabundance ; for once active operations had commenced, the returning to the Base of 'empties' was discontinued, the lorries being required for the more urgent purpose of evacuating the sick. To what use they put these tins and jars I am not quite clear. I fancy the tins were used for water carrying and the jars for storing 'mastic'—a horrible raw alcohol much in demand in the Balkans. (As a few of our men who tasted it have found to their cost, a little goes a very long way!). Bully-beef was popular, rather as a novelty than as a necessity, and petrol was worth its weight in gold. At first a tiny bottle of petrol would buy up a whole battalion of fowls, but later there was a glut of most things on the market, and the rate of exchange rose in leaps and bounds against us.

Bulgaria is an extraordinarily fertile country, dissimilar to Macedonia only in this respect, that most of the soil is under cultivation. In peace-time she is more than self-supporting. The shortage of food in the towns during the War, which towards the end seems to have been severe, was entirely due to the rapacious greed of her ally, Germany. It was, I believe, the daily spectacle of the trains, heavily laden with food, leaving the capital for Germany, which first aroused the bitter resentment and hatred of the Bulgars against their greedy ally. Throughout 1918 especially there were frequent conflicts at the station in Sofia between the two.

Given, however, an era of Peace and a wise and moderate Government, there appears no reason why the Bulgarian peasant, whose worst qualities in the past have been stimulated, and whose good qualities have been stifled, by evil leaders and counsellors, should not take his place in the Balkan League, and share with his

brothers in the general contentment and prosperity which, one devoutly hopes, will at last be the lot of these tortured and divided States.

(*b*) THE ARMY

I feel considerable diffidence in approaching this subject, for I must frankly admit that I have never set eyes on a Bulgarian soldier, except in captivity or under the peaceful conditions of the Armistice. Now, the docile prisoner diligently unloading grain-sacks (diligently, that is, unless the foreman happens to be gazing in the opposite direction) is a very different person from his fellow-countryman armed with rifle and bayonet, and the firm intention of sticking the latter into your gizzard. I feel rather like an old gentleman who, after paying a visit to the Zoo, comes home to the bosom of his family and gives a graphic description of the dangers of wild-game hunting.

Of the Bulgar in captivity, however, I can speak from personal observation, as I lived for some time at Guvezne Supply Depot, where several hundred of his kind were employed on unloading trains. The most remarkable point about their appearance is, except in the case of a few of unmistakable Mongolian cast, their lack of any distinguishing traits from our own men. They wore ordinary khaki uniform, marked with black rings as a precaution against their attempting to escape ; but these marks are not very noticeable, and thereby hangs a tale which I think, without irreverence, I may record.

A certain General was taking a walk through the Supply Depot. To his intense annoyance he discovered an English soldier leaning up against an oat stack who took not the slightest notice of him, but continued to whistle loudly. Now, Generals are just as human as you or I : this General, in particular, was accustomed to being treated with considerable respect. So he gave vent to his indignation in winged words. For five minutes the object of his wrath listened attentively ; at

length (for he was none other than a Bulgar prisoner), he asked expectantly, "Finish, Johnny?" The General's reply need not, in the interests of decency, be recorded.

There was one prisoner at Guvezne who became famous. Before the War he had earned a precarious livelihood in Sofia by doubling the rôle of schoolmaster and tailor. In the former capacity he had learnt a certain amount of English, in the latter he had acquired no small skill in the repairing of garments. Accordingly he was transferred from a gang of labourers to the Quartermaster's stores, where he was chiefly employed in reducing the generous exaggeration of 'Ordnance' apparel to fitting proportions. There was something very charming and un-Bulgar about him, and a simplicity which disarmed suspicion. He certainly lacked something of the virility of his race; indeed, he was that strange paradox, a Bulgarian 'conscientious objector.' As, however, the Bulgarian Government give no heed to the consciences of their warriors, he had to salve his by betaking himself to our lines at the earliest opportunity. In fact, he surrendered (with some half a dozen other Bulgarian Boys of the Bull-dog Breed) within two hours of his arrival at the Front.

'Skinks' (he was always known by this name; it was his way of pronouncing 'skins'—a subject on which he would never grow weary of discoursing) had only one peculiarity—a passion for attending any form of Divine Service. Whatever the denomination—Roman Catholic, Nonconformist or Church of England—'Skinks' would always be present with the cordial assent of the officiating Padre. (I sometimes wondered if the different Padres would have so readily consented to 'Skinks'' presence had they known how various were his devotions. But somehow I think they would have understood.) 'Skinks' was one of the few persons who hoped that the War would continue indefinitely. Whilst it lasted, he lived in the lap of luxury, surrounded by sympathetic friends. Apart from his religious mania, he had not a care in the world. But he dreaded the advent of Peace, for his friends, the English, would

return to that strange place they call 'Blighty' (he is reported to have been found poring for hours over a map of England, searching for 'Blighty'), and he would be likely to get a poor reception if he returned to Sofia. Indeed, such a course would have been impossible, as his flight had been witnessed by a wrathful, but apparently helpless, officer; and even in Bulgaria deserters are shot. However, I am glad to say that all his fears were dissolved towards the end by the generous offer of one of our men, a furrier by trade, who promised to 'take him on' after the War as an assistant. No doubt his knowledge of 'skinks' will prove invaluable, and I wish him every success. For really he was the most harmless, cheerful soul I have met in the Balkans—a Bulgarian 'Mr. Toots.'

Of the other, the uncaged Bulgar, I have seen nothing personally, though I have heard much. His distinguishing quality as a fighter would appear to be extreme stubbornness in defence, though I fancy his staying power is not comparable with that of the Turk. For the real test of his powers of defence came at the end, when they were found wanting. During the two and a half years preceding the final offensive, he had always the advantage of immensely superior positions.

His offensive powers were never displayed during the campaign, except in the initial stages, when he employed practically the whole of his Army to drive three Franco-British Divisions from Serbia across the Serbo-Greek Frontier. Having achieved this, he drew rein at the frontier, where a more impetuous adversary might have followed up his success—with possibly disastrous results for us. Again, in the autumn of '16 he attempted to forestall General Sarrail's offensive against Monastir by an encircling movement from the west. But although he gained a few initial advantages, the ground was soon regained by the Serbs, and our attack, though delayed by a few weeks, proceeded thereafter 'according to plan.'

After that the offensive spirit of the Bulgar seemed

to give out ; for the remainder of the campaign he was content to display passive resistance. In retrospect it appears little short of incredible that he did not make a bid for Salonica, either at the close of '16 or of '17. On both occasions he was numerically stronger than the Entente, and he possessed the priceless advantage of fighting as one compact Army, against the mixed detachments of six nations. By a rapid advance from Doiran, which is only forty miles from Salonica, across a flat plain, presenting few natural obstacles except the birdcage defence of the town itself, he could have cut the communications of all the Franco-Serb Army on the Monastir Front. In '16, too, the Royalist Army under Tino was a direct threat to our rear, and from documents since discovered there can be no doubt that the ex-King was fully prepared to assist any attempt to drive us into the sea. The attack, however, never materialized, and the Bulgar eventually paid the penalty for his pusillanimity.

Although he was always ready to try conclusions with his Balkan neighbours, against us and the French the Bulgar clearly had no stomach for the fight. It is related that once a new Corps Commander took over command of the Struma Sector. He was an energetic man, one of the ' Let's-get-on-with-the-war ' type. So the morning after his arrival he summoned unto him his Chief of Staff, and said, " Popoff, I have an idea. I will attack the perfidious English. Just make out a plan for an offensive on a large scale, will you? And I'll sign the orders."

But Colonel Popoff wasn't very enthusiastic. " It's a good idea, sir," he admitted, " but what about the men —do you think they'll like it? After all, they, and not we, will have to do the fighting."

" Nonsense, my man," said the Corps Commander testily, uttering the Bulgarian equivalent for " Tcha! " " They've got to obey orders. Like it, indeed! What next, I should like to know! "

" All right, sir," said Colonel Popoff gloomily. " Have it your own way. Only, if there's trouble after-

wards, don't say I didn't warn you, that's all," and he relapsed into ominous silence.

For a few seconds General Buzzoff (I fancy that was his name) thought deeply. He didn't like to admit it—for once you're a Corps Commander, you don't admit more than you can help—but he was considerably worried by the words of his Chief of Staff. So he said in a jocular voice: "Look here, Popoff, I'll tell you what I'll do, just to show you that you're wrong. I'll have a 'referendum' taken amongst the troops, and I'll lay you a 'tenner' that more than half the men will vote for an attack." The 'referendum' was duly held, and the Chief of Staff gratefully pocketed his 'tenner.' (The only Bulgars who voted for the attack were from the A.S.C. and the 'Convict' Battalion.) Thereafter General Buzzoff became a wiser and a sadder man, and his warlike activities were confined to official reports of the "sanguinary repulse of British attacks launched by several Divisions." Of course, the attacks never took place, but a man must justify his existence.

For bravery the Bulgar compares favourably with the Greek, the Roumanian or the Turk, but none of them can equal the Serb either in endurance or in the science of modern warfare. In open warfare the Bulgar is anything but a coward; but he displays little skill or combination. The men do not fight as a battalion, but rather in little groups. (The same was noticeable of the Greeks during the recent attacks.) The Bulgar rifle-fire is extraordinarily erratic—many of our patrols who approached to within a few yards of his trenches, and returned to our lines unscathed through a terrific fusilade, owe their lives to this.

Beyond a doubt he has a sense of humour—which covers a multitude of sins. On the eve of our attack on 'Grand Couronné,' in April '17, he posted up a large notice in English: "You may take 'Grand Couronné' when you please—with a camera!" This and a hundred similar stories, although not extraordinarily mirth-provoking (more especially if you happen to be one of the unfortunates about to take part in the

attack), do none the less show that the Bulgar was fully alive to the lighter side of war. Another story shows the Bulgar as something of a sportsman: a reputation which, rightly or wrongly, he has earned from all our men. At the north-western end of the Struma Plain, when fighting was not at the time very active, our men were in the habit of playing football in a field in No Man's Land, quite a short distance away from the enemy positions, and easily under their observation. Encouraged by our immunity from shell-fire, we decided to use the field as a drilling ground as well. After the first day's drill, the Bulgar posted up a notice: "We have not the slightest objection to your playing football in that field. On the contrary, we like to watch you, for it is a very interesting game. But you really must not use the field as a drilling ground; or we shall be reluctantly compelled to shell you." The next day, as the battalion was assembling on parade, the Bulgar, to show that his was no idle threat, lobbed over half a dozen shells, which burst in the middle of the field. There were no casualties, fortunately, but henceforth we confined our activities at this spot to football, during which we were never molested. Drilling took place further back, out of sight of the enemy.

Against us and the French the Bulgar fought, with the exception of one or two regrettable lapses, a 'clean fight.' But in his treatment of the Serb and the Greek he displayed a ruthlessness as savage as his former ally and master, the Kaiser, could have expected from the most cultured German. I do not think his 'clean' fight against us should be unduly emphasized, for in it we may clearly discern the hesitation of the opportunist, who wishes to make quite sure in which direction the proverbial 'cat' is going to jump. I recall a certain conversation with a friend, an Armenian by birth, during which I was discoursing fatuously on the general amiability of the Turk. "Ah!" he said, "if you see a savage lion with its lion-tamer, you say, 'What a noble creature! What a quiet, harmless, good-natured

animal it is!' But if that lion breaks loose, and tears wretched women and children to pieces, you quickly change your opinion. You Englishmen are the lion-tamers, but we Armenians, alas! are the defenceless women and children."

Speaking generally of the Bulgar as a race, I should say that he possesses neither the frank openness of the Serb, nor the acute intelligence of the Greek, nor the outward amiability of the Turk. Among the more educated classes (I speak comparatively), there is more than a suspicion of the swash-buckling bully and the thief. The lower classes, the peasants, do not differ greatly from the higher species of animal. They are a good-natured, rather pleasant people, who respond to good treatment. But if they imagine they have a grievance, they become surly and implacable.

PART IV

RANDOM SKETCHES

CHAPTER I

THE TRAGEDY OF CONSTANTINE

WITH two startling exceptions this War has gone to show that no individual in the belligerent countries, however high his position, however great his reputation, is indispensable. In other words, the personal element is negligible in shaping the destinies of a country in wartime. In our own case, the tragic death of Lord Kitchener, though it was justly considered as a terrible loss to the nation, cannot be said to have affected materially the successful prosecution of the War. The loss was more a personal loss ; and the national grief that it evoked arose rather from the feeling that we had lost a friend, than from any misgivings that his death would bring general disaster, or would even prolong the War for a single day. Thus we have seen one hero after another set up on the pedestal of fame one day, to be knocked down on the morrow like the merest ninepin, either by the blast of death or the equally fatal breath of newspaper hostility. And behold ! another hero reigns in his stead.

There are, however, two exceptions to this rule, two men who have been proved inseparable from their several causes, two men from the same country in violent antagonism to one another—Venizelos and Constantine. The enforced abdication of Constantine removed the only obstacle to Greece's entry into the War on our side, and converted for the Entente a potential enemy into a real friend. So, too, had Venizelos two years ago been mown down by the scythe of death, or fallen before the assassin's dagger, we should have been faced with the direst peril—

a frontal attack made by powerful enemies, supported by a 'neutral's' blow in the back.

The fate of Greece then depended on the outcome of the duel between Venizelos and Constantine. There were, of course, a number of staunch supporters of Venizelos, who, even if he had lost, would have clung firmly to the ideals for which he stood. So, too, it must be admitted—as a tribute to their loyalty rather than to their patriotism—that a number of the ex-King's adherents have remained true to him even in exile, and have willingly abandoned the advantages of wealth, position and power, which they might have retained by an 'adjustment' of their politics—and it must be remembered that in Greece politics are peculiarly susceptible to 'adjustments' and 'modifications.' But the vast majority of the nation and the army were as wax in the hands of Constantine and Venizelos. The struggle was not one of principles, but of principals. The man came first, and the motives after. This peculiar feature of the struggle we must attribute to the extreme youth of modern Greece, and to the consequent lack of any valid public opinion, and to the equal lack of prominent men to lead the people. Still, a country that can produce a Venizelos has no reason to despair of its children.

The duel has been fought to a finish. Constantine as a factor in the case has been eliminated, and Venizelos at the helm of Greece has successfully steered the ship of State to port. Whatever voyages the ship may be destined to undertake in the future, we may place absolute confidence in the pilot and be assured of the vessel's security. In the following pages I propose to endeavour to form as fair and as impartial an estimate of Constantine's character as circumstances will allow, and to give an account of the various influences at work which ultimately led him to disaster.

For two months last summer I was attached, during the absence on leave of my C.O., to a British Corps Headquarters, which was advising and controlling the Greek troops operating on the Struma. Amongst others

sharing with me the intimacies of camp life, I had the singular good-fortune and privilege of knowing Captain Melas, formerly private secretary of the ex-King, and at present a Greek Cavalry officer, acting as liaison officer between the two corps. As of a man of singular personal charm, I esteem his friendship more highly than I can say. Also—I must admit it—I have, as a budding author, "with my nose to the ground" on the eager scent for valuable 'copy,' endeavoured with cynical immorality to extract from him some grains of information on the highly interesting subject of Greek war-politics. The end, in this case, I sincerely trust, justifies the means: for it is only fair that the British public should know the true history of those fateful days, lest they should judge the Greek nation too harshly.

In spite of Captain Melas' reticence and his formal refusal to speak in public about Constantine, whom, before the King's unspeakable treachery, he had served with such self-sacrificing devotion, and with whom, indeed, he had lived on terms of friendliest intimacy from earliest childhood: in spite of his visible abhorrence to forming a condemnatory judgment on his former master, I have succeeded in extracting from him certain information bearing on this highly interesting phase of the War, and I dare to hope that M. Melas will not be too angry with me for my indiscretion in revealing what he has told me. For that matter, M. Melas has been (unfortunately) only too discreet!

When Constantine came to the throne in 1913, after the tragic assassination of his father, King George, at Salonica, he was a man universally respected and esteemed—indeed, it would not be too much to say that he was loved by his people. During the long and prosperous reign of his father, Constantine as Crown Prince had always shown the greatest respect for the will of the people, and had given proof of both wisdom and moderation in his conception of his princely functions. His popularity had, of course, been immensely increased by the successful prosecution of the two Balkan wars against Turkey and Bulgaria in '12 and '13, in which,

as Commander-in-Chief, he led—at any rate nominally —the Greek Army to victory.

There can be no doubt that Constantine ascended the throne with the honest intention of ruling as a constitutional monarch—that is to say, he had no illusions about the "Divine Right of Kings," but justly conceived himself to be the servant of his people. Indeed, during the first year of his reign he shrank notably from interfering with, or dictating to, his Ministers, even in matters of the most trivial importance. His only wish, it seemed, was for Greece to enjoy the fruits of her victories and to live at peace with the rest of Europe.

At this point it is necessary to make a few remarks concerning the King's foreign politics. It has been commonly asserted that he and the majority of his Court, with the exception of Venizelos, were violently pro-German even before the War. The reason given for these pro-German sentiments was presumably the influence exerted over the King by his wife Sophie, the sister of the Kaiser: and the proof was said to have lain in his unfortunate declaration at Berlin during his visit there towards the end of 1913, when he asserted that Greece's victories were entirely due to the training given by Germany to the Greek Army. This speech of course caused intense annoyance in France, as the whole reorganization of the Greek Army had been undertaken and carried through with conspicuous success by a French Mission. Germany, as a matter of fact, had never raised a finger to help Greece—on the contrary, Von der Goltz had been reorganizing the Turkish Army, with which Greece had recently been at war!

To prove how utterly false was this conception of Constantine's pro-German leanings, I will deal separately with the alleged 'cause' and 'proof.' It must be borne in mind that the old King, George, heartily detested the Germans, both individually and as a nation. Indeed, his Ministers had to bring the utmost pressure to bear upon him to make him show even outward civility towards the German Ambassador. In a greater or a lesser degree the whole of his family and his Court

shared his hatred of Germany. Venizelos, with the wonderful far-sightedness which has always distinguished him, and which has rightly earned for him the name of "Europe's greatest Statesman," clearly foresaw even then that Greece's welfare as a nation depended solely on the goodwill of England, France and Russia : and for reasons different from those which actuated the Royal Family—reasons general rather than personal—he steered Greece clear of German influence. Even the Kaiser's sister, Sophie, had at that time, if one may judge from her outward behaviour, little liking for the Germans in general : with the Kaiser she had quarrelled violently. It is related that one of her Ladies-in-waiting, hoping to win the Queen's favour, began to study German. One day the Queen found her reading a German grammar, and asked her what she was doing. "J'apprends l'allemand, Madame."

"Pourquoi apprenez-vous cette sale langue?" was the Queen's curt reply ; and the Lady-in-waiting joyfully set fire to her grammar !

As to the King's famous 'declaration' in Berlin, I can only remind my readers of Bismarck's forged telegram : Germany in 1913 was no less capable of low cunning and dishonesty than she was in 1870. A fair test of the origin of this declaration is the test of Cicero—*cui bono?* To whose advantage was it that Constantine should deliberately flout the French? Not to Constantine's, who was plainly desirous of keeping on friendly terms with all the Powers of Europe. But to *Germany's advantage*. Germany had everything to gain by sowing discord between France and the new King of Greece. And, foolish as it may sound, the Kaiser's megalomania would be immensely flattered by this supposed compliment, however false he knew it to be. Let us, therefore, assume that the Germans either invented this declaration or utterly distorted the King's real words. Obviously, Constantine could not publicly disclaim the sentiments attributed to him. As a guest, his hands were tied, and he could not accuse his host of lying.

Thus we may take it for granted that until the outbreak of the European War Constantine had proved himself an eminently sane ruler, beloved by his people and respected abroad. With the Great Powers, except for an ' indiscretion ' over which he had no control, he had maintained friendly relations. The foreign politics of Greece, untampered with by the King and directed solely by M. Venizelos, veered round more and more in the direction of the Entente. England, France and Russia had re-established Greece as a nation : and to them she looked for guidance and assistance.

But even then certain traits in the King's character, imperceptible to all save a few, began to appear on the surface : occasional outbursts of violence, jealousy and pride. Subtly played upon and aggravated by the enemies of Greece, these unfortunate traits of character were eventually to bring about his downfall. It is curious to note how the pitiful story of the King resembles the ' tragedies ' of the ancient heroes of Greece, made immortal by the plays of Æschylus and Sophocles. A king or a great leader of men, not wholly innocent, but by no means a wicked man, is pursued by a ' curse,' a ' Nemesis,' or an " Ate,' which plays on his weaknesses and eventually whelms him in disaster. Neither a hero nor a villain, he is just an ordinary human being, prone to err. In the language of Æschylus, he is " driven mad by a god " : nowadays we would say that he is led astray by evil counsellors, and that the force of circumstances taxes his strength unduly by placing in his way obstacles which, from the very nature of his human failings, are most likely to bring about his downfall. Except, perhaps, that he has little of the ' grandeur ' which one associates with an Œdipus or an Ajax, Constantine might have stepped straight out of a Greek Tragedy.

One other event, which was to have far-reaching developments, occurred just before the War—the formal reconciliation between the Kaiser and his sister Sophie, which took place at the Kaiser's palace, " The Achilleion," in Corfu. That, in the event of a European

War, substantial promises were made to the Queen as a price for Greece's neutrality, there can be little doubt. It is even said that the Kaiser held out hopes to her of reigning as Empress of Constantinople! The offering of the capital of one of his potential allies to another is quite consonant with other practices of the Kaiser which have since come to light, and need occasion little surprise. But whatever promises the Queen extracted from her brother she kept secret until the time was ripe. By her subsequent behaviour she certainly proved the truth of the saying, "Once a German, always a German."

For Constantine the War may be divided into two periods. The first period dates from its commencement to October 5, 1915, when, by his unconstitutional dismissal of his Prime Minister, Venizelos, he definitely repudiated his solemn obligation to assist his ally, Serbia, against the unprovoked assault of Bulgaria. This for the King is a period of doubt and indecision. For a variety of reasons he cannot, or will not, take the decisive step of siding with the Entente. Though he hesitated on the brink, where a bolder and a wiser man would have taken prompt action, yet he was obviously trying to do the best thing for his country: and one cannot doubt that his indecision arose from patriotic motives.

The chief reason for the King's hesitation was undoubtedly provided by the diplomacy of the Entente. Actuated, no doubt, by the best intentions, we tried in the Balkans to reconcile the irreconcilable: and in the end, by trying to satisfy every one, we satisfied no one. I do not pretend that it is easy to find a solution of the Balkan problem, but there are certain principles which stand out clearly.

If you have three apples and four boys all equally determined to have an apple apiece, you may trip up the boys with the most involved arithmetic, you may cut the apples into halves, quarters, and eighths, you may distribute and redistribute them in a hundred different ways: but whatever you do, you cannot avoid the basic fact that four into three will not go. Boys are no

fools, and they realize this just as well as you do. This is precisely what our diplomacy in the Balkans tried to do. Serbia, Roumania, Bulgaria and Greece were to have an apple apiece, though there were only three apples 'in the pool.' (Turkey, it may be noted, soon saw that she had nothing to gain from us, and fell back upon another and higher bidder, who promised to give her all the apples she wanted.) We cannot be blamed for failing to convert three apples into four: the fault—if with any one—lies with Dame Nature. But we made two fatal mistakes. Towards the end of 1914, it became absolutely plain to every one but our own diplomatists that Bulgaria had made up her mind to side with our enemies and to deal plucky little Serbia her death-blow. Indisputable proofs of Bulgaria's intentions were laid before our diplomatists by England's many friends in Athens (not the least of whom was M. Melas) and eleswhere: but the proofs were ridiculed and disregarded. "Bulgaria preparing to attack Serbia!" we said. "Nonsense, my dear sir. She wouldn't dream of doing it. Why, this very day we have had a conference with King Ferdinand, and he was hopeful—most hopeful—that we should find a solution of the problem. Only give us time, and we will devise a way of satisfying *every one*." What must Constantine have thought of all this nonsense? He knew perfectly well that Bulgaria was playing for time; and yet he saw that we continued to negotiate. Of course, we were impelled by the best intentions, but it must be admitted that Constantine had grounds for hesitation. For months we continued the miserable game, shuffling and re-shuffling the pack, in the hope of turning up five aces. After each deal Constantine became more and more suspicious. While in reality we were merely confirmed optimists, Constantine suspected that we were card-sharpers. Then we made our second blunder—one might almost call it a crime. Without mentioning the matter to the Greeks, we offered to the Bulgars, if they would come in on our side, Kavalla and a goodly portion of Macedonia—that is, the very territory which Greece had

KRESNA PASS. OCTOBER 1918.

fought two wars to reclaim, we offered to her arch-enemy, the Bulgar! When the King was told of our offer, his anger knew no bounds: and we may be sure that he never forgave us. Even our best friends in Athens were stupefied. As for Bulgaria, she laughed at our offer, and was confirmed in the belief (sedulously fostered by German propaganda) that if we were prepared to go to such lengths to retain her friendship, we must indeed be in a parlous plight. In consequence she was all the more decided to come in against us.

In retrospect our diplomatic blindness appears positively amazing, our confidence in Bulgarian honesty almost incredible. On September 23, 1915, the Bulgarian mobilization was officially announced, though, for our benefit, it was termed 'Armed Neutrality.' The following day the Greek mobilization was ordered. Serbia, who had so far resisted the Austro-Germans on her northern frontier with success, saw that her only hope lay in attacking Bulgaria immediately, before the latter had completed her mobilization. An appeal, supported by the Greek Government, was accordingly made to the Powers of the Entente to sanction an immediate assault on Bulgaria. In a memorable speech in the House of Commons, Sir Edward Grey voiced the reply of the Entente: that such an unprovoked attack on a 'neutral' country could not possibly be permitted; further, that Bulgaria had given a satisfactory explanation of her mobilization, and that her intentions were by no means hostile to the Entente. He concluded his speech with pious aspirations for a settlement of differences in the Balkans and a gentle warning to Bulgaria. With this speech the last thread of confidence in the sanity of the Entente was snapped in Constantine's mind, and the last hopes of Serbia collapsed, leaving her a prey to blank despair.

So much then, or so little, was accomplished by our diplomacy. It may also be mentioned that our unofficial diplomatists—a small but noisy band of Bulgarophile publicists—rendered valuable assistance in undermining our position at Athens by their frankly anti-Greek utterances. Early in December 1914 the Kaiser realized

that it was well worth while to initiate a pro-German campaign in Athens, as the results might be fruitful. In fact, he seized the opportunity so thoughtfully provided by our diplomatists. A mission was accordingly dispatched to Athens, headed by the notorious Baron Schenk, to make clear to the Greeks (if the expression may be permitted) "which side their bread was buttered on"; in other words, that instead of waiting for a doubtful supply of margarine from the Entente, they could have a plentiful supply of fresh butter from Berlin for the asking. Newspapers were bought over (the venality of the Athenian Press is notorious), prominent officials were bribed or courted, while even more insidious poison was being instilled into the King's ear by his wife. It was not long before our enemies at the Greek Court revealed openly their hostility towards us, those who had been hitherto indifferent to either group of belligerents became pro-German, and even our friends began to waver.

Of the villainy of the various devices used by Baron Schenk I could say much. But the subject is not edifying. It is sufficient to state that the Hun, by hard lying and by all the dirty tricks of which only he is capable, continued the work which our own diplomacy had begun. We refused to soil our hands by counter-propaganda work, and in this I still think we were right, for though we might have won a temporary advantage by fighting the Hun with his own poisonous weapons, we should have sacrificed our reputation for political honesty, which to-day stands higher than ever in the Balkans. In expressing these sentiments, I know I am at variance with much of the modern school of thought. Still, I fancy that in the end the old policy of eschewing political dishonesty will be justified. When the time comes to settle the peace terms, I know that all the Balkan States—even our enemies—will feel they can trust in our honesty and fairness: and trust in an impartial arbitration will very materially conduce to settling the many Balkan problems which will arise at the Peace Conference.

Another consideration which influenced Constantine

and the Greek nation (the large majority of whom, until the betrayal of Serbia, were behind the King) was the very natural desire of a small neutral to make quite certain that she was joining the winning side. The cynical statement made by a Frenchman about a certain neutral country, that "elle se précipitera au secours du vainqueur," is perfectly true of most neutrals, and perfectly reasonable. Like the foreign exchange, Greek opinion was a barometer of daily events. If the Entente scored a success, the barometer rose to the high mark of "enthusiasm." During the winter of '14, when fighting had died down, it remained steady at "indecision," though slightly in favour of coming in. During the Spring campaign of '15, when Russia was being overwhelmed by the Germans, and when, except for spasmodic and indecisive nibbling, we failed to make any impression on the Germans' Western Front, while the Gallipoli expedition, started with such high hopes, was developing (as Constantine and his Staff had predicted it would) into a gigantic failure, the Greek barometer gradually dropped to storm-level. Yet —be it said to their credit—a number of the best elements in Greece, headed by M. Venizelos, maintained their enthusiasm at the highest point even during the most depressing events, and were in favour both of giving us immediate assistance and of handing over to us the whole of their Army and Navy to employ as we pleased.

Such, then, were the various considerations which were influencing the King, dragging him now in one direction, now in another. On the one hand, the stupidity of our diplomacy, the effectiveness of German propaganda, the Bulgarophile and Anti-Greek campaign in England, and the German successes on land, suggested to the majority of the Greek nation that the extremest caution should be exercised before Greece took the plunge. On the other hand, a small but powerful element, headed by Venizelos, believed in the justice of our cause, and were far-sighted enough to realize that in spite of all our failures and blunders we must

eventually win the War. For them the paths of honour and expediency alike pointed in the same direction—immediate intervention on the side of the Entente. If only the King could have made up his mind to side with Venizelos, there can be little doubt that the support of Greece would have shortened the War by at least two years. But he let the opportunity slip, not only through indecision, but also because the fatal streaks in his character already alluded to were beginning to show themselves in earnest—jealousy, pride and violence. His jealousy of Venizelos was sedulously fostered by those miserable Greeklings, Gounaris, Skouloudis, Lambros and others, with such success that by the beginning of 1915 he had been stirred to deadly hatred of his Prime Minister. The mere fact that a plan of campaign was suggested by Venizelos was sufficient to condemn it in the King's eyes. Nearly every local politician, either through jealousy of the man whose boots he was not worthy to brush, or through the potent influence of German pay, joined in the hue and cry against Venizelos, pandering to the King, and thus sowing the seeds of autocratic violence in his mind, which were to produce such terrible fruit. And not the least among his evil counsellors was the Queen, who now preached to him the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings, which she had learnt from the Kaiser.

Yet, in spite of all these influences, Constantine on several occasions came very near to taking the final step on our side. We know that at the outset he had practically agreed to dispatch an army corps to assist our naval attack on the Dardanelles, though he was eventually precluded from carrying out this policy, partly by cupidity and pride, and partly by the advice of his General Staff. For not only did he demand greater territorial compensation than we were in a position to give, but his pride too, which had been noticeably swelling, led him to insist that we should place under his orders a large number of French and British troops. Moreover, the Greek General Staff had only one reply to make to all proposals of military assistance against

Turkey : " La route aux Dardanelles est par Sofia." They considered—and surely their opinion has been justified—that an attempt to force the Straits would lead to disaster. At the same time they realized that Bulgaria was preparing for War. Elated by their success against her in the second Balkan War, they were anxious to attack her again, before her preparations were complete. Had Sofia been captured, all communication between the Turk and the German would have been severed, and we could have taken Turkey in the flank and smashed her at our leisure. Such, in brief, was the plan of the Greek General Staff—a plan in favour of which the King was enthusiastic. How far it would have been successful one cannot say—at any rate, it had great possibilities, and it is certain that the Serbians were equally anxious to attack Bulgaria. The plan never matured, however, because of our obstinate refusal to believe that Bulgaria would ever declare war against us.

October 5, 1915, marks the end of the first act in the tragedy of Constantine. We have seen the gradual deterioration of the King from a good Father of his people, disinterested, unassuming, and a brave soldier, into a tin-pot autocrat, greedy, grasping, violent in his anger, savage in his jealousy. In a word, he is ripe for the villainous treachery which was to cast an indelible stain on the fame of Greece. When in September 1915 Bulgaria mobilized with the undisguised intention of attacking Serbia, Constantine was put to the test, and found guilty of the blackest treachery. It was not necessary for him to declare War on Bulgaria. He had only to say plainly to Bulgaria, " I stand by the Treaty of Bucharest. I cannot and will not desert my ally, Serbia." The warning would have been sufficient. But the warning was not given. For Constantine's perfidy both then and subsequently there is not a vestige of excuse. In defiance of the will of his people, as expressed unmistakably by Venizelos' parliamentary majority, he deliberately deserted his ally.

The downward path was swift. Once Constantine had taken this fatal step, he stopped at nothing. His indecision left him : his mind was made up. Everything, no matter how petty, no matter how criminal, which could harm Venizelos and the Entente he undertook with eagerness. Whether or no he was in German pay matters not : Germany could have had no more faithful, no more willing, no more active servant. When, at the request of Venizelos and the Greek people, we landed at Salonica a month later, Constantine, his Court, and such of the Greek Army as were directly under his influence treated us, who had come as friends, with open hostility. Every obstacle was placed in our way : our movements were spied on and reported direct to Berlin. For nearly two years the second act of the tragedy dragged on, until, with a suddenness all the more dramatic because of our delay in taking action, the British Navy stretched out its hand and removed the King. Whatever injustice we may have committed against the King previously, we atoned for now a thousand-fold by our long-suffering trust in the traitor. The harm that he did us in those twenty months was incalculable. Apart from the small pin-pricks, the insults and injuries which he was in a position to inflict on us, our whole plan of operations in the Balkans was jeopardized by the threat on our line of communications. To have gone blindly forward when at any time that might have been cut by the Royalist troops would have been folly. Even when in the summer of 1916 we made a partial and successful advance, which enabled us to take Monastir, the campaign was greatly hampered and many lives were needlessly lost because the enemy, through Constantine, knew exactly the disposition of our troops, and had, indeed, in his possession an exact copy of our operation orders.

I often wonder what the King's feelings were during the miserable second act—they can scarcely have been pleasant. Perhaps he was sustained by his unforgiving hatred of the Entente, by his gnawing jealousy of Venizelos, and by the dreams of the reward which

would later be conferred on him by a victorious Kaiser. The serious illness which at that time overtook him did nothing to deflect the obstinacy of his purpose. On the contrary, it placed him more completely under the domination of his German consort, who was at length appearing in her true colours. Yet retribution came to him swiftly, and in the bitter mental pill he was called upon to swallow we may perhaps trace the origin, or at any rate the aggravation, of his physical sickness. His betrayal of Serbia led quickly to the yet more damnable betrayal of Greece. The gallant Prince and Commander-in-Chief, who at the head of his soldiers had won Kavalla, Seres and Drama for his countrymen, was called upon three years later to surrender, without firing a shot, in return for thirty miserable pieces of silver, this very country to his arch-enemy, the Bulgar! His personal hatred of Ferdinand of Bulgaria can scarcely have made the pill less bitter. How his mind must have been racked and tortured by this blow to his pride, his patriotism and his ambition! Unless we are to believe that he had suddenly lost all his good qualities, unless we are to picture him as the abject tool of Germany, not a man but an automaton, we may feel certain that the King suffered terribly from the ignominious rôle which his indecision and treachery had caused him to play.

But the King's 'madness' (if we may again use the symbol of Æschylus) was only intensified by our weak attempts to conciliate him, and culminated in the insane and criminal outbreak of December 1 and 2, 1916, when British and French marines were assassinated in cold blood in the Greek capital. That he was directly responsible for this savage outbreak there can be no doubt. On that fatal morning the King exhorted his troops to destroy utterly the British and French, 'so that no trace even of their nostrils remained.'

This foul act was followed by a period of a few months in which the King yielded, at any rate outwardly, to our demands. The reaction which set in proves that the King's violence was the violence of impotence, and

gives us a key to the development of his character. Like a caged beast, filled with a furious passion, who has fallen on one of his guardians unawares and torn his body to shreds, and now paces ceaselessly up and down his narrow cage in restless but subdued anxiety, Constantine, though unrepentant, knew well that he was at our mercy, and realized the weakness and the folly of his outbreak. Perhaps he hoped for assistance from Germany to release him from his cage, that he might run amok among his enemies with renewed fury. But again he was disappointed: for no help came from Germany.

Still he plotted and planned, playing for time till the Thessalian harvest could be brought in and he could once more snap his fingers at our blockade. Then in May 1917 the end came suddenly, ignoble, inglorious, such as befitted an ignoble, inglorious reign. He was denied the glory of dying on the battlefield for the principles he had once upheld so stubbornly; he was denied even the satisfaction of his countryman Ajax, of dying by his own hand. He was merely removed from the throne, as a naughty child is 'put in the corner,' and escorted to a neutral country. There he continues to live, a wasp with the sting extracted. Surely not the least of his woes must be the knowledge that he is the supreme anticlimax of history.

From the tragic history of Constantine's reign two warnings for the future guidance of mankind stand out clearly for those who have eyes to see: the perils of secret diplomacy, and the even deadlier peril of trusting the lives of millions of human beings to one sole autocrat. The advantages of a benevolent despotism may be great, but the disadvantages of a malevolent despotism are greater. The perils of secret diplomacy require no further comment; their disastrous consequences are clearly shown in this narrative. I have called this chapter "The Tragedy of Constantine." A Tragedy indeed it is, both in the modern and ancient meaning of the word. For we see a man with many good qualities but with several fatal streaks in his

character, gradually influenced and led away by evil advice, his weaknesses played upon by unscrupulous men, and enhanced by the difficult circumstances under which he was called upon to decide : a man who, but for the European War, which brought out all that was worst in him, might have lived and died honoured and respected : we see this man finally transformed into a ruthless, bloody tyrant, who wittingly disgraced his country's fair fame.

Perhaps our disgust at his treachery should be tempered with pity. As Macaulay wrote of Lord Clive : " Fortune placed him in a situation in which his weaknesses covered him with disgrace, and in which his accomplishments brought him no honour." Indeed, there could be no more fitting epitaph for Constantine than the famous paradox of Tacitus—' Consensu omnium capax imperii, nisi imperasset.'

CHAPTER II

GEORGE

(*a*). GEORGE IN DIFFICULTIES

GEORGE has really little to do with the Balkans, except that he has lived there for several years. There is no local colour about him. Still, George is a great man, and so we will let that pass. I have a great admiration for George—it amounts, indeed, to respect. He possesses to an unlimited extent what the Americans term 'neck': in other words, a complete knowledge of one's own abilities, combined with an even completer ignorance of their limitations. George is a middle-aged Army Service Corps Subaltern in the B.S.F. Before the War he was that vague but imposing being, a business man. (I have never dared to commit the sacrilege of asking him the nature of his business; I would sooner ask Mr. Lloyd George for a verbatim report of the Versailles Conference.)

Although a Subaltern, George says he has had four years' active service. I have calculated the matter carefully, and have come to the conclusion that he must have been waging war on the Kaiser four months before His Britannic Majesty's Government took similar measures. Intelligent anticipation is all very well, but if the Hun gets to hear of this, it will rather knock the bottom out of the Lichnowsky revelations. Well, well, in the interests of truth, I am bound to divulge this information, and we must hope for the best.

If *savoir faire* (George's own expression) goes for anything, and if the War lasts long enough, Sir Douglas

Haig will have to look to his laurels (or his bâton, or whatever a Field-Marshal does look to; personally, when I feel that way inclined, I look to my pips). In the words of Mr. Bottomley, I advise the world in general and my readers in particular (in the case of H.B., apparently the same thing) to *watch George*! Sometimes, when I am in a pessimistic mood, I wonder if 'watching' any particular place or person really serves a useful purpose. I have 'watched' Russia for nearly four years, with the utmost perseverance, till my eyes positively ache—but I failed to avert the Russian Revolution. I have watched Hindenburg for years—but it doesn't seem to end the War. Perhaps, after all, prayer is more efficacious.

Anyhow, I hope I have given the reader a hint of George's personality. By the time this book is published, the limelight of popularity may be turned on him, so that these impressions may not be without value. George is a great man, but occasionally he gets into difficulties. George told me this story himself: you may believe or disbelieve it, as you feel inclined. Belief, as Mr. Bernard Shaw remarks, is entirely a matter of personal preference. Some believe there is a war on, others believe in Mr. Bernard Shaw.

The other night George received an urgent "S.O.S." from a friend, begging him to come to dinner "for reasons to be explained hereafter." Now, this postscript filled George with misgivings. I don't mean to suggest that he had never received an invitation out to dinner before. But there was something unusual about the urgency of the appeal. George is not particularly modest, but he knew that in the ordinary way Major Frampton contrived to exist without him. Still, George is not easily daunted; he swallowed his suspicions and a hasty drink, and having carefully buttoned up all his pockets, sallied forth to Major Frampton's camp.

On his arrival his host greeted him effusively but nervously. "So glad you've turned up; the fact is, the Italian Army are dining here in full force to-night" (George raised his eyebrows inquiringly; he does this

rather well.) "You know, I can't speak a word of Italian, and even my French is only produced at crises in my existence. So naturally I looked to you to help me out, I've so often heard you swanking about your Italian. In fact, I never thought you would turn out so useful."

George didn't look very enthusiastic, as the reason for his invitation was made clear. "How many are coming?" he asked coldly; "not more than a battalion, I hope? I don't think your Mess could accommodate a whole Brigade."

"Well," replied his host uneasily, "I can't say for certain; you see, the other evening at the White Tower—we were very merry, you know—I asked several of those Italians to come to dinner any night they could manage. You know the sort of invitation: 'If you come to Russia, do look me up.' And they have taken me at my word."

"How many?" repeated George gloomily.

"Well, perhaps four, or five, or six," mumbled Frampton dubiously.

George eyed his friend with a baleful stare.

"You ought to have a nurse or a Military Policeman with you the next time you go to Salonica," he said.

However, he fortified himself with a short one ("Thanks. Just a short one, please. Yes. Thanks. Thanks"), and began to take stock of the situation. Now, it was a gross invention to say he had ever 'swanked' about his Italian. He may have mentioned casually—after looking round carefully to see whether anybody was likely to contradict him—that Italian was a very pretty language. This, I submit, is perfectly true: it is the sort of statement to which any one might commit himself. He may have added that, with a smattering of French and Latin, you can easily pick up Italian. Hang it all, he had spent two or three summer holidays in (or rather, on) the Italian Lakes. As I said before, George is a brave man, and finding his communications had been cut, he decided to go forward blindly. Further reflection seemed unprofit-

able. So George had another 'short one' ("Yes. Thanks. Yes, that's quite enough, thanks. Thanks"), when a car was heard outside. A hasty glance at his wrist-watch (which he generally carried on his wrist) told George that for fifty-five minutes (for they were to take the Italians to a concert after dinner) he must keep the ball of conversation rolling, or his reputation as a linguist would irretrievably perish.

Numerically the Italian Army was not very formidable, consisting of two officers only. (George whispered to his host that he must have seen double—or treble—at the White Tower.) One appeared to be a Captain, and the other was certainly a Major. George knew he was a Major, for in introducing him, Frampton relapsed for the only time during the evening into Italian. He introduced him as 'Maggiore,' apparently confusing him with one of the Italian Lakes. Having said so much, Frampton retired from any active share in the conversation, feeling apparently that he had done his duty. However, he offered the Italians a 'short one' in French ('*un court*'), and George decided to stave off the 'evil' moment by keeping them company. ("Thanks, just a short one, please. Thanks. That's quite enough. Thanks. Thanks.") Having put away the 'short one,' they sat down to dinner. By way of opening the conversation, George smiled (in Italian) at the 'Maggiore,' and repeated the process on Como—I mean the Captain. George's smile (in Italian) is famous. It brings tears to the eyes of the true Neapolitan, reminding him, I suppose, of Mount Vesuvius in eruption. In this case its effect was electrical. Both the Italians began to talk in incredibly rapid Italian, and George drank his soup and listened.

And now we come to that little word *vero*. To my mind, it is not so much what you say, as the way in which you say it, that really lends joy to a conversation and distinguishes us from the other monkeys. It requires no expert linguist to grasp the literal meaning of *vero*. As my readers have already guessed, it means 'true.' But, like the Greek Definite Article, it would be possible

to fill several large volumes on its various shades of meaning. Let me give just a few examples of the uses to which George put it on this famous occasion.

First of all there is the positive *vero* : " Your statement appears substantially accurate, and is supported by all available statistics. I see no reason to doubt your word." Then there is the politely incredulous : " In view of the Anglo-Italian *entente,* I am bound to believe what you say, but you must admit the story is a stiff un." Or the gentle, piously commiserating : " Ah! too true! Human nature (as contrasted with yourself and myself) is only too prone to err. A pity, but it *is* so. Well, well, I'm sure." Or, again, the righteously indignant : " That's exactly what I say. It is an infamous disgrace that this practice (or person, as the case may be) should be tolerated. Why, damme, sir, if I had my way, I'd do away with the whole lot of them. I would, sir, or my name isn't ——" (whatever it happens to be). Then the softly ingratiating : " How I agree with you! You have expressed my thoughts, as I would never have hoped to do myself. I thank you." Then—to take one last example—there is the subtly questioning : " I wonder if that is really so? Are you approaching the matter with an unbiased mind? Psychologically, are you not the tiniest degree inexact? "

I could fill pages with the various shades and nuances which may be found in the little word *vero*. So much depends on the correct facial expression and inflexion of the voice. Suffice it to say that George survived the ordeal triumphantly, and emerged from the dinner-table with unblemished linguistic reputation. It was, he admitted, a strain ; he felt like a juggler balancing two billiard-cues, the latest Tank and a copy of *The Military Manual* on the tip of his nose. There were moments when he feared that, in spite of the invaluable *vero,* his ignorance would be exposed. Once a terrible silence reigned for several seconds. George ventured three or four times on *vero* (the supremely fatuous *vero*), and smiled his best Neapolitan smile, but no one re-

sponded to these blandishments. He cudgelled his brains desperately for the Italian equivalent of "Angels overhead." He went on cudgelling, but nothing emerged. Then he had an inspiration. . . . Of course he apologized humbly to his host. So clumsy to knock his glass off the table. The Mess-waiter brought another glass and the situation was saved; every one talked at once to cover his lapse—George to the Mess-waiter. ("Thanks, thanks. Just a little, please. Thanks. Thanks.")

All the same, the next time George is invited out to dinner he is going to inspect the list of guests very carefully. You can't be too careful whom you mix up with nowadays, and the greatest juggler in the world loses his skill sooner or later and is placed on the retired list.

(*b*). GEORGE ON THE STAFF

I always said that George was a man marked out for promotion. I have said so for more than three years. Whenever I look at the *Gazette,* I scan its columns anxiously for the announcement of "Temporary Lieutenant George to be temporary Field-Marshal (without pay or allowances) whilst holding the appointment of Generalissimo." These things do happen: take the case of Ensign Krilenko, for instance. In the case of George I must admit that hitherto I have been disappointed. The only promotion officially announced was from a 'one-pipper' to a 'two-pipper.' But now I am more confident than ever that a great future awaits him—for George is 'a creeper.' Have you seen the agitated campaign of *The Times* against the crying shame that Temporary Officers have not been promoted beyond the rank of Brigadier-General? (Perhaps I lack ambition, for I don't seriously hope to get beyond the rank of Brigadier. In fact, I am quite satisfied with two pips—one of them compassionate.) George, however, is ambitious. I fancy George is the real cause of all this agitation. Lord Northcliffe heard about him, and—

anyhow, George is beginning to rise. For fourteen whole days George has been 'a creeper.' If only this proves to be another Hundred Years' War——

Perhaps I had better explain the meaning of 'to creep.' I read a war-book the other day, in which the author was at great pains to explain by means of footnotes, to a presumably unenlightened public, the significance of such recondite Army terms as 'N.C.O.' and 'C.-in-C.' I hope I am not guilty of offering a similar gratuitous insult to my readers' intelligence when I explain what is meant by a 'creeper.'

Nemo repente fuit stultissimus,

or, to adopt a Johnsonian paraphrase of a Horatian misquotation, "It takes several years to make a Staff Officer." A 'creeper' is a Staff Officer in the chrysalis state. He performs Staff work on regimental pay. He is the *alter ego* of some great man. He is overworked and over-'establishment.' After two or three years 'creeping' he begins to get some idea of Staff work. Perhaps a year or so later he may blossom forth into a real Staff butterfly—or he may be returned to his regiment.

I met George yesterday; he had been 'creeping' on a Brigade Staff for a fortnight. I noticed a distinct change had come over him. He has put on weight both physically and mentally. He gave me an uneasy feeling that I ought to be standing to attention all the time he was speaking. And he spoke to me for half-an-hour, telling me all about Staff work. As anything concerning the most important branch of the Service may interest my readers, I will try to repeat what he told me, as far as possible in his own words.

"First of all I want to be fair to the Staff. They really do get through a certain amount of work." (I nodded admiringly at this generous tribute.) "Mind you, I don't say a fairly intelligent office-boy couldn't do the work in half the time. Why, I've learnt practically all there is to learn in a week. You want common sense

and a little business knowledge, that's all. It's really as simple as A.B.C. I don't mind telling you that they're pretty glad to have me there. Fresh ideas and all that sort of thing. I expect I shall have to make a good many alterations before I've finished.

"Far too much time is wasted with red-tape and returns. I told the General so the first day I got there. Of course, I was very tactful—these Regulars are so touchy—but I was firm. I told him what he wanted was new blood, new ideas. There ought to be more 'push'" (George stuck out his chest). "The Army was going to sleep. All those old-fashioned ideas about letting every one else know what's going on—keeping in touch, they call it. Why, it's quite unnecessary. The thing to do is *to get on with the War*, and never mind about anything else. And then all this ceremonial about Courts-Martial and promotion and the rest of the palaver! I told the Brigade Major pretty straight that until he chucked 'King's Regulations' into the waste-paper basket there would be no chance of winning the War. But he was too narrow-minded to see what was perfectly obvious, and talked a lot of nonsense about discipline. Discipline, indeed! Discipline doesn't matter a rap; what you want nowadays is common sense! I'm afraid I gave it to him pretty hot: he said he had been a Territorial for fifteen years and might be expected to know what he was talking about. So I told him what I thought about Saturday-afternoon soldiers.

"And the preparations they make for a potty trench raid, in which not more than two or three hundred of our fellows are engaged! Would you believe it?—they work it all out down to the tiniest detail beforehand, instead of getting on with the good work. And the way they worry the Gunners! No harm in chucking over a few shells before the raid, but fancy worrying about a barrage! I told the Staff Captain what I thought about all this pampering of the troops. But he seems a pretty dense sort of a chap. Asked me if I had ever done a raid myself! As if that had anything

to do with it! I told him I'd been doing much more useful work in the A.S.C. You bet that silenced him! I haven't got going yet, but I expect in a month's time things will be looking pretty ship-shape. I promised them I would cut down the work to half-an-hour a day—yes, to be done by a clerk. And then perhaps we shall get a move on with the War. Well, I must be toddling. You needn't let it go any further, but I don't think I shall remain long with the Brigade. I fancy they'll want me *for something bigger*. I expect the old General will feel pretty lost without me. . . ."

This was yesterday. I have just heard from another Subaltern in George's old Company that he has been returned to them, "as this officer is not considered likely to become an efficient Staff Officer." Alas! all my dreams have vanished into space! No longer shall I read the *Gazette* in eager expectation. But I confess I am overwhelmed with a terrible suspicion. Is 'The Hidden Hand' at work in Macedonia, robbing us of our best brains? Above all, what will Lord Northcliffe say, if he hears of this? I shudder to think.

CHAPTER III

MORE DICKENS CHARACTERS AND THE WAR

At first the War had but little effect on Harold Skimpole. To his friends he discoursed delightfully on the subject with his usual complete detachment and childlike ingenuousness. "You say Germany and England are at war. It seems very foolish of them; but I have not the slightest objection. If they like to tear each other to bits, let them do so by all means. I believe I am truly cosmopolitan. I have the deepest sympathy for every one—Germany and England alike. If by any chance I were a Mighty Potentate, I should say: 'Stop this silly nonsense, and put away these dangerous weapons. Come with me, and hark to the birds singing, and refresh yourselves with the poetry of life.' But as I am not a Mighty Potentate, but merely Harold Skimpole, a child of Nature, I say, 'Fight by all means, if you enjoy that sort of thing.' At any rate, it will give me something to read in the newspapers. For myself I do not ask much—I only wish to live in peace. The rest of the world may kill one another; but let Harold Skimpole live. Butterflies are allowed to enjoy peace. Surely mankind will not deny to Harold Skimpole what it concedes to butterflies. Think of the Belgians, you say. Well, I daresay the poor Belgians are badly treated. I daresay they don't altogether like it. I daresay, on the whole, it is an unpleasant experience. But they people the landscape of War for me, they give it a poetry for me, and perhaps that is one of the pleasanter objects of their existence. Then look at the geography they have

taught me. If Louvain hadn't been burnt to the ground, I should never have known where it was. Surely everything has its compensations." To his surprise, Harold Skimpole's delightful conversation was not well received by his friends. He was even expected to do some form of war work. "Imagine Harold Skimpole doing war work!" he protested delightfully. "Why, I am ignorant of the meaning of the word. I expect it has something to do with figures, weights and measures, and money. Why, I am a mere child in such matters. I admire a strong will and immense powers of organization in others. But I admire without envy. You must not expect Harold Skimpole to join in this craze for organization. He will play for you, but he cannot work."

Unfortunately, or fortunately, as time went on, the War knocked louder and louder at his door, till he could scarcely refuse it admission. The tradesmen, who in the days of Peace were content to accept his airy promises in payment of their 'little bills,' changed their attitude, and imperiously demanded money on the spot. In vain Harold Skimpole assured them: "My dear fellows, it is quite a delusion on your part that you are supplying me with food for nothing. I am overwhelming you with money—in my expansive intentions—if only you knew it. And really, I mean it to that degree that I think it is much the same as doing it. If I had those bits of paper and thin metal to which you appear to attach so much importance, to put in your hands, I would put them in your hands. Not having them, I substitute the will for the deed. Very well! If I really mean it—if my will is as genuine as it is—it appears to me that it is much the same as coin, and cancels the obligation." But the tradesmen were adamant and retorted gruffly: "Don't cher know there's a war on? If yer can't fork out the rhino, yer can whistle for the food." Offended and distracted, he had recourse to living with his friends, leaving his wife and family to carry on as best they could—he found it easier than arguing unprofitably with materialistic

tradesmen. But, try how he would, he could not escape from the War.

It was a Zeppelin bomb which really brought the War home to him. As if by magic, his silly, ineffectual affectations and selfishness dropped from him like discarded trappings, and revealed beneath an angry soul, ready to fight any German in the world. That night, when a bomb so nearly finished his existence, he made a resolution, which he was not long in carrying into effect. The next morning, under an assumed name and age, he enlisted. Since then he has stuck to his guns with a grimness nothing short of astounding in a 'mere child.' To-day he is fighting in France as gallantly as Tom, Dick and Harry. Harold Skimpole is not the only 'waster' to whom the War has given the opportunity of proving his real worth.

Major Joseph Bagstock ("Temporary Lieutenant-Colonel whilst so employed"), more blue-faced and staring, more over-ripe than ever, is doing "valuable" work at the War Office. At the outbreak of war—be it said to his credit—he reported to the W.O. and offered his apoplectic services, which were accepted. Ever since, he has been immersed in a pile of Army correspondence. He often relates his interview with a famous General in August 1914 to his friends at the Club. "Damme, sir, before a shot had been fired I had an interview with his Grace. "'Joe, sir,' I said, 'may be old and gouty—but he's tough, sir, devilish tough. J. Bagstock offers his services to his country; and Joey B. will take no refusal. Send him to France, sir. J. B. isn't too old to fight the Germans. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales observed of Joe, at a levée, that he was wiry. Give Josh a chance, sir—and, damme! he'll take it.'" Apparently the distinguished General feared to send him across the water, lest he should succumb to a fit of apoplexy (as undoubtedly he would have done). So Colonel Bagstock fights the Hun from the War Office, in which field of operations he has gained many distinctions and decorations. He has always a stock of the latest War rumours,

with which to regale his friends at the Club. Any night you may hear him prefacing the latest story in the same familiar way : " Old Joey B. is sly, sir, devilish sly. But Joe knows a thing or two. He keeps his eyes open, does Josh. Few things pass him by, sir, though J. B. is only a blunt, stupid old soldier." One sometimes wonders if Lieutenant-Colonel J. Bagstock, D.S.O., etc., is really of much assistance to his country. But he is doing his bit—and some one has got to do the work.

Good Miss Pross is a V.A.D. in France. Though there was a time when " she little thought she would want to understand their nonsensical language," she has learnt a little French, and she is much respected by the native children. She had learnt, too, to appreciate something of the wonderful spirit which inspires the glorious French nation. Miss Pross may be ugly, rough, angular; but those weary, broken soldiers, who have felt her cooling hand on their fevered brow and have been soothed by her loving compassion, understand and appreciate the tender heart that beats beneath her rugged bosom. Bless you, Miss Pross ! Many of us who scoffed at you before the War owe you a debt of gratitude we can never, never repay.

Mr. Toots enlisted at the beginning of the War. But though he was repeatedly offered a commission, he refused to take it. On several occasions his C.O. sent for him, and tried to persuade him, but Private Toots always replied : " You're extremely kind, sir. Your good opinion is a great consolation to me. Upon my word and honour, sir, I am delighted at this opportunity of meeting you. If I could please you, sir, I would sink into the silent tomb with a gleam of joy. But really I couldn't take a commission, sir. Thank you, sir, I assure you it's of no consequence."

Later on, he was badly wounded, and he was brought into hospital, unconscious. When he recovered consciousness, the Sister tried to break it to him gently that his leg had been amputated. Private Toots received the news with a brave smile, and, shaking the Sister

warmly by the hand, he said: "How-de-do, Sister? I hope you haven't taken cold. I hope you are in the best of health, indeed I do. Thank you for your consideration of my feelings. Thank you a thousand times. But I assure you it is of no consequence at all."

Mr. Vincent Crummles has recently been decorated with the Order of the British Empire in recognition of the distinguished services he has rendered in connection with the War. For this celebrated tragedian has devoted all his time and the time of his distinguished family—including, of course, the Infant Phenomenon, who by this time is more of a phenomenon than an infant—to theatrical performances in aid of War Charities. No doubt the end justifies the means, but it must be admitted that some of their performances appear to afford more pleasure to the actors and the society ladies, who contribute their quantum of 'War work' by selling programmes, than to the unfortunate audience.

That famous lawyer, Mr. Jaggers, has not covered himself with glory of late. Some time before the War he abandoned his practice as a barrister and went into Parliament. By dint of biting his great forefinger and then throwing it at his opponent, as if to mark him out, he soon inspired universal terror in the House of Commons, and he was offered an important post in the Cabinet. Had it not been for the War, all might have gone well with him; he would have continued in his contemptuous way to bully and brow-beat his adversaries with that air of authority not to be disputed and that awe-inspiring manner. Unfortunately the War has proved to every one (except to lawyers themselves) that even lawyers have their limitations. A lawyer may display the greatest skill in dialectics, he may trounce his opponent soundly in wordy arguments—but unfortunately words are of little avail against a powerful and determined enemy. As a result, too, of Mr. Jaggers' inexorable logic and infallible arguments, the expert advisers of the Government were ruthlessly swept aside, and operations were set on foot which sent

thousands of soldiers to an unnecessary death. A Commission, set up to inquire into this little matter, made several statements of a highly distasteful and disparaging nature concerning Mr. Jaggers. In consequence he retired for ever from public life to his famous closet, where on the large jack-towel he effectively washed his hands of the entire British public, and wiped away all traces of their existence. It is doubtful as to who have more reason to be thankful for this dissolution of partnership, Mr. Jaggers or the British public. Mr. Jaggers may well be, in Mr. Wemmick's words, "as deep as Australia." But perhaps a little less deepness and a little more modesty and humanity would be more valuable in these times.

Mr. Alfred Jingle and his tearful friend, Mr. Job Trotter, who, it may be remembered, had emigrated to Demerara in the West Indies, as a result of Mr. Pickwick's unlooked-for and unmerited kindness, returned to England at the outbreak of war and enlisted in the same battalion. Mr. Jingle was the life and soul of the regiment, and was the unchallenged oracle of the canteen, where his romantic and racy yarns and breezy style filled the raw recruits with the wildest admiration. Job Trotter shone slightly with the reflected glory of his friend, but he was not so popular, because of the deep vein of pessimism which, in marked opposition to that of his friend's, ran through his conversation. Indeed, it is he who is supposed to have originated the now famous dictum, "The first ten years of the War will be the worst." Eventually the battalion went out to France. During their first spell in the trenches, Job Trotter was killed out on patrol in No Man's Land. True to his old friend, Jingle climbed over the parapet in an endeavour to rescue the body. But he had scarcely gone over the top when he was hit by a bullet, and collapsed back into the trench, mortally wounded. His pals tried to move him, but he knew the end was near, and begged to be allowed to remain where he was. With something of his old, jaunty manner, he raised himself on his side and jerked out :

"Can't step far—no danger of overwalking. Comfortable trench—grounds pretty—romantic but not extensive—open for public inspection—family in town—housekeeper desperately careful—very." Then, as a film passed over his eyes, he managed to gasp out with his dying breath: "Debt paid—good cause—whack the Hun.—All over—patch of ground—six feet.—Wooden cross.—Drop the curtain.—Affecting—very." And so he passed away, unconquerably cheery to the last.

CHAPTER IV

PAST AND PRESENT

I SUPPOSE that ever since the days of Adam the *laudator temporis acti* has preached the same sermon to the younger generation : of which the text is, " In my young days there were giants ; but nowadays there are only pigmies." The whole charm of that delightful play, ' Milestones,' lay in this contrast : the giant of yesterday became the pigmy of to-day ; the younger generation, eager for reforms and filled with new ideas, converted by the lapse of twoscore years into the older generation, eager to repress the very reforms that it had once so enthusiastically championed. It is a pretty comment on human nature, with the obvious moral that things are much the same as they were a few centuries ago, and much the same as they will be a few centuries hence.

But those who exalt the past at the expense of the present must have been shocked to the very foundations of their cherished beliefs by the War. We are making history indeed ; and on a grander scale than our ancestors could ever have conceived. Not only are nearly all the nations of the world at war : but every man, woman and child of the fighting nations is more or less directly concerned with the War. In previous wars, only the soldiers took part in the fighting : civilians were satisfied to carry on ' business as usual.' But to-day the whole of the nations feel that it is their War, and not the War of the soldiers only ; they share our anxieties, our responsibilities, and, to a certain extent, alas ! our perils. Judged by the standards of modern warfare, the great battles of the past assume the unimportance of skirmishes

between patrols. Think, too, of the much vaunted exploits of the Immortals—Gods and Heroes—of the past. The thunderbolts of Zeus hurled down from Mount Olympus, before which all men trembled, were as a boy's pop-gun compared with the firing of a modern heavy gun. The 'stunting' exploits of those two very inferior pilots, Dædalus and Icarus, pale into insignificance before the every-day routine of the simplest duffer in the R.A.F. We have heard much of the workshops of Vulcan—why, a modern Minister of Munitions would simply laugh them to scorn! The naval supremacy of the ancient Athenians could have been wrested from them by a Brazilian mine-sweeper. The famous Trojan horse is easily eclipsed for strength by a tank, or for subtlety by a *camouflage* expert. Hermes, the messenger-boy, however fleet of foot, would come in a bad second against one of our R.E. Signallers in charge of a wireless installation. Achilles, even if he had completed the dipping process, could easily have been 'gassed.' Æsculapius would never have qualified for a commission in the R.A.M.C. Ajax, we are told, defied the lightning—but could he have "stood to," as cheerily as our men, to defy a heavy 'barrage'? Could Cicero, with all his oratory, have clung to the reins of office with the dexterity and tenaciousness displayed by a certain English Premier? Demosthenes tried without much success to arouse the sluggish Athenians to take up arms against Philip of Macedon: but the propaganda of Lord Northcliffe is far more effective. Even the atrocities of past barbarians, in which you might expect them to excel, appear kindly, indulgent benevolence compared with the behaviour of the cultured German. So one could go on through the list of the Great Ones of the past *ad nauseam*, proving the insignificance of the past in relation to the present.

But though things are done on a bigger scale nowadays, one realizes more and more that there is nothing new in the world. There is not a man, not an idea, not a custom, not even a joke in modern days, for which one could not find some parallel in history.

I saw rather a striking confirmation of this the other day in a paragraph from one of our 'Chatty' illustrated papers. "A good story is going the round of London anent a certain munition-worker, who, even in these rationed days, managed to secure a large basket of peaches. An impoverished friend—that is to say, a man who was not a munition-worker—called to see him. Our hero said to his friend: "Better get busy on those peaches." "Thanks," said the friend politely, "I've had quite enough." "Well, take 'em home to your missus." "Very much obliged; but I won't, thanks." "All right—then I'll give 'em to the pigs!" Such is the story as printed in a newspaper in the year of grace 1918. It may be of interest to reproduce the original story, which may be found in the epistles of one Quintus Horatius Flaccus, better known as Horace. After thanking his friend and patron, Mæcenas, for past favours, he remarks: "Not like the Calabrian host inviting a friend to take some peaches, have you given me riches." He then relates the actual dialogue between the 'Calabrian host' and his friend:

"Vescere sodes."
"Jam satis est." "At tu quantum vis tolle." "Benigne."
"Haud invisa feres pueris munuscula parvis."
"Tam teneor dono quam si dimittar onustus."
"Ut libet, hæc porcis hodie comedenda relinques."

Literally translated, this means, "Do have one." "Thanks, I've had enough." "No, but do take as many as you want." "No thanks." "Well, take them home to your little children—they'll be glad of them." "I am as much indebted to you as if I were carrying away the whole lot home on my back." "As you please—I'll give them to the pigs instead." There you have the two versions, ancient and modern; yet I wager the contributor to the 'Chatty' newspaper had never heard of the 'Calabrian host'—indeed, he had probably never heard of Horace!

Macedonia especially brings to the mind thoughts of

the past, in the reflection that here, where we are now fighting, scores of armies have fought before. The very positions that we have sought to overcome have stood in the way of conquering armies before us. From the days of Alexander the Great till the recent Balkan War of 1912 and 1913, for generation after generation, Macedonia has been the happy hunting-ground of contending Monarchs, the cockpit of Eastern Europe. By her very position she is the buffer State between East and West. For who holds Macedonia holds the key of Europe. Poor country ! Our contempt for her should be mingled with pity, as for a stunted child, born of cruel, unsympathetic parents, a child who has never 'had a chance.' Her history is one long tale of battle, murder and sudden death. Salonica itself, a town which has been destroyed by successive conquerors more often probably than any other town in the annals of history, seemed at last to have entered on a spell of prosperity, when suddenly last year it was destroyed by a terrible fire. It seems as if an avenging Nemesis were pursuing this country inexorably, remorselessly. . . . Is it to be wondered at if her inhabitants are more backward, more uncivilized, than those of any other European nation? Is it to be wondered at if they have made no progress since the days of Alexander? We, who have dwelt so long in peaceful security, should not judge and condemn them by our own standards. For 'to whom much is given,' etc.

Macedonia abounds with landmarks made famous by history. At the eastern extremity of the Allied line, the River Struma flows into the Gulf of Orfano. A few miles from the mouth of the river, actually in No Man's Land, is the site of old Amphipolis, where the Athenians, under Cleon, and the Spartan hero, Brasidas, once fought a memorable battle, when victor and vanquished found a common grave. The city of Amphipolis was situated on the left bank of what was then called the Strymon, on a conspicuous hill, around which the river makes a bend first in a south-westerly direction, then, after a short course to the southward, back in a

south-easterly direction—from our positions at Neohori one can see plainly the position of the town and follow the course of the battle. For its only artificial fortification the city had one long wall, which began near the point north-east of the town where the river narrows into a fordable channel (it has often been forded by our patrols), ascended along the eastern side of the hill, crossing the ridge which connects it with Mount Pangæus, and then descended so as to touch the river again at another point south of the town. Thus the wall, of which fragments still remain, formed, as it were, a string to the highly bent bow made by the curve of the river.

During the war between Athens and Sparta, the latter realized that Thrace was the only quarter of the Athenian Empire that was vulnerable. In the year 423 B.C., Brasidas, one of the few outstanding Spartans who emerged superior to the levelling influences of Spartan training, captured Amphipolis, the small Athenian garrison surrendering without a blow. It was on account of his failure to render assistance to the garrison that Thucydides, the future historian, who was then in command of the Athenian fleet at Thasos, was relieved of his command. Although he did not save Amphipolis, he managed to secure the town of Eion, at the mouth of the river, which served the Athenians as a base of operations in the following year. It is impossible to say how far Thucydides was guilty of neglect of duty. It is quite conceivable that then, as now, the professional fighter on the spot was made to suffer for the shortcomings of the politician at home—in this case Cleon, whom Thucydides never forgave. The next year the Athenians sent a large expedition to Eion, to recapture Amphipolis from Brasidas and to restore their prestige. I do not propose to go into details concerning this famous battle, which dealt Athens a blow from which she never recovered. It is sufficient to say that Brasidas fell on the Athenians when they were in disarray, and by a surprise assault from the city gates routed them utterly. By opposing consummate genius and valour to ignorance

and panic, he defeated an army many times the size of his small garrison, with the loss of only seven men ! But among the seven the hero of the day, Brasidas himself, was mortally wounded : and to this day a spot exists, known as " Brasidas' tomb," where his remains are supposed to lie. Cleon, his ignoble opponent, fled panic-stricken from the field, but was overtaken and slain.

Several centuries later, Amphipolis was captured by the Romans. A party of our men digging trenches near by, came on the base of what must have been once a huge statue. The inscription on it was quite clear, " Cæsari Germanico." Of course, this was at once interpreted " To the German Kaiser," and was construed as one more proof of Constantine's duplicity. As a matter of fact it must have been in honour of Cæsar Germanicus, the Roman Emperor who conquered the city. Standing at our positions near Neohori, one can picture the Emperor, elated with ephemeral success, triumphantly entering the town, glorying in his prowess, never doubting that his name would win immortal fame. The gloomy, forbidding mountains still frown down on the Plain, the Struma still flows on to the sea with the tranquil assurance of immortality. But the thousand heroes who have lived and died fighting by her banks have sunk into oblivion. " Sic transit gloria mundi." A thousand years hence, what trace will have survived of our mighty armies? Our dust will be mingled with the dust of those who came before us. . . .

Down the very road where motor-lorries, limbers and guns now toil ceaselessly by on their way to Monastir, St. Paul once journeyed along the Via Egnatia, as it was called, from Thessalonica to Dyrrhachium. I often wonder what were his thoughts. Was he smothered in dust, tortured by mosquitoes and flies, burnt by the fiery heat of the sun, as we are now? How much have the Thessalonicans, who begged him to come over into Macedonia and help them—how much have they altered in the last two thousand years in their appearance and their habits? Has time wrought no change? Did they

think and act as we do now? One feels a strange, lingering interest and sympathy with all these men and women, long since dead and forgotten. . . .

Here by the side of the road a tumulus, the shape of a sugar-loaf, stands up on the barren plain, marking a spot where once a battle was fought. Who were they—these forgotten warriors?—they who have long since passed down the road by which we also in the fullness of time must descend into the obscurity of death. . . .

The charm of the past lies not in its dissimilarity with, but in its resemblance to the present. To know that thousands of years ago in this very spot men laughed and cursed, felt and acted, lived and died, much as we do now—therein lies the attraction of antiquity. Letters still survive from the soldiers who fought in Macedonia two thousand years ago, letters to the dear ones at home. How closely they resemble the millions of letters written to-day! The simple assurance of love, strengthened by separation; the uncomplaining cheeriness which strives to comfort and allay misgivings; the request for a few insignificant luxuries; the tender message to the children, 'sealed with a kiss'; the unconquerable optimism which robs death of its sting and defeat of its bitterness—the language of the soldier has never varied in its simplicity. Simplicity now, as always, has been the keynote of all deep feeling: for the language of love and sympathy must be unadorned by flowery elaboration—it must go direct to the heart of things. Compare the *oraison funèbre* of Pericles with any of the noble utterances of to-day, exhorting and comforting the bereaved. They make the same appeal, they speak in the same language, which custom has rendered almost platitudinous. The old words, Freedom, Patriotism and Honour, re-echo down the ages. Though cynics may scoff, millions continue to lay down their lives freely for the ideas contained in these stupid little words: and those who have been robbed by war of their loved ones continue to find comfort therein,

when the first anguish of separation has been assuaged by the healer, Time. It is the eternal paradox of humanity : in small things, during the ordinary routine of life, we are mean and petty ; but for a Great Cause we give our lives freely, we give our all, seeking nothing in return.

CHAPTER V

IMAGINARY INTERVIEWS

(*With apologies to* St-ph-n L-c-ck)

(*a*) A DISTINGUISHED GENERAL ON THE BALKAN FRONT

It was within the privacy of his own dugout that we obtained an interview with General X, whose fame has spread throughout the Balkans to such an extent as to render him absolutely famous. More than this we cannot say. For reasons of State, which are so impenetrable that we cannot attempt to penetrate them, his name cannot be disclosed. It is a name at which the beastly Bulgar, the horrid Hun, the terrible Turk, and the anæmic Austrian alike quail in terror. Of his personal appearance, however, at the risk of divulging the indivulgeable, we will only say that he is a clean-shaven man with a large beard and whiskers, and that his bald head is covered with a mass of grey hair.

As we came into his office, three A.D.C.'s, four Office-clerks and a dog rose smartly to attention, and saluted with that precision which has made the British Army what it is. The distinguished General, however, continued to pore over the maps and the weekly *Times*, which lay before him: pausing every now and then from poring to light a cigarette. Without revealing anything that might be of use to the enemy, we may remark that the General is always most dangerous when he is poring.

This, then, we thought to ourselves (when there is nothing else to do, and nobody pays any attention to us, we always think to ourselves), is the world-famous

General, whose name raises a shudder from Kirk-Kilisse to Kopriva, from Radoslavoff (wherever that may be) to Rupel. This is the man who has revolutionized our conception of (we consulted our copy of *Land and Water*)—of Elasticity of Defence according to Plan, of Strategical Retreats, of——

Our reverie was interrupted by a staccato growl from the General. "Orderly Officer! Anything to report?"

We explained ourselves and handed him our card. He took it, read it, turned it upside down, read it again, and threw it into the W.P.B. We were astonished at his wonderful grasp. Where another man might have taken hours to memorize our name, he had mastered its significance in a brief minute.

"General," we began.

"Please be brief," said the great General.

"General," we said briefly; "we have come all this way in response to an overwhelming demand on the part of the British Public——"

"Be brief," the great General repeated.

"To learn," we continued, even more briefly than before—if that were possible—and casting an anxious glance at the General's shining boots; "to learn what the Salonica Army is doing."

There was an expectant pause, during which we expected almost anything. Then the General spoke:

"I would rather say, what is the immediate objective——"

"So would we," we murmured, "much rather——"

"And the ulterior objective of the Armée d'Orient!"

"Exactly," we admitted, pausing to admire his wonderful grasp of the French language, which made us realize we were in the presence not only of a soldier, but also of one of the most consummate linguists of the twentieth century. "What our paper requires is a simple explanation, so simple that the simplest politician can understand it, of the precise objectives" ("immediate and ulterior" we added proudly, after consulting our shorthand précis) "of the Armée d'Orient."

"First of all," said the great General, raising his

distinguished head and wiping his distinguished brow with his distinguished handkerchief, "I must ask you to grasp the difficulties of the terrain——"

We did—we grasped them hard.

"Nor must you overlook the encroachments of the anopheles mosquito."

We assured him indignantly that we wouldn't think of doing such a thing.

"Then have you conceived the difficulties arising from our lengthy communications?"

We tried hard to indicate by adequate facial expression that we had done so.

"Very well, then. We are here to stabilize Central Europe——"

"Quite right," we agreed; "it ought to be stabilized——"

"And by operating against the enemy's lateral line of communications, to shatter his hopes of forming a Mittel-Europa block——"

"Shatter them by all means," we murmured.

"Then we are here to prevent Germany from using Salonica as a *locus operandi*——"

"As a how much?" we asked.

"As a *locus operandi*," the great General repeated sternly, "for submarine warfare."

We gasped in amazement—what a colossal brain! Not only a *facile princeps* and a past-master in waging war on land, he was positively amphibious, and could grasp the possibilities of the naval side of warfare with equal facility! He paused to light another cigarette, and we took the opportunity of bringing him back to the point.

"What we want to know is—do you intend to attack the Bulgar? If so, when, and where?"

"That question," said the General, "is simplicity itself. I can give you an answer in a word——"

"That's right," we said; "give it us that way. That's what we want."

"It amounts—if one may condense it into a phrase——"

"Condense it," we said; "condense it."

"It amounts to this. If you want to know when and where we are going to attack——"

"Yes?" we asked impatiently, preparing to take down the thrilling intelligence.

"You'd better ask the Bulgar."

With that we left him—we felt there was no more to be said.

(*b*) WITH THE MOST FAMOUS SALONICAN RESTAURATEUR, M. FLICA

It was in the heart of the great city of Salonica that we found M. Flica standing outside his famous café. We presented him with our card: which he at once accepted with a smile, and murmured, "Backshee, Johnny." We realized that we had the privilege of addressing not only a restaurateur of European fame, but also a cosmopolitan of the first water.

We seated ourselves at a table, and at a nod from us he took another chair, and sat down beside us with the greatest ease—indeed, we have never seen a man sit down more easily. He ordered two beers; and we raised our glass, murmuring out of compliment, in the language of the country: "Hoi polloi!"

"Malista!" he replied with an ineffable smile—indeed, we have never seen any one smile quite so ineffably. We need hardly say that M. Flica speaks a dozen languages with equal fluency. Indeed, he is so consummate a linguist that he frequently speaks three languages simultaneously—with the same breath, as one might say. On several occasions during the interview we could scarcely tell what language he *was* speaking.

"As a distinguished Salonican, who has come into contact with the soldiers of every Army, what are your impressions of the British Army?" we asked, as we took out our note-book.

"Yes," he replied without hesitation.

We repeated our question in a more simplified form. A smile flitted across his Oriental features so imper-

ceptibly that it could not have been seen. "English plenty good: the others no dam good," he replied, at once seeing the trend or point of our question.

Just as we were pausing (we always pause) to acknowledge the compliment, his experienced eye (or rather his experienced eyes—for this remarkable man has no less than two) detected a French officer sitting at a table near by. With a hurried "'Scuse, pleece," he left us, still admiring his inimitable *verve* and *bonhomie*. As we sat gazing (we do a good deal of gazing) at the busy throng hurrying up and down Venizelos Street, we heard him say to the French officer: "Français très bon: les autres sont des salauds."

Later he returned to us: and we remarked, by way of bringing into the conversation a Biblical allusion: "Are you not thrilled at the thought that on the very ground where you now stand St. Paul may once have been addressing the Thessalonicans?"

"Ah!" said M. Flica, "Paul—him keep a shop in Rue Egnatia—yes, no?"

We roared over his indescribable drollery: we realized that M. Flica has perhaps a more exquisite sense of humour than any other two men in Salonica. With difficulty restraining our mirth, we replied:

"No, St. Paul the Apostle."

"Apostle?" said M. Flica, "no compree," which threw us into a renewed paroxysm of laughter. Restraining our mirth for a second time with even greater difficulty, we asked him:

"When do you think the War will end?"

At once his eyes lit up. In a moment he had, so to speak, focussed his thoughts on the War. We could see that he was rapidly passing in review all the outstanding facts and salient features of the War, pinching them, moulding them, sifting them, collating them, and deducing therefrom a reasoned answer to our question. All this he indicated by a concentration of his features so concentrated, and a contraction of his muscles so contracted, as to resemble nothing so

much as concentration and contraction. "What a mind!" we murmured to ourselves: and then, as he continued to concentrate and contract, "what a brain!" At length, when the silence had become absolutely silent, he spoke:

"War verra good, Johnny. Soldiers plenty money, plenty backshee. War finish, Salonica finish. I also finish. War go on many years, I hope."

We gasped with astonishment at the extraordinary far-sightedness of his outlook. Here was a man, indeed, who could see beyond the present into the future, who could discern that even the cloud of war has a silver lining, or at any rate a paper lining (for silver is scarce in Salonica). This is the type of man we need to win the War. Almost in a trance we left him, scarcely noticing he had charged us five shillings for the beer we hadn't drunk.

CHAPTER VI

THE SALONICA SIDE-SHOW—SQUARING ACCOUNTS

On the 5th of October, 1915, Bulgaria had completed her mobilization, commenced on the 23rd of the previous month, and her patrols crossed the Serbian Frontier. On the same day the first contingent of Franco-British troops landed at Salonica, at the request of the Greek Government, then led by M. Venizelos. After protracted negotiations with the latter, we had, on the very day that Bulgaria commenced to invade Serbia, agreed to send 150,000 Franco-British troops to Salonica to join hands with the Greek Army, which had mobilized for this purpose, in an attempt to succour the Serbs, who were now fighting desperately for existence against the combined Austro-German and Bulgarian Armies. Not only was it our manifest duty to come to the rescue of gallant little Serbia, but it was in our interests to obtain a *point d'appui* in the Balkans, where the presence of our Armies would give confidence to our friends, rally neutrals to our aid, and intimidate our enemies.

The attempt to rescue Serbia failed for two reasons. First, on the afternoon of the 5th, at the very moment when the first troops were landing at Salonica, the position at Athens had been revolutionized. By a flagrant violation of the constitution, the ex-King Constantine had driven M. Venizelos from office, and had definitely repudiated his solemn obligation to assist Serbia. Not only did he refuse assistance, but, when the Entente troops arrived, he endeavoured by every

means in his power to place obstacles in our way and to hamper our movements. The second reason, partly due to Constantine's treachery, but chiefly to the unconscionable delays of diplomatic and military *pourparlers,* was that we arrived about three weeks too late. By the time we were ready to move up north from Salonica, Bulgaria had already invaded southern Serbia, and had effectually blocked the way between the retreating Serbian Armies and any possible assistance from us. The remnant of the Serbian Armies were compelled to retreat through the trackless, barren country of Albania. Eventually, after nearly a month's unimaginable horrors, they reached the coast at Durazzo, and were sent thence to the island of Corfu to recuperate. Meanwhile, the Anglo-French forces, who had penetrated some thirty miles into Serbia, in all nearly eighty miles from our base, in a gallant but futile attempt to break through the Bulgarian Army, were compelled to retreat ignominiously back to the defences of Salonica. The enemy did not cross the Greek Frontier, and for the last forty miles we were unmolested.

The fighting of 1916 may be divided into two periods. During the first five months we perfected, as far as possible, the Salonica defences. In June we moved up to the Greek Frontier, occupying a semicircular front some fifty miles distant from Salonica. Everywhere we found the Bulgar in carefully prepared positions. On the left of our line, the Franco-Serb Army, after repulsing Bulgarian attacks in the neighbourhood of Florina, assumed the offensive, advanced some forty miles on a wide front, and captured Monastir at the end of September. Here the fighting ended, as we were unable to advance further. Moreover, the menacing attitude of the Greek Royalist troops behind us in ancient Greece made a further advance into Serbia, and a further lengthening of our communications (which from Salonica to Monastir were already nearly a hundred miles), both dangerous and inadvisable.

The entry of Roumania into the War in August offered the possibility of a combined attack on Bulgaria from

the Dobrudja in the north and from Salonica in the south. Unfortunately, for reasons which are not even yet clear, Roumania neglected this opportunity, and moved her Armies west instead, in an attempt to regain her lost province of Transylvania. Two months later she was invaded from all sides, but the Salonica Armies were powerless to render assistance, save for the diversion at Monastir. During the year the Franco-British Divisions were reinforced by the Serbian Army from Corfu, also by Russian and Italian contingents. The latter, apart from one Division attached to the French, took on the line from Monastir to the coast of Albania. The sector occupied by the British from the Vardar River, just south of Guevgeli, to the mouth of the Struma, about ninety miles in length, was not the scene of much fighting during the year, but the Vardar marshes and the Struma Plain, which were both in our sector, proved to be the two most unhealthy spots in Macedonia. Towards the end of the year, M. Venizelos definitely broke with Constantine, and landed in Salonica. Here he began to raise, from all the sounder and more loyal elements in Greece, a Greek Army of National Defence. In the spring of '17, when Greece was once again reunited by the expulsion of Constantine, there were three Divisions of the National Defence Army actually at the Front—and, in all, nearly a hundred thousand men.

Except for the British attack at Doiran in April and May, which proved a costly failure, there were no operations on a large scale in 1917. The enforced abdication of Constantine had effectively removed the menace from our rear, for the Pro-German element in Greece was powerless without his leadership. M. Venizelos returned to Athens, promptly declared War on our enemies, and devoted all his energies to preparing the Greek Army for the part she was to play in the War. Gradually the Greek troops, fully prepared and equipped, were sent to the Front, till at the close of 1918 the Greek Army exceeded 200,000 men.

But the favourable turn of affairs in Greece was

more than discounted by the gradual disintegration and final overthrow of the Russian colossus. In face of this disaster, it would have been folly to attempt any large assault on Bulgaria.

The first eight months of 1918 were distinguished by only two events of military importance, to both of which I have referred elsewhere : the successful Greek attack at Sekra-Di-Legen and the Italian advance and subsequent retreat in Albania. With the Great Offensive which opened on September 14th, and was concluded on the 30th, as with the subsequent movements of the Salonica Armies, I have dealt fully elsewhere.

Such then, briefly, is the history of the 'Salonica Side-show.' How far it justified its existence it is at present impossible to say. Though we know what was achieved, we have only the dimmest idea of the cost in men, material and tonnage. Moreover, there is one aspect of the case which must always remain a matter for conjecture—how far the Salonica 'packet,' had it been employed in France instead, would have been sufficient to turn the scales in our favour, and bring us Peace earlier, either in 1916 or in 1917. This was the charge most frequently levelled at us by 'Westerners' : that our side-show was eating up enormous quantities of men and material, the presence of which in France would have been sufficient to bring about a decision in our favour. No doubt, if we included all the different Eastern theatres of War—Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia and Salonica—it would be found that an Army not far short of a million and a half had been diverted from the Western Front. Scarcely a half of this force, however, could be counted as fighting troops, and of these a large proportion would inevitably be required for the protection of Egypt and the route to India. In my own humble opinion, the addition of some twenty-five Divisions to the B.E.F. France would not have been sufficient to turn the scales in our favour. For it is significant that a preponderance of nearly three to two was not sufficient to bring the Entente a decisive victory during the campaigns of 1917 ; and

that in the spring of 1918, when the Germans attacked with a preponderance of nearly two to one, they were eventually held up. Finally, victory was achieved against an enemy who was numerically stronger than we were. The conclusion to be drawn from these remarkable facts appears to be that the resistance of an enemy cannot be broken by weight of the opposing numbers, but only by the collapse of his own 'moral.'

However that may be, and I am well aware that it is a question which cannot lightly be dismissed, it is possible to estimate roughly the cost in men of the Expedition. So far as I know, the only estimate of our numbers published in the papers was contained in a message from Sophie, the ex-Queen of Greece, to the German General Staff. This message, which was written at the close of '16, and was subsequently deciphered when M. Venizelos returned to Athens, stated that the Entente were making frantic endeavours to raise the Salonica Armies from seven to eight hundred thousand men. How far these figures are accurate, I cannot, of course, say, but I am inclined to accept them, as the information obtained by Constantine's spy system was rarely at fault. Let us, therefore, accept the estimate of three-quarters of a million, and analyse it in detail.

The original British contingent was composed of five Divisions, say about a hundred thousand men, and an Army at the Base and on lines of communication of nearly equal strength. If we include every one, the British ration strength could not have been less than two hundred thousand. In December 1916 another Division was sent from France, but in the summer of 1917 two Infantry Divisions and two Cavalry Brigades were sent to Palestine. There were, therefore, fluctuations in the ration strength, but I think two hundred thousand represents a fair average figure.

The French Force was slightly larger than ours: at one time, I believe, there were eight French Divisions. On the other hand, the French employ fewer men on lines of communication than we do. Their average

strength, therefore, probably did not exceed two hundred and thirty thousand.

The Serbian Army (at the time of the ex-Queen's letter) numbered rather over a hundred thousand. About a hundred and twenty-five thousand Serbs landed at Salonica from Corfu. But they had no reinforcements (except for the Yugo-Slav Division, which did not land till 1918), and the Army was gradually reduced during the three years' heavy fighting to a quarter of its original strength.

The Russian contingent was, I think, two Divisions strong—about forty thousand men. After the Revolution, however, they refused to fight. The majority were shipped away to Africa, but some, who volunteered, were drafted to Labour Battalions and worked on roads behind the lines. A tiny fraction of the force, I believe, joined the French Foreign Legion and continued to fight.

Of the size of the Italian contingent I am not certain. There was one Division based on Salonica, fighting in conjunction with the French near Monastir. But there was another force operating in Albania, and based on Santi Quaranta, of which, of course, we saw nothing. During the Italian 'push' in the summer of 1918 there must have been, at the very least, three Divisions there. At the time, however, of which the Queen was writing, I suppose the total Italian Force was about fifty thousand.

As yet, the Greek Army of National Defence was in its infancy, and there were not, I think, more than fifty thousand Greeks at the Front.

These figures, which are, of course, very rough, give us a total of six hundred and seventy thousand in all. It was, however, at this period that the extra British Division was sent out, and the French, I fancy, sent out two or more Divisions at the same time. So we may take it that three-quarters of a million men was, at the time, a substantially accurate estimate.

There is just one other aspect of the case on which I should like to touch. Exclusive of the Greeks, the Serbs and the Italians in Albania, who were all fighting

on their own soil or the soil to which they aspired, and who could not have been utilized to advantage on another Front, how many men—that is to say, how many British and French—in all were diverted from the Western Front to Salonica during the three years of the campaign? The French and the British systems of reinforcement were different. The French automatically withdrew a man from Salonica after eighteen months, gave him leave, and sent him on to the Western Front, replacing him with another man. This method of exchange was far more economical, though a greater number of men were infected with the malarial virus. The British system was to keep a man out in Salonica till he was dead or dying. If there was still a little life left in him, he was kindly permitted to go home to England, where, from the point of view of the Army (or, indeed, from any point of view), he practically ceased to have any value at all. I do not propose to give an opinion on the respective merits of the two systems : but from the point of view of estimating the number of men definitely 'eaten up' by the campaign, as opposed to those who were merely transferred and replaced, our system was certainly more wasteful. We have accepted four hundred and thirty thousand as the 'average' strength of the Franco-British Force : but if we allow for the reinforcements sent out to replace casualties, the total number of men consumed by the Expedition cannot have fallen far short of three-quarters of a million.

So much, then, for the 'cost.' Let us now turn to the more congenial task of enumerating our achievements. These may be summed up under six headings.

(1) Although we failed to render direct assistance to the Serbs in 1915, yet our occupation of Salonica secured for the remnant of their Army a valuable position from which to renew the fight, after they had been fitted out at Corfu. But for the Expedition, the hundred and twenty-five thousand Serbs who escaped through Albania would never have had an opportunity to revenge themselves on the enemy, and Serbia, as a

nation, would inevitably have been eliminated from the ranks of the combatant Powers. Thus, we not only paid the moral debt we owed to her by renewing the country's confidence in victory, but we secured the services of a valuable Army, which otherwise would have been wasted.

(2) From the tortuous maze of Greek foreign politics, one fact emerges clearly—that the Salonica Expedition was at once the stumbling-block of our enemies in Greece and the rallying-point of our friends. Had it not been for us, there can be but little doubt that the voice of M. Venizelos and his friends would have been stifled, and that Constantine would have led his passive country under the German yoke. Throughout all the stages of the War, Greece, by her very position, had an importance out of all proportion to her size: and the Salonica Expedition not only silenced her enmity, but eventually procured her alliance.

(3) Indirectly, too, we must have had considerable influence in bringing Roumania into the War on our side. Had Constantine succeeded in allying his country with the Turk and the Bulgar (as but for us he would have done), not only would Roumania never have dared to join us, but she might actually have been tempted to join the Pan-Balkan block.

(4) By the occupation of Salonica we prevented the Germans from securing an invaluable submarine base. But for this, and the watchful blockade which it enabled our Navy to impose on Greece and her thousand islands, our tenure of the Mediterranean would have been more than precarious: and it would have been almost impossible to maintain communication with Egypt and Mesopotamia.

(5) For three years we pinned down an Army which, as far as 'bayonets' are concerned, was numerically stronger than ours. For though the enemy did not use a fifth of the number employed by us on his lines of communication, he maintained about three hundred and ten battalions at the Front—a far larger number than we were able to put into the field.

(6) Although we appeared to do nothing for three years except drain the resources of the Entente, yet we had in Salonica an invaluable *point d'appui*, from which, when the opportunity at last presented itself, we were in a position to deliver the enemy a blow where he was most vulnerable. With the elimination of Bulgaria, the flanks of both Turkey and Austria were turned and victory was assured. Although Germany was reeling from the deadly blows inflicted by Foch on the Western Front, it is more than probable that she could have hung on till the winter, had it not been for the defection of her allies. It is certain that she would have had to make Peace during the following spring : but in the meanwhile, the winter-madness which seems to afflict all politicians might have lost for us, by an inconclusive Peace, the fruits of our victory. From this the country was saved by the Salonica Armies.

I have endeavoured to indicate, however vaguely, the credit and the debit side of the account as far as they are known to me. It remains for the future historian, in possession of all the facts, to strike the balance.

Printed in Great Britain by
UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED THE GRESHAM PRESS, WOKING AND LONDON


Nish
Sophia
Radomir
Uskub
Monastir
Seres
Kavalla
Salonica