The Retreat from Serbia

Through Montenegro and Albania

By

Olive M. Aldridge

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To my friend W E Hart

with best wishes

H R a Edwards

It is not my book but I am as proud of it as if it were

HRE

THE RETREAT FROM SERBIA
THROUGH MONTENEGRO
AND ALBANIA

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Photopress] "FROM THEIR BLOOD WILL SPRING FLOWERS
FOR SOME FAR OFF GENERATION." —*Njegos.* [*Copyright*

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OLIVE M. ALDRIDGE

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INTRODUCTION

In July, 1915, *I went to Serbia as a member of the 3rd Serbian Relief Unit (sent out by the Serbian Relief Fund Committee) to work at one of the village dispensaries which were then being started by Mrs. Stobart in outlying villages within a radius of some thirty miles from her Field Hospital at Kragujevatz.*

The outward journey was by sea to Salonika, and thence by rail to Kragujevatz. After spending a short time at the Field Hospital, I began my village work; this lasted till early October, when it was interrupted by the invasion of Serbia by the Austro-German and Bulgarian Armies. The three weeks which followed the renewal of fighting were spent at the Kragujevatz Field Hospital, where wounded soldiers were brought in from the Belgrade area. Early in November, when the fighting in that district had stopped and the road lay open to the invaders, Kragujevatz was evacuated. Then for

seven weeks I was on the road with Serbian soldiers from Kragujevatz to the coast of Albania and finally reached London on December 23rd.

In this short period of time I had thus seen Serbia under three different aspects: first, life in the village when the land was in a state of comparative peace; again, when the country was invaded on three sides and the Serbs were fighting for their lives; and yet again, when, after defeat, they were retreating before the on-coming foe.

In the following pages I have tried to reflect as I saw it a picture from each of these three chapters of Serbia during those eventful months and have added a note on Serbian history.

In the final adjustments of this terrible war may my country do all within its power to secure justice for the liberty-loving people of this Eastern land!

O. M. A.

41 Russell Square,
London, W.C.
August, 1916.

To

THE SERBIAN PEOPLE

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"FROM THEIR BLOOD WILL SPRING FLOWERS
FOR SOME FAR OFF GENERATION." *Njegoš.*

SERBIAN SOLDIERS

MAP

The Retreat from Serbia

Through Montenegro and Albania

THE VILLAGE OF VITANOVATZ

It fell to my lot to be stationed at Vitanovatz, a small village a little less than thirty miles south from Kragujevatz and some seven miles north from Kraljevo.

Three women were on the staff—Dr. McMillan and Sister Collins for the dispensary, and myself as housekeeper. There were also David Boone, an English lad, as chauffeur ; Joseph, a Macedonian, who was to act as interpreter for the patients ; and Sam, an Austrian prisoner of war, to assist in the general household duties. Both the latter were placed at our disposal by the Serbian Government.

We travelled out one day from Kragujevatz in a red car which belonged to the Serbs, and a big motor lorry from the Arsenal brought the stores, tents and other equipment. The road was heavy and difficult and the lorry writhed and snorted on

the hills as it pressed slowly forward like some sentient creature quivering in its struggle for breath : at points it seemed as if nothing could prevent it from breaking in two, so great was the strain. The swift red car ran ahead from point to point and then waited for long intervals for the lorry. We started our new home in a field adjoining the village. The field was hilly and sloped towards the road ; there were several fine old trees in it and it was bounded by hedges that later in the autumn were laden with bright-hued berries. Our living-tents were pitched on the ridge of the field, and the dispensary tent at the bottom of the slope quite near the road. A notice was put up, in Serbian, to say exactly who and what we were and to invite anyone who wished for medical aid to come to us. The village was chosen because the road running through it led to the little town of Kraljevo, and many peasants in the course of a week went by with their produce.

News of our coming spread quickly and the peasants flocked to the dispensary in large numbers after the first few days ; many with real maladies, for whom much was done and many cures effected, but others came too who were perfectly well but affected illness from sheer curiosity to see what we and our camp looked like. We were "an event" in the village, many had seen no one exactly like us before, and certainly we were the first people from

Western Europe who had come to settle in the village. So the peasants came to find out how we talked, how we dressed, what we looked like and what we had to eat. The excuse for coming would be to see the doctor. This formality over, they would walk round the dispensary tent and inspect it in detail, then they would walk slowly up the field to our private quarters. It never surprised us to enter our mess tent and find a group of peasant women discussing its arrangements or to enter our sleeping quarters and find a similar group deeply interested in our camp beds or the shape of our garments; or still another group round our fire lifting the lids of our pots and pans to find out what we had for dinner. A bright yellow fisherman's oilskin of mine, brought from England, attracted much attention, and when wearing it, whether in the camp, in the village or in the market town, peasants who had not seen it before would come straight towards me as though they had been attracted by a magnet; sometimes two or three people would take hold of it at the same time, apparently forgetful that someone was inside it, feel it and pronounce it "dobro" (good). The village people too seemed to know where it was kept on fine days. Even the Presednik (the magistrate of the village) openly admired it and told me laughingly that he would steal it should he have the opportunity. Other mem-

bers of the staff had equally good mackintoshes and of far greater value, but these excited no interest and we attributed the attractiveness of mine to its colour—bright yellow.

But if the Serbians found us interesting because different from themselves, we certainly found them interesting, and for the same reason. Being chiefly an agricultural people they have a different civilisation and—apart from the Catholic, which we have in common—a different religion: most are members of the Greek Church and others are Mahommedans, and not only have they another language but another alphabet, the Kyrillic, based on the Greek instead of the Latin characters. Then, too, there is a fortnight's difference in time between their calendar and ours. Two other points of difference we noticed among the peasants—a nod of the head we found meant "No," whilst a shake of the head meant "Yes," and that the women, who are great knitters, invariably commence a stocking at the toe instead of the top. The Serbs belong to the East of Europe and are therefore quite other than ourselves and have much of the reserve of the Oriental. At first it was the differences that roused our interest; later we not only admired but found the Serbian character lovable.

We not only helped the peasants with medical advice, but with clothing when there was need. Our assistance was accepted quite naturally and

was looked upon as the gift of one friendly nation to another, and they in their turn were equally ready to help us. The Serbs are a kind, generous natured people and are always ready to give. For the smallest services rendered them we were always repaid; gifts of fruit, nuts, eggs, vegetables, live pigs and chickens, knitted gloves, coloured waist belts, amongst other things, were showered upon us. Things they themselves had made or had grown on their little farms. Sometimes we did not like to take these gifts, as the homes from which they came seemed to contain so little, but to refuse would have hurt their feelings. They are a sensitive people and to give is so much a part of their nature that we always accepted. A peasant woman from a neighbouring village who occasionally washed clothes for us, always gave us a big rosy apple each when we paid the bill. One day a peasant entered our tent whilst we were at dinner; he went round the table and gave each of us three walnuts, then walked away.

Many patients came journeys, which took several days, in bullock waggons over the hills and along what appeared almost impassable roads. They slept in the waggons and brought food enough to last till their return. On arrival the oxen would be unyoked, then people and animals would sit down together near the waggons with their meal spread on the grass,

and a fine day would see our field dotted with these ox-waggon groups, the oxen eating hay or stalks of maize. Maize is a great food in Serbia for both man and beast. Animals and people have many things in common, and a great intimacy exists between them; the animals too seem very human. An ox we met once on the road from Kraljevo was very surprised and frightened on seeing our motor car. For a time he stood quite still and gazed, his eyes growing ever larger and rounder, then dashed for safety to the side of a woman who stood with a distaff in her hand a little way down the bank by the roadside—just as a child might have run to its mother's side for protection—and from this point of safety watched the car pass.

Animals, and people too, take life at a contemplative pace, both seem to live ever in an atmosphere of dignified leisure and are seldom in a hurry. When asked to do anything the peasants would always reply "sutra" (to-morrow)—and to-morrow never comes. We too after a little while when asked to do things said "sutra" with the ease and fluency of the native—possibly it was the climate, for we too began to feel that any time would do. Peasants who came long journeys would wait quite patiently their turn to see the doctor and it appeared not to matter whether their turn came to-day or "sutra." Our staff—or rather its western element—were the only people in a

hurry and who bustled round and fussed over things. Soon we began to feel that all this haste was not only undignified but almost indecent, and had we stayed a little longer, just as we had learned to say "sutra," we too might have learned fresh values for things and realised there was no need to hurry and bustle—eternity was before us.

The Serbs, men and women, are fine in stature and have very handsome dark eyes. They begin to look old at a very early age. Often have we been shocked to find that patients whom we had thought long past middle age, were quite young men. Possibly it is the effect of their hard outdoor life. The men dress in brown home-spun garments trimmed with black braid and white or unbleached under-garments; in summer the under-garment is worn outside. The outer garment is sometimes very ragged and bits, large or small, of the underwear may stick out at many points, but this never affects the easy manners or bearing of the Serb. We often remarked that he possessed a soul above rags and other surroundings. Certainly there is no element of snobbishness in him. Silk sashes of varied and brilliant colours are worn by the men under their brown jackets, and the women are fond of gay embroidery on the fronts of their bodices; their skirts are very full and rather sombre in colour. The foot gear of both men and women is a kind of sandal called

"opanki." In wet weather the women take off their opanki and walk down the muddy roads and across the fields with bare feet. A narrow leather strap run round the top of the opanki acts as a drawstring and keeps it close to the foot. The end of this strap is taken round and round the leg and fastened with a metal hook in the stocking just below the knee. The top of the stocking is a favourite place for carrying a big knife. Often the Serb—who, in days of peace, is a gay fellow—will fix a little bouquet of flowers, a rose or a geranium at the point where the strap hooks into the stocking, another bright flower will decorate the front of his cap which is worn a little on one side of the head, and yet another will be carried in the barrel end of his rifle. A lover of flowers is the Serb, and music is a part of his nature; he takes life easily, and perhaps a little indolently. Often were we fascinated by his gay appearance as he sat on the grass in our camp. And yet this same man would, if danger threatened, rise to attention on the instant and be ready if need be to face death on the spot.

Such a man was Svertomir (a Serbian orderly added later to our staff) who we all agreed was a bad housemaid but a good soldier. He never cared for washing the saucepans (lonats) after supper and would ask with a smile if they could be left till the next day, "Sestra! lonats peri sutra pet sat?" (Sister, saucepans clean to-morrow

at five o'clock) and when morning came often they were not ready for cooking the breakfast. Yet when garbed in his soldier jacket (a little small for his stalwart form) with knife in belt or stocking, and shouldering his rifle and fixed bayonet, he was transformed and could be trusted in any emergency. He accompanied us later in our "trek" down to San Giovanni di Medua, unfailing in kindness and helpfulness, bearing privation without a murmur, after a hard day's journey taking his turn cheerfully as guard at night. We owe Svertomir much. We left him on the Albanian coast, far from the little home in Kraljevo where his mother lives.

The Serbian women work on their little farms (the peasants own their land) and when not actually engaged in this work are always seen with knitting needles or a distaff in their hands. They knit thick heavy stockings and gloves for their menfolk and embroider them with gay floral designs in vivid hues—often one saw a man wearing bright yellow woollen gloves with green or red roses worked on the backs.

There were two inns in the village quite near each other, both double-fronted buildings, and each had a wide roomy veranda on the ground floor, hung with creepers and other plants, extending along the full frontage. A few steps led up from the road to the veranda, which had to be crossed in each case to enter the inn. Seated round the tables on the veranda were

always groups of villagers discussing the latest war news with wayfarers. The inns resembled our old-fashioned country inns in the days before railroads. Roads in Serbia are not easy for travellers, and distances between towns are great. Rooms in the inns we found were primitive but clean and comfortable, floors were uncarpeted. Travellers often brought their own food, it did not matter whether they bought it or not at the inn. There was good stabling for the animals. In many of the Serbian villages inn fires were lighted in small recesses in the walls, some five feet or so from the floor, over these water and coffee would be heated in tiny tin or copper pots with long handles. At one inn we had two rooms, of which we had the keys, for storage purposes. Here we kept our stocks of medicines and provisions and other things which it was necessary to keep dry.

One large common room in both inns was used permanently by Austrian prisoners. In wet weather their meals were taken there. Other prisoners occupied a loft over some stables. The Austrian prisoners made a new road to our camp; they worked in the village and in the fields, and being thus healthily employed by their captors had perhaps as good a time as any prisoners of war. The Presednik—or magistrate—of our village let them take the apples and pears from his orchard when they

were working for him, "although," he said with a smile, "they do not deserve them." He, the Presednik, was kind to us and looked after our wants. He it was who kept us supplied with wood for our fires. When our supply ran short we used to send him word and he would send Austrian prisoners to cut down a few trees, which were then drawn up in ox waggons into our camp, accompanied by Austrian prisoners to unload and cut them into the requisite lengths. Many of the peasants never chopped their wood, but placed the end of a tree across the hearth—a square hearth often in the middle of the room—and lighted it; all that was necessary to replenish the fire was to push the tree as it burnt away a little further across the hearth. Often there were no chimneys and the smoke went off in any direction it pleased. These fires in the middle of the room were very fascinating to the outsider. One house near us had such a fire and in passing, just after dark, we could see through the open door a family of eight seated round it with the light flickering over their faces and the children with their little hands stretched out for warmth outlined against the flames. The rest of the room was in shadow and darkness. Another house with a square hearth and space for quite a large tree was often visited by us, as a consumptive lad lay dying there and his parents were anxious to obtain medical advice from every possible source.

"Will he get better?" was always their question. "If there is a chance we will give him only the food that is good for him; but if he must die, then he must have whatever he wishes." He was a soldier in the Balkan War and contracted the illness in Albania, where he had been sent to fight.

The Presednik sent water for general use to us from the river in large barrels, drawn up to the camp by oxen; our drinking water came from a spring near the Pope's (the minister's) garden. Great interest was shown by the Presednik, as by the peasants, in what we had to eat, for in addition to the things bought in the district, we had stores sent out from England. A new kind of bean or pea was at once commented upon, whilst the canned foods and our ways of cooking caused much serious reflection. The Presednik would often call just before meal times, and he too would lift the lids of our pots and pans to see what was inside. Taking out his knife—all Serbs carry large knives—he would cut a piece from anything that was new to him, eat it, his face wearing a serious expression the while, and finally would make his pronouncement in judicial tones. Sometimes we would ask him to share our meal, and if we then offered him anything with which he was familiar he would wave it aside with a lordly dignified sweep of his arm and say he could get it "svaki dan" (every day) and so would have

none of it; if, on the other hand, he could not get it "svaki dan" he would eat heartily. He was an intelligent man and took a keen interest in everything that concerned the area under his jurisdiction.

Presedniks are elected every three years; they are the chief men of their areas and can adjudicate in all questions of land and other property up to a given value. Our Presednik was eager to establish a school in Vitanovatz that all the children, he said, might learn to read and write. One day he took us to a neighbouring village—also in his jurisdiction—and showed us over a school in which he, as a boy, had been one of the first scholars. He wanted both a church and a school at Vitanovatz. "Which," he asked us, "should come first?"—and when we said the school he was delighted because it fitted with his own ideas. He was a deeply religious man, but the school, he said, meant so much to the children, and churches were more frequently accessible. "Besides," he said, "God is everywhere." He took us too one day to a village church on a special feast day and we saw the churchyard almost filled with peasants from the neighbourhood who had brought food to place on the graves of their dead; those who brought the food gave it to all who came, and ate of it themselves. The ceremony is called "datja," and is a very ancient custom amongst the

country people. Those who partook of the food thought whilst doing so of the suffering the dead had endured, and the souls of the dead were thus benefited. The peasants went in single file through the church and each received a blessing as they passed the altar and kissed the the hand of the "Pope"—a cold, lifeless-looking hand which he extended. He seemed no longer human, but inanimate, and might have been a decorative section of the altar. Later, this time in the open air, standing at the end of a table, the "Pope" blessed the representatives of families and villages who came forward with bowed uncovered heads.

In this village we called on the peasant woman who washed our clothes and were welcomed by her with whole-hearted hospitality; she brought us jam and water, which it is the custom to offer. A little tray is handed with a dish of jam (the fruit is kept whole in the preserving), two receptacles for spoons, and several glasses of cold water. The etiquette of the ceremony is to take a whole fruit, put the spoon back in the receptacle for used spoons and then drink some cold water. At first the ceremony, though simple, is a little puzzling. During the walk back to our own village we talked with the Presednik about the government of the village, his election to office and his Committee of Council. We told him about the villages in England.

A pleasant weekly event was my visit to the Presednik's office to pay for eggs, milk and garden produce bought through him from the villagers. At first we bought direct from the peasants, but found it difficult to refuse to buy when the articles had been brought long distances, and consequently got overstocked with goods. The Presednik arranged that the main orders should be given through him, and he would distribute these as fairly as possible amongst the villagers. In these weekly finance visits all the formalities of such a proceeding were duly observed. The Presednik sat at his table with his clerk by his side as the various items on the lists were checked. No element of frivolity ever entered into these proceedings—it was business. But business done, all matters under the sun would be chatted over. There was always a kindly tolerance in the Presednik's attitude. Later, during the retreat from Kragujevatz, when relays of our Unit passed through Vitanovatz, he would take no payment for the eggs, milk and other provisions he gave them. Once he was very eager to talk about a quotation from a London newspaper which had appeared that day in a Serbian journal. Many speeches were being made in London about Serbia. The Lord Mayor of London—who, by the way, we translated as the "Presednik" of London—had referred to British friendship with Serbia; another important personage had made a speech in which he

spoke of Serbia as the "Gateway to Constantinople" and had said that the main interest would be transferred from the Western to the Eastern front and that all the great issues of the war would be fought out on Serbian soil and how the Allies would come to Serbia's aid. The Presednik's face flushed with pride as he spoke of the part his country would play in that great decisive combat that would bring victory to the Allies and peace to the world. "What matters it now," he said, "if Bulgaria is in league with our enemies? Have we not already, and single-handed, driven the Austrians and Germans from our land? Now with the British and French to aid us, nothing is beyond achievement!" His country now is in alien hands and he himself in exile.

Kraljevo market was always a delight to us. Often we did the journey there and back on foot, sometimes we drove—or rather jolted—in the wicker post carriage with hay for a seat. A feature of the market was the small display of goods. The peasants brought their produce in very small quantities and they seemed quite indifferent whether one bought the goods or not. They shewed their goods when asked, but though they were always quite polite they did so with a "it does not matter if you do not buy" attitude. One day a woman was sitting on the ground with a basket of apples near her and talking to a group of other women; we

wanted apples, but we could not make up our minds for some time as to whether she had brought the apples to market to sell or whether she had herself bought them and was about to take them home.

The market place with its shady trees, crowds of peasants garbed in many colours—yellow predominating in their head gear—groups, of oxen sitting or standing near their waggons placidly watching the scene, quantities of walnuts at every turn spread in front of the shops on pieces of matting, was always full of interest. We made many acquaintances in the town, amongst these the Director of the Agricultural College, who visited our camp, and the apothecary who helped us in several difficulties. We also made the acquaintance of a Russian doctor and a Russian engineer. They too visited our camp. Before they came they made us promise to give them an English pudding. When we asked "What sort of pudding?" they said "Oh! any kind, only it must be quite English." We gave them their wish, but as they came in the afternoon and had to leave early to get back before nightfall they had boiled apple pudding for afternoon tea. At the Café de Paris, in the Market Place, we got delicious coffee, and at the Café opposite we stabled our horse and carriage when we drove to market, and took a room there to which our purchases, as we made them, could be sent and kept ready for

our return. Road scenes on the homeward journey were varied. All sorts of people and animals were there ; many little wicker carriages like the one we drove in ; peasant women in their "opanki" (sandals) and full skirts, their heads tied up in black or yellow kerchiefs, with a basket on each arm, were on horseback riding astride on very high saddles ; families of pigs spreading themselves across the road and often stopping to take a meal considerably handicapped our speed. A Serbian horse is apparently only trained to walk or gallop—it never trots, and so any obstacle at once reduced us to walking pace. Then the slow, easy-going teams of oxen which, with their drivers, were always ready to be startled by anything new on the road (such as ourselves), would suddenly run their waggons at strange angles up or down the banks by the roadside; often too a number of young colts running by the side of their mothers would frisk in and out and across the track of the other animals, people and conveyances with all the irresponsible movement of youth.

Fruit, vegetables, eggs, etc., in plenty could always be got from the market or from the people in our own village; white bread too could be obtained, not so white as the English bread, but better in quality. Maize grows everywhere in abundance and, growing on the ground between the thick maize stalks, were yellow and

green pumpkins. Plums, a small deep purple variety, grow too in profusion, and from these "rakya" is distilled.

The land is rich and has a wild aspect, though much of it is cultivated, for the peasant never overdoes it and always knows what to leave to nature. An air of freedom too is everywhere: one can wander at will and is never confronted by "Trespassers will be prosecuted" or even a "Keep off the grass!" Our neighbourhood was rich in wild flowers and berries. There were many birds. Herons and magpies were quite common—the latter as numerous as sparrows are at home. Good cheese could be got of two kinds—one "sir," a hard cream cheese, and the other "kymak," of a soft crumbly nature. Butter we never saw, and "pekmes," a jam made from plums, was one of our stock substitutes, and as we could not have "bread and butter," we had "bread and jam," "bread and marmalade," or "bread and treacle" for a change.

After we had lived about two days in the village we thought it but fit and proper to call on the Pope (minister) and his family. We reasoned that as we had come to live in his village and could thus be looked upon as residents, and as we got our drinking water from the spring near his garden—so it was our duty, as well as a pleasure, to make the call. We did not know much Serbian; certainly we knew

the names of the different parts of the body and a little about aches and pains, but we had nothing in our vocabulary that would make "polite" conversation. As the Pope's family did not speak English, and any language they knew other than their own we did not understand, and any language we knew other than our own they did not understand, and as we were the visitors—the aggressors, so to speak—nothing remained but for us to talk Serbian. We felt our country's reputation was at stake and that it was up to us to make good. A brilliant inspiration seized us, and we dived into our pockets for our sixpenny "Easy Serbian" books, turned rapidly over the pages to find material to build sentences, and after a few seconds asked cheerfully but perhaps rather breathlessly, "Have you any dogs?" When they told us, we followed up by asking, "Have you a horse?" Then, "Have you oxen?" and so worked steadily on through the list of the animals. When this was exhausted we said "Long live Serbia," and came away. A firm friendship, however, began that afternoon between our camp and the Pope's household. Jam and water was offered us again at the Pope's, followed about fifteen minutes later by some Turkish coffee served in very small cups, very sweet and nearly half grounds. The white floor boards in the Pope's house were spotless. The walls too were white and many coloured samplers

and tapestries hung on them. Bunches of dried thistle plants stood on the tables and served as holders for photographs.

The children of the village were little wild things, and at first—though filled with curiosity —would have nothing to do with us. At last after being much smiled at by us they were tamed, and a chorus of little voices would greet us in a village street with "Dobar dan," "Dobro veche," or "Laku notch" (good day, good morning, good night). They liked sugar and we would often give them a piece each as we came from the village shop. Serbian children are very serious and look like grown people cut down—perhaps the dress gives this effect. As the children get older they become less serious and look younger. A little boy about six years old looked after cows in our field. He was so small and wore such a large wide brimmed hat and a pair of very mannish grown up trousers, that we named him the "cowherd." He was very shy, and when we made advances would have nothing to do with us; like a little wild animal he would never let us get nearer than a given distance—and we wanted so much to be friends. Once we offered a sweet, but he would not come near enough to take it; we turned away, but knowing that his bird like glance was on us left the sweet in the broken bark of a tree. A few seconds later the sweet was gone. Fate, however, ordained that we should be

friends. Sitting at tea in our mess tent one afternoon we heard piercing cries. At once we ran out and found our little "cowherd" in tears. He now not only let us approach him, but he himself came towards us, and from his sob broken utterances we discovered that he had lost a cow. Two cows only stood where three should stand. The little cowherd's attention had been so completely absorbed in watching our tents that he had not noticed the straying of the third. All ended happily; his mother came on the scene and the other cow was found, we having helped in the search.

Facing the inns at Vitanovatz was the well; this was walled round the top to the height of four feet or so, and high above this a wooden arm was balanced across a support. To one end of the arm a cord was attached, and the bucket to the other. The village possessed two shops; from the first we bought milk, from the second, the chief shop, we bought kerosene, bacon (slanina) which was always all fat (bacon with even the faintest streak of lean we never saw), pots for cooking and tobacco for the orderlies. The shop-keeper and his family would smile a welcome and let us wander round the shop to search for the things we wanted but of which we did not know the names, whilst other customers would try to aid us by talking Serbian and giving us walnuts or other things to eat from their baskets or pockets.

Dorothy Picton and Dorothy Brindley, of the Kragujevatz staff, came to us, one to regain strength after an attack of fever, and the other to rest after strenuous work. The former had a small bell tent to herself which we called the "detached villa," and the latter shared a tent with Sister Collins and myself, which we named the "tenement." On many windy or wet nights have the occupants of this tenement got up from their beds, gone the round of the tents to slacken or tighten the guide ropes, or to chase away the dogs who came to help themselves to the camp provisions. There were many dogs in the neighbourhood and all seemed semi-wild. At nightfall they would creep stealthily through the grass and round our tents in the search for stray pieces of food. The Presednik lent us an oak cupboard so that we could keep food in safety at night. For weeks the dogs came, we could hear them but never see them, as they always made off by the time we came on the scene. One night a big noise made by the falling pots and pans came from our kitchen tent. We went quickly and this time made a "catch." It was a puppy so young that it could scarcely stand and swayed from side to side as it walked. It then persisted in coming into our tent and cried in a small squeaking voice. Its mother would not be far off, we felt, and so retired to bed. A little later when all was still she came and took the puppy away.

In speaking of Kragujevatz we would sometimes abbreviate the name to "Krag'." Joseph, our interpreter, was amused. "Why do you say 'Krag'?" he asked, "the Serbs will never understand what you mean." "Oh!" we replied, "it is shorter, easier, and life is not long enough to pronounce every name in full." Whereupon Joseph answered, "In England, when you speak of Manchester do you call it 'Man'?" Still he was rather impressed with "Krag," and we heard him use it several times afterwards. It pleased us to make Joseph laugh because he was a pessimist and wore a dismal expression, and if there was a black side to anything he never by any chance missed it. Later, after a short time spent in the camp he became happier, and his face, instead of running from north to south, began to run east and west. He was the only person in the camp who ever carried an umbrella. Joseph—like the Presednik—is an exile.

Four Josephs were connected with the camp—the Interpreter and three Austrian prisoners who came up from the village to help us. Simply to shout "Joseph," would have produced four when only one was needed, so we added numbers to their names. The Interpreter—Joseph jedan (one) remained simply "Joseph," the others were Joseph dva (two), Joseph tre (three) and Joseph chetiree (four). Much merriment, which they appreciated, was caused by the use of these new surnames. Two

of the Josephs got mixed one day before they were numbered. Joseph dva had a severe cough and was asked to go to the dispensary tent for treatment. About the time he was due Joseph chetiree appeared with a message; before he could deliver this he was seized and in spite of his protests, so the story goes, had his chest examined before the mistake was discovered. Joseph dva and Joseph chetiree were great friends and liked to work together. They took a real interest in our camp and worked hard for its smooth running. They must have come from orderly homes, for they liked to see the insides of all the pots and pans polished, and they washed our overalls and cleaned our boots without being asked to do so. They both came from a village near Prague. As twilight fell, and after a hard day's work as Joseph dva sat by the fire and watched the pots boil for supper, his gaze would be fixed in the direction of Prague and a feeling of home-sickness would come over him. Sometimes we would sit by the fire too and he would tell us about his home and about his capture—for nearly a year he had been a prisoner in the hands of the Serbs. The Austrians never liked the Serbian shoes they had to wear when their own wore out. Joseph dva, one evening by the fire, when the longing for home was strong within him, suddenly took off his opanki and threw them away amongst the firewood, said he had done with them and

would go to Prague. Then laughter came to his aid and he picked up the opanki.

The first Saturday that we were in Vitanovatz we were startled by a strange sound of wailing which increased as the evening wore on, and it echoed and re-echoed amongst the hills till the air seemed filled with cries. It came from the women in the churchyards, we learned, who were offering food and flowers on the graves of their dead. This wild chant was a prayer of intercession sent by them to heaven. Each week this was repeated and carried on far into the night. Black flags—a sign of recent bereavement—would hang over the door or gateway of many houses, together often with articles of clothing worn by the dead member of the family. At many points on the roads we came across stones to mark a grave, or erected in memory of those who had fallen in battle away from home. One such stone on the road to Kraljevo was in memory of Serbian soldiers who had died in Albania. Little clusters of graves would confront one at unexpected places on the hillsides.

One day an ox waggon came into our camp bearing a dead child. The child had suffered from diphtheria. Its father was killed in fighting and the mother was busy on the farm, so the grandfather and the dead child's small brother came with the waggon—a day's journey over the hills. When they entered our field there was only a little waxen figure stretched out

at the bottom of the waggon, with a lighted candle in one hand. Another day a man was brought to our camp in a bullock waggon. When chopping wood the axe had slipped and he had cut his foot, he was very weak from loss of blood. We placed a bedstead, from our own tents, in a corner of the dispensary which we curtained off, and kept the patient until he was sufficiently strong to bear the journey to a hospital in Kraljevo for convalescence.

All this time there were rumours of renewed fighting. We heard of the possible rising of the Bulgars on the one frontier, and of the massing of the Austro-German troops on the other. The Serbs were under no illusion as to their position, they knew that the renewal of fighting was near. They knew that so soon as Russia suffered a set-back at Austrian hands then their own turn would come. Rumours swept daily over our village as clouds sweep across the sky. We heard often of the coming of the British and French troops. One day we heard that the Allies were at such a place and we turned up our maps to find out how long it would take them to come north—but they never came. Then we heard that it was a mistake and they were somewhere else—again we believed it and again they never came. Then we heard from members of another Unit how, farther south, the stations had been decorated with flowers, the school children out and the place

en fête to welcome the Allies as they entered Serbia, and that they did not come. Then we heard that the reason our men were so long in coming was because they had disembarked at a Montenegrin port and the journey across the mountains would necessarily be slow, and again we found it was all a mistake and that they had never been in Serbia.

About this time we read a leading article in *Le Journal des Balkans*—a small sheet published in French. The writer spoke of the failure of the Allies to reach Serbia and said it was now too late and, though no bitterness was expressed, there was a deep note of disappointment and a sense of coming tragedy. The article ended in predicting a second Belgium. Newspapers from home reached us but irregularly; we never got a paper less than fourteen days old, so we knew but little of the English view of the situation, and never caught the events up in the English papers before the lines of communication were cut. One day all the bright boys in our village —as bright and bonny as any lads in any other country—were called up and taken by the Presednik to Kragujevatz and to Kraljevo, and life in our village was saddened. Many soldiers passed through our village in the night. Joseph spent every moment he could get away from the dispensary to waylay people who came through the village from Kragujevatz or Kraljevo to get news.

About this time—the beginning of October—it was necessary for me to make a journey to Kragujevatz for fresh stores and medicines. These journeys were taken by us in turn and were always something of an adventure—for until the moment of starting came we did not know what kind of conveyance we should get. To go by railway meant walking to Kraljevo for a train at noon, then spending many hours of the night at Lapovo junction and reaching Kragujevatz in the early hours of next morning. So the road journey was preferred. When we wanted to go we told the Presednik and he would stop the first conveyance bound for the right direction. All he had to do, we said, was to stand in the middle of the village street, hold up a spread-out hand and command a conveyance to halt, as a policeman does at home to stop the traffic. A conveyance might not come for several days, but we had to be ready to start at any moment after we had given notice. It was like a lottery and there was always a good deal of speculation as to what kind of vehicle it would be our luck to draw. The vehicle that fell to my lot was a rather small-sized charabanc drawn by two little grey horses, their long tails almost swept the ground and they were either very old or very tired, for their action much more resembled standing still than movement. The pace was so slow that one could almost count ten during one revolution of the wheels.

The driver, the only occupant besides myself, was very old, or very tired too, and he continuously cracked his whip in the air, and "Ide, ide" (go, go) came mechanically from his lips; but the grey horses, probably as used to the sound as they were to that of the wheels behind them, made not the slightest effort to quicken their pace. Still it was pleasant to amble, for the hedges and fields were clothed in rich autumn tints and the rivers and streams were full and rushed swiftly down their courses. The half-way stage was reached as darkness fell and here a halt for the night was made—the road being much too heavy to continue the journey after dark. During supper in the common room of the inn an American doctor came to see me. Someone had told him a "Frenchwoman" had arrived and he was a little surprised to find a Britisher. He was working in the district and spent a great part of his time, with an interpreter, in travelling on horseback to the isolated peasants' houses. The landlady of the inn was kind and anxious for me to be comfortable. Later she shewed me to my room, which seemed a combination of bedroom and store-room. There were two beds in the room, both with clean coverlets, but which probably had not been recently used, for when the beds were opened, mice ran from under the pillows. A bottle of cold water was brought for washing purposes; this had to be taken outdoors where

the contents could be poured over one's face and hands, for there was no basin. An inn opposite had its frontage covered with coloured paintings in which heroic Serbian figures were depicted slaying the Turkish foe.

By half-past five the next morning we were again on the road to Kragujevatz and it was as though we had continued through the night, for again "Ide, ide" came from the driver's lips, again the whip cracked and again the grey horses—in spite of their supper, night's rest and breakfast, made not the slightest quickening in their pace. As the early mists rolled away, again the countryside in all the gorgeous hues of its autumn covering was revealed. Gipsies (Tziganes) too were seen in groups with their horses and flocks by the roadside—the horses appearing as wild and untamed as their owners. These nomadic people added beauty and interest to the roads by the richness of their complexions, flashing eyes and the wealth of colour and variety in their clothing.

Suddenly the quiet road became astir, guns were heard, the gipsies hurried to and fro, motor cars full of soldiers appeared, it seemed, from nowhere, and the road was filled with many people. My driver, shewing his first sign of real life, quickly turned the grey horses round and made them face the hedge. Then Taubes could be seen coming towards us driven out of Kragujevatz, all movement subsided and every-

body stood still in the roadway watching and waiting, and the report of the guns continued. The Taubes disappeared and in a few minutes all was normal again. The remainder of my journey was completed in an arsenal car which soon outdistanced the sad little grey horses. Happily no bombs had been dropped from the Taubes on Kragujevatz. The first wounded men were, however, coming in to our hospital from the Belgrade area. Many were brought on stretchers, but some of the less seriously wounded walked from the station, gaunt, dusty, tired men with arms and heads bandaged and clothing mud-covered and bloody. Some of them were in uniform, others in their peasant dress of brown home-spun. Amongst the many wounded men we saw, then and through all the terrible time that followed, uniform did not seem to matter, and their clothing was often a patchwork of the soldier's and civilian's garb.

Thus at last had rumour become reality—the Bulgars had risen and the Austrians and Germans, who had so long menaced our peace, were besieging Belgrade. David Boone drove me back to Vitanovatz in one of our cars, and we carried with us instructions to close the dispensary. This was to be done without delay —no matter what we were doing or how many patients we had—all work for civilians had to stop and we were to go back to our hospital at

Kragujevatz—nearer the scene of fighting—and be ready to do our part in all the terrible eventualities that the renewal of fighting would bring.

THE RENEWAL OF FIGHTING

Photopress] "FROM THEIR BLOOD WILL SPRING FLOWERS
FOR SOME FAR OFF GENERATION." —*Njegos.* [*Copyright*

THE RENEWAL OF FIGHTING

THE Serbian soldier is brave. In courage no one can surpass him, he is absolutely fearless and holds death in contempt—not that he wants to die more than anyone else does before his allotted time. He loves life and brightness and gaiety, but with duty before him and death in the way he will go straight on not only without flinching, but without even a change of expression. He knows how to die—it is more than courage, it reaches sublimity.

It is one thing to fight if success or the possibility of success can be seen, but it is quite another thing to fight if at the end of one's best efforts there is nothing but swift and sure defeat. Against the Austrian and German army alone a longer, and perhaps successful, stand could have been made—for the memory of the last fight nearly a year before was still vivid in the mind of the Serbs when they hurled the invader back from Belgrade, and the Bulgars alone could have been easily overthrown; but successfully to repel invasion on three sides was impossible, and the Serbians knew that they were outnumbered.

Kragujevatz was the important military centre, the big arsenal was there, and all that it con-

tained had to be taken away or rendered useless before the enemy's arrival. The Government, the Army—comprising all men and boys between eighteen and fifty—and all the lads between fifteen and eighteen who would supply the army for the next few years, in fact all who were liable to be taken as prisoners of war, were ordered away. There were too the Austrian prisoners—between forty and fifty thousand—to be cleared from the country. While all this was being done and in order that others might get safely away and the retreat be carried out in an orderly manner and without panic, it was necessary to hold the invader, and so a living sacrifice was made. If courage alone could have won the fight victory would have been with the Serbs.

Austrian prisoners paid fine tribute to the Serb's qualities as a soldier—"There is no finer soldier," they said. This too is how they accounted for the large number of Austrian prisoners in Serbia, whilst their own country, so much larger and stronger, had captured so few Serbs. We who were there know something of the fight the Serbs put up because the results in human wreckage came through our hands in our hospital at Kragujevatz. We got back to Kragujevatz in time to assist in the transference of the hospital from the tents to a permanent building erected by the Serbian Government by Austrian prisoners' labour during the summer

months. The building covered a great deal of ground and consisted of long wards on the ground floor only. The removal, which had to be done quickly as the wounded men were being brought in, was made very difficult by the deep mud and heavy rains. Our staff was small, as one section of our Unit was away with Mrs. Stobart with the army on the Bulgarian frontier, and another was at Lapovo, the railway junction between Kragujevatz and Belgrade. Dr. May was the chief of the Kragujevatz section. My work lay now in the hospital wards, to fetch and carry and render any services the nurses might require from me.

For three weeks wounded soldiers were brought to us in trainloads and in bullock waggon loads. Men with ghastly wounds, with only the first rough dressing put on on the battlefield, exhausted from hunger and want of sleep; night and day they came. It was as though the long line of ox waggons would never cease. At first a fair amount of comfort could be provided, clean linen and beds. Later they came in such large numbers we had to make mattresses from bags and pieces of sacking, which we filled with fibre. Mattresses were taken from the men who had both mattress and bedstead for those who had neither. Hay, straw and blankets were spread on the floor and some men had to remain on the stretchers on which they were brought. Others were laid

on the bare floor of the barely finished ward. Men of all ages were there—some quite young lads like those who had left our village of Vitanovatz. One laddie, badly wounded, smiled up from the straw where he was placed and said "Laku notch" (good night). A man near him with eyes protruding and inflamed craved for darkness and sleep.

Scarcely had these men come into hospital and barely, it seemed, before they had had time for food or rest, the Narednik (sergeant major) would come through the wards and give out the order that all who could walk must leave at a given time. No matter what their wounds, so long as they could stand and their heads were sufficiently clear to enable them to keep their balance, they had to go, and men who needed sleep and rest stepped once again into their dusty, dirty, bloodstained clothing to take to the road, the road that was to lead them, though they did not know it then, right down to the Albanian coast, to put as great a distance as they could between themselves and the invader. Taking up their bundles, and with a "Fala, sestra" (thank you, sister) and a "Sretan put" (good luck) from us they would go their way. The road leading south-west out of Kragujevatz was, in addition to all the other people, lined with these bandaged and broken men. There were but few conveyances for them.

But in spite of all the sad surroundings both patients and staff were cheerful and little things constantly happened to cause merriment and laughter. Life is made up of a curious jumble of joys and sorrows, of pleasures and pains. Some men came back one day after they had left and found their beds occupied by others; they took it as a joke and settled themselves in the corners, and by the sides of their old beds on the floor. One patient, a Serbian sergeant, would wear his cap in bed. He always pulled the clothes up close round his chin and ears, leaving only his face visible; his eyes black and sparkling could be seen the length of the ward and he wore a dark fearsome moustache like the German Emperor's. The sister-in-charge told him she would have nothing to do with him because she was sure he was the Kaiser. This caused much amusement, and as long as he remained in the ward he was known as "the Kaiser." Much fun was caused when we tried one evening, taking him to be a patient, to prevent an Austrian orderly from going out to get his supper. Relatives of the wounded men who lived near would stay for hours in the ward and bring baskets of cooked food, which they would spread on the bed and share with the patient.

Just as the Serb can face death so can he also bear pain. He makes light of wounds and will not stay in bed if he can possibly get up. The doctors and nurses used laughingly to say that,

what with the quick coming and going of patients and the constant getting out of bed of the others, how hard it was to make the man in bed correspond with the chart hanging over his head. The Serb is strong and, possibly because he has always lived much in the open air, his wounds are quick to heal. One man who had one side of his face severely damaged and one eye destroyed, sat up in bed shortly after his wounds were dressed and smoked a cigarette. A bright lad of about eighteen had an arm so badly damaged that the doctor wished to amputate it. The boy refused. A foreign doctor must have the patient's permission. Fearing for the lad's life the doctor said to the interpreter, "Tell him that if he does not have it off he will die." The lad without a change of expression said, "Then I will die!"

The orderlies in our hospital as in others were Austrian prisoners, and they worked wholeheartedly during this terrible time—doing all the disagreeable tasks for the patients, fetching and carrying for them, humouring their every whim, never losing their tempers and doing all with infinite kindness : the wounded Serbs could not have received kindlier treatment had their own relatives attended them. It seemed, as one watched them, incredible that the two countries were at war with each other. There were some wounded Austrians and Germans in the hospital. An Austrian who was convalescent would run

about the ward (wearing his cap and wrapped in a strangely cut dressing gown from our linen store) and spend much time waiting on the others when the orderlies were busy; he made everyone happy. At his request a bandage winder was fitted to the bottom rail of his bed and he insisted on winding the bandages when the dressings were done. Another Austrian prisoner sawed wood to make fracture beds, and another came into the ward and filed a ring from the badly damaged hand of a wounded Serb. During this time six new nurses arrived. Their train, the last up from Salonika, was bombed. They came at a time when their services were most urgently needed and also in time to lose their new equipment and share the adventures of the "trek."

All this time a low rumbling noise could be heard; it was from a never-ending line of ox waggons, in Government transport service, that passed along the road in front of the hospital each day from sunrise to sunset. Another sound too, loud and imperative in tone, could be heard; this was from the guns of the enemy and daily grew nearer. When the wounded soldiers were dying in the ward, when nothing could be done to save them, and only the presence of someone was necessary to watch and administer any little comfort, it often fell to my lot to stay with them till the end came. Death, always sad, seemed hard and

cruel in these cases. These victims in a war that they themselves had had no part in making were dying as strangers among strangers (with no one present familiar with their home, their friends or their past life) in a busy hospital near the fighting line, where all the energies of doctors, nurses and orderlies were taken up with others whose lives might yet be saved, and almost it seemed before the breath was gone from their bodies, they were removed for burial because the beds were urgently needed for others.

Fighting ceased and the road lay open before the invader. All that was useful to the enemy had gone from Kragujevatz. Orders then came for us to leave; the hospital was cleared as far as could be and handed over to the care of Greek doctors. Austrian orderlies were taken away and replaced by Serbs. We were sent off in small groups at different times with ox waggons which contained food stores, tents and general hospital equipment. The last group to leave (apart from our Chief, Dr. May, and the Secretary, Miss McGlade, who left a few hours later with Dr. Curcin, the Chief of the Foreign Missions for the Serbian Government) contained three of us who were together at Vitanovatz. Our orders were to press on quickly to Rashka, choose a site for a fresh hospital and be ready for the rest of the Unit when they came up with the ox waggons, tents and hospital stores.

To enable us to carry out our orders we travelled in a motor car and thus overtook the others. That it was the beginning of our journey home we did not know, as it was expected that further on the Serbs would make another stand against the invaders. We left after the destruction of the railway, after the military authorities had gone and about eighteen hours before the Austrians were timed to enter Kragujevatz.

THE RETREAT

THE RETREAT

The road from Kragujevatz to Rashka lay through Vitanovatz—where we overtook other members of the Unit—and Kraljevo, now filled with refugees from Belgrade; and then began a long climb to the village of Ushtsche. But, despite travelling in a motor car placed at our disposal by the French Sanitary Department, the journey was slow. Serbian roads were obviously never intended for quick travelling. One difficulty was to get the four wheels of our vehicle on the same level at the same time; one wheel always would be in a hole and have to be lifted out by main force. Another cause of delay was the waiting until such time as we could persuade the driver of an ox waggon to unyoke his oxen, harness them to our car and haul it out of the mud in which it had sunk to its axles. This took a long time, as no driver was very willing or pleased to stop and in consequence lose his place in the apparently unending line of waggons.

Inside the car were five of us: Dr. McMillan, Sister Price, Dorothy Brindley, Milan, the interpreter, and myself; outside were three: the chauffeur (a Frenchman), Johanovitch (a Mon-

tenegrin from the Kragujevatz camp) on the box seat, and Droog (a Serbian mechanic) on the step. Inside, too, we had an assortment of bundles, including bedding, bread, hard-boiled eggs, a cooked ham, a lantern, a teapot, a hatchet, top boots and a hammer. Periodically we were all, with the baggage, jolted bodily off our seats, and our heads would bump against the top of the car before we dropped back again. Our limbs got bruised as we were thrown backwards and forwards against the sides of the car or mixed with the luggage at the bottom. A tin of Huntley & Palmer's biscuits jumped clean out of the window at the back of the car and disappeared. This almost caused tears. There were rivers to ford and unstable bridges to cross. Then, too, something continually went wrong with the car itself; with a sudden jerk it would come to a halt and the chauffeur would spring from his seat and send Droog underneath to find out what was wrong. Droog would go under, come out covered with mud and give his report. After a short consultation they would both get back to their seats and we would re-start. Again there would be a jerk and a sudden stop, again they would get down, and again Droog, patient and long-suffering, would be pushed in a most ignominious manner under the car, come out muddier than ever and give his report; once more they would mount, but only for a short distance

would we proceed before the whole business was re-enacted. The chauffeur, a good soldier and anxious to carry out his orders to get to Rashka quickly, would run round the car and ejaculate: "Pas de chance, mon Dieu! pas de chance."

That night we rested at an inn at Ushtsche, a village south from Kraljevo. Four of us occupied a small room whilst the men of our party slept in the car. The common rooms and passages of the inn were filled with soldiers, wrapped in their great coats or blankets, sleeping on the floor. We stepped over them to reach our room, Before we got to Ushtsche we had travelled for some time after dark, the hillsides at points being ablaze with fires. These were at the encampments of Austrian prisoners who were being taken away from the country. Early next morning we were astir and on the road to Rashka, which we reached in the afternoon during a heavy rainfall.

Rashka, a small town, stands at the junction of three valleys on the borders of the Old and the New Serbia. Through one end of the town, a stone's throw from the market place, runs the river which, up to the close of the Balkan war four years ago, divided it from Turkish territory. On the hillside, across the river, and seen clearly from the market place, stand the old Turkish look-out towers which command the roads from the valleys as they enter the town. In character

Rashka is more of a village than a town, but it has a very spacious market square; its houses, like those in most Serbian towns, are low lying.

For a time we waited in the market place whilst Johanovitch and Milan found the Chief of the Police, who later placed a schoolroom at our service. The food stores we had brought were sparingly used as but little else could be bought in the place, so many people with the same wants as ourselves had already passed through. Two of us only had bedding—blankets for the others were coming in the ox waggons—this we divided as best we could and slept on the floor.

Having brought us to Rashka the chauffeur was under orders to return to Kraljevo to fetch others. The first journey had, however, exhausted the petrol and more could not be obtained. He and Milan went to Novi Bazaar as they were told they might get some there, but the journey was made in vain and the car had to remain in the market place, where it served as a bedroom for Droog. It seemed an unkind fate which, a few days later, brought the chauffeur's chief to Rashka. This gentleman was very annoyed because the car was not in good working order and said it was due to the chauffeur's luggage. This luggage, which stood in our schoolroom, consisted of one very small plain wooden box some two feet square, which contained nothing but a dictionary, a little bundle

of letters from and photographs of his family and a yard or two of ribbon in the French national colours. And this was responsible for the breakdown ; it did indeed seem as if there were "pas de chance" for him. In the later stages of the retreat both his feet were frozen. He suffered greatly and for three months was in a hospital. He is now with his mother in his native town in France.

The site for our new camp was chosen, but it was found that the Serbs, if they made another stand, would have to make it farther on. Dr. McMillan and Sister Price, together with Dr. Milanovitch, a Serb, fitted up a dressing station where soldiers, as they came through, could get their wounds re-dressed. Similar work was done by other members of our Unit on the road, and at Vitanovatz and Kraljevo as they came through.

After the first few days our school was turned into the military headquarters and we went to live in a three-roomed Turkish house near the dressing station. Madame Milanovitch often came to the dressing station where her husband was engaged and to see us in the Turkish house; we became great friends. Rashka was not their home. They, like us, were but passing through. Madam Milanovitch, a dainty little lady with beautiful dark eyes and tiny white hands, looked quite out of place in the rough and tumble of the retreat. Up to that point she had journeyed

in a carriage, but now, as it was increasingly difficult to get horses or oxen, she feared it would be necessary to travel on foot when the time came to leave Rashka. In readiness for this eventuality she had a pair of her husband's boots ready for her use and had shortened one of her skirts. She shewed them to us and said that when she put them on her husband had said she looked "Quite like an Englishwoman!"

For a fortnight we stayed in Rashka, and during this time it seemed as if the whole male population of Serbia, native and foreign, passed through. One day the place would be packed with people, the next day they would be gone; again the town would be equally crowded, but with an entirely different set—so it changed from day to day. In every street, at every corner, by the river and in the market place fires were lighted. The wooden fence round the church was pulled down and burned for firewood. At every turn animals were killed and everyone seated round these little fires seemed to be either killing, cutting up or cooking—sometimes roasting whole—a sheep, a cow or a pig. This gave a ghastly touch to the scene.

The Crown Prince came with his soldiers; he walked through the streets and chatted to everyone. French flying men were our neighbours and camped with their machines on the hillside quite near our house. Big encampments of Serbian soldiers came with their horses and oxen,

settled for a night, or a day, and vanished only to be followed by others. Members of the Government came through and Serbian officials of all degrees, the foreign attachés, foreign missions; hundreds of young Serbian lads came too and each night the floors of cafés and every other available building were covered with them. They entered the town in the evening and left at at daybreak the following morning. Our own marines, with Admiral Trowbridge, were there from Belgrade. Then, too, there were thousands of Austrian prisoners. Among the latter we recognised and spoke to several who had been our orderlies at Kragujevatz; there was one who had worked with me in the same hospital ward.

The Scottish Women's Unit stayed for a few days on the hillside below our house. Members of our own Unit, including the Lapovo group, came too and passed on. Every square inch of floor space in our house was covered by sleeping forms at night—all were packed in with mathematical precision. Apart from our own Unit, which varied in number from day to day, we always had lodgers. Lone figures from other Units were waiting every night till our people were settled, and we would then fix them up in vacant spots and share our blankets with them. When there was an extra pressure we seriously considered the possibility of tying them up in their blankets pudding fashion and hanging them on hooks to the rafters. Our meals too,

as our beds, were shared. The inhabitants of the town were very friendly towards us. One day we bought some nails in the market place and the shopwoman would take no payment for them. "No," she said, when it was offered, "you are helping our soldiers."

Here news came to Milan that his brother was killed in battle against the Bulgarians. This made him very sad and he was very anxious to go to Kruchevatz for a couple of days, where his family lived, to see his mother. We were quite willing that he should go, but the military authorities would not grant him leave. The French chauffeur, a good companion in adversity, on many an occasion turned his sadness to laughter. Johanovitch (the Montenegrin) went out daily to out-lying peasants' houses to buy us food, which was increasingly difficult to obtain. The stream of people through the town at last ceased and of the inhabitants the women only remained. Our turn at last came to go and our little group was broken up. Dorothy Brindley went off one morning just before dawn with some members of another Unit *en route* to Novi Bazaar and Montenegro; Dr. McMillan and Sister Price left with Dr. Milanovitch to work in a dressing station, at the half-way stage, on the Mitrovitza Road. The chauffeur joined some of his own countrymen; and Milan departed with another section of our Unit. My lot was to journey to Mitrovitza with Doctor

Iles and a nurse in charge of an invalid member of our Unit who had had the bad luck to be inside her bullock waggon one day when it capsized. News reached us before we left that a member of our Unit, Sister Clifton, had been accidentally shot; the bullet had passed through both lungs and then through her arm. She was taken first to a hospital, then brought on a stretcher to Mitrovitza. Here she developed pneumonia and had to remain. Dr. Iles, Dr. McMillan, an orderly, and Sister Bambridge, a great friend of hers, stayed with her. All were shortly afterwards taken prisoners by the Austrians and later, when Sister Clifton was well enough to travel, sent by them to Switzerland.

Serbia, especially through Shumadia, is a beautiful country in which to "trek," hilly or mountainous throughout, intersected by many rivers, well wooded, and everywhere covered with a rich vegetation, which gives warmth and colour. After nightfall one saw by the roadside, on the river banks and the hillside, the blaze from hundreds and hundreds of little fires, each with its group of campers, and, just before dawn these fires would die slowly down and shadowy figures could be seen moving about, packing up their bundles ready to take to the road again at break of day.

The road to Mitrovitza runs parallel to the river. The first night we slept on hay under cover of a leaking tent at the half-way stage

which we reached after dark. No sooner were we asleep than we were awakened again by heavy rain. To sit up was the only means of keeping one's head dry, and to draw up one's feet the only way to keep them out of a pond. Consequently a strictly vertical line was necessary the whole night. A gloom was cast over this little camp because in another tent a member of the Scottish Women's Hospital Unit lay dying. A day or two before, the motor car in which she was travelling ran over a precipice not many yards distant. She was brought to the camp suffering from terrible injuries to her head. At daybreak, before leaving, we went to her tent; she was delirious and moaned with pain. We were told that she could not recover. She died two days later and was buried on the hillside just above the camp. May she rest in peace. The road from the half-way stage to Mitrovitza runs round a mountain with a deep precipice on one side; it has many sharp curves and at certain points was washed away by the heavy rains, and was so narrow that only one vehicle could pass at a time; it required the greatest skill to drive round these sharp broken curves. Many accidents occurred and we saw motors—big lorries, as well as other vehicles that had run over the side sticking at all points on the slope and lying at the bottom abandoned.

Mitrovitza is Turkish in character and quite other than Rashka. Between Kraljevo and

Rashka many small differences were noticeable; the oxen were of a smaller breed and one saw men in white homespun more often than in the brown. But here in Mitrovitza the whole aspect was different. The minarets of the mosques were dotted over the town, the streets were narrower and more winding, and the secluded dwellings were surrounded by high walled gardens and courtyards. It was quite different from the Serbia we had known; for five centuries it had been under Turkish rule. The streets were literally packed with a dense crowd garbed in many varieties of colour and costume. It was a difficult task to walk even for a few yards. Oxen and people were so tightly packed together. The mud was appalling!

A hospital stood on the highest point of the town on the bank above the river, and from our tent, which the chief of the hospital had given us permission to erect in the hospital grounds, we could get a view of the town and surrounding country. It seemed impossible to find clean ground, and later we left the tents and slept in a room the Serbs put at our service in a big Government granary where hundreds of bags of maize were stored. Running over the whole length of this building was a loft and here hundreds of Serbian youths were housed each night. Overhead we heard the sound of their many feet night and morning.

My duty here was to act as housekeeper and

provision members of our Unit as they came through. To shop was difficult. Johanovitch —the Montenegrin who had left us at Rashka to travel with his wife and daughter—we again met; he helped me and we both spent much time searching for food. The Chief of the Military Hospital gave us an order for bread from the bakery, and later gave us orders too for rice, beans and meat. Sugar we bought at a shop in the market place, but could get only a small quantity at a time and that only at a certain hour of the day. Wood was scarce too and the smallest fire we made in the open space in front of the building had literally to be held from an invading army with their pots and kettles. A fire once made was never left until we had finished our cooking, but we let many strangers boil their pots and pans at the same time, every inch of space over and round the fire being thus fully utilised.

After a few days' stay and with the greater number of the Unit already ahead, we—about twenty in number—with Dr. Curcin as leader, took the southern road in bullock waggons through Vuchiturn over the Kossovo Plain to Prishtina and Prizrend.

We crossed the Plain of Kossovo—that historic ground where in 1389 a great battle was fought between Serbs and Turks, and on the battlefield of which the rulers of both countries fell. The Turks were the victors, and that

whole strip of territory, the Old Serbia, passed under the dominion of Turkey. This land thus wrested from Serbia and held under alien rule for five hundred years, was regained but a few short years ago after terrible sacrifice of human life. Now again it was passing from Serbia's control, and over the ground where their forefathers had fought the Serbian army was now retreating, hoping against hope for the point to be reached where they could make another stand against the invader. The soldiers did not like to leave; they said "We have been defeated before, but we have never run away." Each would have been far happier had the order come to turn back, even though it had meant certain death.

The second day out from Mitrovitza, and as we crossed this Plain, a snow blizzard burst upon us in all its fury, and an icy wind blew across our track. There was no shelter. The slow ox-waggon procession moved on in what seemed a never ending journey. To the right, to the left, in front or behind, right away to the line where the sky and earth meet, nothing could be seen but a vast stretch of snow-covered land. Nothing was there to suggest food, warmth or rest; to stay was to die. We each had an ox waggon to sleep in which also carried a portion of the stores; but after the first day, owing to breakdowns, we had to share our waggons. The blizzard took the back out of one waggon

and the roof off another. Still another went over bodily into the river and was abandoned. Everything we afterwards wanted seemed to have gone down the tide in that waggon. There was much water to cross, both rivers and flooded land. It was a pitiful sight to see the Serbian lads, many of whom were wretchedly clad and badly shod, trying to get all the warmth they could from the small woollen scarves round their necks and blowing their hands to keep warm. Being on foot, they had to wade ankle-deep, sometimes almost knee-deep, through these stretches of water, and as they came out the other side the icy wind would freeze their soaken garments to their feet and legs.

Being almost the last to come over the road we saw the wreckage of all that had gone before. It seemed a veritable road of death. Broken down vehicles of all shapes and sizes were lying everywhere. They had stuck in the mud, fallen down banks and over bridges into the rivers, with wheels off and shafts broken. A tragic sight on that awful road was the dead and dying animals. When oxen and horses could go no further, when they dropped from hunger—all animals were hungry—want of rest or broken limbs, they were unharnessed and abandoned. Everywhere, sitting, standing, lying in all positions, some already dead, and others still waiting for the kindly hand of death to touch them, the animals lay and slowly the snow

covered them. Never once throughout that long journey were we to be freed from this ghastly sight. As well might one have tried not to see the stones in the road as to have endeavoured to avoid them. Many of the dead animals were flayed. Sometimes patches of skin only were taken off. Dogs were gnawing them, and people were cutting pieces from their dead bodies. Everyone seemed to be carrying a lump of raw meat in their hands till the day's journey was over and it could be cooked on their little fire. In the midst of these horrors people slid quickly back to the primitive stages of existence. All were hungry, and other food was scarce.

One night on the road to Prishtina and Prizrend we were given a big brown tent which had been taken from the Austrians. It was riddled by bullets and let in the rain. We slept soundly and woke early the next morning to find, many of us, that our beds were in pools of water. For some reason we could not continue our journey that day, and with the prospect of a second night in the tent we lighted a large fire in the centre, dried our clothes and bedding, and turned the tent, despite the smoke from the wood fire, into a comfortable dwelling. Another shelter we got on the way was at Prishtina. Here a Turk gave us a room in his house. We were grateful as the journey that day had been a very cold one and snow was

deep on the ground. Our host shewed his hospitality by bringing a charcoal brazier for us to warm our hands and sat with us round it chatting about the journey. When the last of our party arrived the room was very full, and as uncomfortably hot as outside it had been uncomfortably cold, so two of us descended to an empty room on the ground floor which opened on to a yard. Our host said we might sleep there. To see what was on the floor or in the yard was impossible as we had but a dim light, so we slept on the window sill—which was fairly wide—and shivered. We had arrived quite late in the night, and started off again long before daybreak the next morning. This stage of the journey was taken very quickly, and but scant time allowed for rest—for either animals or people—as we were almost within range of the Bulgarian guns.

Some hundreds of prisoners from the gaols passed us at dawn during a short halt we made by the roadside for breakfast. They were tired, emaciated, hungry-looking men, and a large number of them had heavy iron chains fastened to their legs. They walked with difficulty. The reason they were chained, we were told, was because they had been rebellious or had tried to escape. As they passed, two men in the ranks called out "Good morning" in English. Eight men, spies or deserters, we were told, were shot as we entered Prishtina.

A few hours after leaving Prishtina and within a few miles distance of each other, five men were stretched out stiff and lifeless across our path. Nobody took any notice of them: all passed by, just stepping over or round the dead bodies. The driver of my ox waggon caught my glance as we passed the second man, but the only comment he made was "Niye dobro" (not good). One man by the roadside in an apparently dying condition was taken by Dr. May into her waggon. She wrapped him in blankets and gave him food and took him on to Prizrend, where she handed him over, on the high road to recovery, to the care of a Serbian hospital.

One saw, too, many hungry Austrians; these men were taken away in batches of hundreds at a time, and there were always individuals who could not keep up with the others. They were permitted to drop out and make their way down to the coast as best they could. Many of them were literally starving. They would come to us with clasped hands begging for bread, but we had nothing to give them. It was terrible, for in many cases we knew that within the next few days they would be dead, and would never see their homes or their country again.

All this misery and all the many roadside tragedies were happening not because anybody was going deliberately out of their way to be unkind to anybody else, but it was the inevitable result of war and invasion. And so long as

countries recognize war as a legitimate means of settling their differences, so long as countries are greedy for their neighbours' territory, these tragedies will be re-enacted.

From Prishtina to Prizrend it is a long climb, the road looping itself many times before the summit is reached. At the top a magnificent panorama of mountains, the Crnoljeva, lay open before us; our road then for a long distance dropped steadily before reaching the town. Prizrend is Turkish in character and more eastern even than Mitrovitza. The streets are narrower and more winding; they are paved, as are all the streets in Serbian towns, with large, round, uneven cobble stones, but intersected by many water channels which are to be seen oftener in the towns of Old Serbia. There seemed scarcely space to enter the town; the streets, packed more densely than those of Mitrovitza with a cosmopolitan crowd, were almost impassable. Our drivers, oxen and waggons camped outside the town with soldiers and many other refugees. We were able to secure rooms in a Turkish house and stayed for two nights. The street crowds were fascinating. Several of us climbed to the castle and found there a big crowd of Austrian prisoners. Many of the buildings were stored with guns and ammunition; everything suggested war.

Here news came that the road through Monastir was menaced by the Bulgarians and

any hope of getting through to Salonika was futile. To double back on our track was the only thing to do; not on the same road, but on the one leading to Ipek. Had we known when at Mitrovitza that the Bulgarians would cut off the road at Prizrend we might have gone to Ipek by a much shorter route. The Austrians, too, were advancing rapidly; it was doubtful whether they or we would reach Ipek first.

The first day back from Prizrend was one of the pleasantest and most peaceful of the whole journey. There was a warm gentle breeze, the sun shone, and stretching away into the distance on either side of the roads were fields and grassy slopes. Peace seemed to have come again to earth, and for a while there were fewer people. A long procession of Serbian artillery was about an hour's distance ahead, and behind were other ox waggons and a miscellaneous crowd of refugees. One of the earlier and sad sights on this road were groups of tired, worn and crippled horses and oxen.

Djakovitza was our objective on leaving Prizrend, and it was a far longer journey than we had expected. As night fell the oxen grew tired and hungry, and progress was slow; several of the last waggons which contained eight of our party got cut off from the others. Two of the oxen broke down and as the waggon had to be left behind we spent some time in transferring the most urgent portion of its contents to

the other accommodating waggons. The oxen were brought on at their own pace by their driver. After pressing forward till about eight o'clock all hope of catching up with the front section of the party that night vanished, and a halt by the roadside was made. There was not much hay in the waggons, but all that they contained the oxen ate, and two big fires were made for the drivers and ourselves.

Later the moon came out and lighted up the countryside. Our group of eight sat round the fire, drank tea and told stories. Some Serbs came across the fields to our fire with their "guyde" and played native music; whilst they played our Serbian orderlies placed their hands on each others shoulders and thus in a row kept time with the music in a rhythmic swaying dance. An Irish nurse sang some sad Irish songs. Then the fires died down and we turned into our ox waggons for sleep; the drivers lay on the ground near the shafts with their heads almost touching those of their oxen. At two o'clock the journey was resumed and we travelled on through the night. The soft light of the moon gave everything a touch of unreality. Nothing besides our five waggons with their occupants was on the road. About an hour later the ancient bridge that divides Serbia and Montenegro was crossed, and a little further on the road bent sharply over a second bridge. Two of us who had walked ahead

waited here for the others, and felt all the beauty and all the strangeness and silence of this moonlit world steal over us—it was as though we were standing in Eternity.

Djakovitza was reached the next morning, where the first section of the party were already established in a room adjoining a mosque. Here a two days' halt was made and our stores and equipment further reduced. At Prizrend much had been given to the hospitals. Several oxen were exchanged for ponies, as they would be wanted later for the mountain journey.

The shops, especially those in the older part of the town across the river, were full of interest. They were workshops and retail shops combined. Copper and tin goods of all kinds, jewellery, white skull caps, and a variety of other articles were being made in full view of the customer: there was also some beautiful embroidery. In every shop two or three men were either at work or sitting round a charcoal brazier. One or more charcoal braziers seemed to be part of the equipment of each shop; also three-legged stools, which were like halves of six-legged stools, and some practice in sitting on them was necessary before a sure balance could be maintained. Two of us bought threepenny knives—not because we wanted them, but because we wanted to sit on a three-legged stool, warm our hands at a charcoal brazier and converse with the proprietor.

The call for prayer came from a neighbouring mosque. Many men came and all took off their shoes in an outer lobby before they entered the inner chamber. From this lobby we saw the back view of a kneeling row of worshippers, who at intervals bent forward till their foreheads touched the floor. No women came. Mosques have no seats, but the floors are carpeted. The streets were full of children and both boys and girls looked very quaint in their wide printed cotton trousers. They were as full of fun, energy and mischief as other groups of town children in any part of the world. The men, especially those who were elderly, presented quite an elegant appearance in their white home-spun suits, trimmed with black braid. The trousers were fitted in closely to both leg and ankle, and then made to spread gaiter fashion over the foot; this, together with their white stockings and black slippers, gave their feet a flat appearance. The dress was very handsome and the wearers were refined in manner and appearance. On the open spaces near the town were large encampments of Serbian soldiers. A fair amount of food could be bought and there was an air of comfort everywhere. It seemed to us then as if Montenegro had been wrongly described as a barren foodless country. An extraordinary number of graveyards are to be seen in and near Djakovitza—there are acres of grass-covered mounds.

Between Djakovitza and Ipek another blizzard swept over the land and the ground was white with snow. A night was spent at the monastery at Detchani. Serbia has many of these monasteries with their spacious yards, which can give shelter to numbers of men, animals and vehicles at the same time. All are surrounded by high walls and can only be entered through the big heavy gates.

Before the monastery was reached the oxen had grown very tired, and again two waggons were cut off; they were fated to get behind breakdowns the whole day. One waggon contained hospital equipment and the other Sister Price and myself. Towards nightfall the road, snow-covered and intersected by many streams, that could not be seen until they were reached, became very difficult. Darkness fell, the oxen moved slowly, and the drivers, always patient, plodded steadily on by their side; hunger and tiredness made no outward difference to them, they were as capable of endurance as were the oxen they drove. Throughout the day we—Sister Price and myself—had walked, but when the darkness fell the driver urged us to get inside the waggon as the road was narrow and uneven and the waterways dangerous. To catch up the others we felt was impossible, and so settled ourselves for the night. Later we were wakened from a sound sleep by Doushan's voice (one of the Serbian orderlies) telling us we were

at the monastery. Although we were hungry and cold, and warmth and supper were inside the monastery, we felt that in being disturbed we had a real grievance. A large room hung with portraits of the founders of the monastery and Slav saints was placed at the disposal of our party, of whom the majority were already in bed.

Eight of our party left early the next morning to finish the journey alone. It was necessary for them to reach England quickly and so it was arranged that they should go first to Ipek, take the few ponies assured to us there, and not suffer unnecessary delay through lack of transport for the others. They took leave of us at the monastery just after dawn. Thick snow covered the ground. On the second morning the rest of us left, and experienced the coldest journey of the trek.

People on the road were in agony—so cold, piercing and merciless was the wind. It blew across the ice bound roads, till they were polished and sparkling as glass. Animals slipped and fell at every turn, many broke their limbs and were left by the roadside. A peasant woman was on the road with two children—one she carried and the other ran by her side crying with the cold. A Serbian officer took them all in his conveyance and put his coat round the children. Fortunately the distance to Ipek was not great and long before dusk the journey was ended.

A room in the house of a Montenegrin was

placed at our disposal by the authorities. Had we known its history we might not have entered with quite the same spring in our steps. A few hours after our arrival a man came in and did not seem at all inclined to go away. He seemed anxious to know when we would leave and we thought him very fussy, and although he was quite at home in the house we looked upon him as a fellow refugee. Then we found we were mistaken and that he was the owner of the house. He had come straight from prison, where he had spent some time for the murder of his wife, to find his house lent to us. He was quite polite, but eager for our departure. The crime was committed, we learned, in the very room we occupied.

Ipek might have been the North Pole, so thickly encrusted was it in ice. The slaughter of oxen was terrible and far ghastlier even than in Rashka. Their work was done, they were not wanted on the mountains—for the road ended here—so people were lavish in the slaughter, and at every few paces warm steaming blood ran across the streets. Pack ponies were scarce and the demand for them great—everybody wanted them for the mountain tracks. It was necessary to stay in Ipek till such time as they could be bought or secured in exchange for oxen. All the ponies were weak, lean and hungry; they had been worked to their utmost and not given sufficient food for some weeks.

The number eventually secured was quite inadequate. One pony between two people was the order. On asking what weight a pony could carry, we were told about one hundred and thirty kilogrammes. As, however, we could not guess the weight by just looking at the amount of stuff, an assortment of the most necessary articles was made. A ground sheet and blankets for two people and two people's share of food (all the food was divided and each made responsible for their individual share), the driver's blankets and the pony's corn, enough to last for a certain stage of the journey, had to be taken; also various pots and pans. When all these oddments were collected and my pony was loaded, the cargo made an impressive appearance. A Serbian boy, who had not even half a pony, hung his blanket and boots on the saddle. Instead of kit for two, the pony was thus to carry the kit for four, to say nothing of his own corn. He therefore began the journey by sitting down, and it was probably the wisest course he could have taken. He was at once "undressed" and got on his feet. The weight was reduced and more expertly packed, and with a more cheerful expression the pony then lined up with the others and kept his head up well to the journey's end.

It was in Ipek that we again met Mrs. Stobart and the other members of the Unit who had been with her. They came into the town with

a section of the army and camped by the roadside between us and the monastery. Two of us called to see her and stayed to eat. In spite of the cold the camp was snug, the motor cars were drawn round to make an enclosure, and in the centre of this was the fire. Tarpaulins were hung round to break the wind. Later we called at the monastery to see several others who were leaving her there to link up with us.

From Ipek there are two routes—one *via* Rosji, longer than the other but a better road; on the shorter road the tracks were bad and dangerous. Dr. Curcin brought us over the latter route, as the other, though a better road, would be more crowded and chances of food and accommodation less. The short route, however, turned out to be equally long, for owing to the heavy snowfall and cold winds the tracks were icebound and the way beset with difficulties. The main travellers on this route were Serbian soldiers who were leading their horses. One horse had a large copper boiler strapped to its back, and this boiler dogged our steps from Ipek onwards. During the first stage of the mountain journey, before the track narrowed, we saw motor lorries lying at the bottom of steep precipices. They were sent over purposely so they should not fall into enemy hands; many cars, waggons and guns were destroyed.

The last night at Ipek came the news that the Austrian army had been repulsed at Mitrovitza

and that the Serbs would follow up the advantage thus gained by a big offensive movement. It was said that instead of continuing the retreat it might be necessary the next morning for all to go back to Mitrovitza. The effect was electrical, each pulse quickened and the light of renewed life shone from every face. We slept that night not knowing what the morning would bring. When morning came, and with it the order to go forward, everyone fell into the old pace and that new light vanished.

The mountain tracks were very bad for the ponies, especially where the water dripped from overhanging rocks and made large holes in the snow. The drivers sounded the depth of these with a stick; although they were sometimes not very deep the unevenness of the bottom would often cause the ponies to slip. Points, too, were dangerous where an ascending path curved inwards, for after passing the curve at its inmost point a pony would often lose its foothold and slip backwards, the driver keeping hold of the bridle would be pulled off his feet, and as the two slid backward towards the edge of the track a cry would be raised and the other drivers would leave their horses and come to the rescue; this help, though always in time, never seemed to arrive till the twelfth hour when we had had our fill of horror in witnessing these hairbreadth escapes.

Nikola, a Montenegrin whom we had engaged

at Ipek, acted as our advance agent across the mountains. He would start earlier than we to find a suitable camping place for the night, always allowing for us to reach it by nightfall. Once, however, he did not rightly gauge the distance, and we had a short journey after darkness had fallen. The path was narrow, steep, slippery and frozen hard again after its slight thaw in the midday sun. A nurse in front of me lost her footing and slipped forward into the darkness; in trying to save her my foothold was lost and a horse behind me slipped also. The three of us, none the worse for our adventure, landed at the bottom of the slope in a heap. There was laughter at our expense, as on the downward journey we had addressed the horse in Serbian and asked him to "Chekka molim" (stop, please), when it was as impossible for him as for us to stop.

Exact information as to distance could never be obtained. Terms of measurement were not in miles or kilometres, but in hours or days. Then, too, whilst in Montenegro it was always necessary to distinguish between a Serbian and Montenegrin hour or day. The Serbs walk well, but the Montenegrins—whose country is one vast mountain—take enormous strides and cover the ground very quickly. Equally tall as the Serbians, the Montenegrins are perhaps of somewhat slighter build, their legs are free from the skirt of an overcoat, and they do not appear

to wear so many clothes. Sometimes we could get a room in a Montenegrin peasant's house, and the members of the family would always be intensely interested in our movements and would sit in our room the whole time whilst we were going to bed or rising in the morning, there was no privacy. The majority of us, however, always preferred to sleep round our camp fires under the stars. We bathed in the streams, and washed our clothes, too, in the same manner when time permitted. The summit of the first mountain range, the Tchakor, was passed at the close of the second day. At any point of this mountain journey (which took us nine days) when looking backwards or forwards soldiers in single file could be seen on the looped tracks ; they made a thin moving and never-ending line on the vast slopes of those mighty mountain sides.

Andrejevitza was reached about the fifth day. Many thousands of soldiers had already gone through. On the top floor of a café, which was built against a hillside, we succeeded in getting a room where, when asleep, we resembled little mounds in a closely-packed graveyard. A wretched night was spent ; in the violent wind we expected the hinges of the casement to snap ; and on the landing outside our door an imbecile Turk wandered about the whole night. Early morning saw us again on the road. Our journey this day was one of only

two or three hours, for we found a farmhouse on a beautiful hillside, where a halt was made till the next morning. It was a glorious day, warm sunshine and no wind. In a stream that rushed down the hillside we bathed and washed our garments, which we hung on the hedges to dry. There was plenty of wood for our camp-fires. We slept in the open air, and felt clean once more.

Another delightful stopping place was the last stage before coming to Podgoritza; this too was a farm. The house was very old and consisted of but two rooms, a wide flight of steps, quite palatial, led to the entrances, two doors side by side (and looking like one) led into the separate rooms. In one room the family lived and the other was used as a storeroom. In the latter, amongst much else, were dried vegetables and fruits, corn and hay, bins of hide, horn and string. Numerous families of rats and mice were there too as discovered by several of our members who slept in the room. A river ran within a few minutes' walk from the house and here again we were able to bathe, and wondered if the folks at home would shiver if they knew we were bathing in the open air in December.

Much fishing is done by the Montenegrins, but a rifle instead of a net or line is used. One man will wade in the river and with a long pole prod and poke in the banks and under the stones; another will walk along the river-side

some distance up the bank with a rifle and shoot the fishes as they swim away after dislodgment. Some fishermen came one day when six of us were bathing and fired their rifles within a few yards of where we were; it was slightly disturbing as we felt there might be some inaccuracy in their aim, but we soon discovered that they knew what they were about; they shot their fishes and passed on as if we were not present. Snowdrops grow wild on the Montenegrin mountains between small thickets so that they cannot easily be gathered. Our common garden sage grows too on the mountain sides.

In Podgoritza it rained heavily. The Hotel des Balkans gave us shelter and meat meals; bread we had to supply or go without. We were very hungry, not that we were ever quite without food, but it was impossible to get the right kind. Maize bread and meat were our stock foods. The bread was full of sand which got between our teeth and was not only very unpleasant but caused dysentery amongst many of our members. If at any time other bread could be obtained, it was given to those who suffered these ill effects. A deep craving for fruit and sugar was experienced by all, but these were only very rarely obtainable. Rice and raisins, it was rumoured, could be got in Podgoritza; for half a day, however, we searched the little town from end to end, visited each shop and

looked in all the bins and boxes, but without success. A tantalising but amusing incident happened in the Podgoritza market. A peasant woman had some "kymak" (soft cheese) to sell at eight dinars (francs) per kilogramme. We were quite prepared to pay this sum, but as she was about to serve us a police official interfered and said the price was exorbitant and that she must not sell for more than half the price. Then she would not sell at all, and we who wanted the "kymak" had to be content to see her close the basket and fold her arms across the top. At intervals during the day we pressed her to sell. Even bribery was tried and we offered the eight dinars when the official was not looking, but to no avail; she was adamant. Later the official said she could sell for five dinars, but then she raised her price to nine dinars and we were still baulked of attainment. A similar instance occurred when we wanted potatoes from another seller. An official in answering inquiries about the despatch of letters said, "Oh yes, you can write your letters and can post them, but the boxes are never cleared." A sporting instinct at once prompted us to write to our friends. In Serbia all letters were franked for us by the Government; not being sure whether this would hold good in Montenegro, we took no risks but bought stamps and handed our cards over the post office counter. This was on December 13th, and they reached

London quite safely five weeks later. The last letter received from London at Kragujevatz was dated October 3rd. At Mitrovitza a copy of the *Westminster Gazette* for October 15th was seen. In this was a paragraph to the effect that in view of the possible invasion of Serbia arrangements had been made for the transference of the seat of government to Mitrovitza. Not only had the transference taken place, but the Government had long since gone again.

King Nikola I. of Montenegro passed through the streets of Podgoritza ; he rode a tall, light grey horse and wore a large light grey cloak which reached to the stirrups. His gold decorations and orders and the polished silver stirrups shone from their background of grey. A body-guard of soldiers on foot encircling the horse and rider were also resplendent, but in a slightly lesser degree. The sun, after the heavy rain, came out brightly and as the little group crossed the bridge they glittered and sparkled in its light. For a moment it seemed to lift them above the common muddy condition of the streets and people, and no one might have been surprised to see a halo suddenly appear round the king's head like a saint in days of old. They passed and we continued our walk across the bridge in the mud, with our vision still a little dazzled. Several of us attended a short intercession service here at a Catholic Church, the building was very small and the floor was

of bare earth. Opposite the Hotel des Balkans and across the little boulevard was a public garden with flowers and trees, the first attempt of the decoration or laying out of a town that we had seen for a long time.

The evening before we left Podgoritza we held a "reception" at the Turkish Schools, across the river from our hotel, where the drivers and ponies were sheltered. A big wood fire was made in the school yard and some cabbage we had bought was put into two empty kerosene tins and turned into soup. Two of us went across early to prepare the meal and the others who were the guests followed later. They came through heavy rain and almost ankle-deep mud and we met them at the school door, shook hands and said "How do you do?" and "so good of you to come." The soup in the meantime was served straight from the kerosene tins to the guests as they came up in turn. When leaving Kragujevatz we had each brought, as instructed, a knife and fork, spoon and a plate and cup. These had long since disappeared and the receptacles now presented by the guests for soup were of strange and various shapes. All of us returned later through the mud and rain to the hotel. Our orders were to be ready and sitting on our baggage by six o'clock the following morning, and six o'clock found us carrying out the instructions to the letter. The conveyances came two hours later, and after a

good deal of doubt had arisen as to whether they would appear.

The road now lay over flat country to the Lake of Scutari, and waggons were again used. These were like shallowly scooped out lorries with no covering. The bundles of blankets and kettles were tossed in, and we sat on the top of these with our feet hanging over the sides. Rain fell and the wind was cold. The horses, two to each waggon, were the strongest we had seen during the whole journey and resembled the rather small, sturdy, thick-set type of Russian horses, wearing the wide harness set with brass so often seen in pictures.

Instead of going to the head of the lake, we made for a point a little way down on its eastern side. The boat that we expected did not arrive, and after waiting for some hours we took refuge in a big, empty granary, where we stayed till noon of the next day. In the centre of the wide stone floor we lighted a fire. Here we took in lodgers—members of another Unit who could not find shelter. We "entertained angels unawares," for later our lodgers drew from their possessions a small tin of Demerara sugar when they found we had none, and gave us each a spoonful for our tea—those of us who had already had our tea took the sugar in our hands and used our tongues as spoons.

The next day the sun shone brightly as we sat on the little quay waiting for the boat to

arrive, and the wind had dropped. High overhead for a long time a Taube circled and hovered like a huge silver bird against the sky. Loud explosive reports could be heard startlingly near, and we were told that Scutari and San Giovanni di Medua were being bombed. This we found later was true.

Twelve British marines were waiting too for the boat. They were the last men down from Belgrade, who had been left to cover the guns. They were hungry, weak and tired, and one of them fainted from sheer exhaustion and had to be lifted on board the boat. They said they had been firing by day and trekking by night. Food was discussed, and one man said that raw cabbage was "fine tackle." The long beards which they had grown, and which they disliked exceedingly, gave them a strange appearance. We were all glad to meet each other, and the cockney accent of one man who hailed from the "New Cut" was as music to our ears. Later on board, as they sat round the cook's stove watching some water boil, they leaned against each other's shoulders and sang "Who killed Cock Robin?"

The lake journey took about seven hours. Failure to get a boat would have meant a further five days' journey by the side of the lake. Many people told us that this road was beset with danger, as the Albanians would at any point sweep down the mountain side and slaughter us for loot, that they were bandits and would

wipe us out and that nothing would ever be heard of us again. Later we learned that other members of our Unit had gone over the road and nothing had happened beyond the terrible hardships caused by the bad condition of the road and fording of many rivers.

When on the lake some curious person suddenly asked "What day is it?" It sounds as if to answer would be easy, but all knowledge of days and dates was lost. No newspapers, letters or business appointments came our way, and one day seemed very much like another. On asking such a question the answer one would get would be "They say it's Wednesday," or "They say it's Sunday." Our diarists got the nearest, but did not help us much, as they were always so hopelessly in arrears and had to go back such a long way before they could get a basis for their reckoning. So when this question was asked on the boat some one turned to a Serbian officer to see if he knew, and he turned to a captain who was asleep, shook him with "Kapitan, Kapitan," and asked him: Kapitan was about to answer when he had his doubts, rubbed his forehead and passed the question on to somebody else. Thus the question went round and no one, either Serb or Britisher, could give an answer.

Gipsies, also refugees, were on the boat, and someone suggested they should be asked to play a violin one of them carried. When ap-

proached on the matter the Serbian officer, who was an old man and very sad at leaving his country, said, " No, with my permission no one shall play music, the time is too sad." Soon afterwards, when our marines sang " Cock Robin," although they sang quietly to themselves, we felt that the Colonel would not perhaps understand. So it was explained to him that it was not light-heartedness but sadness that made the marines sing. It was the way of British people to sing sometimes when very depressed ; it disguised their feelings to others and enabled them to present a bold front to the enemy. He smiled, and we hope he understood.

Scutari was reached after nightfall and we walked into the town from the landing stage. Several two-wheeled ox waggons—quite different from any we had previously seen—took our blankets and kettles and other belongings. These were placed in the waggons so badly by the Albanian drivers that they were shaken out, and two of our members who walked behind the procession came up with their arms full of miscellaneous oddments that they had picked up from the road. The night was spent in a school, where hot soup was given us, and three rooms with a plentiful supply of hay put at our disposal. After breakfast the next morning we went by invitation to the British Consul's house. Tea, in real china cups, and tobacco were handed

round. We sipped the tea and rolled cigarettes as we waited the Consul's arrival.

Two-wheeled ox waggons, like those of the previous evening, at which the Serbs laughed and said they had seen nothing like them before —came to take us to San Giovanni di Medua. The oxen were a much smaller breed than those used in Serbia and they kept their noses almost to the level of the ground as they pulled the waggons. The drivers, who were Albanians, carried long sticks but never struck the oxen; they conducted them by pointing this way or that. The oxen seemed to understand their driver's every word and movement. In these drivers an entirely new type of human being was presented to us, and two days only in their company was not sufficient time for us to grasp "their point of view," and so the meaning of many strange happenings remained unrevealed. To begin, it was extremely difficult to make them understand that we wanted to ride in the waggons, although we could not imagine for what else they thought we had hired them, and quite half a day vanished before a start could be made. Our instructions, on leaving the Consul's house, were to walk behind the waggons to the point where the drivers got hay. The first waggons contained our blankets, and with these many of our Serbian escort walked; the second contained hay for the oxen; and in the third set we tried to ride. But for some un-

explained reason the Albanians wanted to fill all the waggons with hay and desired that we should walk. The Albanian language is quite other than Serbian, so that neither we nor the Serbs were capable of pressing our point of view. The Albanian sergeant who was in command of the drivers could understand a little Serbian and at times conversed with one of our men. But they seemed to keep in the background during these very trying negotiations.

Finally, imagining that deeds might speak louder than words, we took the law into our own hands and commenced to climb into the waggons and to the top of the truss of hay that filled them. Objection was taken to this and, when nearly at the top, my driver took hold of my foot and pulled me down again into the road; the others were treated in similar fashion. After repeated efforts we at last got in and the journey was resumed. All went well until the drivers suddenly seemed to discover that we were not seated on the right spot, and motioned us with angry glances to move this way or that way. Sometimes it was very difficult to know which way they wanted us to go. Two expressions only seem possible on the faces of the Albanian drivers—one a broad smile, the other a tragic scowl; there is nothing between the two and they never get from one to the other, but the expression is the one or the other. When two of us were seated comfortably on the top

of the hay in our waggon suddenly the driver's face took on the tragic scowl; he came to the side of the waggon gesticulating wildly. It was clear that he wanted us to move, but it was not at all clear as to where he wanted us to go. First we moved to the front of the waggon, which was quite wrong and he was very angry, then to the back, but this was wrong too and he was angrier still, then, not knowing what else to do, we sat down on the very spot we had left. His expression was radiant. The drivers too treated us as if we were inanimate. When sitting or lying peacefully in our waggons the driver's coat or a piece of wood would suddenly land on us. The driver would see a nice dry piece of wood by the roadside, pick it up for his camp fire in the evening, and toss it into the waggon without troubling to see where it would fall—if it fell on us, well, that was our look-out.

That night, through the delay in the early part of the day, we found it impossible to reach the point where we had intended to camp. Progress was extremely slow, as the land was heavily flooded, and instead of roads there were vast tracks of watery waste to cross; the mud was inches deep. Dead horses were everywhere, many in an advanced state of decomposition, and the odour at points was almost unbearable. The night was spent at an Albanian farm. Our host gave us a room, in which he

lighted a big fire. He showed us great kindness, and refused to take any money in return for the hospitality he gave. A very early start was made the next morning to make up for the time lost. Again we had some difficulty in getting into the waggons. There was a slight improvement in the roads, and many of us walked. The drivers walked the whole way through the mud and water with bare feet. At one point where a halt was made to feed the oxen, there were patches of dry grass-covered ground. Here the drivers washed their feet in the pools, took off their top pair of trousers and hung them on the waggons to dry. One of the surprises an Albanian driver gives is the number of pairs of trousers he wears. It does not seem to matter how many pairs he takes off, there is always a pair underneath. Yet the Albanian does not appear to be overweighted with clothes; he is of slight build, alert, nimble, and has all the lithe agility of a panther. His garments are made of a cream homespun—the under garments of a thinner texture than the outer ones, and his head is swathed in handkerchiefs.

San Giovanni di Medua was reached on the night of the second day out from Scutari. We were told that an American sailing vessel—though we might have to wait some time for it to come—would take us across the Adriatic. On our arrival we found that an Italian vessel

which had run unexpectedly into the harbour, having discharged its cargo of food, was about to leave again. The captain was in a great hurry to be off, but hearing of us he sent a message that although he already had on board one hundred and twenty members of different Units, including some of our own who had taken the road before us, who had waited at the port five days for a boat, he would take us if we were quick. We were hurried from our ox waggons into rowing boats without having time to say good-bye to the little group of Serbian soldiers who had tramped that long journey with us from Kragujevatz. Masts of sunken food ships dotted the harbour, and we rowed between them to the Italian steamer in the bay. The vessel moved off before those of us in the last two boats were able to get on board. We shouted, but to no effect, and realising we must wait for the next ship turned to row back to the shore. Suddenly we were hailed, and the vessel stopped—someone had probably prevailed on the captain to wait for us; we rowed up quickly and were hauled on board with all the despatch and unceremoniousness of bits of luggage. The boat was crowded but we sat down on the deck and slept through the night, with the waves breaking over us from time to time. By eleven o'clock the next morning, after a twelve hours' passage, the Adriatic was crossed and Brindisi lay before us set in

glorious sunshine. Italian, British and French battle craft of all kinds lay in the Brindisi waters and, massed together as they were, made an impressive show of strength and power. Every vessel appeared to have had a washing day, for each had lines stretched across its deck hung with rows of very homely useful garments.

It was all rather like a dream to step ashore. After the rough and tumble of camp life and the long journey made under such primitive conditions along rough roads, across snow covered plains, and over wild mountain ranges untouched by the hand of man, it was now as though one had stepped on to the stage of a theatre or into a child's toy picture book. Nothing seemed real—the real world was the land of mountains and hunger we had left.

Italian officials wearing handsome uniforms and immaculate linen, and rings on their elegant white hands, came across the quay to meet us. We were hungry, tired and unwashed, with the dust and mud of a seven weeks' journey on our boots, and our clothing a patchwork of each other's garments. When the officials saw us they went back and cleared all the women and children off the quay. It was as though they had said "This is not a sight for members of the weaker sex, this is man's work to disembark these wild women." The Italians were very kind and placed first-class travelling accommodation at our disposal. Through Italy and

across France we journeyed, and then from Havre to Southampton for home. Before the British Government would permit us to land at Southampton we had each to fill in a paper containing many questions; one of these was "Give exact reason for coming to England."

We were back again with home, friends and comforts before us, yet it was a sad home coming, and gladly would we have retraced our steps. Our thoughts went ever back to the Serbian soldiers whom we had left on that inhospitable Albanian coast. The men who had come down the long road from Kragujevatz and who had borne privation and danger without flinching, men who were hungry, tired and worn, without proper clothes or other equipment, and whose boots were almost off their feet. Throughout the long journey every step brought us nearer to our homes, but took them ever farther from theirs. Our hearts and our thoughts went out to them and we longed for the time when they would be back again in their own country; back once more in those little homes that we knew so well, dotted throughout the length and breadth of Serbia, reunited to their women folk and their children, able to enjoy, as never before, all the blessings, all the comforts and all the joys that life can yield. We longed too for the time when all the ghastly business of war will be over and done with for ever, and sanity come to the peoples of the earth.

NOTE ON
SERBIAN HISTORY

ROUTE OF RETREAT: SHOWN BY THE BLACK LINE

NOTE ON SERBIAN HISTORY

Of the pre-Balkan history of the Serbs but little is on record except that they are of Slav origin and lived as an agricultural people in the Carpathians. Owing, however, to unrest caused by invasion of their lands by the Goths in the seventh century, groups of these virile tribesmen came down into the Balkan Peninsula, where they rapidly spread and intermixed with the Latin and Greek peoples. The early part of their Balkan history was largely influenced by Byzantine culture, and under its influence Christianity supplanted their old Pagan faith.

For their greater strength and common protection the tribes came together as a people and made repeated efforts, eventually successful at Rashka in the ninth century, to found a Serbian State. From that time onward, but with many ups and downs and much internecine strife, they pressed steadily forward developing their territory and power, and in the fourteenth century were the strongest people in the Balkan Peninsula and could be reckoned as one of the important powers of Europe.

At that time, however, the Turks were making determined efforts to penetrate further into Europe, and encouraged by their earlier successes in the southern part of the land—where on the Maritza in 1371 King Vukasin and 60,000 Serbian soldiers were slain, and also to anticipate an allied move against them by Serbia, Bulgaria (a province of Serbia at that time), and the State of Bosnia—made a big sweep forward and challenged the Serbs to a battle (1389) on the Plain of Kossovo. With no lack of courage, although the forces were three to one against them, the Serbs boldly answered the challenge and fought so valiantly that despite the tremendous odds they faced history might have had a different tale to tell had not a traitor in their camp left the field with his men when the battle was in progress.

The battle is chronicled as a religious one between Christianity and the Islamic faith. The rulers of both lands, Knez Lazar and Sultan Amourath I., were killed, and of the Serbian soldiers but few were left. All the land except Montenegro passed to the Turks, and under their sway Serbia was gradually robbed of her freedom. Then for over four centuries Serbia as a nation disappeared from the map. The people were in a state of vassalage, and their lands and rights as individuals were taken from them unless they conformed to the Islamic faith. The brightest boys were taken to Con-

stantinople and trained in the "Janisseries" to fight for the Turks. Yet, spite of much suffering the Serbs kept the spirit of their independence alive and never forgot throughout those long years that they had once been a nation. Their history, told in unwritten ballads, was passed on from one generation to another. The great deeds of their people were thus kept alive in their memories, and the children, born in vassalage, learned that they belonged to a great people who were once free.

Successful rebellion against Turkish authority began in 1804 when the independence of Belgrade was won. This was lost again in 1813. but regained two years later. Thus steadily, bit by bit the grip of the alien ruler was loosened. Eventually in 1913, at the close of the Balkan War, the Serbs having regained the lands of old Serbia and Macedonia freed themselves entirely from the Turkish yoke and stood again as a nation before the world, looking to the time when the 7,000,000 of their people who were living under Austrian rule (Austria annexed Bosnia from Turkey in 1908) would win their freedom and all would unite under a common government. Austria objected to Serbia's freedom; it was to her interests that Serbia should remain small and helpless. She not only objected to the possibility of giving up the provinces in her possession but she wanted Serbia too, or at least a highway through it

with an outlet in the Ægean sea, and was violently opposed to Serbia having a port anywhere. Serbia's good fortunes had thus to be checked at the outset and so another war was forced upon her. So, scarcely had Serbia freed herself from her Turkish foes before she found herself confronted by Austria and involved in another struggle. Independence so dearly purchased from the Turks was thus lost again, and in the last months of 1915 Serbia passed into Austrian hands. Not that Austria was stronger than the Turk or could accomplish what the Turk could not, for alone she could not have successfully invaded Serbia. Three times she tried and three times she failed; but it was only because Germany and Bulgaria came to her aid that this fourth attempt succeeded.

Again as on Kossovo Plain Serbia has fought with three to one against her, but this time it has been three countries. Again she has been overpowered and her men and boys between the ages of fifty and fifteen are in exile; and the women of the country, strong, capable and courageous, are facing the enemy alone, and are representing the Serbian nation within their country to-day. The end is not yet, but those who know the men and women of Serbia know that there is in their character a virile element of independence and individuality that long centuries of foreign rule could not obliterate and that their land to-day is only invaded, not con-

quered. Austria and Germany both want Serbia —the former for reasons already stated; the latter to link up the Austro-German Empire with Constantinople and the East. Serbia wants her own land and people under her own control for the quiet, orderly development of her race.

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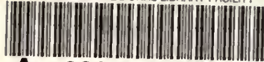

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