

EXPERIENCES IN THE BALKANS.

(February 1915 to December 1920.)

BY MISS ROUND.

(Continued from page 107.)

PART II.

After a short rest at home many of us tried to return to Serbia, but the Government would not sanction any more private units leaving the country. I nursed some Serbian students who had foolishly contracted German measles while at Cambridge. I had about 25 through my hands, some very ill, but they all made a good recovery. I again tried to return in July, and was advised by the Serbian Relief Fund to join the Army Nursing Service and get out that way. I did so but was informed I must nurse in one of the home hospitals for at least six months. I would not join on these conditions but received an urgent note saying to sign up and if accepted by the Board, I should be sent to the Salonica front, and I was. We went out on the Hospital Ship "Brittanic," 1,300 nurses, besides V. A. D's. We had an exciting time, for while off the Italian coast we knew something was happening; first, because we practically stood still and then went on full steam ahead, and put into the port of Naples. It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, for while awaiting orders we were allowed to visit Pompeii. The excavations were wonderful, and we had a good view of Vesuvius. We also saw Stromboli in action while passing along that part of the coast. At Mudros we transhipped, because the "Brittanic" is far too big a boat to enter the Bay of Salonica.

At Salonica when the Matron asked who I was and where I was going and to whom did I belong? I said I was an orphan, belonging to no one, as I had not been attached before I left England. She said, "You are Topsy." I then asked to be allowed to go with the unit that was for the Serbian hospitals, as I knew the language a little and understood the Serbs and I got my wish, being sent to the 28th General Hospital for the Serbs, outside Salonica. I stayed 10 months, getting a good deal of work and also learning the Army routine. We were several times in danger from aeroplanes, once it was thought we would have to evacuate at very short notice. At the end of 10 months I asked to be transferred to a hospital nearer the fighting line. Three days before I left Salonica a small fire started in the Turkish quarter at 5 p.m., Saturday; at 7-30 p.m., more than half the town was in flames, it had spread so rapidly, and by midnight the greater part of Salonica was in ruins. Our Tommies worked like the heroes they are and saved many hundreds of lives. Trams were burned up as they passed burning buildings and the crash of glass and buildings could be heard for miles round. There was no water, and only an obsolete fire engine. When we passed through on Monday morning it was still burning and a good many roads still impassable. At Vutekops work was very heavy and often we had to take cover from aeroplanes, three or four times a day. Many bombs were dropped quite close but fortunately they were duds. A rumour came out that those who had been out nearly two years when

they went on furlough would not return, so I did not sign on again, but asked permission to join the Serbian Relief Fund, to which I originally belonged. This request was also granted much to the surprise of my friends and the Matron, who said she was afraid I should have to go home, but I did not, and when the eighteen months was up for which I had signed on, I was allowed to return to my old unit. It was situated near Monastir, having one hospital of 200 beds at Kremjan and one in Monstir. I went to Kremjen and here was asked to take over the stores and look after the staff. It was quite an experience giving out the rations to the ward orderlies and staff, besides sending up weekly supplies to Monastir and eight other outpost stations. Ordering the monthly supplies up from the Base took a little thinking out but I enjoyed the work and did it for three months. Then I went to one of our outposts, at Lake Prespa, a delightful spot just on the Greek frontier. Here was a small hospital of 10 beds for refugees, besides a large out-patients' dispensary and three big settlements to be visited once a week. I generally went with the doctor to the biggest settlement, and on other days looked after the staff, did the catering for staff and patients and ran the dispensary. I was here six months, returning to Kremjan to nurse sick staff. It was then rumours began to float about. The Serbs were making ready for a big offensive, the heights of Kianachalan were to be stormed and the terrible Babuma Pass retaken. We were asked to be ready to follow up the army and also to have extra beds ready. What prayers went up for the success of this movement. The Crown Prince, now King, visited us. He had lunch with us just as we were. What a boy he seemed, but so earnest. He shook hands with us all, and when I asked him in Serbian how he was, he answered me in English and laughed heartily. He was delighted to know we could all speak his language so well. Early in September we were all ready, and literally our hearts stood still when we knew the hour had come. Those heights how formidable they looked and what a stronghold for the enemy. A few wounded came in, but all elated they were getting their country back. The heights were stormed and taken, Velas was in the hands of the Serbs, one of their first big towns, and then Prilip and then Leskovatz would follow. We made for Skoplje and took over the same hospital that we had left in 1916, but oh what a difference. Here the Serbian army had made such an advance that they were three days ahead of provisions and ammunition, in fact they could not be found. We were so afraid it was a trap to surround them, but no, in less than six weeks the whole of the country was rid of the enemy. The gallant little nation had done wonders. Who will write of their glorious deeds of endurance and the faithful way they stood by their allies? At Skoplje the Germans in retreating had scattered death and destruction in every conceivable way, not the work of human beings surely, but the work of the evil one for certain. They scattered germs about everywhere, poisoning all the wells either with actual poison or by throwing in dead bodies. Our boys who were in the Transport column fell quickly. I was privileged to be one of the first to go in advance and along with our doctor, Matron in Chief, and Sanitary Inspector arrived at Skoplje a few days after it had been taken. Here in one of the buildings we found nearly all the men

of three companies down with influenza including the Medical Officer. The C. O. came in and asked us for help. I was the only one that could be spared. Matron had to get the place ready to take in patients, the doctor had to return next day to headquarters to speed up the equipment and the Sanitary had her work cut out, especially as regards the water supply.

We had no stores, only a small quantity of food and bedding, still the boys could not be left. It was my duty and a joy to feel I could perhaps help. I went in at 7 a.m. next morning and saw the Medical Officer lying on a small camp bed, double pneumonia, desperately ill, a young officer lying in the same room with influenza looked as if he were going to die, and then I went in to see the boys, 430 patients straight off. No milk, no stimulants, very little medicine, no beds, only their kit bags for pillows and a couple of army blankets. Nearly 50 had pneumonia and several dysentery. Not a bed-pan, urinal, feeding cup or anything else. The poor boys had only just come in the day before and gone down like flies. Their food consisted of water arrowroot, Oxo, and tea without milk. Well it was a big task. I got all the men who were well together and asked them to help me, we cut down kerosine oil tins and made bed-pans, wash basins and all sorts of things, then I collected all the empty jam tins, got them washed and gave them as sputum cups. Washed a few of the worst cases, fed them with Oxo, and then I started a Primus stove in each of the wards, got water cans, put in some tinct. Benzoin Co., set one man to take it round every fifteen minutes to a patient in turn. This relieved their breathing very much, others I rubbed with liniment. The next day a medical officer came along and I told him what I was doing, he was unable to help as he had two other camps in the same condition, and the men could not be sent down to the base as there was no one fit to take them. I said I would carry on if I could have absolute authority until a doctor could come. He readily agreed, promised to send milk and brandy and other things and to come himself every other day. This went on for six weeks, in all, 630 patients were under my care, eight of whom died. They often ran temperatures of 104° F. to 106° F. I began work about 7 a.m., and remained on duty until midnight or after. About this time we received orders to go to Nish. I was only in Nish a few days when Matron asked if I would return to Leskovatz and open a Dispensary and soup kitchen. The pre-war population of this town was 16,000, it was now more than 36,000, and only one doctor at the hospital. In a very short time I had anything from 80 to 140 patients daily at the dispensary and over 700 coming for soup. A little V. A. D. was sent from Nish to help and I had two German prisoners to fetch water, chop wood, and clean the rice and prepare the soup, and a Serbian orderly to help in the Dispensary. I hope never again to see such dreadful cases. The tuberculosis was simply appalling, the cavities I used to wash out with a douche can and rectal nozzle and then plug with strips of lint, rag or anything, soaked in saline and put on a dry pad, wrap up in old rags and a final cover of paper, that off the lint and wool or newspaper or even leaves off the trees, when procurable. It was rarely I had less than 20 such cases. We opened at 7:30 a.m., and shut

the door at 10 a.m., trying to be finished by 12-30. Then we had a meal and started to serve out the soup from 1 till 2 p.m. Each adult had a pint, children under 12, three-quarters and smaller children half a pint. The soup was made alternately of rice or lentils, with onions, pepper and olive oil, meat could not be bought, eggs cost two shillings each, milk was a shilling a pint, bread two shillings a loaf, sugar about five shillings a pound. Tea was unprocurable, green coffee beans were ten shillings a pound, rice six shillings, and so on. No soap, candles or matches were available and very little kerosine. After we had finished the soup we tried to rest for half an hour and then visited very sick people in the town, mostly advanced phthisis, typhus, enteric, or small-pox cases. We did this work for seven months. As I had had no holiday for nearly three years I went home on leave having a most adventurous journey all the way.

(To be concluded.)

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GOVERNMENT GENERAL HOSPITAL, MADRAS.

The General Hospital, Madras, originated as an amalgamation of two formerly existing hospitals, *viz.*, the Garrison Hospital and the Old Naval Hospital. The former of the two structures (originally a warehouse) must have been built before the year 1759, but the exact date is not known. The "Old Naval Hospital" formerly a Granary, was converted into a hospital in 1744. The General Hospital was used as a Military Garrison Hospital from 1784 till 1859, but sick sailors of Her Majesty's fleet and of the Honourable East India Co.'s ships were also treated there during the period 1790 to 1808.

The original building was one-storied and shaped like the letter "H." The Western half was allotted to the troops located in the Fort and the Eastern half to the General Hospital (Civil). In the latter were treated military details from foreign service, sick of the ordnance, Commissariat and Gun Carriage Factory Establishments. Sailors of Her Majesty's ships and all European and Anglo-Indian Civilians. Indians were treated in the neighbouring separate wards.

In 1895 the Western half of the Station Hospital was handed over to the civil authorities and became part of the Civil Hospital. The patients from the old Women's and Children's Hospital at Egmore were transferred to the General Hospital. Since the opening of the Government Maternity Hospital no gynæcological cases are treated in the General Hospital.

There are now about 600 beds in daily use, and a very large Out-patient and Special Department, also the Government of India X-Ray Department, where much electric treatment takes place, patients coming from all over the south of India.