

## BOOK OF THE WEEK.

RECORDS OF A SCOTSWOMAN,  
KATHARINE STUART MACQUEEN.\*

Biography is always of interest, and especially so when we know the subject of it, and many nurses to whom Miss Macqueen was well known as a Queen's Superintendent, in her work in the Near East, and, in the last years of her life, at St. Katharine's College, Poplar, where she organised the Maternity and Infant Welfare Centre, and the training of Infant Health workers, will be glad of the opportunity of learning something more of one to whom many nurses owed much.

The Bishop of London, in his introduction, writes: "I found myself Chairman, by Act of Parliament, of this new venture of the ancient foundation of St. Katharine's; but, as I looked round the table, at the first meeting of a board entrusted with the task of finding and tending babies in East London—lo and behold we were all bachelors! We had the common sense to look about at once for the best woman we could find to help us, and it is not too much to say that the opinion of the whole civilised world led us to Miss Macqueen. At any rate we were told by the Matron of every hospital we consulted in London, that if we were fortunate enough to induce her to come, she was *the* woman for the work."

Her biographer writes of Miss Macqueen: "Her strength was that her ideals were expressed in actions rather than in words, in work done with infinite pains, understanding and sympathy. The outward look was there, for all there is of beauty and truth and of goodness in the world, whether in her own or in another land. As a woman she belonged to the Victorian as well as to the progressive world of these latter days. In her claim for free scope for women as citizens in work, and in happiness, there was neither clamour nor petulance, but rather a gentle dignity, and a disarming humour. In spite of her many uprootings and the small means that make things hard, she was essentially a home-maker, a dispenser of hospitality. 'For herself she wanted nothing,' a fellow-worker wrote. 'What we most revered in her was her delicacy of mind and her single-mindedness. She had the highest possible standard, but was broad-minded enough to understand other points of view.'"

Miss Macqueen trained at the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, with the object of joining the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute. She nursed for two years in the South African War, and held subsequently various posts under the Q.V.J.I., the last being that of Nurses' Superintendent for England at the Queen's Institute. In 1912-1913, and again in 1914, at the request of the Macedonian Relief Committee, she went out on their behalf to the Balkans, and letters published in her memoir tell

in detail of these two journeys, which are of special interest, as they deal with experiences immediately preceding the great war.

Her most important, because most enduring, piece of work was as Principal of the Royal College of St. Katharine's-in-the-East, and it was only while in the nursing home, where she died, and within a few days of the end, that she completed a scheme for the reorganisation of the work at St. Katharine's College to keep pace with its increasing growth.

Her biographer writes: "She was never a ready speaker, and though she practised herself in addressing small audiences for her work's sake, it did not come easily to her. I remember the amused dismay with which she told of being 'dragged up on to the platform—muddy boots and all,' by the Bishop of London, who was taking the chair at a meeting in Poplar on Infant Welfare, and who explained to the audience in his genial enthusiastic but sometimes disconcerting manner that here was the expert on the subject. 'After that what could I do?' I don't doubt she did it very well."

"Monotony was the one thing she could not stand for long; it seemed to crush her spirit, and it was by strength of spirit that all her work was done. . . . Again, much as she valued all her experience, beginning with her district nursing . . . she turned with joy, and something like relief, to the more adventurous Balkan enterprise, at an age when most women would have shrunk from anything of the kind, involving, as it was certain to do, considerable risks and hardships. . . . Though her journal shows she was often hindered by illness hardly mentioned in her letters, the whole thing was like wine to her spirit, and she came back from her first Balkan journey renewed in life and vigour."

Like so many workers who leave the countryside for the busy life in towns, she was laid to rest by her own wish in a quiet country churchyard, "beside the old Banffshire home which she had so passionately loved, and of which only that last summer she had written, 'There is no place like Kirkmichael.'"

P. G. Y.

## COMING EVENTS.

March 18th.—Nurses' Missionary League, Day of Thought and Prayer, University Hall, W.C. 10.30 a.m.

March 22nd.—College of Nursing, Ltd., Birmingham Branch. Lecture by Dr. Arthur Loxton on "Some Diseases of the Skin." Lecture Theatre, General Hospital, 5.30 p.m. Members free. Non-Members, 1s.

March 29th.—Professional Union of Trained Nurses. Annual General Meeting, The Plane Tree, 106, Great Russell Street, W.C. 1. 4 p.m. Tea, 1s.

April 30th.—Sale of Work. Nurses' Memorial to King Edward VII., Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow.

\* By Olive Macle hose. Macle hose, Jackson & Co., 61, Vincent Street, Glasgow. 7s. 6d. net.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)