

WELFARE WORK IN MACEDONIA.

By A. GARSTANG.

It was in 1920, just after I had been released from welfare work with the War Office, that someone told me a welfare worker, with hospital experience was required in Serbia. Two weeks after my application was in I was on my way *via* Orient Express. It had always been a wish of mine to travel in this luxurious Express, but I never thought it would ever come true!

You take the train from Calais, in a through compartment, with *wagon-lits*, travel through France *via* Paris, Switzerland *via* Lausanne, Italy *via* the Lake of Maggiore, Milan and Venice, and on through Jugo-Slavia to Belgrade. It is the easiest and most comfortable journey known, and certainly one of the most picturesque. Arrived at Belgrade I had some days to wait until someone else could accompany me on yet another journey to Macedonia. This was not so comfortable or not so easy running. In many parts the railway lines were being repaired, we had many stopping places, and had to stay the night in Skoplyi, as there was no train running direct to Veles. The memories of that night are not pleasant. It was hot August weather; there were many mosquitoes and many bugs, so that though the town itself had many interesting people, and interesting buildings and places, the least said the soonest forgotten! It was dirty—distinctly dirty!

The next day saw me in the train once more. It is something like a two or three hours' ride to Veles, but the whole journey took the best part of three days, as much time spent as from Calais to Belgrade! From Veles to Shtip, the east side of Macedonia, I journeyed in an Army wagon with some soldiers, there being no railway; it took the whole day. The country gave one the "idea of a barren and dry land where no water is." The roads were appalling, having huge holes, and in some places sloping and unlevelled. Sitting on one's baggage, or crouched on sacks and holdalls, could hardly be "travelling in comfort." The Serb soldiers were cheerful, however, and seemed quite used to it.

Once settled in Shtip I found it was quite a delightful place. There were two sisters there who had been in the Scottish Women's Unit. They were helpful, as they knew the language and were happy and good tempered, which makes a great difference.

We had very comfortable living quarters, and in the same block we had two large rooms which we prepared for "sleeping" some of the village children who required extra feeding up. Outside in the yard we had a dispensary and dressing station, where every day (except Sunday) the children came for treatment—sometimes as many as 140, and never fewer than 80. It was heavy work as some of the children had extensive skin trouble.

The dispensary was open for half the day, the other half of the day was spent sometimes in visiting patients and sometimes in visiting schools,

issuing tickets for admission. When the cases visiting the dispensary required doctor's advice, we accompanied them to the Medical Officer of Health.

After six months I was wired for to go to Monastir, or Bitolj, as the Serbs have called it, a place situated right across Macedonia in the west, only about 18 miles from the Greek frontier and not many hundred miles from the Albanian front.

Monastir is a very interesting place. It was very tumbled down and still showed the ravages of war. Barbed-wire and trenches everywhere on the outskirts; many broken down houses in the town and many badly riddled with shot. But, on the whole, it has picked itself out of the debris; the roads are repaired, the canals are mended, the shops are rebuilt, and the place is thriving. With regard to the people one soon learns that the Macedonian goes about with a view of working only for to-day, as to-morrow will take care of itself. I have never seen it so well emphasised as in Macedonia.

My work in Monastir was to open up a hospital for the orphans and run a dispensary in connection with it. The children had previously always visited the civil hospital in the town, but as the Child Welfare Association were organising orphanages here and there, they thought a hospital, run solely for the orphans, would be much nicer. Having procured a small Turkish house, beds and some hospital appliances from the Serbian Relief Fund when they closed down, and a kindly gift of clothing from the Americans, together with the necessary local carpenter, &c., we opened the little hospital, and before long were able to treat 30 patients. There were two wards—one for boys and one for girls—and then one smaller ward for an isolated case. The first six months after the opening of the hospital we had very heavy work, but with the constant care and attention given in the daily dispensary, the general condition of the children improved, so that we have not had so many patients since.

Unfortunately, we were not able to keep the hospital going owing to lack of funds. It had been a great wish of the town that the Serbian Government (as in the case of the orphanages), might be able to take it over, but there was no credit in the country and it had to be closed in August last.

COMING EVENTS.

November 27th to December 3rd.—Imperial Nurses' Club, 137, Ebury Street, S.W.1. Birthday Week. Opening "At Home," November 27th. 8 to 10 p.m.

November 30th.—Nurses' Missionary League. Quiet Day, St. James' Church, Sussex Gardens. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

December 2nd.—League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses, General Meeting and Social Gathering. 3 p.m.

December 7th.—Glasgow Royal Infirmary. Nurses' League Reunion Dinner. Trades House, Glasgow. 7.45 p.m. Guest of Honour, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick.

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