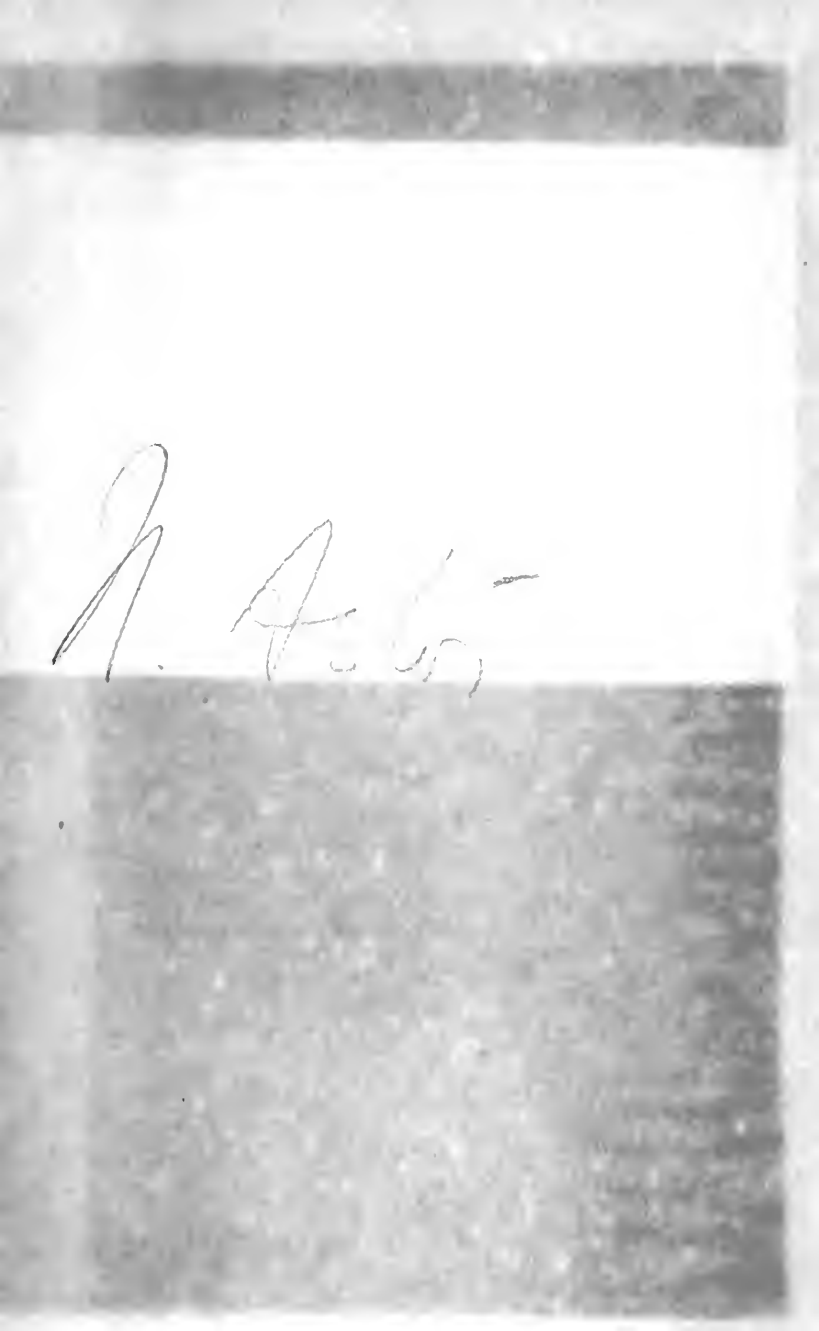

LETTERS FROM A FIELD HOSPITAL

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LETTERS FROM A FIELD HOSPITAL

BY

MABEL DEARMER

WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR BY

STEPHEN GWYNN

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The crowning dishonour that we do the dead lies in our dutiful effort to remember them. Real remembrance consists not in a trick of memory, but in a power of realisation. Unless the thought of the dead be a fruitful impulse, let it go the way of tombstones and tin wreaths of immortelles—there is no virtue in it.

The Difficult Way.

MEMOIR

In that month of July which closed the first year of the European conflict, a preacher, dwelling on the part which woman played "on all the battlefields of Europe behind the fighting line," said to his congregation: "As I speak, a single figure seems to embody to me the glory of woman in this great war." He named Mrs. Percy Dearmer, who "had gone to that point of the field where the need was most agonising and the personal danger greatest." "God has completed and crowned her sacrifice," he said, "by asking for her life."

Those who knew and loved Mabel Dearmer best will need no commentary

on her death; our loss has more of pride in it than sorrow. Being what she was, she could do no other, and who could unwish such an end? But because she was a leader and a teacher, it is her due that this closing and supreme action, which in truth "completed and crowned" her whole life, should be rightly understood. Her reasons, here as always, were born of her own thought, not imposed from outside; and here, as often, they would have seemed to many little short of heresy. Yet even these many will realise that the test imposed upon her was the more austere. It is easy to go into danger when convinced that your country's cause is righteous; she thought that for all countries war was unrighteous, yet she went. She went on active service not because she was an Englishwoman, but because she was a woman; not because Serbia had been

wronged and had fought gallantly, but because in Serbia help was needed, and a place was vacant which she could fill.

What she felt, what she meant, in going, her own words shall in great measure make clear. The task of supplementing them falls to me, her literary executor, because to me, as her nearest friend at home, she wrote the letters which are almost a journal of her experiences; and also because the comradeship between us, of nineteen years' duration, had never been so close as in the months which immediately preceded and followed the outbreak of war. I saw that sudden whirlwind strike her, and I knew that in her, while she still followed her ordinary habits, it produced a disturbance far greater than in many, myself for instance, whose lives were superficially more changed. For her, no harmony was possible between natural life and

those unnatural times; she found peace and perfect happiness only when she put off the normal way of living and went out with a lovely humility as the lowest of those who served. She had done many things and all with distinction; she had been courted alike by men and by women who had themselves no mean share of the world's envy; she had achieved much, yet counted herself as only laying the foundations of a career. But never in all her varied energies did she turn more joyfully to any labour than when she went out, not to nurse, but to fetch and carry for nurses in a hospital unit.

Let me sketch in bare outline the phases through which her life passed in its three and forty years. A lonely childhood fed her imagination; with the tenacious memory, which was one of her gifts, she reproduced something of those years in the early pages of her

best novel, *Gervase.* Also, it was one secret of her success in writing for children that she had never forgotten what it was like to be a child. Then followed, so far as I can judge, a precocious and uneasy girlhood, fevered with ambition. It was to the stage she first looked to achieve the something great on which she counted absolutely. I asked why she abandoned it. "They thought I was not pretty enough," she said. But the instinct for the theatre was always there, and one of her earliest friendships was with the veteran W. G. Wills, who made a companion of the clever girl of fifteen. He was a painter as well, and so was she; and the art by which she first decided to become famous was painting. Partly too, it offered the readiest way of escape into a life of freedom. Her mother had married for the second time, and her stepfather, a steady orthodox conserva-

tive, was much scandalised by the extreme socialist views which his ward professed. They were, I make no question, crudely thought out and crudely uttered; but here as in other matters she knew her own mind from the first. There is no important subject on which she can be said to have altered her convictions. Contact with experience broadened and strengthened and shaped them; but essentially she affirmed out of this wider knowledge the same beliefs which her vivid intelligence and courageous instinct had adopted upon faith and abstract thought.

Independent life began for her at eighteen when she made her way as an art student to Herkomer's school at Bushey. At twenty came the interruption of marriage, so often the close of a woman artist's career; and her second child was born before her twenty-second birthday. *The Difficult Way*

sketches the transition from Bushey to South Lambeth, and many of the episodes in that history of a curate's girl-wife are sketched from memory. But though here as elsewhere she drew freely on her own experience for settings, incidents, this or that external happening, the drama of this and of all her novels was born of pure invention. Like Nan Pilgrim, she had to face an unfamiliar struggle with butchers' bills, and to know the strain of poverty; but her husband was hardly less than herself an artist by sympathy, and she was free and welcome to turn her art to bread-winning account.

That was the moment when artists of talent were experimenting with the poster, and here she succeeded. Then came book illustration, and she became one of the group who contributed stories and pictures to *The Yellow Book*. In that environment I first met her. Henry

Harland was the centre of the circle, which gathered at various houses; Richard Le Gallienne, and his brother-in-law James Welsh (then known as an actor of Ibsen), W. J. Locke, and Laurence Housman were all constant figures in it. Maurice Hewlett, on the point of becoming famous, was often of the same company; and there were brilliant women as well. One of them, Miss Evelyn Sharp, had then just written a delightful book for children, and Mabel Dearmer in making the pictures for *Wymps* applied the methods of the poster to book illustration.

In these charming but mannered designs one feels the influence of Aubrey Beardsley. She came to herself entirely when she drew the pictures for Laurence Housman's rhyme of *The Seven Young Goslings*, and for her own children's books of verse, *The Book of Penny Toys* and *Roundabout Rhymes*, which

were succeeded by that prose saga, the *Noah's Ark Geography.*

In all of these you had her inimitable quality of fun and life; but she shaped her fun as an artist. Her original designs have been sadly disfeatured in reproduction, the colour scheme destroyed; yet these books continue, and will continue, to live.

They brought in also considerable sums when money was badly needed, and they represented an infinite deal of work. She was never a quick worker, and her draughtsmanship was far from impeccable. Laurence Housman helped her with that, and I was called in to advise on literary technique. But to us writers who came to her with our projects, she made far more than equal return. Her brain teemed with invention, and I, more particularly, urged upon her that she should write, not for children, but for a wider world.

She found for a moment a kind of half-way house in her *Noisy Years.* Nobody was ever better able to amuse children; but they amused her none the less, and they appealed to her sense of humour even when they were most of a perplexity. This book stands apart from the rest of her work, and earned less notice; but few volumes better deserve to be reissued than this group of sketches. If her sole aim had been to earn money or reputation, her simple plan was to exploit the vein which she had opened, till the great general public knew her books for children and about children as a staple article. That, however, was not in the least her way. The need for self-expression was with her a driving force; and she had much to say that could not be said within that limited range.

The novel seemed her obvious field, and to the novel she set herself—I

advising her. It seems to me now that I was wrong, and a far-seeing critic might have detected her real gift. At all events she laboured with great difficulty at novel-writing, and neither of her first two books, *The Orangery* and *Brownjohns*, gives any measure of her powers, although both have charming passages. But they were written and rewritten with labour and, so to say, against the grain. She had the genius for taking pains, and she mastered the art of prose fiction completely but slowly. *Gervase* is masterly in its treatment of a difficult subject, far less open to criticism than *The Alien Sisters*, which preceded it, though it was less popular; and even in *The Difficult Way* her work seems to me technically immature. Yet this in substance is the work of her matured nature, and belongs to a period when her life had very radically changed.

In those first years when I knew her,

she was the most vivid creature that imagination could conceive. If one does not call her beautiful, it is because the word is accepted in a conventional significance and the photographs are there with their record. But no photograph was ever like her; what they omit is precisely her beauty—for beauty it was—the colour, the movement, the poise of her figure, crowned with its mass of brilliant hair, the living quality of her voice, all the radiation of her personality. She was tall and slender in those days, as a young tree; but in those days also wild with the sheer desire of living—grasping at life with both hands.

One thing I have come to see since—she had not in those days the home she needed. First sharing a house in Devonport Street with a friend, later crowded into a little flat in Hyde Park Mansions, she lacked space about her.

It was a happy day when her husband got his promotion to the living of St. Mary's, Primrose Hill, and they changed out from the flat into a pleasant house in England's Lane, facing southwards to a garden some fifty yards long, and divided by a row of tall poplars, not from houses, but from another garden. It was there first that I began to realise her delight in everything that grew and lived—plant, bird, and beast.

Money was scarce still, and if there were to be flowers, she herself must dig and sow and plant and water; and since she never did things by halves, there were flowers in profusion. There were pets too, a succession of them, all needing her tendance; and it was just like her to take a fancy somewhere in Yorkshire to a swarm of bees, and ship them on the railway along with her luggage. The bees became an institution, a lasting source of pleasure, but

like all her other pleasures they got her into scrapes. Once, for instance, they swarmed in the middle of a parish garden party. But they were friendly bees, used to being pulled about and looked at, till after two years a new strain was introduced, vicious Italians, and bee-keeping ended.

All these things employed her tireless activity, filled up the space not occupied by work; and her life became one of Hampstead, not of London. Her friends of the writing world did not easily come out so far to see her, nor was she tempted to go to look for them; though with her, friendship might lie by during five years, and at the end it would be there again fresh as ever.

But those who came to see her in Hampstead certainly found a change in her preoccupations and interests. She had made it her business to know her husband's parishioners, and with her

there was scarcely such a thing as acquaintance. Her gift for eliciting friendship won her intimates among people remote enough from all the literary world. As she matured she was less interested in expression than in life itself, and above all in one aspect of life—religion. Here I cannot rightly interpret, but two things I know. Wherever people were, with whom religion was the passion of their life, she was of their freemasonry; and whenever she was in real difficulty, a difficulty of the soul, she fell back always upon the thought of God.

Her books are there and speak for her—on the one hand, her *Child's Life of Christ*; on the other, her novels. No one who reads the novels with sympathy is likely to doubt which way her judgment would have decided on any question of conduct. "Life to her was freedom, and any compelling power

that stood outside her reason would have appeared to her a thing to be resisted." So she wrote of Kate Souls, and it was true of herself. Yet it was the peculiar quality of her mind that she could sympathise entirely with the extreme churchmanship of Gervase Alleyne. What mattered to her sympathy was not the precise formula of an ideal but the spirit in which it was held. Any belief for which a human being would suffer willingly commanded her regard, and she knew herself ready to be burnt for her own opinions. That was the knowledge which gave her confidence, and she had proved it.

Through all her books one note is dominant. What she had learnt from life was to be grateful for pain, to accept and welcome discipline. Her nature was turbulent and it brought her much suffering: she was the better friend to those who needed counsel.

The writing of her novels and of the *Child's Life of Christ* was her main employment from 1900 to 1910. But in the latter part of this period she had begun to find her way into the branch of art which was to give her powers full scope. By way of a holiday from writing *The Alien Sisters*, she turned aside to dramatise her earlier novel *The Difficult Way*; and I perceived with amazement how swiftly and resourcefully she worked in this new medium. Through some good luck, the play was accepted for tentative production, and it saw three or four matinées at the Court Theatre. Then as always she had no difficulty in finding artists of talent and reputation to play without fee, for her work offered them rare opportunities. Miss Lilian Braithwaite created the part of "Nan Pilgrim," and the play, though it has never been regularly on the boards,

is in constant use for the training of students.

The consciousness of her gift was not long without bearing its fruit. After *The Alien Sisters* had been finished she launched her new novel *Gervase.* Once more the writing proved laborious, though she worked now with an assured touch ; and she threw it aside definitely for a while to write the play with which her brain was teeming—*Don Quixote* —probably the best thing she ever wrote. Her nature, always sanguine, bid her to count with confidence on seeing it produced ; she was disappointed and the disappointment struck deep. A new chance seemed to offer itself with Mr. Martin Harvey, and she dramatised specially for him Balzac's story of the *Peau de Chagrin: The Talisman* she called it. But this too failed, and the way seemed closed to her. There was a demand only for plays of modern

life. Some of her friends said, "Write these and then write what you care for"; but that was not her course. She would write only what she cared for, and since no one else would produce it she determined to arrange for its production herself.

The germ of her future work lay in a very modest enterprise. For several years at Primrose Hill, to raise a little money for St. Mary's Choir Fund, she organised each Christmas a play mostly for children. It was there that she developed her extraordinary skill in training children to speak on the stage without losing their natural simplicity and grace. These productions were at first simply children's plays; but the idea of a mystery or morality play grew from her miniature revival of her friend Laurence Housman's *Bethlehem*. Instinctively now she came into her inheritance.

Of all plays that were performed in her time, none gave her so much pleasure as the translations from Euripides written by Professor Murray and produced by Granville Barker. It was the stranger because classical literature had little interest for her; she had no scholar's passion for the past, either of Greece or Rome. But for her the Greek drama was no more dead than Greek sculpture; it was living art conceived on the true lines; plastic, it was pageant as well as play; it worked in large outline; it dealt with great issues lifted away from the daily detail of life. What she wanted was not a problem but a symbol; not a story, still less an intrigue, but a legend: and modern literature has few legends. One she had fastened on, for *Don Quixote* was to her a legend, no satire but a high mythological romance. Her madman, who saw all things transfigured,

had a wisdom of his own akin to the essence of her faith. Drama was for her the noblest vehicle for those ideas which she held sacred; and just as for the Greeks drama was connected with their worship, so her religion, she felt, possessed a range of story infinitely more charged with meaning than the tales of those who built the Mycenean tombs. "The Problem play shows the muddle of the world. The Morality, very quietly without any preaching or fuss, shows the way out of that muddle. Surely we are sick of all these despairing plays that hurt one's heart and tire one's head—these plays of jealousy and revenge, of hereditary vice, of morbid imagination—that are like a maze of misery, one crooked path only leading to another—while all the time life is a lovely thing, and the air is full of angels."

So she wrote in one of her addresses,

and in that spirit she turned from her Christmas plays for children to write a Nativity play for those of her own mind. *The Soul of the World*, with its three Acts of "Bethlehem," "Gethsemane," and "Calvary," was written in a burst of happy labour; but to write it was the least of the trouble, to secure its production meant the provision of money and a far-reaching organisation. So came into being the Morality Play Society whose first venture was ambitious indeed. Nothing was done on a petty scale; she could not help making her plays spectacular; and there were seventy or eighty performers needed. Over and above these an enormous group of volunteer workers was drawn together. From the people who came and stitched Jewish gabardines, or addressed envelopes, or pasted labels on the back of chairs, up to the finished artists who played the parts, all was

labour of love, co-ordinated and directed by one driving energy. I never saw any one with a greater capacity for work than she, and during each of her productions her day was one of fifteen hours. But where she was unapproachable was in the gift of getting labour out of other people. A girl would come in, as extra typist, or to help with some detail of the costumes; and after three or four days you would find this new votary running back from her other concerns and begging leave to sit up all night that some piece of work might be put through. Some were attracted by the artistic side of the project, some by the religious interest; but the real bond was the magnetism of one personality. "Work with her was so spirited and delightful," writes the chief member of her committee, Mrs. Ernest Waggett, herself well used to directing other workers, but here, like the rest

of us, a contented satellite. Without an explicit word, we were all made to feel that we were in a struggle together, and that the struggle was worth while.

Success repaid us at first. For a week of performances the Great Hall of the University of London was crowded with audiences who sat as they would sit at Oberammergau. Most were drawn by the religious side of the spectacle, but among them was Mr. George Bernard Shaw who from that time out was never chary of his encouragement. "You are one of the few people living who can write plays," says a letter of his. The professional critics were discouraging, but dramatic criticism is curiously conservative and puzzled by any departure from the usual. What mattered, however, and what wrecked the enterprise, was the law.

The law was against us. It signified

nothing that the Archbishop of Canterbury had read the play before consenting to become patron of the Society, and that half a dozen bishops had lent their names to the Committee: the University authorities were threatened with prosecution for a breach of the law. When her next play—*The Dreamer* (telling of Joseph and his brethren)—came up for production, only one hall in London was available—that of the National Sporting Club. A beautiful hall it is, and the incongruity of the surroundings amused the play's author so much that she inclined the more to risk production there: but unquestionably the effect was bad on her own public, and this second production, even more ambitious than the first, proved heavily expensive. This discouraged and harassed her, but did not deter; she replenished the Society's funds by her own exertions, giving readings at

various halls, and throwing in the large fee which she earned for directing Professor Geddes' *Masque of Learning*. But the law was too strong. The Sporting Club was threatened with a withdrawal of its licence, and that hall also was closed to her. The matter became notorious, and in effect the door was forced—for others to enter. A *Joseph* was permitted at His Majesty's. But Mr. Harvey could not obtain a licence for *The Soul of the World*. She recognised what had been gained, but none the less recognised that plays which treated sacred subjects in a religious spirit were still banned; and she worked on where a new avenue opened itself.

What she had at the back of her mind was to acquire sufficient power on the stage to give effect to her own ideas on her own lines. One of her friends (an extremely able stage car-

penter) told her that she would have a theatre of her own after fifteen years; and she was quite prepared to accept the programme. But the first thing was to become known as a successful producer of plays that were in no sense esoteric, and she bethought her of the other aspect of her Christmas productions and turned to a play for children. The first result was *The Cockyolly Bird*, made out of her *Noah's Ark Geography*, and here for once she had the critics applauding her. It mattered more to her that Miss Gertrude Kingston saw the production and realised the possibilities of its author. So began the partnership of these two ladies in the Holiday Theatre. Its first production was *Brer Rabbit*; and here she had valuable help. Music entered into her conception of the drama as an integral part of it, just as in a Greek play, and she had found in Mr. Martin

Shaw a composer whose work was as versatile as her own. In the two scriptural plays and in *The Cockyolly Bird* his music had been incidental; here, it was little less important than the words. But here, as in her other plays, Mabel Dearmer's authorship was only a small part of her effectiveness. She conducted the rehearsals, she planned in general outlines the scenery (though Mr. Paul Shelving, one of her discoveries, carried out her ideas), she drew her own poster, she directed the whole business; it was she who had to find and train actors, to cope with stage hands, with advertisement agents, with box offices, with wig-makers and property stores — and all with very inadequate means.

By this exercise of varied ability, she had, without money, with nothing but her own brains and energy, got into management in London within three

years—doing things her own way, and whether in her mystery plays or her farces for children, producing work that was beautiful to look at, instinct with colour and with life. Yet it is only those who know something about the stage who will realise the difficulties that she surmounted. Depending as she did on the services of actors who came in for the mere chance of playing a good part with a fee that would only cover their expenses, she was liable to lose her principals at any moment: in rehearsal the casting of her pieces would be changed perhaps completely throughout. The result was a confusion that seemed inextricable, and experienced actors looked forward with horror to each first performance as it drew near. I remember the most finished of them all, Miss Henrietta Watson (who had played alike in *The Cockyolly Bird* and *The Soul of the World*),

coming down to see the dress rehearsal of *Brer Rabbit*. "The thing is simply impossible," she said, "you have no right to produce to-morrow. But I suppose you will pull it off. You always do." It was pulled off, brilliantly, but by a combination of tact with driving power that I have never seen equalled.

The stage carpenter who gave her fifteen years to have a theatre of her own was wrong; she would have done it in half the time—that is, if she had continued.

Once, only a year ago, she said to me, "If any one had told me I should have got to this age without doing something great, I should not have believed them." I said, "You will make a great success if you choose; but will you care enough to go on in any one line?" "Ah," she said, "now you disquiet me." And she went on to say how when the

difficulties were surmounted and the road lay clear, her interest seemed to flag. What kept her working at the stage with such fury was less the desire to succeed than the will to achieve what she had attempted. If ultimately she had cared to go on, it would have been because she had found in the stage the best means of influencing thought and feeling; and signs were not wanting to me that she was drawn towards a more direct appeal. I said to her that she was capable of becoming a street preacher. She only laughed and said she would not promise.

The truth is that many desires had left her. She had been as a young girl full of ambition—eager not only for fame, but the rewards of fame, wealth and luxury, costly dresses, all the beautiful things in which she always found delight. As she grew, the passion for work in her strengthened; no

one got such enjoyment out of play, but it was more and more difficult to induce her to quit work. But when she stopped to think—and it was her nature to stop and think, and not to go on automatically in a groove—she knew that doing interested her less and less; her real end was being. Doing was only worth while as an aspect or phase of being.

If I put it otherwise, I should say that with her the contemplative mind was present in a very unusual degree. She loved solitude—she who was the heart of company. But the contemplative mind was strangely wedded to a devouring energy; and during the years from 1910 onwards her life was passed in bursts of violent exertion. She was not in these days engaged in writing so much as in learning this new art of dramatic production, which was also a business. Writing had to come

in when it could; the children's plays were knocked together in a few weeks —almost in a few days. Her last serious piece of writing was *The Dreamer*, which began to be written in Devonshire during the autumn of 1911. I used to find fault with her for living so external an existence and say that her business was to write plays and not spend all her energy in organisation. But her answer was always the same: "I have written plays, I can write no better; and they cannot be produced. My business is to make myself a position in which I can produce them."

And so in these years she was chiefly an organiser, but almost entirely of voluntary labour. She depended for her supply of workers on her own power to inspire, her own resourcefulness in inventing means to help on her projects. It was curious to see how her activities fitted together. One of her by-works

was the care of two houses in Kilburn which had been left her, let out in small tenements. I as her trustee wanted to sell them, but she insisted on keeping control, and with her usual competence made them a model of what such a property should be. But incidentally, as the costumes and other properties of her plays accumulated, she made part of this into a store; and she developed a kind of agency for buying up old costumes from the various pageants and so forth, and for leasing them again. She could supply a dozen Roman soldiers or Saxon thanes on demand; shields, battle-axes, haloes for angels she had by the score. All this amused her beyond words, and the supervision of this storing appealed to her love of method and order. There never was so notable a housewife. Everything that she wanted in the way of help she picked up as she went along—people to

look after these stores, people to adapt dresses, to design scenery, to execute properties. She had probably the oddest catalogue of acquaintance of any woman of her time, and very nearly all her acquaintance were personal friends.

But even while the work amused and delighted her, it became a continuing strain—not because of the labour but of the anxiety. There was always the fear of a financial failure which should crumble her whole enterprise. Nothing could be less like than hers to the traditional idea of an artist's temperament, incapable of understanding business propositions. She was as fit to understand an agreement as most trained lawyers, and I remember seeing her withstand an experienced solicitor as to the construction of a very complicated legal document. It had been explained to her twenty years before, she had grasped it in all its bearings, and

she demanded that counsel's opinion should be taken. Counsel endorsed her view, and the solicitor apologised and paid for the opinion. Money affairs did not come so easy to her : she had no head for figures ; but she insisted always on understanding just where she stood. The trouble always arose from the passion for her scenic ideas. Once she was engaged in a production, the things she needed to carry out her conception must be found : profit or loss came afterwards, and more than once there was a grave reckoning to face. Her anxiety was in proportion to her determination to succeed ; but she never let the anxiety hamper her work, nor did she let it be seen. Whatever her inward perplexities she kept an untroubled front to the world.

The arrangement with Miss Kingston and the success of her *Brer Rabbit* at the Little Theatre in the Easter holidays of 1914 lifted her out of most

of these worries; but the strain had been great and had told. She was feeling the need of a place to which she could, as she put it, "run away" at pleasure, and her scheme, long talked over, of a cottage in the country began to take definite shape in the late spring of that year. Her work was settled for a long way ahead: she had to revive *The Cockyolly Bird* at Christmas, and the needs of the Morality Play Society were to be met by a production of Murray's version of the *Rhesus*. For this two societies were to combine, and she was merely to direct the production; and the task of organising and of managing the business side was for the first time to be taken off her shoulders. She had breathing space, and strong as she was she felt the need of it.

Chance brought to her the fact that Mr. Alfred Powell, the painter of china, wanted to let his cottage in the Cots-

wolds, and she asked me to take a day off and go down with her to look at it. It must have been early in June that she climbed for the first time the steep footpath that leads up some three hundred feet from the Chale valley to the ridge on which is the church and village of Oakridge Lynch. We asked our way to Mr. Powell's house, and came to a door in a wall over which stood up the spiky leaves and burnished heads of tall artichokes; inside showed the roofs of, it seemed, half a dozen houses. We entered into a close of flowers, and as the door swung inwards it brushed against a great clump of thyme planted on purpose to send up welcoming odours. A few steps farther down the steep pathway pink roses were festooned across from one wall to a sheltering hedge of close-trimmed yew. Beyond that was the shaded porch, deeply sunk, and a mass of jasmine and

clematis ran riot over it. The house itself was thatched with grey straw—not the traditional Cotswold roofing. But Cotswold stone made the solid block of its walls, and those mullioned windows which are Cotswold's special charm. The place looked south and east over a network of steeply cut valleys, rich in timber. All there was green and grey; but nearer the house was vivid colour—a mass of blue creeping veronica under the low windows and white pinks near them. It was an old farm remade by an artist craftsman: the garden was his creation, and the whole thing stood there a finished work—lovelier by far than any picture. Its two acres of steeply sloping ground were in orchard, but in front of the house, girded by a dry-stone wall, was a rolling space of roughly scythed lawn. All one could say was that the place was too pretty to be real.

There was a deal of it: you could billet a hundred men in the various buildings, and one outlying barn that had been converted into a studio was made my freehold. I and other friends came down often. Dr. Dearmer went and came as his work allowed; but she herself was there almost continuously from the end of June. At first she had no servant, and set out to do everything herself with the assistance of some one from the village to wash the floor; but the cooking was to be her own province—a new branch of art. I never saw her so excited over anything as over the first dinner that she made ready with her own hands. It was an hour or two behind time, but when it did arrive it satisfied her exacting standard. We had dug our own new potatoes, we had picked and shelled our own green peas, and the leg of lamb was all it should be. After that,

there was a series of triumphs with ducks, chickens, and so forth. I never ate so many mushrooms, or so good. The rage for cooking lasted perhaps a fortnight, but then it dropped ; it took up too much time indoors, and the world outside was more attractive. There were the flower-plots to replan and extend—for she must set her own stamp on the place ; and there was the problem of the orchard grass which grew so long and rank, that something had to be found to eat it down. That was how the two hornless goats, Nanny and Billy, came into her life. Nanny went out for cross-country walks, on a lead at first, but very soon trotting untethered : the lead was only used to harness Nanny when her mistress wanted assistance up one of the steep hills. Next came the Skyes : Jacob had been long established in the family, but a wife was found for him who promptly

bolted, and had to be pursued across country, and run down finally among boys who had at first stoned the poor little beast, taking it for a badger. All sorts of other live-stock was in contemplation, and a range of hives; but for the moment energies were fully occupied in coping with the fruit. She had invested in an elaborate plant for preserving fruit and vegetables, and the experimenting with it was an enormous joy which soon became a duty, for half the orchard trees were plums, and we had run into such a crop as no man remembered. She was not going to let plums beat her; and so we gathered them in baskets, in buckets, in baths, we became a factory for plum jam and bottled plums; for days together none of us went outside the ring walls of our orchard close. But where on earth in that radiant weather could one have been better? And as for her,

she was like a bee too busy with the flower it is on to think of moving. She did some writing, and some work at her interminable correspondence; but for the most part she was ceaselessly busy as a cottager, and happier, I believe, than ever in all her life. She had taken root, she had utterly and irretrievably lost her heart to the place; the country people, plain-spoken, independent Gloucester folk, delighted her; she was never tired of praising their willingness to render service, their unwillingness to take pay, their scrupulous honesty; and she made friends among them on all sides. You would find a farmer's wife come in to converse with her seriously over the best method of keeping geese, or to compare notes about recipes for pickled walnuts. In the evening, after the day's work and pleasure, she loved to sit on a broad seat, just by the boundary wall of dry-

stone, where the view was wide over the valley, and where about her feet lemon thyme was planted, and there was rue within hand's reach, and rosemary—a place of sweet herbs. Even by night she would not be shut away from the outdoor sights and sounds and fragrance, and her bed was set either on the stone flags under the porch or abroad on the dew-drenched lawn.

Then across it all the war came. She herself has traced the manner in which the rendings of that European convulsion gradually extended out to her, so unthinkingly happy in Cotswold. What I give here is no finished work, only a rough draft pencilled in and full of erasures; but it tells the story.

"When the war broke out, I was at my cottage in the Cotswolds. It was a wonderful plum year, and every day each tree (not only in the orchard but on the lawn itself) tumbled its burden

of purple fruit upon the ground. This meant work—work or wasps.

"At this time I hardly touched a newspaper. Every minute was occupied. From the early dawn, when, from my outdoor bed, I watched the sun rise through the tangle of flowers over-topped by gigantic hollyhocks to full mid-day, I was busy. I spent my whole day in the garden or orchard with Ann and William, the goats, and the two Skyes, Jacob and Oakridge Dorothy, and then on from full mid-day to the blue night, when the evening primroses lit their lamps and the night-jar just ruffled the air with his purring—on still into deeper night, when now and again a glow-worm sent a sudden signal, or the owls called sadly to one another across the transparent darkness—then sleep, and the glory of another day.

"Then I got a card from Stephen Gwynn posted from the House of

Commons: 'There is war and we are in it.'

"I knew nothing of European complications and cared less. The murder of an Archduke meant no more to me than some tale of an imaginary kingdom in Zenda. When, some time since, I had hurried to London for a hot and crowded two days, I had attended a city dinner given to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and he had talked gravely of coming disasters — war! I had thought only of Irish difficulties, which I hoped would be soon settled, and dismissed the speech from my mind. But now — war. These three letters spelt out untold horrors, but horrors that were still remote and far away. I asked myself if any horrors could be greater than the horrors of peace—sweating—the daily lives of the women on the streets—the cry of babes born to misery as the sparks fly upward. War!

The anguish of war was still far from me. I turned again to occupy myself with the plums which tumbled now with distressing frequency.

"Later, I began to realise how London was taking the news. My friends would not come to help me with the plums, they would not come to rejoice in the flowers and the sunshine. They did not want to leave town; a strange passionate excitement seemed to possess everybody. I could not enter into it. War! I did not hate the enemy, I hated the spirit that made war possible, and this spirit I seemed to catch in our own newspapers. I gave up reading them except for a brief glance at the telegrams. The plums accumulated; I dealt with them alone somewhat sadly. Only the evenings gave me back the peace of God—which held in its quiet arms the whole weeping world, working out its passion under the stars.

"Then I got a letter from Christopher, who was spending his vacation in France. He was at the House, and meant to take his degree in languages, which was wise of him as he had passed a good deal of his time in Germany and Russia. He wrote: 'I am coming home to enlist.—Your loving son, CHRISTOPHER.'

"It was all real then. Stephen Gwynn's postcard had spoken truly. I began to think over my position. I knew that if I had been a man I could not have fought, for the way in which I read the words of Christ is that the Kingdom of Heaven is gained by a different method altogether. 'Not by might, nor by power, but by spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.' It is a method which has never been tried by diplomatists. If an individual attempts it in his own life, and plunges into deep seas, it sustains him and he walks on the waters in a great amazement. What

happens to an individual will some day happen to the nations, when they seek each other's good rather than their own gain—but not yet. Till then we must learn our mistakes through great suffering.

"Christopher was indignant at my apparent half-heartedness. 'I can't think what has come to you, Mother,' he cried, 'you are generally so eager for the right. I can't think what has come to England this summer. In France every woman is working at bandages in the hospitals; in France every man has answered the call. You are not awake in England.' (This was in August.) 'When I went to Madame and said, "Madame, je pars aujourd'hui," she never asked me why I was leaving or where I was going; she knew it could only be for one thing. "Bien, Monsieur," she said, "tuez bien des Allemands." That was all: she was burning with

patriotism and hatred and with the thought of Alsace still kept a prisoner. But you'—and the boy broke off, in angry disappointment.

"'I can't help it, my dear,' I replied; 'I can't hate my enemy. I have spent my whole life trying to learn a different lesson. If you feel you must go, you must go; it will be right for you to go. You offer your life—that is always good—you can't do more.'

"He went unsatisfied, and I envied the proud mother who sends her sons, proud of them, proud of the war that calls them out, proud of the God of battles. But that God is not my God, and my heart was heavy.

"My eldest son went next. Then Stephen Gwynn came one day to the cottage. 'I am going to enlist,' he said. 'You are too old,' I said desperately, for I felt friends also slipping away from me; 'no one will have you at

fifty.' 'I shall try,' he said. 'I am sorry for you,' he added kindly, thinking of the boys, and I hope of himself too, for he is a dear friend; 'you have all your eggs in one basket and you don't like the market.'

"There was no doubt at all that he thought war was right. 'I don't pretend that any war is Christian,' he said. 'But this is a just war. If you are a Christian, I don't see how you can fight at all. To be a Christian to-day seems to me to court annihilation.'

"'Yes,' I said, 'just that—to be ready to throw away one's life for the Kingdom of Heaven, but for nothing less. It has always meant that. That is why its Founder was crucified.'

"After a while I went back to town. I had arranged to produce the *Cockyolly Bird* at the Little Theatre at Christmas. No one had much heart for theatre-going, but it gave work to some hun-

dred and twenty people, and that alone seemed worth while. Also it was a children's play, and what have children to do with war?

"The interval I filled up with work for the Belgian Refugee Committee. Stephen Gwynn helped me, and I was glad to be able to work with him, for I felt that soon the war would take him, and I should see him no more. My work was to see people at hotels and allocate them to the different houses which had offered hospitality. I need not recount the tales of suffering—one has met them in the newspapers—it was only one of the by-products of war. One young woman I interviewed seemed strangely dazed. It was explained to me, 'She has lost her baby.' 'Did it die?' I asked. 'No, she was frightened. She came by the last boat from Ostend; there was a great crush and she dropped the child in the sea.'

"There was nothing to say. She had herself escaped death and outrage—she was young and pretty. She had only dropped her baby into the sea.

"One man, journeying in Spain, returned home hurriedly to bring away his little motherless daughter and her governess. He reached his home to find it burnt to the ground and the child and her governess missing. He searched for her in Holland, in England, —back again to Holland—back again to Folkestone—in vain. His case was typical of hundreds. But I had a letter from him later to say that he had found the child and had taken her away to live happily in Spain. He was a lucky man—and an exception.

"The *Cockyolly Bird* did well; the Little Theatre was full every afternoon, and for a time the war sank into the background. Geoffrey was promoted and sent with his regiment to Malta.

Christopher got a commission in the Royal Naval Air Service. One day I picked up a paper and read a letter signed 'Maud Royden' in which the case against war was put forcibly and well. I wrote to her and we became friends. 'Is it right to say what one believes about this war while one's nearest and one's best are fighting?' The question did not seem to need an answer. She published a pamphlet called *The Great Adventure*, and I wondered what work would next fall to my hand. I determined just to wait to the next thing, whatever it should be, that seemed the best. There was no sense, I thought, in my lecturing or writing on the subject; in any case, too many words were being thrown about, too much passion wasted in futile argument. I became chairman of the Publicity Department of the Women's Emergency Corps, and arranged various

afternoon meetings at the Little and other Theatres.

"I went down to the cottage about this time. It was very cold, but no words can describe the beauty of the early morning glittering with sunshine and white with hoar frost. I found a hepatica in two colours, new to me and most exquisite. Another, which we had planted ourselves in the rock garden, was showing its blue flowers; polyanthuses of many colours were pushing out their heads; violets, crocuses, aconites, scilla siberica, chionodoxa, and a Judas tree made the garden thrill with excitement—hints of the coming glory of summer. A yellow jasmine, pale but most frailly exquisite, shot out its lights; catkins purred on the hazel trees.

"Dollie was now the happy mother of five puppies—two boys and three girls; we christened them Nicholas,

Peter, Ann, Phœbe, and Susan. They lived in the little apple house and rollicked on the lawn. I knew the day would come when they must be sold at prices befitting their distinguished pedigree, but delayed thinking of anything so painful.

"One day I went home and was caught once more in the turmoil of war activities. I was asked by the *Daily Telegraph* to give a matinée of a children's play on behalf of the Belgian Fund—the children of England for the children of Belgium. My spirits fell with a thud. I thought of the cottage and felt that I could not bear it. Any one who knows what the work of producing a play entails will realise what was before me. At first it seemed impossible to arrange so much for only one matinée and in so short a time. Then it was pointed out that the play might bring a considerable sum to the fund,

and I felt that this was the next work in store for me.

"Now endless work and apparently insurmountable difficulties began. Mr. F. Dunn, who had played Uncle Remus, was a lieutenant in the Royal Naval Reserve; Mr. Stanley Roberts (Mr. Fox) was at the Dardanelles; Mr. Arthur Cleave (King Deer) had just returned from France wounded. My stage manager, Mr. Masters, had taken a commission and was out of reach. There was one hope. Dear little Fabia Drake, the inimitable Brer Rabbit of last year, was still available.

"By degrees other performers were found and a new stage manager, and all went well. I arranged for new firefly movements and frog ballets and sent out a call for the first rehearsal.

"On the morning of that day a letter appeared in the *Times* from Bishop Bury asking for a clergyman to go out

to Serbia to minister to the various British units, comprising some three hundred doctors and nurses who were at work there. My husband told me that he thought of offering to go as the call was urgent. I was very busy with my rehearsal and as far as I could kept the subject from my thoughts. I tried to think that most of the things one worries over never happen at all, and the exigencies of a long rehearsal of the whole five scenes of the play held me unreservedly. I had to break off early on the next afternoon, partly because three of my actors were wanted for an extra rehearsal of *Rosy Rapture* in which they were all playing, and partly because I was anxious to go to the farewell service of the Stobart Serbian Unit arranged by my husband under the auspices of the Church League for Women's Suffrage at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields.

"I went out of friendship for Dorothy Picton,[1] of whom I had seen very little during the last few months and had done no more than present her with an automatic pistol of which I gathered she would stand in need. (Since then I have had reason to change my opinion.)

"I jumped into a taxi and arrived at the church in time to see my husband in a cassock talking with one or two people in the nave. He whispered one or two hurried words in my ear about Serbia, the significance of which I did not grasp, and disappeared. Then I looked about me. The unit consisted of some forty women of varying ages dressed in a uniform of grey cloth and wearing a round black hat. Mrs. St. Clair Stobart, whom I had known fairly well and had met intermittently for

[1] Miss Picton, who at first appeared as a volunteer wardrobe mistress during one of the big productions, had become not only the most devoted of helpers but an intimate friend.

quite a number of years, wore the same uniform with some modifications. They all looked very businesslike and keen on the undertaking. I had only heard of Serbia as a country penetrated by disease that brought death to those who went to minister to it, and I wondered as I looked at them how many would return at the end of the expedition. One or two had pretty young faces, and I felt sorry for them and wondered how their parents could possibly let them go. 'If I had a daughter,' I thought. 'If'—. Then I became aware of my husband's address. 'This is only *au revoir*,' he was saying, 'for I myself am to accompany you to Serbia. I have this morning been appointed Chaplain to the British units now working in that country.'

"His words took some time to reach my consciousness; and now I know how an ordinary woman behaves in such

circumstances. I just sat there with my nose and eyes getting rather swollen and very red and dropped tears on to my hymn-book. That morning, coming to my rehearsal in King Street, Covent Garden, I had seen a girl punch her sister in the back with the remark, 'Soppy thing, blow yer nose, can't yer? 'Old up yer 'ead, do.' I felt it applied to me.

"My husband now was to follow my sons to danger and possible death. I remembered Stephen Gwynn's post-card that sunny-scented morning at Oakridge. 'There is war, and we are in it.' They were all in it—and were content to take up the work that came to their hand—all but me, who was to be left with the arrangement of a single matinée at the Queen's Theatre, and afterwards the cottage with its flowers and sunshine —empty.

"During the singing of the last hymn

an idea struck me. Here was the work for which I had waited. I had no doubt and no hesitation. Every tie that could keep me in England had been cut, every difficulty removed from my path. The unit filed out of church, all but Mrs. Stobart, who still stood in the aisle. I went up to her.

"'Can you take me to Serbia?'

"'What can you do? What are you trained for?'

"'Nothing. But I am an ordinary sensible woman and can learn quickly.'

"She looked at my garments. I liked pretty clothes and wore a green silk dress and a fur coat. Her eyes were caught by my long earrings. Then she touched my coat.

"'You must leave this at home.'

"'Of course,' I said rather impatiently; 'I told you I was an ordinary sensible woman.'

"'You must accept discipline.'

"'Naturally.'

"'Very well. You can come as a hospital orderly. Call at the office to-morrow morning for a list of clothes wanted and be ready to start in three days. In the meantime go with the others to the meeting. Follow the doctors. There is a motor at the door.'

"I did not ask any more questions, but the whereabouts of the meeting or the owner of the motor were equally unknown to me. I followed two women with dark collars on their uniform to an exceedingly comfortable car. An old lady looked out at me strangely. I had to account for myself, for my nose was still red and I felt that there was a suspicion of dampness about me. 'I am Mrs. Dearmer,' I said hurriedly; 'I have only just heard that my husband is going to Serbia, and it was rather a surprise.' 'Indeed it must have been,' said one of the doctors kindly, 'you will

be very lonely.' 'Oh no,' I returned quickly, 'I am going too. I have settled it in the last two minutes.'

"They must have thought me the very strangest person, but at this point I felt explanation impossible and relapsed into silence.

"The car stopped at 16 Carlton House Terrace, and we all went up to tea. There I found some people I knew, and learnt that the house was Lady Cowdray's.

"After tea there was a meeting and I sat with the unit. Then I noticed that the doctors wore dark red or blue collars, the nurses purple, and the orderlies, of whom I was henceforward one, plain grey. Sir Thomas Lipton spoke of Serbia. He said that there were, when he left, some three hundred deaths a day at the hospital at Skoplje. One place that he described had no doctors and no nurses; the dead and

dying were tended only by two suffragettes. He did not seem to realise the enormous compliment he was paying to the pioneers of that women's movement.

"He left us convinced of misery and need beyond words, and with a thrilling sense of the joy of service.

"When it was over I joined my husband. 'Well,' he said, 'I had not time to tell you before.'

"'No,' said I, 'nor I you.'

"'Tell me what?'

"'Only that I'm going to Serbia too. I'm a hospital orderly.'

"Nothing surprises my husband. He only said, 'What fun!' and hailed a taxi.

"'No,' said I firmly, 'you are going to endure great hardships in Serbia. You had better begin now and go home in the Tube.'"

That is how she closed the first

chapter of "a very personal book," which, as her letters will tell, she began in Serbia. She wrote only this chapter and it she rounded off, characteristically, with a laugh. But there has come to me one other passage—a pencilled scrap of paper, barely legible, which after her death was found in the mud-stained bag that she kept in her little tent. It gives, I think, the keynote to all her thought and all her action in the last phase of her life. "*To the Greeks foolishness, to the Jews a stumbling-block.* Christianity can never teach common sense. It teaches the kingdom of heaven. It may permeate common sense with the tincture of its ideals, but the more common-sensible it becomes, the less is it Christianity. It is the folly only possible to the supremely wise."

She who wrote thus had in the practical affairs of life more shrewdness,

more common sense, than any one with whom I have ever taken counsel. That permeation of common sense by Christianity, and of Christianity by common sense, which she describes was well illustrated in the fact that her attitude to the war alienated no friend. Yet there was another reason for this. She who condemned war loved courage and loved self-devotion. The war was there, and with it the call to action and to sacrifice. If her sons had chosen to go out into the street as missionaries and denounce the war as an outrage against Christianity, as a crime that no nation should commit, even though it were to be trampled into powder, she would for that have gladly seen them beaten, imprisoned or put to death, and gladly have taken her place at their side. This was the courage that she most valued—the courage to die but not to kill; and if the world had enough of this courage,

then, she thought, there would be no wars.

But she did not for all that withhold either her sympathy or her approbation from those who were prepared to follow their own ideals where they might lead. The boy who came to her with his first ardours of patriotism and went away unsatisfied yet found in those following months no better comfort than she could give. I remember how she told me that never in all their lives had her sons shown such a desire to be at home, nor come so close to her in talk.

Yet, for all that, she was isolated and a little lonely. Perhaps her mind worked the more strongly and was all the truer to its own instincts. In her final decision she consulted no one, though she had the habit of consultation. Upon all ordinary matters, not only of work but of conduct, she loved asking advice and was always ready to take it;

that was part of her inestimable quality of companionship. But on the supreme issues she decided unalterably and alone. In the last resort she stood for freedom, above all for woman's freedom. It was her deepest conviction that a woman no less than a man must be free to follow her own work and her own ideal wherever these might lead.

The interview with Mrs. Stobart took place on Friday, 26th March; and her telegram brought me over on the Monday morning believing that the departure was for that night. But happily postponements were necessary, and the party did not start till Easter Sunday morning. The week was one of hurried activity; her various theatrical interests required to be dealt with. The *Brer Rabbit* matinée was handed over to Miss Edith Craig, but, funds failing, it never came off. There were also the problems of equipment, and these

were in their way an amusement. Clothes always had an interest for her, and she was never too busy to adapt each new fashion into something characteristic of herself. It was part of the passion for colour and form which inclined her to choose her woman friends for their beauty and for the beauty and originality of their dress. Now, quite other things than beauty were in question. She who would have carried with great dignity the austere folds of a nursing sister's habit or of a peasant's dress had to put on a plain serviceable workaday uniform, which disguised her. Yet it was part of the change that she welcomed. Her desire now was to put off her individual life, to enter the ranks, to strip herself of all external freedom, to be simply under orders on active service.

In a sense, for she was always fore-thinking, she counted the hardships.

But in a sense, too, the spirit of adventure that was strong in her leapt out to grasp at the new experience. In 1910, after a grave illness, which struck her down at Nuremberg, returning from Oberammergau, she went on a visit to the West Indies, and there became intoxicated with the strangeness of it all: she broke away from ordinary civilisation and managed to strike up into the wild, in Tobago, and still more on the continent in British Guiana and Venezuela. The bent for real travel, not the mere journeying from Cook's hotel to Murray's, was potent in her, and no discomforts could deter her enterprise. What she welcomed in her Serbian mission was the opportunity to serve; but also the desire to see and to know sprang into being. An Irish doctor to whom she went for vaccination said to her, "So you are going off for a spree."

In answer to mild expostulation, "Isn't a complete change of work and of surroundings always a spree?" he said. "Oh, doctor," she chimed in, "I do so agree with you."

That was the note that I felt dominant in her—the passion to get to work and to adventurous work. Yet she was ill, and at the last her body threatened to baulk her purpose. She had been under treatment for a swollen knee-joint, the result of over-work at her Christmas production, from which she had never fully recovered; and on the night before her departure she found it suddenly and formidably inflamed. A council of war was summoned. There was no doubt that a doctor would forbid her to go, in her own interest; but all that troubled her was the fear lest she should become a hindrance to others. I have never seen her so anxious and so uncertain as then,

between her eagerness to go and her dread of proving a failure. Ultimately it was settled that she should attempt the journey as far as Paris, and that anxiety was still on her when she left.

Her letters tell of this, and of the rest, till all but the last words of the story. I shall take it up where she leaves off.

FROM A FIELD HOSPITAL

Grand Hôtel du Louvre,
Paris, *April 5th.*

Well, here we are, with this part of the journey done—in an exceedingly comfortable smart hotel opposite the Palais Royal and the Rue de Rivoli. The people here think we are a Cook's Tour and smile sidelong at us because of our extraordinary garments. I *do* wish we had brassards, I should feel so much more heroic with a Red Cross on my arm. Aren't people silly over these things? they don't realise the value of symbols. If we had been walking about London with Red Cross badges and the Serbian colours, there would

have been more people and more money.

The sets here are curious. Everything is reversed. The orderlies are ladies—the poor useless "ladies" who have been trained to nothing—we have to take our orders from the nurses. I sat by one pert young woman (in the 'Orangery' I should have written "a pert giglet") at dinner—not in our Unit, thank goodness—who said, "Are you a nurse." "No," said I, "an orderly." "Well," she said, "I *am* sorry for you."

We realised there was a war when we got to Boulogne—chiefly because all the Tommies came and chatted to us and kissed their hands to us. The French soldiers were much more staid. A lot of Gurkhas were loading up mail-bags and "little comforts for the troops" and looked very fine—not a man that was not splendid and distinguished-looking. In Paris there were crowds of soldiers

looking like a "revue" in their pale blue and red—many uniforms and Zouaves, to add to the effect. Paris was darker than London last night, and so far I have not been out. I have just revelled in my comfy bedroom and *petit déjeuner* in bed and the most luxurious of hot baths—not quite the last, but the last but one, I fancy. The knee is still swollen but not painful, I am still lying low about it. It is gradually going down. Tell me *everything*. I shall write whenever I can. I wonder if Bulgaria is going to do anything, or if this raid will affect us.

Hôtel du Louvre et de la Paix,
Marseilles, *Tuesday, April 6th.*

We left Paris at 8 o'clock in the evening. The train very crowded. I felt rather ill at first with vaccination and general stuffiness, but picked up when the sun rose over rocks and blossom and olives and blue sky of the South of France. It is very nice being with Dorothy who is ever so kind and good.

Lots of soldiers about, lots of uniform, but the shadow of war not so heavy here as in Paris. I am just going down to dinner. We sit in long lines, looking very black in our dark uniforms. The nurses of the British Farmers unit (the one managed by Dr. Hirst) are not in uniform at all—we consider them very inferior.

Wednesday.

I am still in bed waiting for the *femme de chambre* to give me a bath, the last until—when? Perhaps it will be smooth and nice though, and I shall have lots of baths. The knee isn't right yet. I have only one prayer now, that I shall have strength to stick this job. . . .

Wednesday, April 7th.

I have written that date in full because the day after to-morrow was to have been my play. How queer it seems.—A doctor has come here on his way back from Serbia with the remnants of an American unit. He lectured to us this afternoon. Things are pretty ghastly. *He* only remained—all his doctors and nurses died—but we come out with every precaution, probably at the end of the typhus. We shall not be a

Field hospital after all, but a fever unit —the people are dying in thousands from starvation as much as anything. The hospital rough work will be done by Austrian prisoners who arrive so starved and weak, they can only crawl. It takes about a fortnight's feeding to get them fit and then they are very good. He said we must take *everything* and can get stores at Malta—the place is in a state of famine. He was a most splendid man; one felt one loved him for what he had done, and we were so much at one—all with one's life in one's hand, going to the same place—we were tremendously drawn together. You like me to write to you quite frankly, don't you?—you do not want me to minimise dangers, do you? It is better to face it all and just *know*, isn't it?—I know it was right for me to go (if only my knee holds out and my health doesn't make me useless) and I am ever so happy.

A Russian said to one of our people, "You will have many discomforts, you will have no comfort—your comfort will be in your own heart."

To-day was lovely and sunny. We went in a tram round the wonderful coast and had chocolate in a queer sort of café stretching out over the sea. When I say "we," it always means about six or seven of us.

I will write to you on the boat. We stop at Malta and go to Athens and the Piræus.—I think these are stupid letters but they tell the things you would want to know.

Thursday morning.

Yes, indeed, this *is* a depressed silly letter. To-day I am quite well and feel like a *bird*! Put my gloominess down to vaccination. Just off—Good-bye—and God bless you.

The sea looks like blue glass.

Messageries Maritimes Paquebot,
Saturday.

We are six miles from Malta and wondering if we may land. I am so longing to see Geoffrey. . . . We are a strange crew — Sisters of Mercy — French doctors in every kind of strange uniform, from blue and red plush to khaki — one recognises them by the twisted serpent on the collar. They are puzzled by us because our nurses laugh and play and smoke cigarettes and carry on generally. One said, "No woman can nurse unless she is a nun; you don't know what you are going to; you will be back by the next boat." The whole unit is in consequence furiously indignant.

I had my second typhoid inoculation yesterday. I cannot help being rather glad that cholera virus has *not* arrived, for the ordinary vaccination has simply "caught on"—taken, isn't the word. I

have had a horrible arm. Still, I am really feeling better—this heavenly blue sea and soft air have brought my spirits back, and we are all friends on the ship, and everybody is very gay and happy. There are one or two French families, some motor ambulances on board, two aeroplanes, and quantities of wire netting to catch torpedoes in. Nothing interesting has happened. We passed between Sardinia and Corsica — bare blue rocks—and I thought I saw snow.

Oh, do you remember the *meat safe* in netting that you packed for me? It wasn't a meat safe, it was to wear on my head. I *must* get snapshotted. [A pencil sketch at the side.] This is the modern Red Cross Nurse whose fairy fingers are going to tend the wounded. That doctor at Marseilles sent us out for india-rubber gloves, so there won't be a square inch of us exposed — we shall all R-eek with paraffin.

PAQUEBOT, PIRÆUS,
Tuesday, April 13th.

I have not been able to write you a line since Saturday, but I have been in my berth and incapable of anything. I have had a terrible arm from vaccination, which is, however, I am told, usual with some people, and nothing to be surprised at. It has been very painful and I could not move it. Well, Geoffrey came out in a boat at Malta looking very fit and splendid, and took us ashore. Malta was wonderful, much more wonderful than anybody had ever said — extraordinary buildings — they looked Turkish — of a golden yellow colour—tropical plants—huge amazing rocks. Goats everywhere—*darling* goats —women in queer black veils stiffened in front into a sort of hat. I said to Geoffrey how lovely it all was, and he only said, "Oh, they are only Malts—

this is the *Club.*" Numberless Tommies everywhere, numberless sailors, an Army and Navy stores. I fitted Percy out with a huge stock of provisions in view of starvation in Serbia; and then we dined with Geoffrey, who did us gorgeously and insisted on champagne. My arm was torture, but I got through with it all and enjoyed it—only I did *not* go to the Opera afterwards as he wanted me to. While we were there, the "Inflexible" was towed in.

The harbour was a wonderful sight with all the huge ships showing out of the blue. Then, rocking to and fro, and much thinking of you. The doctor in charge brought a whole string of difficulties to my cabin. *All* the nurses picked up escorts of stray Tommies and went round Malta in large hilarious parties. I thought the best thing to do was for Percy to tell them that *this must not be* at other places; so he called

a meeting and warned them of the possible dangers in Greece and Serbia. They retorted by saying that parties ought to be organised to show the place, and then they would not have to pick up Tommies. Accordingly Percy and Cook's man have taken an enormous party to the Acropolis this morning. I was not up to it, so I just sat on the boat and began this letter waiting for Lady Bax Ironside to get up and go with me somewhere.

Palace Hotel, Athènes.

It is exciting to see Greece. This harbour, if it were not for the big ships, might look just as it did long ago—browny gold—no, ochre-tinted houses—all just as they must have been—blue sky and misty hills. Then Lady Bax, who tells me that she has arranged

with Percy to send a Cook's man for us to take us to Athens, which is some twenty minutes away. No Cook's man appears, so after appalling bargaining we get a boat and are ferried across. Now I know I am a stranger in a strange land—*never* have I felt so strange and lost. We got into a tram and then into a train and travelled through dull country with crowds of ugly, evil-looking people who all looked as though they would murder you if they could. We saw the Acropolis in the distance, strangely small, and at last arrived at Athens. We bought postcards and the man tried to cheat us, and we went to an immense chemist's shop where the smartest of smart young ladies also—gave wrong change! Well! Lady Bax has gone to the Legation, and I am writing here. I am to see things to stir me to wonder and pity after lunch. Oh, I wish you were here!

I can't think of these people as the beautiful Greeks. If I do a Greek play, *never* will I make the men dark and black-haired but white and ruddy and like the gods.

Off Lemnos,
Wednesday, April 14th.

We are very sad, for we have been here all day and are not allowed to land as it is a naval base. Still the sunshine and the blue sky are heavenly, and there is a great deal going on from time to time. Two torpedo boats have come to talk to us, and the French one has carried off tons of letter-bags and a man who, previously in mufti, has now emerged as a gorgeous English staff-officer, also another French officer, and a plain little individual in a grey frock-coat and bowler hat and yellow gloves. Two French submarines keep dodging round also. Now they are gone and we are left looking at the bare hills of the island—no trees and no people—and the lines of battleships round the corner. They say that we are only fifteen miles from the Dardanelles.

Here is a bit of grass of Parnassus, from the Acropolis. It was most wonderful and beautiful. I always feel that ruins are dead things, and never want very much to see them. But these ruins against the blue sky—the purple distance — themselves glowing and trembling with colour, rosy colour, merging now and again into gold or faint purple—were haunted with beauty that made one weep with joy. How wonderful it must have been, but how small! You could throw a stone from the Parthenon to the Temple of Esculapius or the Theatre of Dionysus round the corner. How small, how aristocratic it must all have been! I couldn't understand the guide and wondered where the Wingless Victory was. There was her Temple, but it was empty. I remember the Victory with Wings in Paris. Where did she come from? [*In the margin*—She came from

Samothrace. I have just remembered.] I saw the place where the Elgin Marbles were taken from. It was like seeing things that one had dreamt about, and all floating in blue atmosphere (haze is the prettier word).

There are no trees on these Greek islands, there are no trees round Athens, except cypress, olive, and orange—only the trees that men have planted. No wonder they were glad when Athene brought them the olive. We walked down to our little boat at the Piraeus —such a strange wild crowd, selling things, eating, drinking, and love-making, lying in the streets—huge barrels of anchovies and olives, beads, oranges, every kind of dress—all the things one had seen clean and dead in pictures, here alive and dirty and a thousand times as beautiful. It was all beautiful. I wrote to you in the morning when I had just landed (you will have got that

letter before this one) and it was cold and rather wet, and the people looked so wicked—then the sun came out and everything was changed.

I am much better. I am emerging from all my inoculations into health, and it's such a happy feeling. My arm is still stiff and swollen, but I myself am beginning to feel like a bird and ready for anything. I am also beginning to feel that I should like work of some kind, and when I started I only wanted rest.

Where will this letter find you, I wonder? We see no papers and we only hear of rumours of war here. Geoffrey was going to the Dardanelles this week. He may have started now, but I shall chance a letter to him. Our first stop is Dedeagatch, where Lady Bax Ironside leaves us. I shall try and post this there. I wonder where I shall get my next letter from you.

April 15th.

Heaven knows when and where this letter will get posted. We have been stopped and our ship requisitioned by the Government. So we are still lying in this blue and peaceful bay wondering what will happen to us.

Later.

This is the tale that was brought to me, but like most gossip on a ship it turns out to be wrong, and we have again started on our journey. A young lieutenant on a torpedo boat was sent out to stop us last night and sat for a long time and talked. We could only move very slowly with a pilot when we reached Lemnos, and very slowly out, as the place is thickly mined. Also last night we were in as thick a blackness as the London streets

—no light anywhere—so it seemed as if something *was* expected to happen.

We are continually shedding "spies" —unfortunate people trying to get to Constantinople. Three—an old Dutchman and his wife and a lady—were shipped off to-day to be interned on an island. Their home was in Constantinople and their business. But, as the Frenchmen sitting at our table said, "Who would want to go home in time of war, and there is *no* business." So that seemed to settle it. I felt sorry for them, poor creatures. The man had just been operated on and was delicate, and the women wept. It did seem hard.

Splendid Palace Hotel, Salonique,
17*th April.*

We have just arrived at Salonica, and have met the other half of our unit. On Monday Mrs. Stobart and some of us go on to Kragujevatz to get up the tents and establish the hospital, and the others follow as soon as all is in readiness. Percy is going on on Monday. I do what I am told, and I don't yet know what that will be.

We were kept for a long time at Dedeagatch, and some of us got a sailing boat and went ashore. I am getting tremendously well with sea air and sunshine, and my dreadful arm is not quite so badly swollen. I can now get on a glove. Anyhow I feel safe against smallpox. This is a curious place—it seems to be crowded with the sickness and deformity of the world. Everybody

is marked with smallpox—some people without noses or ears. There are great crowds everywhere—we are not very much stared at, for the place is full of Red Cross—doctors and nurses, French, English, and American. We heard that there was a strong anti-Allies feeling, but we have not met it. The place wants cleansing—washing out with disinfectant or burning down—burning down would be best. We had a long talk to some French doctors last night who were just back from the trenches—we meet no one but doctors now—and they really are a very fine set of men.

It was exciting to go to Dedeagatch and see Bulgaria—there were a good many Turks about and some children in veils and trousers—girls, I suppose Turkish. There was a minaret and a Greek church side by side—strange, dirty, picturesque people, much like all the Eastern places I imagine. I have

not seen a newspaper since this day last week. I can't realise that there is a war—oh yes, I can, I had forgotten Lemnos and the Dardanelles. We passed the mouth of the Dardanelles and saw the silhouettes of a couple of battleships—that was all. Geoffrey will go to Lemnos when his turn comes to go out. At Dedeagatch we found a man who spoke English—a peasant.—He said, "Bulgaria likes the English but she will fight for the Turk." Now I wonder if that sentence is of consequence to anybody.—It was only a peasant's opinion!

This is not an interesting letter. I can only think in jerks—there is such a babel of tongues all round me. There is so much to tell and yet I can't write guide-book talk to you. I want to know *your* news. Perhaps even now there is a letter waiting for me. It grows on me, this life of no responsi-

bility—just going where and doing what one is told. I am more and more glad that I came.

Later.

We went up to the old Turkish town this afternoon. It is inhabited neither by Turk nor Greek but by gypsies, and is the most extraordinary and wonderful place. The Turkish women dress in black and have black veils over their faces—the Greeks have lovely dresses—the whole place was full of colour.—You know what it was like. We went into the prison and the prisoners were most delighted to see us. Poor things—all herded into this strange place for any period between three and fifteen years—but fairly free and able to talk and smoke—I wish I had brought heaps of cigarettes, they are useful to give people. I don't know what they would cost here. Tea is 16/6 a pound. When we left

the prison the soldiers came down and begged Mrs. Stobart to take a photograph of a group of them. Of course she did—and there was a great deal of joking and laughing. The people are pleasant smiling and civil. We have had fresh news from different units—the typhus is not so bad—the precautions are at last bearing fruit. Good-night. I am going up to doctor my bed and myself with various medicaments.

Sunday.

Just as I was going to bed I met a nice man in khaki who told me there were no insects in this hotel — *such* a relief. I had a heavenly night and was up in time for Percy's English Celebration at the other hotel. After breakfast we went to three mosques turned into Greek churches—and saw a strange and

wonderful service. I am getting so well and sunburnt, my cheeks are as red as they were in Glencar.—My horrible vaccination is at last getting well—or better. You know Kragujevatz is in the hills and healthy—there are sulphur springs too. If we don't catch anything we shall be tremendously well —and really the enormous precautions that are being taken lessen the risk considerably. Each patient is bathed in kerosene and completely shaved by the Austrians—there is not a hair on his body by the time he reaches the hands of the nurses. Mrs. Stobart is frightfully keen on coming out of this without losing one of us—she works night and day at her precautions. If the unit comes back whole it will be the first to do so.—It would be *mean* to go and die and spoil its chance of winning such a reputation—wouldn't it?

We are so keen on news from home.

We hear Zeppelins have been in England — but where? The newspapers here give such queer names. Is Zeybridge — Weybridge? Good-bye, my dear friend, I am just going to rush off to dinner. If you could see me now, you would recommend Salonique as a health resort to anybody!

SALONIQUE, 19*th April.*

We shall be here until Thursday waiting for stores. Mrs. Stobart and twelve of the party go on to-morrow to get the tents up at Kragujevatz, so that all will be ready for the remaining forty-two when we arrive. We have had two lectures to-day from the doctors—one on typhus and the other on camp sanitation. The arrangements seem to be extraordinarily complete. We may not have a cup of tea or a biscuit in our tents without first spreading a cloth so that not one single crumb shall fall to the ground to attract a fly. We may not even clean our teeth and throw the water on the grass—everything has to go to a particular place. We are to have our temperatures taken every morning — then Swedish Drill!! — They declare that with proper precau-

tions not one single case of typhus or cholera need appear among the Staff. To-day has been very pleasant, a perfect holiday. We arranged a picnic in the afternoon, and found a trench beyond the barbed wire on the outskirts of the town. There we spread out our Tommies' cookers and made tea and had delicious cakes which we bought in the town. Of course we are staying at absolutely the best hotels, and are being very well looked after, so that we shall be bursting with health by the time we arrive.

April 20th.

We have had rather a trying day—up at 6 o'clock to see the other bit of the unit off. Of course the disinfected carriages reserved for them could not be found, and we spent a wild hour surrounded by shrieking populace lifting

in luggage ourselves and getting them off. Then we found two trucks containing the transport (two motor-cars) and most of the tents had been left behind. We were advised not to approach any official until the Monastir train had gone out, as we should not get attention. It was expected to go at any moment, so we kicked our heels at the station for two solid hours waiting for that blessed train (filled with passengers who also waited two hours) to get out. Then another hour interviewing officials. We find the station-master is an Austrian and forgets things on purpose. The end of it is that they swore the trucks should go on this afternoon and that three disinfected wagons should be ready for us on Thursday. Then to the Serbian Consul (for when we cross the frontier we travel carriage-free) to see about our carriages there. We shall be two

days and two nights in the train—foodless and waterless.—It is no joke providing food for 42 people—Dorothy Picton and another cook have it in hand. We have to take our own water. Percy has just bought an enormous straw-covered bottle.

We have just met Commander —— who was with us until Lemnos and has come with a most extraordinary story. A transport near him was supposed to have been torpedoed. He was on a little salvage boat and rushed up to find men bobbing about him all over the place—the sea full of 'em—and rescued any amount. You will probably have got the right version—we get nothing correctly here. Three men only out of the lot in his boat died. It is all very confusing when excited people arrive and tell you stories.

Well, I don't know when you will hear from me again. Letters from

Serbia seem to be difficult—but I suppose they will arrive somehow. I shall send you one more word to-morrow before we start. This maddening knee of mine has turned into sinavitis (is that how you spell it?) and I shall have to rest it for part of the day anyhow—isn't it awful?

SALONIQUE, *April 21st.*

The last letter from Salonique.—It's rather dreadful—six of our people are ill, and we go on to-morrow.—Not much—throats mostly and a touch of fever—a feverish touch rather—no particular fever. I am like a young lion—no—a middle-aged and cheerful lion—but I am feeling very fit indeed. I am putting iodine on the knee. The Serbian Consul has just been in and found only me, so he poured out his woes which are many. The hospitals and units are so many, and they lose their baggages and themselves, &c. &c. He gave me a letter to the Chef de la Gare at Guévguéli, the frontier, and also a letter to the Commissaire de Police. It is all so queer—everything seems luck. If I had not been sitting in the hotel at this particular minute, we

should not have got those letters! Well—we shall see.—The Comitadjis seem to have broken out again. We reach Kragujevatz on Saturday and start at 6.30 to-morrow—all paraffined from head to foot or vermigelled—with our top-boots and bathing caps.—Shan't we look darlings? and you know how paraffin smells.

We have had a lovely day. We took two carriages this afternoon and went round the mosques. At one lovely place where they were all praying, looking like "Kismet" only real, they let us go in, only we had to change our shoes. They were splendid people and the mosque was wonderful and lovely. Then we went to a tea-party in the winter-garden or roof-garden of one of the biggest hotels here—then finished up the day at a picture palace where we saw *Le Voleur* (played at the St. James' by George Alexander

and Irene Vanbrugh as *The Thief*). —Play by Bernstein.—It was all very amusing.

Our food arrangements until Saturday are enormous. We shan't starve or die of thirst.

Tents and patients on Saturday—and real work. I am so glad, although I have enjoyed the play very much.—Good-bye for this first part.

Stobart Field Hospital,
Kragujevatz, Serbia,
Tuesday, April 27th.

I have literally not had a moment to sit down since I arrived, but I sent you a post card "On Active Service" to say all was well. Thursday to Saturday in the train was a little trying, and I suffered from rather violent sickness for some 12 hours.—It was odd as I had gone thro' the voyage without being sick at all. We arrived on Friday night and at once drove up to the camp to see Mrs. Stobart and Col. Harrison (the military attaché who was responsible in the first place for Percy's coming), then back to the train to pass the night. The place looked desolate and poverty stricken, with hospitals on all sides. Every big building is a hospital. The Serbians are kindness and gratitude itself—both officers and men. The men

who worked for us cannot do enough and lift heavy packages and crates hour after hour without complaint—or food or drink. I wish I could get a few stage hands out here and work them a little. It was wonderful to get into the air after the stuffy trains and filthy, filthy sanitary arrangements of Salonica. A good deal of our sickness on the way was due to foul smells and want of air. Now we are on a sort of plateau, not shut in and yet with mountains on all sides and wonderful sunshine and wonderful evening skies.

We get up at 6 o'clock—breakfast at 7—and our lights are out at 10 o'clock. I find the sleeping-bag deliciously comfortable and have three blankets as well. I share a tent with three others but it is a sort of palace — 20 ft. by 18 ft. . . .

After Supper, 8.30.

I like this life tremendously but I get home-sick and want my letters fearfully. One never stops here, for we have not yet got into regular work, which means we have *no* times off—but I don't mind that as you know. I suffer from foot-soreness more than anything else and change my shoes three and four times a day.—It is so funny going to dinner with one's own plate and mug and knife and fork and washing them up afterwards. You see there is no sticking our knives into the ground for us; they have to be properly washed. We are taking our first patients on Friday—50 wounded from another hospital. The camp arrangements are perfectly wonderful, and it is all made so that we can pack up and be off wherever we are most needed in a few hours. There are two kitchens

—a camp kitchen and a staff kitchen—and at present only four cooks, of whom Dorothy is one. We have really delicious food. The government here feed us—they give a grant and we buy the stuff. We get heaps of vegetables, and have stews and salads made deliciously. We don't get butter, but we have boiled eggs and buttered eggs, etc. for breakfast.

Percy had three services here on Sunday, an early one in the tent and mattins and evensong in the open air. The Serbians and Austrians were tremendously interested. Some of the Austrian prisoners who come up to dig our trenches round the tents and our pits and things are very nice, and some can speak a little English, and they all laugh and joke and will do anything for us. There are lots of rumours about the war, but I shan't tell you one of them—first because I want this letter

to arrive safely; and secondly because the rumours that fly around this camp are not to be relied on. I will get back to our life. Percy had a memorial service yesterday for the British and Americans who died here. The last nurse died the day we left London. We all went down to the churchyard, and Percy read a short service and prayed over each of the graves. I feel it would be horrid to get typhus just now when life is so delightful. I have been put in charge of the linen tent for the whole camp, and am, in addition to this, doctor's orderly—although I don't quite know what this last may mean. The linen tent, which is getting into delightful order, is proving an immense success, and I am very much amused by it. You can imagine how one schemes and contrives even to get things in.—There are sixty-two tents in all, and now we have hospital tents all ready for patients.—

There—my feet are aching so fearfully that I must go to bed, so good-night and God bless you.—I am sitting in Percy's little tent with a lamp I have stolen from the dining tent, and all the nurses and people are making a great noise outside. Percy and I are in quite different *classes*. Percy sits with the great—the doctors and Mrs. Stobart, and I with the common orderlies—that fills me with joy. It is like being at school—a very happy and delightful school, but still school—and one's virtues are school virtues, and one's sins are the sins of school girls.

My knee is much better and I have got the bandage off my vaccination arm. I have got a slight cold but am very fit and well.

April 28th.

This letter has not gone, so I have time for a little more. There has been a gale blowing, and in the midst of it I have had to put up two more tents for the linen, which overflows everywhere. We have also been sweeping straw and stuff out of packing-cases into great heaps to be burned. The Serbians are so funny—they crawl round until one snatches their fork out of their hands and does the work oneself.[1] I find they worked well yesterday because they were *interested* in the shirts and clothes —to-day they have had to sweep up and burn straw and hammer wooden pegs, and they won't stir. Another of our men was suddenly taken at work

[1] Dr. Dearmer notes: "Such men were only the sweepings of the Serbian army—too slack (or physically unfit) to serve with the rest, and therefore put to jobs like this."

with typhus. They just say they feel ill and drop down on the grass. We had one yesterday. An orchard at the bottom of the camp is being made into a laundry. Now good-bye really. Whenever I am off work, which is not often, I want to sit down and chat with you.

P.S.—There is a man here out to help with tents and trenches and things. He is very disgusted at not being nearer the middle of things—"Wot shell I sy when I git 'ome if I ain't seen no blood"!

Friday, April 30th.

I did not write you a word yesterday for it was a hard day, and I slept in all my off time.

The war seems to be very far away. Vague rumours float about that Italy

has come in, and that is all we know. The town is out of bounds and our whole life is the life of the camp. Percy, who will go backwards and forwards between this and other places, will be our one link with the outside world. He is now at Skoplje and Nish, and returns next Tuesday. In the meantime I am using his tent and rejoicing in a little solitude, altho' I like my other tent-companions very much indeed. Our first twenty-five patients come today, and the nurses are just passing my tent in their pretty blue dresses and white army caps. Mrs. Stobart and the others who are going into the receiving-room are wearing their rubber suits—top-boots and oilskin hats. So far the only animal I have yet seen is the very smallest flea, which I caught this morning on my pyjamas. We have rigged up the Austrian orderlies, who are to clean down the patients and do

other rough work in the wards, in drawers, wool cardigan jackets, and grey pyjama suits. They thought it awfully funny to be washed, paraffined and shaved—and at the critical moment the whole box of razors was missing. Now—I must go back to my linen tent—which has now expanded into three tents—as soon all the nurses will be clamouring for things.

May 1st.

As I am writing at the door of my clothing tent at 5·15 I can see the stretchers coming over the grass in the distance. The patients all have red flannel coats, so they are very conspicuous.

The routine of a hospital is sometimes rather funny. Before a patient is admitted he is washed, paraffined and shaved by the Austrian orderlies.

Now, all these patients who have come straight out of a hospital have already been done—they are spotless, but they have to be done all over again. You never saw anything so clean in your life as these men.—Poor things, they have spent most of the day in being bathed!

They won't let us (the authorities, I mean) take typhus here,—so these wounded are coming to us to make room for the typhus patients in the town. There is another nurse down with it in the Scottish Women's Unit. All our people are better except one, who is suffering from pneumonia. She is very ill they tell me. I do hope so frightfully that she will get better. It would be such a maddening way to die —before anything had been done at all.

It is *very* hot now in the day time, my face and neck are very sore and burnt. I have sent into the town to see if a veil of any kind can be found.

The nights are almost as cold. I had my sleeping-bag—which is horrid because you can't turn round in it: the whole thing turns round if you do, and you find your pillow suddenly on your face. We get up at 4.30 now. Breakfast 6 o'clock—rest and oranges (of which there are heaps bought from Salonica) at 10 o'clock—dinner at 12—tea 3—supper 6—bed 8 o'clock.

The Government give us food, but they are very erratic in the way they do it. To-day five sheep arrived—they are sitting in the kitchen tent dressed in muslin. Yesterday we had a sucking pig. Dorothy is having enough experience in cutting up sheep, for she has some animal to cut up every day. I have been told that I am responsible for the linen of the entire hospital and the clothing of the 200 patients and orderlies, and the tent and boxes in which it is stored—and that in the

event of marching orders coming I must be ready in six hours. I have immense stores of clothing here, and a house is being disinfected for me to-day so that I shall pack most of my stuff in readiness. I have learned how to strike and pitch my own tent—(the clothing tent is a kind of Marquee !)—and what guy lines are—and also that I am much stronger in the arms than I thought I was, and that I can hammer in my own tent pegs and lift packing-cases that a month ago I shouldn't have dreamt of touching.

My synovitical knee is rather a nuisance, but I steadily decline to be influenced by it. It doesn't get painful, only puffed. Fancy—it will be a month to-morrow since I said good-bye at Victoria—I am *so* glad I came—but I long to have news.

Later.

News has just come from Headquarters that we travel with the Serbian Army. So when they go, we go,—it is nice to have something settled. Well, I must slave at my linen to-morrow.

STOBART FIELD HOSPITAL,
KRAGUJEVATZ, SERBIA,
May 1st.

I have only just posted a letter to you, so it seems absurd to be writing again so soon, but I am taking my first night watch, and that is a great excitement. Two of us take it until one o'clock, and then we are relieved and two more come on. We have to walk round the entire camp every half hour. It takes nearly a quarter of an hour to do this, so I suppose it must be at least a quarter of a mile round.

[Then came a plan of the Camp.]

11.30.

Well—we have been and come back, and it has taken us half an hour, for we had many adventures. The nightingales

were singing one against the other, frogs croaking, cocks crowing—and a continual noise coming from the direction of the town. I never heard such a hubbub. No, the noise comes from a camp of soldiers that are looking after transports —great wagons go out every day full of guns.—The soldiers seem to be a little drunk.

12.30.

We have done another round—the sentries are wide awake, but our own men orderlies are sleeping all over the place, wrapped in blankets—four in the second dispensary, one in the kitchen. All these are Austrian prisoners—and there are two more men who are sent up from town to help us who refuse to go back because of the typhus. So we made them a jug of tea and took them up bread and marmalade, for they had had no food because they would not go

near the typhus hospital to get it. However when we got back to them we found them fast asleep, and as we simply could not wake them we put the jug down beside them and left it there. — The cuckoo has now begun to cuckoo—the soldiers have stopped singing and shouting, and there is only one nightingale.

The night nurses are now coming in for their midnight meal. We have got a tin of turtle soup which we are heating up—and then to bed. Good-night. Oh—I am *so* sleepy and my feet feel like jelly. I was up at five—so my day to-day has been one of *twenty* hours.—There has also been a dog-fight.

May 3rd.

I had no time to write a single word yesterday, and I was so tired after my twenty-hour day that I simply dropped asleep whenever I was off for half an

hour. I was called to a meeting of orderlies in the afternoon, which was the funniest thing you could imagine. It was an indignation meeting, principally because of the twenty-hour day one has when one is night watch. As I was still blinking from the effects of it I could not protest that all was well. The meeting has done good, for we have been told to sleep for one hour, from 1 to 2, in the middle of the day. However, the motor was waiting at 1 o'clock to take my extra bales down to a house that has just been got to receive them, so I lost my hour.

All our beds are full, and some of the men are in such fearful pain one would do *anything* for them.

May 4th.

Nothing — too tired. I have been called for night watch again, and have

refused. I couldn't help it. I'm too tired—otherwise very happy.

May 5th.

I am sitting out in my linen store, which is really a very fine production. I have a great desire to go for a walk and see the country a little, but so far have been too busy to move out of the hospital. I could wish to be doing more — so much time is spent in organisation; still all our beds are full and the patients are fearfully starved and ill.

FIELD HOSPITAL, KRAGUJEVATZ,
Sunday, May 9th.

I am afraid that I rather overworked when I first came out, for my knee suddenly got worse, and on Thursday I found I could not walk at all without agony, so now I am a poor thing, crawling and lying about when there is so much to be done.

I have begun a book—a very personal book, very simply written, just saying how things strike me, and calling everybody by their own names. I am rather wondering what you will think of it.

The hospital is nearly full now, and work is in full swing. A wayside dispensary has been started, to which people come from all parts, sometimes walking from twenty-five to forty miles. The most common complaints

are typhus, scarlet fever, and diphtheria. They also have an awful disease—a sort of fever which shows itself in huge glandular swellings of the neck and is contagious. There is no law here whereby they must be isolated, and they associate the word hospital with death. The only thing which can be done is to send them home with medicine and advice. Two more dispensaries are to be opened on the way to Belgrade at a distance of ten miles apart. This seems to me to be the most splendid and most needed work—the war recedes farther away than ever.

May 11th.

Percy has just come back from Belgrade, where he has seen his first firing. Part of the hotel where he stayed has been destroyed. He was the guest of Admiral T. [name erased

by the Censor] and had a very pleasant time. My life is very quiet and happy. Part of the clothing bales has been sent down to a house near, and I go there every day and pack and sort. I begin about seven o'clock (we are up at five —breakfast at six) and go on till twelve, then rest until three and begin again.

Do you know, we would give anything here for a pack of cards. The patients have nothing to do and simply beg for them. They are twenty-two dinars in the town—a dinar is a franc.

The knee is nearly well and I can nearly walk again. It has been pelting and pouring with rain. The mud is ankle-deep.

May 13th.

Hurrah, I have got a letter from you which has delighted me. It is dated April 30th, and the inside tells me

about April 28th and April 29th. It is such a relief to know that you are not in France.[1] I hear from Mrs. Knowles that Chris is at Hythe "standing by" awaiting sailing orders. Do write to him—it will be a *great* comfort to me to know that he is keeping in touch with you.

This heavy rain continues. You would laugh at my costume—breeches and the heavy rubber boots, which are not one bit too heavy. I wear my macintosh over this, which has been shortened to the knee and girt round the waist with a luggage-strap. It is quite true that I am learning all sorts of new things—the little trench round my tent, and the best way to carry off the water, have been puzzling me a good deal to-day. Also I have learned that disastrous things happen if you don't

[1] When she left England, I was expecting to go to France almost immediately—on the safest possible duty.

continually loosen tent-ropes in the rain.

Do you know, a sad thing has happened, now that my eagle eye is removed. Old —— is drinking badly again — and he had improved so tremendously, hadn't he? I am writing to him from here to say that if he drinks Mrs. Knowles will certainly tell him to go—that I like him and trust him, but— Do you think I can send enough force even from Serbia to restrain ——?

I am sitting in the little green tent in a sea of mud (outside—the earth inside is dry), with my trench full of rivers of water, the water pouring all round me.

FIELD HOSPITAL,
Sunday, May 16th.

I have not written for two days, and that is because I am happy. I am so much happier here than I could be anywhere else in the circumstances that I am more than glad I came. I feel such a fraud, for I am not having any dangers or trials. I am most tremendously well, with cheeks like the Scarlet Seedling apple at Oakridge. Now that the rain has gone we have glorious weather again, almost too hot. I have a new job—to prepare the outgoing patients' clothes and supplement them with new. A man went out yesterday and two this morning. The thing they value of all others is shoes—these funny Serbian shoes that are made of narrow strips of leather interlaced — and *there are no shoes*: their own are useless, worn

through and through. Percy and I brought out £50 that was sent us to spend, and we have already spent £20 of it on shoes. When I brought my poor man his clothes last night, he nearly cried when he saw the shoes. I like taking them these things, for I see so little of the patients, and it is only because of them that we are here. Everything is so curiously mixed up. We are friends and enemies all together —half our wounded are Austrian—and strangest of all, the head doctor of the Serbian Hospital is an Austrian prisoner. He is a wonderful man, and looked after and treated 200 wounded all alone. He was taken prisoner, and never stopped his work of saving life—first as an officer of his own army, then as a doctor among the Serbs. There is an Irishwoman—named Wetherall — working at the Serbian Hospital. She is all alone, and has been here during all the awful time. In the

Serbian Hospital the windows are never opened, and this nurse had to fight all the doctors to get any kind of decent sanitary arrangements. She says the nurses were bathed and soaked in typhus, and that it would have been a miracle if they had not got it. Somehow it seems quite wrong of us to be so flamboyantly well and healthy; but if we are to be a field hospital we must *not* have typhus and we must just learn to wait. We have all our tents full and send away men every day, so I don't think we have much to complain of. Still, when the death-cart goes past our camp (as it still does every day)—with the white cross painted on the side and the big wooden gold cross perched up high in front—we feel that we ought to be bearing more and helping more, and that it is the fever units who are having the work and the struggle.

I wish I could make you see what it

is like. Listen now. I opened my eyes this morning and the sun was rising, the tent curtains were drawn back, and I seemed to be right out in the open. There was a broad band of red, and dark clouds on each side. The frogs were just quieting down. Then the whistle sounded, and I had a scramble to get dressed. The sun was right up at six and blazing at seven when I began work.

I have been interrupted again. If you write me scrappy, jerky letters, *what* are my letters to you? You see I am a slothful person and *sleep* during my quiet hour, so I never have time for anything.

I have made up my mind to stay out here until the war is over. Don't you think it would be a good thing? I can't bear it at home, and I am doing real work here.

I was interested in your London

news. Oh, how thankful I am not to be in London! I don't think I shall take kindly to a roof again after this. You would be amused to hear the doctors here talking over the "War babies." (You must remember that we are all women.) The general opinion is that the "War babies" are going to save the country, who ought to be grateful. So it ought.

Good-bye—this is a perfectly idiotic letter. It is difficult to write "line upon line," as it were. The knee is better, but still bandaged. I can't walk much. When I can, there are heavenly woods waiting for me full of the most lovely and strange wild flowers. What does Oakridge look like now? Good-night again—it is 8.30 and very late; my light has to be out at nine.

I can't tell you what a comfort it is to me to know that you are not in France.

FIELD HOSPITAL, KRAGUJEVATZ,
May 19th.

Well—the deed is done—and I have arranged to stay on here after my three months are up, provided nothing unforeseen occurs. I hated those last months in London—just hated them. Doctor May is taking this letter. There are all kinds of developments, and she is going to London to get funds and to explain the scheme. We have had more than 100 patients a day at the wayside dispensary—ill with typhus, scarlet fever, intermittent fever, and diphtheria. We are going to have six of these dispensaries between this and Belgrade, and what is more, a hospital of 150 beds for any cases that need operation or who are too ill to return. At that hospital we shall take anything

and everything. We are also adding another 100 beds to this hospital.

Colonel Harrison says that Italy will be sure to come in, and that will mean fighting for us—but who can tell? These sunny peaceful days pass like a dream—happy—except for the pain always at my heart when I think of you and the boys.

STOBART FIELD HOSPITAL,
May 22nd.

It is 7.30 now on this Saturday evening. I am sitting in front of my tent in a sea of mud—the little drain round it and the other that leads into the middle of the Broadway (which I have planked over with two stolen bits of wood) are like roaring rivers of brown water. I am dressed in breeches and top-boots (muddy to the knee nearly) and a shortened macintosh. Two cooks, a Serbian sergeant, the X-Ray man, the Sanitary inspector, and two nurses are playing at ball and shouting in French, German, and English. It is an awful thing if the ball falls because of the mud, and if it hits anybody excitement runs high. It is all soft grey all round, and the mountains are blue. The long lines of barracks (now a typhus

hospital) are like a white line. It is getting dark, and the Austrian orderly is coming round to fill our tent lamps. I have now retired to the inside of the queer little tent, and the brown river is running round me—the ball has stopped —lights are appearing in the tents across Broadway, and the frogs are beginning. The four doctors have evidently got a good story, for shouts are coming from their tent now. The hospital tents with some happy men and more suffering ones are behind me. By half-past eight the tents will be drawn, and all quiet by nine o'clock, except for night nurses and the night watch.

Two men are going out to-morrow. I have just taken them their clothes— I am giving a pair of shoes to each man who goes. We talk by signs and much laughter—they say "Dobra Sester"[1]

[1] The word is really "Cestra."

(Good Sister)—"Dobra English"—and I say "Dobra," and we all say "Dobra." I am not at all hardened to the sight of wounds. They don't make me feel sick or disgusted, only passionately pitiful, and I always get a little soppy and pat their hands and say "Dobra Voynick," which means "Good Soldier," and they say "Dobra Sester." The sight of a bad wound beautifully dressed and carefully treated is not repulsive, and the loving, pitiful care of the nurses here is wonderful—I think they would die for their "boys." These men have not had women to look after them before—for the Serbian women don't nurse or do anything, as far as I can see. We are English, Irish, Scottish, French and Russian in this town.

Whitsunday.

Another day has gone past and it is

again 7.30. It has been rather a trying day, full of hard work, but also of foolish little difficulties and tryingnesses. They are not worth writing about, and they are only what one knew would come. On the whole, I think this is a very united unit—there are no cliques, and everybody is fairly on an equality. If something terrible happened there are women here who would do splendid things—and the truth is that we are all rather positive in type, as is natural for people who have volunteered for this sort of work, and that makes it a little difficult for us to live together at close quarters.

Whit Monday.

This dull little diary goes on—it is only 7.15 to-night. More talk of our moving. Everybody is being given special duties in the event of a sudden

order coming. I wonder which of us all will be in it first. The patients (those of course who can walk about) have captured the ball to-night, and there are shouts and yells of joy from them all as one or another of the wounded men try to get hold of it. It is a sad sight—they are splendid—tall, handsome men, so different from the little Greeks.

The "enemy" came to tea to-day—the Austrian doctor who is a prisoner here and has worked for the Serbian wounded so nobly that he is head of the Military Hospital—and *a prisoner* —Oh, isn't it strange? He has in bad times dressed 500 wounds a day—besides operations—sleeping for a few hours at a time and eating when he can —and this for the *enemy*. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his enemy. He only spoke German and a few words of

English. Of course people are raving over the horror of the "Lusitania"—but was there ever any real gilt on war?[1] If I never saw you or Geoffrey or Christopher any more, I could no more be angry with the men or the nation that had taken you all from me than I could with an earthquake. It is all ignorance and folly, and we are working out through it to ordinary sense. The only way to see war is from a hospital.

[1] I had written: "All the gilt is off war; the Germans have accomplished that much."

STOBART FIELD HOSPITAL,
May 26th.

It is between 5 and 6—my time for giving out the hospital linen, but the nurses are not coming so frequently and I have time to begin a letter to you. I am always here from 10.30 to 11.30 (11.30 is our dinner!) and from 5 to 6. It has at last cleared after incessant rain —such rain as I have never seen. (The Doctor of the Military Hospital said to-day in German, "God sends the rain to clean Serbia.") My walk to the store-house is ankle-deep in sticky mud, and there are ponds and lakes everywhere—but no words can describe the beauty of the mountains in the clean air. I feel rather tragic, for our sanitary inspector, a girl from Donegal, doesn't like the frogs and has poisoned all the ponds round about, so that there are no more

I doomer kerkermerkers.[1] I expect she has poisoned everything else too.

The storms have been simply terrific. I was nearly blown out of my bed last night. It was miserably depressing to crawl out in the mud and loosen ropes and get soaked through—especially as I had been having a stupid fit of depression — silly things that one can't write about and that one has no business to mind.

So Ernest's friend Wilding is gone, and P—— S—— (do you remember the young man who used to act for me?) has been severely wounded and is paralysed. I see the papers ringing with the "Lusitania" disaster—and other things. Here we never talk of them—we only say "it is war." Still, one feels bound with a burden of unknown tragedy and desolation. You know our patients are so happy here, except,

[1] Frog chorus in one of the songs in *Brer Rabbit*.

of course, those who are dangerously ill. The men who are getting better are always singing and dancing. They dance in a ring, doing a sort of step all the time, and they sing too, long long sagas of past wars in the strangest harmonies that are very beautiful. One begins and he holds the tune all the time, and then at the third and fifth line all the others join in, giving a sort of bass accompaniment to the notes, yet showing that all know the words.

The work is hard, yet we are restless —so much time is spent in the mere business of living in camp, and although we have our place full we feel they *might* be in some hospital in the town. Unless we go to the front, as we may at any time, I am not sure that I shall not join another unit—either for fever or active work. I will see, but so many people here feel the same that I may find myself badly wanted, in which case

I will stay. Some of the people here want to go to Poland, or else to nurse fever here in the places where there are no hospitals—but we must wait.

June 3rd.

I have not written for three days—there has been so much to do, and I have been very tired. As I told you, I am greedy for sleep, and when the work is heavy I sleep in my off time. They shelled the town here for practice to-day, and I was so tired I took an hour away from my work and slept through the whole thing. The reason that my work has been heavy is that the dreaded typhus has come into the Camp—as we, and everybody else, expected, so it isn't for us to grumble or be alarmed. Our little Serbian interpreter — the "Narednik" he was called (that means sergeant-major), a

boy of twenty-two—was the first to get it—then Nurse Read, our theatre or operation nurse. He started on Tuesday, Nurse Read on Wednesday, and yesterday Mrs. Stobart and Dorothy Picton were isolated. In their cases there is no rash as yet, but of course we are all anxious. If I get it, will you always remember that I am *very* strong with a terrific constitution, and most tremendously alive and well from my life in the open, so that there is every chance of my pulling through. I should send you a wire, as of course you would want to know. I shall send it—not feeling that I am inflicting a heavy blow, but just telling you of something, the possibility of which we understood and realised from the first, and that there is nothing to be worried or excited about. One has to stop some day, and personally I would rather "stop" here, doing this work,

than anywhere else in the world. There is nothing terrifying or agonizing in typhus—you sleep most of the time, and just drift away into the unknown quite quietly. I am not dwelling on all this, but just telling you so that you may not be worried or unhappy about me. It is just as if we were talking over the fire.

Now about news. I am very well—but I am suffering from prickly heat which, I understand, is a common complaint in these parts. We have all got it, and it is *the* most unbearable and tiresome thing you can imagine and takes away one's sleep — one's nice comfy sleep I mean, not the sleep of exhaustion which no amount of prickly heat would do away with—and it makes one's nice arms and body look so horrid although it is not on one's face.—On Monday, Thomas Lipton came over with a following: we had the band

up, which is most beautiful—they are a musical people—and the patients sang, and the whole thing was very festive and happy. Next day, the typhus came.

June 4th.

P.S. — All the patients are doing well. Sun shining, and every one cheerful and happy to-day. No new cases.

STOBART FIELD HOSPITAL,
June 4th.

Of *course* we have to rough it, but I don't mind. You see we did not bring a chair (I so often think longingly of that chair at Asprey's), and I haven't sat on a chair for seven weeks, so to some extent I have got over backache. Of course it is not nice when the floor of your tent is a mass of sticky mud which gets on to everything, and when your clothes are wet day after day, but everybody has to have it, and none of us women would dream of even *thinking* it wasn't nice. You make me laugh when you talk of my linen *cupboard*; think of a tent—a sea of thick mud on the floor (in spite of most careful trenching) with rough packing-cases and crates on their sides all round — filled with things that are nearly always wet, and on the floor mattresses and hot

bottles and air-cushions and bed-pans, and cradles for wounded limbs. All my ingenuity is exercised in devising ways to keep the things separate.

June 6th.

I am writing in bed although I was up part of the day, as I have a touch of fever which is responsible for my grumblings in the first part of the letter. The typhus scare is practically over although some of the people are very ill indeed. Here is the history: The Narednik had it first and was promptly removed—then Mrs. Stobart was taken ill,—then Nurse Read, the operation sister,—then Dorothy Picton, Nurses Willis and Boothe and Miss Johnson, the manager of the laundry. The doctors said "typhus," and all were removed to an isolation hospital. I felt ill—I was taken ill almost directly

I had sent my last letter to you telling you about the typhus—but I vowed that as long as I could I would keep on my two feet. I did *not* feel that I was in for a terrible illness and I did not want the isolation tent—so I just made myself scarce when temperatures were taken, and kept on—then I got too bad and had to give up, and by the time this happened the illness was beginning to mystify the doctors, as it was not continuing in the way that typhus should, and some of the patients were beginning *actually* to get well. Dorothy Picton was simply furious when she heard that a doubt was cast upon the authenticity of her illness. *Oh*, isn't it funny? Of course if we *had* had typhus we should have behaved beautifully — but now that we have only a silly little fever without a name (it makes you feel rather rotten all the same), we are all fractious and

grumble all day. Of course the people are painfully and miserably ill, but nothing dangerous. I simply feel hot and "soppy," and dissolve into tears at intervals during the day and night. My prickly heat sticks on to the blankets (oh for sheets!) and my hair is in wet lumps, and I don't feel lovely or heroic or anything—which just means that I am not really ill at all. Still it has made me quite thin, and when I stand up, I feel as if I hadn't got a stomach at all. *Now* you know! Dorothy is *so* funny out here. You see she has taken Serbia seriously, and I don't really think she will get over *not* having typhus and *not* having to rescue the wounded under heavy fire. When we saw her being carried to the typhus tent, there was a sort of silence—naturally; *now* the word typhus is greeted by shrieks of derisive laughter in spite of the doctors assuring us that there will be

lots more opportunities of dying uncomfortably. It *is* funny—little groups of nurses come up to me and Percy, pathetically saying, "What are we to do? We are wasting our training here on wounds four and six months old," and I always reply cheerfully, "*Cholera is coming*—we shall probably all get it," and they go back to their tents quite contented and happy.—The truth is that it always annoys people *not* to do the thing they set out to do, whatever it is. We do live in odd times—the men go out to kill each other in order to settle some question, and the women—well, if the women can't be ministering angels and brave dangers, they just become horrid little cats and break rules and squabble. I suppose God knows—oh, I *know* God knows, but I wish He would make us know quicker.—War is the devil's own.—When I see these wounded here I have got a new

obsession. I don't see you and Geoff and Chris hurt, but I see all the men that you and Geoff and Chris are going to hurt as these men are hurt — and that is the unbearable thing. If *you* are hurt you can bear it to death, for you have ideals—but they, poor lambs, they curse and rave and suffer and don't know why it happens, or what it all means. There is an article in the *English Review* (which *thank* you for) —an article on Nationality—which I feel in my bones is true. It is this madness of Nationality, this false patriotism, that makes wars. As long as men grab land and think it noble to die for their own bit there will be wars. As though a nation depended on its land! It depends on its spirit and its ideals. The Jews are a nation and they have no land. There—I can't argue, but what I felt dimly at Oakridge I know clearly now. This war will not bring

peace—no war will bring peace—only love and mercy and terrific virtues such as loving one's enemy can bring a terrific thing like peace. Do you know, these Serbians can do nothing but fight—their whole talk is of fighting—their fathers did nothing but fight before them—they are human beings wasted—they know nothing, they care for nothing but fighting. As soon as they are well, they want to go and fight again — they are like fighting dogs or cocks—that is what war has done for them—killed their souls for generations. Oh, I *will* stop. But it goes into everything, into the tiniest action — the hardest fight is to love the person you want to fight and to seek *his* good rather than yours. It sounds a platitude, but to-day it is Christ or Kitchener. What chance would Christ have to-day? Crucifixion would be a gentle death for such a dangerous lunatic.

FIELD HOSPITAL, KRAGUJEVATZ,
June 9th.

I have not been able to write yesterday or the day before because I am only just getting better and had an immense amount of work. We have ten nurses down now with this unknown fever—everybody is doing everybody else's work. My two helpers have gone—one is ill and the other is nursing her. They seem to get worse and worse in that isolation tent—oh, thank God I had the sense to keep outside! With me the fever seems to have taken the prescribed time—ten days from first to last—but I have a very high temperature every night to which I seem to have grown accustomed, for I don't feel ill with it. I find that Three Day Fever is a recognised illness in the tropics, "known *also* in the Balkans." I dis-

covered this in a book in one of the doctors' tents, and having heard the R.A.M.C. man mention it I looked it up—but our poor things have kept their dreadful temperatures not for three days but for fourteen, and don't seem to be getting better.

June 10th.

I was interrupted yesterday before I got to my most important piece of news—"the bombs." You have probably read about it by this time. I was getting up just after five, when I heard people calling out that there was an aeroplane. There were three coming very quickly—they circled like birds in one big sweep—then every gun in the place seemed to wake up. It was extraordinary to watch them and to feel that at any moment all might be over for some of us. No, one did *not* con-

sciously feel that—one only felt *the* thrill and enjoyed it. At one time one aeroplane was so low that it seemed to emerge from two clouds of bursting bombs. There was one in our grounds not many yards from the camp—of course the noise of that was deafening. It was curious how one instinctively looked for covert—two of the Austrian orderlies got under the beds in the laundry, and I am afraid that the soldiers did not behave so valiantly as they might. One fat man lay on the ground declaring that he was killed. When it was all over we went to breakfast, which was only a quarter of an hour late—and that I think is a record. The doctors were late, for three wounded were brought up from the town—with torn shoulders and legs. About seven people were killed and two children. They tried for two points, the Arsenal and the wireless station, which is just

below the Camp. As far as we can see, they deliberately avoided us, for our white tents are tremendously conspicuous. It must have been a great temptation just to drop a bomb on the top of anything so glaring. A French aeroplane went out in pursuit and one was brought down and the aviators—three—killed. . . . Oh, it is so difficult to write here—there are continual interruptions. Our new doctors and nurses for the dispensaries are due at Salonica on June 18th. Percy is going down to meet them. He starts to-night.

The heat here is terrific, and it is almost impossible to do any work in the afternoon. I often think of the West Indies, in reality so much hotter, and yet, as far as life is concerned, *so* much cooler. These little tents bake and frizzle in the middle of the day, and there is nowhere to get to.

Clutton Brock has written a good pamphlet in the "Papers for War-Time" series. We get the wildest rumours here, and are continually hearing that there is conscription in England.

Do you remember you bought me some books the Saturday before I left? One was a little pious book—Von Ruysbroeck—it has been a great success. You know I like what people call "discipline"—*don't laugh*—I do—it is always a great success. The little book fits in with all this, so I am quite happy. I am not quite well, though, yet—although I am getting better every day. A touch of fever leaves one a dreadful rag. The poor patients are really ill and won't be fit for work at all this three months. One or two are going straight back, I believe—isn't it hard lines? Good-bye again and tell me news. I have no room to talk about it—telling you the doings here takes all my space.

[*Across the margin*] Another man is down to-day—the second interpreter. If you write to Elsie and Mrs. Knowles tell them I can't write—I have no time. They must be thinking me so unkind.

June 12th, KRAGUJEVATZ.

Your letter has at last come—or rather I called at the post-office and found it there. It was begun on May 20th and posted on May 26th. It was so *lovely* hearing. I am glad my letters make you see us here—I had thought they were as dry as old bones on the parched soil of the camp. It is always easier to write when I have a letter to go upon, as it were—that is, when you begin to talk first. Sometimes I feel as if I were talking, talking into the night. B—— once said that if people were separated—the closest people—after a time they lost touch—they could not help it—that that is just a fact about humanity, and that even if they wrote, the writing must be an effort. I don't think it is true—it may be about some stupid little

ten-year-old friendship, but— ! ! Well, the camp is very much changed—rules very much relaxed, and everybody doing everybody else's work. Eleven people are down with this deadly fever that has no name. [*In the margin*] We know now—Enteric.

Poor Dorothy Picton is very ill with complications. I have not seen her for ten days—they are all separated from us. Seven of the sick are nurses, three orderlies, and Mrs. Stobart. Poor things, it came very quickly. This terribly hot weather is against them too—words can't express the heat of this camp at mid-day. I have got over my attack, though I have my breakfast in bed and have to knock off work from twelve to four. I am not suffering from anything at present but fleas at night. Fleas! You never saw anything like these fleas —they have snouts like walruses—and sulphur, Keating, and vermigelli are

just pleasant little tonics to them —and as to the boiling sunshine that is supposed to kill them, they simply revel in it and hop with joy when I put my blankets out to air. Aren't people queer—no, not people, *fashions*. Some men came over from Vrnachka Banya—R.A.M.C.—a barrister, some artisty people, *very* respectable. We had a tea-party for them (that is, four of us had, not the unit). In course of conversation the most precious of the lot said, "You know there is never a tea-party in Serbia that doesn't begin with lice and end with latrines." "Oh," said I, "I have had such an exciting letter from a great friend, an officer, in Ireland." "About what?" "Latrines, of course!" and we were started, but we ended up with lice. The latrines here are perfect, and everybody has to be shown them. You see, we have a *woman* to do this—

an Irish girl—and women are naturally fussy about these things. You should see her digging her trenches. To me it is all a miracle, for we are over two hundred people, and there are always baths and heaps of water, and the refuse and mess from two great kitchens to deal with. Do you remember how dreadful I thought the Oakridge arrangements were a year ago? Oh, how much has happened in a year! I have learnt a *fearful* lot here. I am altered in heaps of ways. I think it has been the lack of discipline in camp life that has struck me more than its discipline—"pinching" things, for instance—and one's powerlessness. When I first came I simply never got a bath, for I felt I *could not* fight for hot water. I used to put on my water to boil, and invariably somebody who watched me do it used to "pinch" it when I was gone to get my indiarubber bath. Now

I sit over my water, and if I have to leave it for a minute to get anything, I throw bricks at any one who goes near it. There is a little girl here who can be peculiarly insulting. I bore a good deal in absolute silence until I began to feel I was really getting an enemy. Then it struck me one day that it was only a sort of rotten pride in me, so the next time she was intolerable I just shook her, saying, "Apologise to your betters for being a rude, intolerable little pig. A—(violent shake)—pol—(same)—o—gise!" She shrieked with laughter and was fearfully pleased, and in a way we have been friends since. You see this place is like school—"side" isn't tolerated, and you have to get used to being called a "silly egg" by people who are the social inferiors of Hilda. There is a handy man here with a prize Cockney accent—he knows all the sporting clubs

—about Bert's class, I should think.[1] He was put on to do a job for me, which he evaded doing day after day. "Worrit," he said, "'ow you do worrit. I tell you one thing, your hair will be grey before this war's over." I couldn't report him even if he had really been rude. I am only an orderly myself, and the first rule of "school" is not to report people, so I just had to pretend not to hear him. Of course in the end if you never lose your temper, you score, for there will always be somebody to arise and do battle for you; and if you really like the people it isn't very serious, although they make you wild for the moment and you are ready to snub them or do anything else horrid. I

[1] Hilda was a much-loved little maid who used generally to come to Oakridge with her mistress. Bert, who had charge of the stage at the National Sporting Club, became a friend during the run of *The Dreamer*. He was enthusiastic for the play, and said it reminded him of the days when he went to Sunday School.

have got quite fond of nearly everybody here.

You know the truth is that we all overworked a little when we first came —now we have Austrian orderlies and some Serbians to do the hard work. The Austrians gave us a display of the goose-step last night. One drilled the others—puffing at his chest and imitating a ferocious officer. I have a man to work for me called Millaret; he is a perfect dear. He can't read or write, and he doesn't know a word of anything but Serbian. He brought up another orderly to ask me what he was to call me. The other man said, "Missis, what do a man call his Missis—Sestra (sister) or Maika (mother)?" I preferred Sestra, so I am Sestra. Wouldn't it be funny if English orderlies called their officers "Brother"?

Tuesday.

[*In pencil*] Yesterday I knocked under with this fever—typhoid—but mild, owing to inoculations. Don't worry about me—it may mean, though, that I come back to England at the end of three months. I should be no help unless quite fit. Tell Mrs. Knowles and Elsie. I am wiring to-morrow as I promised. Good-bye. M.

[*Across the margin*] Do send p.c.'s to Hilda and Mary and John, for I can't write. Mrs. Knowles has addresses. Hilda sent me a lovely letter of ten pages.

The rest is soon written. There is a terrible entry in her little Testament, written on the day before the "Tuesday" of her last postscript. "June 14th. Burning hell. — Out of the deep." But her telegrams of June 15th ran: "Down enteric slight very cheerful." These only reached London and Fermoy on the 20th. Some days later a bulletin said that the fever was running its normal course without complications. On the 26th came word from herself, "Change exhaustion getting better Mabel." On the 28th Dr. Dearmer telegraphed, "Out of danger," and on July 1, "Recovering steadily." That message did not reach us at home till the 6th. On the 10th a telegram

was sent, "Relapse critical hours," but that, too, lingered in transmission; the next by far outran it. This told us on the 11th that she had died that day.

Much later, Dr. Dearmer's written bulletins began to arrive. By July 1st she had recovered far enough to laugh and read the papers and be herself. After that, the change set in, and there was a long week of high fever. "She always says she is very happy," he wrote. On the 9th they still hoped to save her. But I am sure that long before this her face was set for the last journey, and she would not willingly have turned back.

Among her papers is the rough draft of an intimate letter, I think to one of her woman friends, at all events written about ten years before she died. From it I take these words:

"Through little truths to the big truth, through little adventures to the

last adventure. The last unspeakably good thing of all the unspeakably good things that have come to us is death. When I went to see Geoffrey at school the other day he said, 'Everything is a beginning again.' It is quite true. From a little boys' school to a big boys' school, from the school to the university, from the university to the world—from life which is death to death which is life—from something to nothing. Where there is nothing there is God."

That was how she thought then of death—the last adventure—she who had the adventurous heart. But there went with it always the mystic's desire. Years later she gave me this message to transmit to another sick-bed: "Tell him that at the last one sinks back on God." She testified then of what she knew, for at Nuremberg she had lain so near the gate of death that her return was a thing unlooked for. Her strength pulled

her through, and when I went out to fetch back her and her friend Mrs. Knowles, who had stayed in attendance on her, I found her radiant with the joy of living. Yet afterwards she told me how, when consciousness came to her that she was recovering, she felt herself "cheated." She had been unwilling to relinquish the quest to which the last adventure beckoned her.

Yet if she had not been "cheated" that first time, she would not have died, as assuredly she did die, with the sense of having attained. In one passage of these letters from Serbia, which I have omitted because it touched too intimately on her life, she wrote that "the storms were over" and that she was "gliding down a smooth stream of life, with the end — a happy end—in sight if not dwelt upon." In those last five years she had finally conquered all her difficulties; she knew herself mistress of

herself and equal to any fortune; there was no fleck of trouble on her mind. She was happy because prepared at any moment to give up all she had and follow the best she knew; on that condition only, so she discovered, could happiness be held. The end which she did not seek she none the less envisaged with steady foresight, and accepted it in advance as one than which there could be none better. Even her final passing came as she foresaw it, for she drifted out of existence so quietly that none could say exactly when she ceased to live. Gradually and joyfully she, in her own phrase, "sank back on God."

I could add, from what Dr. Dearmer has written and has told me, things moving enough about her last days—her humour, her affection for those who tended her, her religious observances, what she liked read to her — and especially concerning her growing ab-

sorption in all that she called "God." "I don't want to hear about your silly telegrams, I want to hear about God" is a sentence from her sick-bed that has the old ring about it. We used to laugh at what we called her passion for laying down the law about "God"; and certainly some of her theological opinions would have raised controversy. Talk about "God" in the old days might have meant unsettled or unsettling questions. But at the end, it is clear to me, what she meant by God had a mystical personal meaning for the side of her that I cannot interpret —the side that was in love with death.

What I knew was the side that loved life in all its manifestations, that loved its own abounding vitality. On this side of her being she was a woman who had much to give up. The cottage at Oakridge, and all it stood for, had fulfilled the long desire of her days, and

to part from all this meant a great sacrifice. The work for which she gave up life, not recklessly but willingly, was woman's work; she was proud to take part in it because it was a woman's enterprise, for she was above all utterly proud of her womanhood.

"The true attributes of woman," she wrote in *The Alien Sisters*, "are courage, wisdom, and fortitude; it needs courage to love, fortitude to guide, and wisdom to endure."

As she found each need, so she grew to meet it; and many will cry out upon the waste of such a life. It is true that of her charm, her humour, the infinite delight of her companionship, memory can preserve only some ineffectual echoes; that her books, her plays may be forgotten, and even her death scarcely remembered, for what is one brave death the more at such a time? But those who learnt her mind

from knowing her will believe, as she believed, that certain powers in human beings have a potency not limited by death, so that men and women, who never heard her name, may yet, in a difficult world, be reached by some far-off transmitted ray of her fortitude, her wisdom, and her courage.

She rests now among the strangers for whom she gave her life, and the anxious pain that was always at her heart can trouble her no more. She has been spared much; for somewhere in the waves of that fierce southern warfare, her eldest son tosses; they may yet sweep him over his mother's very grave. But her second boy, the young knight-errant, who came from France so hot on the quest—he, too, sleeps well. For a year he chafed and fretted, earning swift promotion, but denied the danger, till at last his chance came. Three choices were given him, all

honourable, but one led straight to the bloody shores of Suvla Bay. There for some ten days he tasted battle; then came mangling wounds, and, after a few hours, release. He, too, had followed his vision to the end. Under different inspirations, he by the broad beaten road, she by tracks that few have trodden, reached the same goal: I write their names together:

Mabel Dearmer, died at Kragujevatz, July 11, 1915.

Christopher Dearmer, died at Suvla Bay, October 6, 1915.

Each group of kinsfolk or friends has nowadays its private roll of honour, and all the rolls are still open. But on ours, whatever record comes to be inscribed there, the first place is, and will be, beyond challenge or comparison, a woman's.

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LIST OF BOOKS AND PLAYS BY MABEL DEARMER

ROUNDABOUT RHYMES. (Illustrated by the Author.) Blackie. 1898.

THE BOOK OF PENNY TOYS. (Illustrated by the Author.) Macmillan. 1899.

THE NOAH'S ARK GEOGRAPHY. (Illustrated by the Author.) Macmillan. 1900.

THE NOISY YEARS. Smith, Elder & Co. 1903.

THE ORANGERY: a Comedy of Tears. Smith, Elder & Co. 1904.

THE DIFFICULT WAY. Smith, Elder & Co. 1905.

BROWNJOHN'S. Smith, Elder & Co. 1906.

A CHILD'S LIFE OF CHRIST. Methuen. 1907.

THE ALIEN SISTERS. Smith, Elder & Co. 1908.

GERVASE. Macmillan. 1909.

LIST OF BOOKS AND PLAYS BY MABEL DEARMER—(*Continued*)

NAN PILGRIM: a Play founded on the Difficult Way. Produced at the Court Theatre, 1909.

THE PLAYMATE: a Christmas Mystery Play. Mowbray, 1910. Produced at Primrose Hill, 1910, and at the Little Theatre, 1912.

THE SOUL OF THE WORLD: a Mystery Play of the Nativity and Passion. Mowbray, 1911. Produced at the University of London, 1911.

THE DREAMER: a Poetic Drama. Mowbray, 1912. Produced at the King's Hall, Covent Garden, 1912.

THE COCKYOLLY BIRD: a Play for Children. 1913. Produced at the Court Theatre, 1913–14; revived in 1914–15 at the Little Theatre.

BRER RABBIT AND MR. FOX. Joseph Williams, 1914. Produced at the Little Theatre, 1914.

THE COCKYOLLY BIRD: a Book of the Play. Hodder & Stoughton. 1914.

"The Soul of the World" was also produced at Bradford, in Wales, and in East London, and is being revived this year at Lancaster and Nayland. "The Dreamer" was also produced in East London. "Don Quixote" will shortly be published, together with a collection of poems.