

EXPERIENCES OF SCOTTISH NURSES ON THE WAR FRONT

They Say They Have Been Kindly Treated by the Austrians, But Not by the Germans—Interesting Stories by Women Helping the Wounded Soldiers.

The Scotsman says:

After being imprisoned in Serbia and Austria for over a couple of months, a party of nurses who were included in the first Scottish Hospital Unit which went out to Serbia about six months ago reached London on Saturday afternoon from Vienna. They had traveled direct to London with but a short stoppage in Paris.

The party included the matron, Miss Bowhill, of Perth; Dr. Davidson, Edinburgh; Dr. Macdougall, Islay; Sisters Fletcher, Edinburgh; Brown, London; Scorgie, Manchester; Skae, Mortimer, Hiney, Edinburgh; Gibson, Pettigrew, Smith, Jones, and Lamb. Miss Duke (X-ray operator), Mmes. Gregory, Hare, and Lees (voluntary aid detachment), and Miss Madden (chauffeur.)

At Waterloo Station the party were met by representatives of the Hospital Committee from Scotland, including Dr. Beatrice Russell, of the Executive Committee, and Mrs. Laurie, Greenock, the hon. treasurer. The heroic ladies appeared to be in good health and spirits, although the matron complained of the effects of her journey.

No Complaints.

The nurses made no complaint of their treatment at the hands of the enemy. They were captured by the Germans while at work in the hospital in which several hundred Serbian soldiers would have been left unattended had it not been for the noble resolve of the women to remain behind and administer to their relief. The Sisters were hustled from one place to another, and owing to a shortage of food keen hardships were experienced. They realized, however, that they were prisoners of war and that privation and suffering were inevitable, and they stoically resigned themselves to their fate. Their ultimate release was due to the good offices of the American Consul at Vienna.

Mr. Macdougall's Story.

In the course of an interview, Dr. Macdougall, who is a graduate of Edinburgh, described the experience of the party which was at Krushevit when the Serbian retreat began.

"Sir Ralph Paget," she said, "made arrangements for all British people to leave the country, but that was only possible by way of Montenegro. As our chief was not leaving, we decided to stand by her, but other units trekked over the snow-clad hills towards 'Home, sweet home.' When they had gone we had to ration ourselves as best we could. For ten days we were without bread. Thousands of hungry and destitute refugees passed through. Several times the Germans ordered us from place to place, and once we had to go into a room in the municipal buildings, which was not fit for a pig to live in.

"Our rations consisted of black bread, beans, and a little meat, which was believed to be horseflesh. One day we managed to annex a bag of flour and make scones, which were regarded as a great treat. Professor Kola, a well-known German medical man, did all he could to obtain our liberty, and told us an interesting fact that the Germans had captured sufficient Red Cross stores in Serbia to supply the needs of an army of a million men for a year."

Describing the entry of the Austrian and German forces into Krushevit, Sister Hiney said the inhabitants who could not get away sprinkled the roads with white powder as a sign of surrender, and also displayed white flags. Austrian and German flags were run up by the soldiers on all the principal buildings.

Former Matron at Craighouse.

Sister Hiney, who was formerly matron at Craighouse, Edinburgh, stated to a Sunday Post correspondent, that when fighting commenced in Serbia she was one of the party who took over five hospitals at Lazarevatz, and received wounded from the bombardment of Belgrade. When the Serbian Army began to retreat they were ordered to move on. They had a few hours' notice to clear the hospital and proceed to Krushevat.

"The journey was made in cattle trucks usually. Krushevat found homes for two thousand people, but the nurses found five thousand there. Food became awfully expensive, and finally we could not get bread at all,

and we had to live on dog biscuits—ship's biscuits really. Twenty-one of us had to sleep on the floor of a small room. On November 5 several of our party trekked over the neighbouring mountains for home. Next day the town was subjected to a terrific bombardment, and on November 7 the German and Austrian armies marched into the place with fixed bayonets. They treated us with civility, and we never had any cause to complain about the Germans.

"One afternoon I saw hundreds of Serbian children round the gate of the hospital begging for bread from the Austrian sentries. Occasionally the children got a box on the ears, but as a rule the soldiers fetched them something to eat.

"I have come away from Serbia knowing that the Germans are very efficient," said Sister Hiney in conclusion. "If they do not win the war it will not be because they have left anything to chance."

Contrast of Hun and Austrian.

Dr. Alice Hutchison, of Edinburgh, the head of the second Scottish Women's Hospital in Serbia, gives a spirited account of the two months which she and the members of her unit spent as interned prisoners.

She likes Austrian soldiers and does not like German soldiers. "At Stalatch," she says, "the German troops jeered at us and made vulgar remarks, and even worse than vulgar. No officer checked them. How different in Kevavara, where we were under the Austrians. The wooden hut to which we were taken was full of Austrian orderlies. They gave us some of their bread (we were famishing), and we all slept in the hut, on the table, on the floor, anywhere. I awoke from time to time, and it was amusing to see Austrian soldiers and Scottish women sleeping side by side anyhow on the straw. In the morning we washed in the Danube.

"Three soldiers were on guard over us. They were told not to fix their bayonets because we were ladies. So different from the German soldiers, who rioted because they said we were getting better rations than they. 'After all,' said one of our Austrian guards, 'you are human beings like us even if you are English.'

"Christmas Day was the jolliest we ever spent. We bought live geese in the market, killed them, and cooked them, and also ate them—all of them. We drank toasts. We had never previously dared to sing 'God Save the King,' but this night we risked it pianissimo while the guards were out of the room.

A Kaiser Charade.

"It was not difficult to arrange that. They were fine, decent fellows. They lent us their uniforms for our charades and tableaux vivants. We represented the Kaiser and the Emperor, Franz Josef clasping each other by the hand. I am afraid our Kaiser's uniform was Austrian—it was the nearest we could get to the real thing. The moustache was cotton wool blackened with something or other.

"We were allowed walking exercise by the side of the Danube. After the first march one of our guards complained to his officer that we walked too fast. 'They fly like geese over the mud,' he said. I was told that this insurgent practice must not continue. I laughed, and said that surely great big Austrian soldiers could walk faster than meek little British women. But they took it quite seriously. They changed the guard, and gave us two of the longest-legged soldiers I suppose in all the Austrian army. One went out with us shopping in the morning. The other rested in preparation to accompany us on our afternoon walk."

In the second party were Doctors Alice Hutchison, Laura Hope, Sybil Lewis, Agnes Proctor, and Charles Hope; administrator, Miss Jack; matron, Miss Philp; sanitary inspector, Miss Gordon; Sisters Bayne, Carter, Catos, Donovan, Dow, Duguid, Ellis, Evans, Gordon, Hall, Hamer Hart, Kilty, Oldfield, Piuder, Richards, Saunders, Walmsley, Williams and Wilson; orderlies: Miss Nicholls, Kerr, M. Fraser, A. Fraser and Tebutt.