



Snaps from Saloniki

THE "snaps" and impressions which make up this article were garnered by my brother, Dr. W. J. Weaver, who went from New Brunswick in 1916 and joined the R. A. M. C., spending over seven months in Malta and nearly four in the Saloniki war zone. After three weeks in a tent hospital some miles from the famous seaport on the gulf at the head of the Aegean Sea, he was appointed to take duty for a regimental officer, going home on a short leave of absence. The district of which he was put in charge was about twenty square miles in extent, and he had about 1,000 men to look after, amongst whom were some 600 Bulgarian prisoners and Greeks. This afforded excellent opportunities of seeing the country and the people, though doctoring large numbers of men through an interpreter is a tedious business.

In coming by sea to "Salonique," as the army men call it, the Canadian doctor sailed past snow-crowned Olympus, the classic home of the gods, and on his return journey, across Greece by land, camped for a time at the foot of the mountain, which is nearly ten thousand feet in height.

When he landed at Saloniki, the big beautiful harbor was full of vessels, mostly battleships.

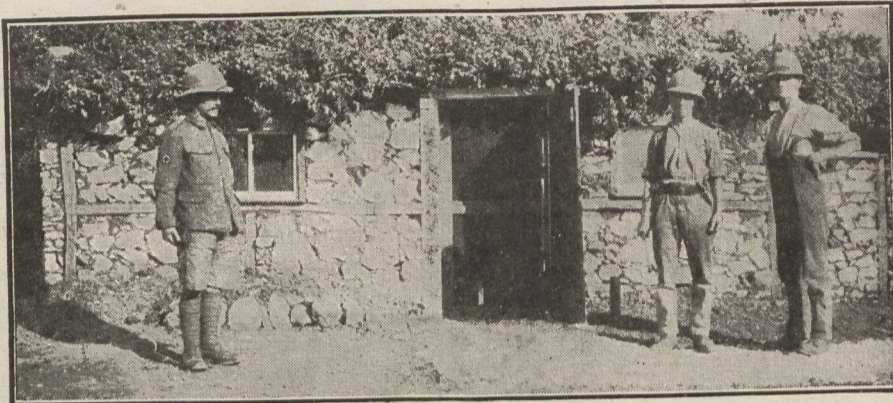
The city, which was founded considerably over two thousand years ago, possesses many interesting relics of antiquity. Amongst these are a triumphal arch of the Roman Emperor Galerius, spanning the ancient Street of the Vardar; the White Tower (not so old), some venerable gateways and portions of the old city walls; and a number of very interesting churches which, after being used as mosques for nearly five hundred years, have again become Christian places of worship.

It is a city of contrasts, where the modern tram-car passing under a Roman archway, carries as passengers Jews, Turks and Bulgarians, as well as Greeks, to say nothing of men in khaki. In its streets and markets strange costumes of endless and well-marked distinctiveness, representing to those who know, the whole appalling tangle of the Balkan nationalities, jostle one another and delight the eye of the sight-seer.

In summer the climate is very hot, for the city is shut in to the east and north by an amphitheatre of mountains. It was so hot in July last that the English nursing sisters in one of the tent hospitals discarded their regulation head-dress of the white veil, and put on straw hats to protect themselves from the blinding glare of the sun as they went from tent to tent looking after the sick "Tommies." On the other hand, the native of the country though even in the hottest weather he may elect to wear an old fur cap, always takes care to shield the back of his neck with something resembling a veil; and the Greek women tie gay-colored handkerchiefs over their heads. The Turkish women wear "a black affair" on their heads arranged to cover forehead and mouth and nose, leaving no part of the face visible except the eyes.



Sisters on duty with straw hats.



Permanent quarters of Officer Commanding Royal Engineers Company.

By EMILY P. WEAVER

By the way, Greek girls, even of the lower order, very often have the type of nose we call Grecian.

The Greek laborers wear queer, enormously baggy trousers, resembling "bloomers," or a gay colored tunic, which looks like a short full skirt, and is met at the knees by long stockings. This attire strikes a Westerner as somewhat "nondescript, with rather a leaning to the feminine type." Some of the officers chanced to visit a village when a wedding celebration was in progress. Dancing was going on around a band of musicians. The foreigners could not distinguish the bride, but had no such difficulty regarding the groom, a handsome young man (as most village Greeks are not) "dressed in very close-fitting, white breeches, and a short white skirt like a ballet-dancer. Then he had on a short blue waistcoat without sleeves, and open at the front (just like what a girl would wear) and a strip of pink ribbon pinned on his breast. He certainly was a swell."

A few women and children used to come to the English doctor for treatment, and he found it necessary very often to prescribe for sick babies a warm bath, a recommendation which greatly astonished their mothers. These civilian patients sometimes offered a live chicken or a few eggs as "backshe." The word, however, was more familiar as standing for a demand for a gift. The children are great beggars, and in plying this trade have acquired a few English words. "Penny backshe!" cried two little girls as they pursued the British officers. "English have plenty money."

The doctor lived and did duty with a company of Royal Engineers, and the men of whom he was in charge were at work, for the most part, in preparing a site for a new hospital or making military roads. But some sturdy Bulgarian prisoners were working on a huge British potato farm of 10,000 acres in extent.

Grappling with the ever-insistent food problem on such a tremendous scale must astonish the native farmers, whose holdings are generally small and methods primitive. They

cultivate the valleys and live in communal villages at the foot of the surrounding mountains. The farms are tilled by individuals, who often have to go two or three miles to their work. The barns are built of baked mud bricks, and often there is a little mill in the village. It is run by water and the grain is ground by means of round stones.

The Greek farmers raise quite good crops, despite the dryness of the climate, but it is probable that some system of irrigation from the mountains would greatly improve the yield.

It will shock no one in these days, when women in the most advanced nations have been forced so extensively into the work of men, to be told that the women in the Saloniki region toil in the fields with the men; but it does strike a Canadian as odd to see the man riding to work on a donkey or small pony (a very tough and wiry pony) with his wife trudging humbly behind. Moreover, when the scene of their joint labors is reached, it is the woman's part, as in the home, to take the heavier tasks.

One day the doctor passed a group of women with

hammers, breaking stones by the roadside. The stones had to be carried up a small hill to be broken, and this was done by two girls. The big girl bent forward and put her hands behind her, and the little girl piled quite large stones on her back.

On another occasion he saw a man lying down in a field, minding a baby, while his wife and daughter drove the plough.

The plough used almost entirely in this part of Greece is a wooden affair of the type pictured in Biblical illustrations. It cuts a shallow furrow and is usually drawn by oxen. Rarely a farmer is the proud possessor of a steel plough!

The grain is reaped with a scythe or sickle, and carried home in sheaves

slung in huge bundles across the backs of muzzled donkeys. To thresh it a "stone-boat" is driven over it, or oxen or other animals tread it out on a hard floor. Finally the mixture of chaff and grain is tossed up with forks, so that the wind may blow the former away.

The Greeks are great eaters of bread—a dark bread made of a mixture of wheat and other grain. With it they use olives, olive oil and native cheese of goats' milk, taking meat rarely, perhaps once a week.

Great herds of goats and flocks of sheep, with musical little bells on their necks, pasture on the mountain sides, looked after in old Eastern style by shepherds.

It is rather strange that the natives of the Saloniki district themselves suffer much from malaria, a disease which, together with dysentery, has seriously reduced the number of effectives in the British forces at Saloniki. In fact, on this front disease has given the doctors far more work than the gunfire of the enemy. No one, however, "shows his malaria worse than a native Greek, when his olive complexion turns a sickly green."

Another great difficulty which our armies have had



Typical Saloniki costume.