

# OUR DEBT TO SERBIA

**F**ORTY thousand children left Serbia for Corfu. Thirty thousand perished on the way.

Is Serbia too remote for us to realize the tragedy of that statement? Do we think of the Serbs as a swarthy Eastern people unworthy of our friendship? Those of us who saw and heard Mlle. Losanitch, when she visited Canada, had that illusion forever dispelled. Beautiful, graceful and accomplished, with a clear white skin, dark hair and eyes, a charming voice and dignified manner, she represents the highest type of European culture; yet she is wholly Serbian, and tells the story of her country in a manner so simple and sincere that her cause enlists the sympathies of everyone. Mlle. Helen Losanitch is the daughter of a professor in the University of Belgrade, a member of the government. Not more than twenty-five years old, she has already done voluntary nursing through three of her country's wars, and she tells of the peace-loving Serbians, ninety per cent. of whom were farmers who owned their little homes and loved them; who fought only to defend them. She lived through the dreadful scourge of typhus which killed 250,000 of the people, and nursed amidst the terrible lack of supplies and hospital equipment. The poor soldiers who got nothing but tea without milk three times a day, would say, cheerfully: "Sister, my country is at war. If she had more, she would give it to me."

**A**N American Red Cross doctor in Serbia said to a war correspondent: "My word, Clarke, but I tell you these men are great. I feel that small beside them that I could hide myself. Pain! Suffering! You've not seen bravery until you've seen these men suffer. I'll take off a hand, an arm, a leg—without anaesthetic, mind you—and will the fellow budge? Not an eyelid. If you hear him say: 'Kuku lele' (oh, dear), that's as much as you'll hear, and not often that much. And die! They'll die without a sound—unless it is a 'thank you,' if they can, before they go. Where this race of soldiers sprang from, I don't pretend to know; but I tell you right now, they're God's own men."

**L**IKE Belgium, Serbia has been over-run with hosts of invaders; her people have been driven from their homes. They have suffered even more cruelly than the Belgians, but the country itself can never be destroyed, for its beauty lies not in architecture, but rather in the physical attraction of its high plateau, its temperate climate and luxurious vegetation. There, four mountain systems mingle with deep gorges, lakes and rushing streams. Serbia is considered one of the loveliest countries in the world, with a beauty that man never fashioned, and neither can man destroy. Perhaps the tide of immigration which flows westward to America may turn again to the East; for Serbia has great undeveloped resources. No soil in Europe is richer in minerals of all kinds, and the copper mines of Maydan-Pek are said to be the richest in the world. The chief products and exports were cereals, fruit, swine and cattle. To this will be added tobacco, flax, hemp and sugar beet, and in the future Serbia will engage in a large scale in the cultivation of silk-worms, and exploit her six million acres of forest timber. No wonder that the envious eyes of other nations have fastened on this land of promise! Exhausted by the Balkan wars, it was much against her will that Serbia entered upon this world-war; but the depression that weighed upon the people during the first days of mobilization gave way to an outburst of joy, when the news came that England stood by her side; and the Serbian soldiers on hearing it, threw their caps high into the air, wild with delight. And Serbia, homeless, still has faith in her Allies. The help we sent to them came too late. To the civilians who have survived the privation of the terrible retreat across the inhospitable snows of Albania and Montenegro, and to the Serbian army, we owe a national debt of honour, and it must be paid.

**S**O far, we Canadians have done little. Amidst the multiplicity of demands on our sympathies and resources, the call of Serbia has been but faintly heard. The help we have given, both here and in Great Britain, has largely been accomplished through the Serbian Relief Committee, formed in September,

By ESTELLE M. KERR

1914. Its first act was to send out a surgical hospital under Lady Paget, who, as wife of the British Minister in Belgrade during the Balkan wars, had wide experience in war conditions in the near East. All through the terrible typhus epidemic, this devoted lady and the members of her staff worked. At times, there was only one nurse to attend to 300 patients. Then a complete new unit arrived, followed in the Spring by a third and a fourth and a fifth, who courageously faced famine, death and every possible hardship. Besides equipping and maintaining these large units, the Serbian Relief Fund contributed towards other hospitals and Red Cross societies in Serbia, advised by Sir Ralph Paget, K.C.M.G., British Commissioner.

**L**ADY PAGET and her unit remained in Skoplje after it had fallen into the hands of the Bulgarians; and for four months continued their ministrations to the wounded of both nationalities, and dispensed relief to the Serbian population, but in February, 1916, the hospital was taken over by the enemy, and the unit, treated with great courtesy, returned by way of Petrograd. A great part of the civilian population fled with the retreating army.



SERBIA IN EXILE.

## SERBIAN NATIONAL HYMN

Translated by Elizabeth Christich

God of Justice! Thou Who saved us  
When in deepest bondage cast,  
Hear Thy Serbian children's voices,  
Be our help as in the past.  
With Thy mighty hand sustain us,  
Still our rugged pathway trace,  
God, our Hope! protect and cherish  
Serbian crown and Serbian race!

Bind in closest links our kindred,  
Teach the love that will not fail,  
May the loathed fiend of discord  
Never in our ranks prevail.  
Let the golden fruits of union  
Our young tree of freedom grace,  
God, our Master! guide and prosper  
Serbian crown and Serbian race.

Lord! avert from us Thy vengeance,  
Thunder of Thy dreaded ire,  
Bless each Serbian town and hamlet,  
Mountain, meadow, hearth, and spire—  
When our host goes forth to battle  
Death or victory to embrace,  
God of armies! be our leader!  
Strengthen then the Serbian race!

Rich and poor suffered together, and died of starvation and cold. Wealthy people walked over the mountains because they would not take the means of transportation from weak women and children. The aged King Peter had to be carried in a chair; but nothing would induce him to leave his soldiers until they were out of danger. His son, Prince Alexander, led the men, walked with them, shared their food, and refused to embark until the last man was safely landed in Corfu. Even the barest necessities of life ran short, as Austrian submarines had sunk many of the supply ships sent to their aid. The representatives of the Serbian Relief Fund were thus thrown on their own resources, and their success in caring for about 10,000 civilian refugees was a very remarkable achievement. They also sent food to the starving Serbian troops in the interior of Albania, and did invaluable work at Corfu in distributing large supplies of food and clothing from England, and establishing new base hospitals at Corfu and Salonika.

**T**HE French Government undertook the care of 3,000 Serbian boys—this when France has 2,000,000 orphans to feed—and distributed them amongst the various schools. Three hundred boys were brought to England by the Serbian Relief Fund, where schools have been opened at Oxford and Cambridge. No attempt is made to turn the lads into Englishmen. Schoolmasters have come with them to carry on their instruction in Serbian. Many of the pupils do not know whether they are orphans or not; for their fathers are in the army, and their mothers and sisters may be in the interior of Serbia or in refugee camps; but their education is directed to fit them to return to their homes and rebuild their native land. Twenty of these boys are over 17 years of age, but have been rejected as unfit for military service, and six of the Oxford Colleges have taken one each for the University course. The fund which supports these refugees is largely made up of "mites." Factory girls have gone without holidays to send help to the Serbs; school children have given up sweets, treats and school prizes. And as the result of a special campaign for an Orphanage, the London school children collected £7,000. In 400 elementary schools, the children assumed the task of clothing these small exiles. Lessons in making garments were given in school hours, while much of the finishing was done at home. The Serbian kit was designed according to the models of the national dress: a strong chemise, a short skirt and little bolero, edged with brilliant colours. The stockings have cheerful colours knitted into the border. The only colour which must not be used is green—emblematic of Turkey. The depot has sent large supplies of clothing to the colonies of 6,000 Serbian refugees in

Corsica and France. Arrangements are being made to supply the Serbian prisoners in Austria-Hungary, via Switzerland; and it is hoped that it will be possible to surmount the obstacles placed by the Bulgarian Government in the way of sending food and clothing from Roumania to the Serbian prisoners in Bulgaria, who are estimated at 30,000.

**H**ER MAJESTY THE QUEEN is the patroness of the Serbian Relief Fund. The President is the Lord Bishop of London, and the other officers have equally honourable names. The administration of the finances is conducted in the strictest economy, owing to the large number of devoted voluntary workers. The personnel of the executive of the Canadian Committee also comprises many distinguished people. The Honorary President is Mr. R. A. Falconer, President of the University of Toronto; the President, Dr. W. D. Sharpe, of Brampton, Ont., was formerly attached to the Royal Naval Hospital at Belgrade, Serbia; the first Vice-President, Mrs. L. A. Hamilton, is widely known for her executive ability. The Committee also includes the wives of the Lieutenant-Governors of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia; strong committees have been formed in Manitoba and Alberta. Each Province has its own committee, which is working zealously for the cause, trying to arouse greater sympathy for our most unfortunate Ally. Surely we who live in the seclusion and comfort of our Canadian homes will be willing to sacrifice something for the brave Serbians who have given all that they had.