

(October 2nd, 1916.)

With the Canadians at Salonika

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AT a special luncheon of the Club held on the 2nd October, Professor Mackenzie said:

Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Canadian Club,— I esteem it a very great privilege and honor to be invited to speak at one of your Club luncheons, and I am very pleased that I can convey to so many citizens of Toronto greetings from the Toronto citizens who are at present in Salonika.

I think it must have occurred to all the members of this Club the significance, the great significance, of the occasion of a Canadian Hospital being established with the Imperial army in Macedonia. It is one of the most striking manifestations of the Imperial idea, and I would like you to remember that in Salonika there is not only the University of Toronto General Hospital, the 4th Canadian, but also the 5th Canadian, from British Columbia, and also the Stationary Hospital sent out with the first contingent and operating first in France, but later moved to Salonika. So we are not the only Canadians in Salonika. In addition to that we have a large number of Canadian officers and men who enlisted with the Kitchener's and Territorials, and one historic day those officers and men challenged the University Hospital staff to a game of baseball, in which the University Hospital team was badly defeated.

One has heard criticism of the policy of sending Canadian Hospitals to Salonika and to Egypt, where there were no Canadian troops. I wish to say that in this war we want no sectionalism and no parochialism. If the Empire is to be benefited to the full through this lamentable war, it will be benefited by these units giving their work for one another. We don't want to neglect Canadians, but the more the units of the Empire are mixed, I think the better for ourselves in the end.

In regard to Salonika, I may in passing remark that the

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newspapers of Canada and the United States give the Turkish name, "Saloniki" but you remember it has not been Turkish since 1913. If you look at the "Times," the "Morning Post," and other British newspapers, you will find they spell it "Salonika." I don't know of a writer that gives it the other way. The French call it "Salonique." I imagine we have our own right to speak of it as we do, but it is of course an abbreviation of "Thessalonica," the name of the ancient Greek city. I pronounce these Greek names with deference to the gentleman present who taught me the "Little Latin and less Greek" I know.

When one comes into the harbor, a magnificent harbor, which stretches up into the Balkan peninsula—we came into the Gulf early in the morning, and it took the whole morning to steam up it—one passes Mount Olympus on the left, and comes into this wonderful bay, which could accommodate the whole British fleet, certainly the whole French or Italian fleet in the Mediterranean. The city is built on the side of a sloping hill and as you look at it from the bay you see the little houses, with low, red-tiled roofs, stretching up to end in the old Byzantine fort, situated on the Acropolis at the back of the city.

The most striking feature to a westerner is the number of minarets—twenty or thirty—topping the churches, because in Turkish times every church was converted into a mosque, and every one of these mosques is surmounted by a minaret.

The hill at the back is 3,000 or 3,500 feet in height, and is called Hortiak. Stretching west from that is a range of low hills which separates Salonika proper from the Macedonian plain.

When you land, the impression you get is first of all the smell. The French try to make a bad pun, saying that the place has a good name, "Sale unique!" The streets are paved with very rough cobbles, difficult to walk on, and there is a trench in the middle of the street. The British Consul told us, "You have no idea how much Salonika has improved since the Greeks took it over in 1913!" We could imagine what is must have been like under the Turks!

The street population is varied. Naturally the troops add to its varied character. Over fifty per cent. of the population is Jewish, and the older Jews all wear a special costume. The old men wear a gabardine, usually of bright colors, lined and fringed with fur. The old women also have a special costume, and a hat with a curious tail behind; the only difference is in the color of the velvet and silks.

Greek soldiers are everywhere, but clad in khaki, so they are not specially striking, except the Cretans. You will have noted in the papers that at the head of every revolution a prominent part was played by the Cretan gendarmerie. They all wear a black forage cap, and a jacket, and nether garment which has a bag from the seat which hangs down as far as the knees—some people say they imagine the Cretan policemen use it to carry their luncheon in.

You see Turks, but they are not so striking as at Cairo. You meet veiled women at Cairo, and so you do there; at Cairo the veils are light, easily seen through but at Salonika the veils are a deep black, and you have no idea what is behind them.

The history of the city is extraordinarily interesting. It has been for two thousand years a city for which the eastern Mediterranean nations have striven. A French writer calls it "la ville convoitée," the coveted city. I have hardly time to give you a description of its history, but throughout the Middle Ages it was compared with Venice, its old rival. Their situation is almost similar, the only difference being that as far as Salonika is concerned it has the impassable Balkan peninsula behind it, cutting it off from the European nations, but still they all tried to get it.

It has a very old history. As I will point out in a moment there are most interesting archaeological evidences there, showing that it was actually founded in B.C. 315, when Cassander, one of the generals, and a successor of Alexander, built it; he married a half sister of Alexander, named Thessalonika, and called his capital after his wife—a very proper thing to do!

Paul landed there in 52 A.D., but he did not get a very good reception, you will remember, and had to go on to Beroea, where his reception was better.

The Bulgars held the city for a while, but their power was shattered in the 10th century, and they have been struggling ever since to capture it. The Crusaders also took it, in the 12th century. During the Fourth Crusade, the Normans conquered the district, and founded an independent Norman kingdom. Later the Serbians, the Turks, the Venetians, possessed it. Finally it became Turkish in 1432, and remained a part of the Turkish Empire until 1913, when the Greeks took it.

A most interesting period of its history was in 1492, when Jews came from Spain and Portugal, being driven out by the Inquisition. They came in large numbers and settled in Sal-

onika and other cities of the Levant, but Salonka was peculiarly a Jewish settlement, so that to-day you see Jewish names over the shops, but they are names of a Spanish type. All through the town these Spanish names are seen, and the ordinary language of commerce there is Spanish, of the old type, the mediæval type, different from modern Spanish. Of course they all speak French, as the Jews of Paris established schools, and Paris was the natural place for Salonikan Jews to go for their education. There are about 100,000 Jews in Salonika, out of a population of 175,000. So they mean a very great deal in the city.

A very interesting part of the Jewish population is the so-called "Deunneh." In the 16th century a "Messiah" from the Levant came to Salonika, and got a tremendous following there. Subsequently he became ambitious and set up a kingdom of his own. The Turks took him to Constantinople, where he embraced, willingly or not is uncertain, Mohammedanism. There are fifteen or twenty thousand of these so-called Deunneh converts, who are publicly Mohammedans and go to the mosques, but at home are said to practise Jewish rites. Zangwill mentions one celebrated example, Enver Pasha. A large part of the Committee of Union and Progress of the Young Turk party is composed of Deunneh, who live at Salonika.

The city's most recent history you know. The Committee of Union and Progress became strong after the Turkish Revolution, in which revolution all the various vicissitudes of the Turkish Government of that time centered. To a large extent the Macedonians are members of the Young Turk Party. Finally in 1913 the Greeks took the city from the Turks. There was a small fight in the streets one day, and they threw out the remaining Bulgars in the second Balkan War.

It is rather difficult to visualize the relationships of the area in which Salonika is situated. So I have attempted myself to make a map to give you some notion of the district. I have taken the map of Ontario, on a scale of eight miles to an inch, and superimposed upon it a map of the Macedonian front. Toronto represents Salonika. The Gulf of Salonika stretches across the lake to the Niagara peninsula. The chief mountain ranges are colored green, but I hadn't time to note all the mountains; when one gets back some thirty miles from the town it is all mountainous country. Monastir, Florina, Orsova, are to the northwest, Monastir just a little beyond Listowel, at a distance of forty miles from Toronto. Lake Doiran, on the Serbian boundary, comes about Beeton, south of Camp Borden. The

Struma river is coming down from Lake Simcoe, across Lake Scugog. The fighting that is described in the papers this morning is taking place not far away from that district. Kavala, which the Bulgars took, is a short distance beyond Peterboro'. That will give you some idea of the size of the district.

Mount Olympus, of which we are rather proud at Salonika, is just in the Niagara peninsula. It is about 9,000 feet high, and on a clear day its triple top, for it has three peaks, can be seen; Ossa is a flat pyramid to the south of Olympus; Pelion, we don't see. Olympus and all the other mountains are all snow-covered the greater part of the year.

Back on the peninsula is Mount Athos. On the plain, gradually rising to the Struma, the troops are operating along a semicircle. That, I think, gives you some notion of the area.

The appearance of the country to the west, where our Hospital was when we landed in November, is somewhat like the prairies; south there is the great sweep of the Vardar marshes. A very striking characteristic of the whole of that part of Macedonia is the tumuli, as large as this room, I should think. One used to dig out these tumuli to form habitations for the troops. The French and Tommies used them because they were easy to excavate. They live in the top, and digging farther down find archæological remains beneath them. The place is hardly touched yet archæologically. However, a number of articles have been brought out by the British and placed in an archæological collection in charge of Professor Gardner, of London, a war volunteer, attached to the navy, while those found by the French area are in charge of a French professor from the Sorbonne, attached to a French regiment. They are all gathered together. Pottery of Mycænæan and premycænæan times is found at the bottom of these tumuli.

Professor Gardner kindly shows the sights to visitors. He showed me one rather interesting, and I am inclined to think rather unique memorial of the days of Alexander, which had been dug up in constructing a line of trenches. It was a marble tablet, about the size of the top of this table with deeply cut Greek characters which could be readily interpreted. It turned out, when Professor Gardner got the dirt cleaned off it, to be a memorial to an army contractor who supplied the armies of Alexander the Great. It was said the reason for the memorial was that "in times of famine he fed the poor, and he supplied the army with the best goods, at the lowest rate, and never took an undue profit." I don't know

that that is unique, but it is certainly unique that it should be put on a tombstone.

So much for the archæology. One could talk a long time about it, but I have not much time left, and I want to speak of the Hospital.

We arrived on November the 8th, and were put into tents on rising ground overlooking the Monastir Road, or Via Ignatia, that Roman road from Durazzo through Salonika to Constantinople. It is a most interesting place, with natives passing up and down, and we are in an ideal spot to see all that is going on in the district, about six miles from the town. We had the patients and the Administrative office in Hubert tents, Canadian made. We took them with us, and they accomplished their purpose well. Behind, on higher ground, were the nursing sisters, in Indian tents, which were much better. Beside them were the officers and men of the unit, in bell tents. One might think they were uncomfortable, but I may say that was the most comfortable winter—except occasionally—I ever passed. I always had had an ambition to spend a winter up north in the Nipissing district, amid the snows of Northern Ontario. I never expected to camp in the snow in Macedonia. But it was only when it was really bad weather that one suffered. That is, when the wind came down from the Balkans or the Albanian hills it was very cold, usually accompanied with snow. It was very trying with the rain, wind and the flopping tents; but that was not for long. The wild flowers came out in February, the whole plain was dotted with anemones, and up in the hills there were the most wonderful orchids and wild flowers of all kinds.

When the fighting was more intense it always brought in more wounded. At one time we had as many as twelve or thirteen hundred patients. When the spring came on, conditions improved. The sanitary condition of the troops was good, the amount of sickness very small, and for two or three months we had very little work. There were the ordinary camp casualties but not many serious illnesses to treat.

Our situation at first, close to the Monastir Road, near to the Vardar marshes, was not very good, owing to the proximity of the marshes, breeding grounds for the Anopheles mosquito, which carries malaria. So the War office decided that we must be moved, and in May we were transferred on the east side of the city, in eighty-two or eighty-three huts, these serving as hospital wards for patients, and laboratory and administration huts, huts for the officers, nursing sisters and men of the unit. It made a large town of huts. The huts had red-tiled roofs, as wood is scarce and there are no shingles. Each

hut has windows at each side, and a door at each end; the accommodation was good. In the ward huts there was a small room for the nursing sister, with a sort of diet kitchen and sanitary arrangements at the end.

We were situated on the main road which the British engineers had built, along which the ambulances brought the sick and wounded. When the sick were to be removed from the tent hospital the ambulances formerly went to the wharf, some six miles away; but now the lighters from ships come straight to the hospital wharf, and in that way the British engineers by building a mole have made it possible to save this six mile ambulance trip, it is only a quarter or half a mile to the new wharf, and the sick can be taken straight to the hospital ship. The policy of the British authorities is to concentrate the hospitals in this area, where the sick can be easily evacuated to the ships.

The work of the hospital is varied. It is hard to give you an idea of it. When we moved to the hut hospital the weather was quite hot, generally about 102 in the shade. The British soldiers complained bitterly, but we said, "This is what we have in Toronto in August sometimes!" At any rate, it was very hot weather for two weeks. At the same time, up country there were swarms of mosquitoes, so that when I left they were getting malaria cases from the front, and some dysentery, that has given a good deal of work with the ordinary camp casualties. The weather has become cool again, though, and the last letters I have had tell of its being seventy or eighty degrees in the daytime, with cool nights, but still I think the hospital is pretty full with casualties. It has been increased in size, so that now we have 1,340 beds, instead of the 1,000 beds with which we started.

We were well equipped, splendidly equipped, better than any other hospital in the area. These supplies came from Ontario, from Toronto, from the University, in which the people supported us magnificently, enabling us to purchase things other hospitals did not have. There was an enormous quantity of dressings sent us by the women of the University and of the Women's Canadian Club and of Toronto generally,—they supplied us with everything necessary, in every particular, I think there was nothing lacking. If we wanted anything, we got it, because we had the money. Naturally we fed our patients well, so the Tommies liked to come to the Canadian Hospital, and we got a great reputation.

I imagine the reason why we fit into that work so well and have had such marked success is because we are a University

company, especially brought together, and accustomed to working together at home. A letter from the chief Roman Catholic priest with the British Expeditionary Force, who was living with us during the winter, said that what struck him particularly,—and I think it is what especially impressed me,—was the friendliness within the unit, as a University Corps. A British Officer remarked "You people seem to have lived together so long that you have got all the corners rubbed off; while we in the other hospitals were just like a lot of new dogs that just saw one another for the first time when we got on the hospital ship!" There is a very distinct advantage in our being all men associated in work at home.