

Balkan Days and Ways

By MRS. LINDSAY PATTERSON

THE value placed upon trees by the people of the old world is a delight to one who loves trees as I do. One day in Belgrade a friend of mine took me out to see the king's country place, saying she would there show me the most beautiful thing in Serbia. I didn't ask what it was, though wondering if it were to be one of their marvelous Pirot rugs or some unusually elaborate embroidery, forgetting that the Austrians and Germans had stolen all valuables.



MRS. PATTERSON

But she led me to an immense

plane tree, on the order of our poplars, and said, "I told you I would show you the loveliest thing in Serbia." And after we walked around under its immense branches and had Turkish coffee in its shade, for the place is now used as a park, I decided she was right. And I simply purred with self-righteousness as I thought of the number of trees I had planted, of the great mimosas full of pink blossoms and fluttering with ruby-throated humming birds, and the magnolias with their white fragrance and the pink crape myrtles,—really if I had had a decoration handy I should have bestowed it on myself without any more ado! If you are a tree lover and tree planter, here is a little poem for you to memorize:

"What does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants cool shade and tender rain,
And seed and bud of days to be,
And years that fade and flush again
He plants the glory of the plain;
He plants the forest's heritage;
The harvest of a coming age;
The joy that unborn eyes shall see—
These things he plants who plants a tree.

"What does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants in sap and leaf and wood,
In love of home and loyalty
And far cast thought of civic good—
His blessing on the neighborhood
Who in the hollow of His hand
Holds all the growth of all the land.
A nation's growth from sea to sea
Stirs in his heart who plants a tree."

I am sorry I do not know the name of the author, for he deserves to be kept in memory.

* * *

All entertaining overseas is of the plain living, high thinking order, for food is still something to sustain life, not just for feasting. But the cosmopolitan character of the company is too fascinating for words. There will be a sprinkling of Americans, then English, French, Russians and Serbs. The English language is

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mostly spoken out of deference for the Americans who as a rule are in a class by themselves when it comes to ignorance of any language but their own. There is no gossip, no local chat, but as the company is composed of a set of men and women chosen for certain qualifications that fit them for overseas duty, the conversation takes a wide range,—indeed the whole world comes under survey by the talkers, who have come from the ends of the earth and who give their experiences and explain conditions that are kept out of press news for the sake of the peace of the world. Happenings that you were never able to understand are explained by the men who took part. Generals and statesmen are sized up mercilessly or defended by placing facts before you,—the battles that were lost through treachery, the bribes that were refused, the matchless courage of the nurses as they fought the terrible typhus epidemic until they themselves fell victims, the strange beliefs and customs of the peasants, and in between it all the continuous questioning as to America's attitude concerning the Peace Treaty, for they feel that unless America signs that this awful war will have to be fought all over again. It was thrilling. All books on the subject now seem tame to me, because writers on European politics these days have to be very careful what they say.

* * *

At first I was puzzled to know what to wear. I knew the women had been over there so long their evening clothes were old or worn out, and I didn't think it would look well for me to go surging in with my new ones, so at first I stuck to my uniform. But one night I was so tired I changed, and never have I had an evening dress given such an ovation. One woman summed up the feeling, "Praise the saints for some real clothes to look at once more!" The uniforms as a rule were becoming, with the exception of that of the Scotch nurses, which was the ugliest thing I have ever laid eyes on, and seemingly was chosen for the same reason that the old woman selected a dark blue china tea set—"It wouldn't show dirt." It was a dismal, dark gray and made to make the wearer look like a sack.

But I suppose they thought it was a case of "Pretty is that pretty does," for no set of women nurses left the magnificent record that the Scotch nurses did. Shot and shell and pestilence and death found the Scotch nurse at the post of danger—cheerful, capable, faithful. I visited them out on the bleak mountain sides where they lived in their hospital tents where they were fighting to save tuberculous children and wounded soldiers, the tent sittingroom made homelike with photographs from home, old magazines and Pirot rugs.

We gathered around a plank table and had tea together, and they told me thrilling stories of the heroism of the Serb soldiers, but not a word of what they themselves had done and suffered. That I heard from others. And you will find that to be characteristic of nearly all overseas workers—they will not tell you of what they did or suffered. Their praise is always given to another.

W. D. J.: Crimson clover sowed in February will in all probability be a failure. Your best plan will be to hold these seed over now until next September and sow them. If they are kept dry and in good shape, you will probably get fair germination from them at that time.

Physician—You had a pretty close call. It's only your strong constitution that pulled you through.

Patient—I hope you will remember that when you make out your bill.

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