

With the New Zealand Hospital at Salonika.

Our first three months at Salonika were intensely interesting. We were located at the Lembet camp, about three miles from the city, and from the hill where we were situated had an opportunity of witnessing the gradual change in the configuration of the country as the armies of the allies arrived. At the time of our landing the famous 10th Division, which achieved renown at Suvla Bay, was practically the only section of the British army in Salonika, with the exception of course of the Ordnance and other Depts. which were forming here and there. Shortly afterwards many battalions of famous regiments arrived, and the countryside which had been calm & peaceful, was turned into a huge military camp. Defensive positions were taken up on all the hills surrounding the city of Salonika, and all day long there echoed and re-echoed the sounds of the explosions in the hills, where these works were being pushed on. It was here that we met our worthy comrades in arms - the French - ~~and-were~~ whose camps extended out on the plain beyond our hill position.

British Engineers were faced with and overcame tremendous difficulties at Salonika. There were confronted with trackless hills, narrow badly formed roads, and flimsy bridges, but thanks to their splendid work, roads were formed properly, bridges were strengthened, and a thousand other works accomplished. In a short time the maze of wires which extended all over the countryside told of the perfecting of the communications to the units holding positions further out, and the remarkable speed with which the roads into the country were built was a revelation to us. Within a few weeks of the time of our arrival the roar of traffic from the Serres Road just out from our camp, was continuous. Great motor lorries, mule trains, ammunition columns and others rolled by in a seemingly never ending stream, while as one watched it the primitive Greek carts & transport could be seen here and there. Field bakeries, large detail issue stores and the host of other departments which come in the lines of communication sprung up, but the best of order and discipline prevailed everywhere.

The country of Macedonia is different to anything we know in New Zealand. The most primitive methods of agriculture are followed and the flocks of goats and sheep which wandered about the hills were a striking contrast to the sheep of our own country. We arrived in the autumn time, just as the last of the wild flowers were passing and within a few weeks winter set in with a vengeance. The first fall of snow came within a fortnight of our landing, and at other times during the winter there were other falls of a ~~greater~~- heavier nature than this one. Opportunity was taken by almost all to go out into the country, and the evidences of the times of long ago, which were to be seen on all hands, were most interesting. The valleys between the hills were terraced, and covered with grape vines, while the little villages which lay here and there were picturesque in the extreme. It was evident, however, that much poverty prevailed, and refugees were met with everywhere. On both sides of the road leading towards the Lembet camp were the shelters which had been erected by the Greek government at the time of the last Balkan war, and these were occupied by many thousands of the refugees from this war. Much assistance to these people was rendered by the British Government, who employed thousands of them on road construction and other works. In our own camp, we had about 60 of these people road making for some months, but found that they were not of much assistance in anything which required manual effort.

We were fortunate in having attached to our unit at Salonika, as Chaplain, the Rev. Kay, D.D., Professor of Ancient Languages at St. Andrew's university, Scotland. He was able to tell us much of the ancient history of the land of Macedonia (or Thessalonica of Biblical days), and on various occasions throughout the winter he lectured on subjects having relation to the country in which we were living.