NEMARI NIŠTA (IT MATTERS NOTHING):
SIX MONTHS WITH THE SERBS
S. Miles Franklin

CONTENTS

One: GETTING THERE
Two: THERE
Sketch I OUR CAMP
Sketch II RECREATION
Sketch III THE PLIGHT OF THE SERB
Sketch III CAMP CARACTERS
Sketch V MALARIA
Sketch VI OUR HIGHWAY OF CHANCE Villages – Vodena – Voz
Sketch VII SOCIETY – HOSPITALITY
Sketch VIII FEMININITY AT THE FRONT
Sketch IX MUSIC IN MACEDONIA
Sketch X IN THE ORDER OF THE DAY
Sketch XI THE POSITION OF THE SERB
Sketch XII S BOGOM! (GOOD-BYE!) 

These comments of a camp cook upon experiences gained as a voluntary member of the army of the British Red Cross are submitted unpretentiously for what they are worth as a document of the war. With no strain- ing after tragedy nor attempt to picture hardships or adventures, which, comparatively, did not exist for Red Cross workers on the Salonique front
from July 1917 till February 1918, perhaps they may serve to show that black though the clouds, desolate the future, there is still sunshine and laughter.

The references to the Serb are just as the writer met him there and then, without effort to trace his lineage from the Flood, or to re-write his history from the time of Pliny and Ptolemy, which seems to be the convention with writers upon matters Serbian. Among sustaining works such sketches may be acceptable in the relationship of sweets and raisins at a heavy banquet.

In the service of the empire

The siren bugle call of England ringing round the world in 1914 A.D. to rally her children to her was heard with equal clarity by those a-near and those a-far, by those of the fixed belief that the only hope of rescuing the Empire is the rigorous adoption of full-blown Prussianism; by those so faithful to discredited ideals of love and brotherhood that they were irradiate with determination to live the doctrine of non-resistance at the very mouth of the belching cannon; by those alert to wrest emolument and honours while relinquishing not so much as their armchairs or vices; by those offering their lives without recompense to uphold the standards of liberty. They came in millions ‘from every quarter of the globe’. I came among them.

Had modern methods of industrial efficiency deranged those who live under the Union Jack, no doubt there would have been some field awaiting me, such as to sew on buttons or distil proteins from potato peelings, but as a daughter of Liberty I was fully cognisant of making only one more of the millions of women, of whose value John Bull has been ignorant, and consequently left the individual free to experiment and to choose, directed only by the rein of conscience or the dictates of common sense.

Of all the women’s regiments, the famous Scottish Women’s Hospitals appealed to me most, engineered as they are by evolved women, and occupied with intensely human service among different nations. I have rarely met a Scot in any corner of the earth who was not sensible, friendly and so supremely congenial to me that I have always regretted that one of my forebears did not hail from above the Tweed. Here was a chance of repairing by adoption that which was not vouchsafed by inheritance. So I applied. At the end of three months I was called up and found myself in a whirl of preparation. There was the medical officer to pass, two inoculations and a vaccination to be undergone and a trousseau to collect.

Some of the big John Bull departments which have kept would-be Empire savers running around like the dog that grinned in the bible, and