

**NEWS LETTER**

July 1941

After a silence of nearly three months we have this week received a rich mail from Greece, and so we can now share with you the high spots of these letters which tell so vividly and courageously the story of these past months. They also describe the events and conditions which led up to the decision of Mr. and Mrs. Charles House to return to Salonica to carry on the work of the School after the closing of the Red Cross work and the departure of all American diplomatic and consular officers from Greece.

As announced in the last News Letter, we have received several cables which assured us that Mr. and Mrs. House were safe and well, first in Salonica on the 8th of April when the German occupation began, and in Athens on May 10th where they returned to close up the Red Cross offices. This trip to Athens was made by plane in two hours at the invitation of Colonel Rieckhoff, commanding the Air Force in Salonica, who felt the roads were still too bad for them to try to make it by automobile.

Now we will go back and pick up the story where Mrs. House left off in March from Salonica, where they returned just in time to be in their home when the German forces entered the city. Mrs. House's letter is dated June 11: "It's just about two months since I have sent you a letter and two months since any has arrived. It was so good to get the cable from the New York office, which came through long before any other word was received. It came through Berlin and the American Embassy there. Now to go back where I left off on March 19. You probably had my letter saying that we drove back to Salonica on March 23. On March 29 we drove to Koritza in Albania to see Mr. Rodney Young, the young American archeologist (Princeton) who was struck by a piece of bomb while working with a Greek canteen. Shortly after that he was moved to Athens and I visit him frequently in the hospital. While in Koritza we had dinner with General Tserokoglou, who is now Prime Minister of Greece. On April 4, Mr. House drove to Thrace with his assistant Mr. Paul Thorn, and Mr. Harry Hill, to make plans for giving relief in those areas. He returned to the Farm on April 6, the day before Germany declared war on Greece. Mr. Thorn and Mr. Hill returned immediately to Athens so that all three would not be in Macedonia when it was occupied. On April 8, Dr. and Mrs. Riggs of Anatolia College, Miss Meverett Smith of the Near East Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. George Gardner and two children of the American Farm School, and Mr. Arthur Lanckton of the Standard Oil Co., left in two cars only missing the blowing up of the last bridge by two hours. They had just two hours notice, and as they were about to leave there was another air raid alarm and we all had to go into the shelter. It was hard to let them go and it was almost too much for me when little Lucy Ann Gardner, who was sitting on my lap while her mother packed, said to me: 'Where is Lucy Ann going?' 'To Athens', I replied. 'And where is Aunt Ann going?' she asked. 'Aunt Ann is staying here?' I said. 'Then Lucy Ann stay too!' she replied, putting her arms around my neck.

"The very next morning the German Army moved into Salonica, and all was quiet. We have been so thankful so many times that we stayed. That very first day Mr. House called on the German Consul General and the High Commanding Officer and was assured of their co-operation, and so he was able to do a great deal to help. With the funds in hand he was able to arrange the continuation of work relief to some 500 poor women, the distribution of clothing to the destitute, medical service, the opening of a hospital

for wounded soldiers, etc., under the auspices of the Greek Red Cross, and it has been a great blessing. Mrs. Papaliaki is in charge of the Red Cross having to do with the nursing and the prisoners of war, and she has been so grateful for Mr. House's counsel and help. I took charge of organizing the giving out of children's clothing and it has been a most moving experience.

"On the 18th of April the Farm was requisitioned but none of the farm activities were disturbed in any way. The soldiers are many of them farm boys and so much interested in the school and especially in the way it was started. Many of them have said: 'Dr. House was a very wonderful man. He had the right spirit.' The officers, too, have been considerate and very appreciative of the beauty of the place and the purpose of the School. One Major called it a 'Kleine Paradis'."

Mr. House is making plans for nation-wide child feeding stations. He writes: "I have been assembling the facts and writing a report on the problem of child welfare in Greece. The picture is very grave and I hope very much that it may contribute to some concerted effort in behalf of Greek children. The outlook for all of Greece is very grave. There is very little food left in the country and responsible people everywhere are in despair."

A week later, on June 18, Mrs. House writes: "Mr. Paul Thorn has been sent to Geneva. The American Red Cross headquarters are to be closed and we will return to the Farm to live. The school is now to be run as an agricultural enterprise. The men in responsible positions in the practical departments have been retained, but the teachers of the academic department have been dropped. We have been able to make arrangements for them so that it doesn't mean undue hardship and they have been very understanding. We are hoping that we will be able to open the school as usual in the Fall but it will necessarily have to be on a different scale, perhaps as a purely practical school. The meteorological station, first started by Dr. House, is to become a first class station much enlarged, under the Governor; Mr. Bodouroglou, of our staff, is to have charge of it. They are so happy to be able to remain at the Farm. All our supervisors came back safely except Mr. Photiades, cashier at the school after his father's death. He had a nervous breakdown and died after a very short illness. Mr. Demeter Hadjis was one of the first to get back. Mr. House and Mr. Litsas, Assistant Director while Mr. House was with the Red Cross, called on the General who will live at the Farm, and his Adjutant assured us that there would be no reason for not opening the school in the Fall.

"You will be interested to know that the German and Austrian soldiers, our Greek supervisors (recently returned) and the English and Australian prisoners all play football on our playground after work hours, and then all go into the Finley pool for a swim. The prisoners are all so eager to come to the Farm to work that their guards have them draw lots for the privilege, for they can't all come. Anna, Elsie and Elizabeth, daughters of our staff, with Miss Aletheia Pattison, went to the hospital nearby with flowers; the girls have raised money and made sandwiches, rice pudding, etc. for the wounded of all three nations, and when there were Italians they were remembered too. Col. Rieckhoff, head of the Air Force quartered at the Farm, said that the babies and children in town must have their milk and he gave us an order which we posted at the dairy not permitting the soldiers to take it."

On June 21, Mrs. House writes: "Our American correspondents are leaving by plane on Monday, and others will be leaving soon now that all the U.S. consulates are to be closed. Our Minister to Greece, Mr. Lincoln MacVeagh, his wife and daughter, left about two weeks ago. In spite of all that Mrs. MacVeagh had to do before leaving, she thought of Mr. House's love of coffee and left two cans for him. The Americans were able to buy the foodstuffs they left, so we are living high and able to have company, Mr. George Weller of the Chicago Daily News, and Mr. Gallagher of the Associated Press,

for lunch today. We are both fine, much thinner, of course, everybody is, but I am glad we've decided to stay on here no matter what happens.

"I realized," she continues, "how the other half lives during the few weeks after we returned to Athens, for I didn't have a supply of food on hand and the amounts of bread, sugar, rice, macaroni, etc. that could be bought with our food ration cards for a month were only about enough for a week. For example, I stood in line 2½ hours for half a cup of coffee even a month ago, and it hasn't been possible to get any more since. For my food card I had to wait in line 9 hours (2 days) but the second day I carried a little chair and a book and sat in comfort while I waited. The suffering of those who have nothing ahead and very little money is indescribable.

"The other day we had a request from some British prisoners for some prayer books and Bibles and hymn books. Mr. House bought up all the English Bibles he could find in Athens and I went to the English Church, which has been closed since the occupation, and collected some of the hymn books from the pews. They were sent to the prisoners by the representative of the International Red Cross (Geneva), who is now here in Athens."

On June 26, Mr. House writes: "In a week or two we plan to return to the Farm and stay there. There will be plenty to do there which I hope will help in these hard times. It is always sad to wind up an activity such as the American Red Cross work, which has been looked to by so many people as a symbol of hope. The work has been interesting and I have had a greater opportunity than ever before of seeing the country, its people and its problems."

"I am grateful," Mr. House writes to one of the Trustees, "to have become more completely familiar with this country and its people, whom I have grown to love so deeply. Suffering must inevitably be very great but in spite of this and even perhaps because of it, I am full of hope and faith for the future. From the view I get of things that are transpiring, my emotions and feelings are moved by sorrow and sympathy but my heart is at peace in the faith that however long the night the dawn is coming when through our suffering we will see better the true values of life. This better understanding will increase the importance of education, such as our school is carrying on, and which conforms to Christ's example and teachings."

Ethel H. Bliss

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\* The American Farm School during the past forty years has had an unbroken record \*  
\* of service throughout the period. Its spiritual vitality is such that we confi- \*  
\* dently believe it will emerge from the present war stronger than ever to carry on \*  
\* the kind of service it was organized to render. In the meantime, those of us here \*  
\* in America must support the loyal men and women at the School who are struggling to \*  
\* meet the daily war problems as they arise. We have not only a moral, but perhaps a \*  
\* legal obligation, to continue to pay the salaries of the teachers even though their \*  
\* teaching service at the School has been temporarily interrupted. There are other \*  
\* obligations which will also have to be met. Mr. House has reported to the Trustees \*  
\* that he needs \$10,000, and that these funds will take care of emergency obligations \*  
\* and put the School in a position to resume its work in the coming months. \*

\* We believe that all friends of the School will be glad to know that the work \*  
\* will continue its practical assistance to the people of Greece in their great need, \*  
\* and will help us to meet this obligation. \*

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