

NEWS LETTER

June - 1947

This brings good news to you from Greece. In spite of the difficulties which beset that country, in spite of the fact that the School is situated in Macedonia, the center of strife, "I am thankful to say," writes Mr. House, "that as far as the daily life of the School is concerned, you would never imagine that there is anything abnormal going on in the countryside."

This does not mean that the boundaries of the School can keep out tragedy. Barely a month ago the father of one of the boys, who was president of his village, was killed, and news of loss of a member of the family, or loss of a home, all too frequently comes to the boys and girls of the School. But their courage is high, and they square their young shoulders to carry adult responsibilities. One boy writes: "I came for learning farming at this special school . . . and I have great faith that some day I will be a useful farmer and citizen because there is nothing better than that." While one boy is in school, his widowed mother works the family vineyard, and he is intent on learning all he can so that he can take his father's place and help his younger brothers and sisters. Another boy writes: "Two boys from our village graduated from the School. My father heard of the School and did his best to send me here. I pray for the Director and those who help me to be here."

A constant stream of visitors comes to the School, many of them children; Scouts, Girl Guides, school children. Forty young men, studying to be village school teachers, recently ended a five-day course of special training in boy scouting; 100 Girl Scout leaders attended a training course at the School during the Easter vacation. Mark Etheridge, head of the American delegation of the United Nations Inquiry Commission, did not leave Greece before he had visited the School, nor did Paul Porter, head of the Economic Commission. General Down, in charge of all the British forces in Greece, and his wife have been at the Farm and many UNRRA officials. In fact, it seems that no important visitor to Greece feels that his visit has been complete unless he has seen the American Farm School. Such is its importance in Greece. Through all these people, who know it at first hand, its influence is being broadened and deepened.

"To visitors, young and old," a letter says, "our cows, pigs, and chickens are a source of great interest. There are almost always from 25 to 50 little pigs, and 10 to 20 little calves, and now, of course, there are hundreds of little chicks. . . Grain in the wheat field stands three feet high (in April) . . . the almond trees are loaded with young almonds. . . the silk worms are already being fed. . .

"Every day villagers are coming to buy our young pigs; we have had a request for three to go to the island of Chios. There is a great deal of interest on the part of farmers to learn to drive the tractors which have been brought into the country by UNRRA; one farmer has come three times to urge that we start a course for teaching tractor driving and care."

Mrs. House writes of taking some visitors to the Girls' School: "The girls were just coming in from their work for supper; the groups from the vegetable gardens were singing as they walked along with their hoes and spades over their shoulders; the chicken coops and runs and the rabbit hutches and pig-pens were all beautifully clean

and tidy. The girls took us through the school, showing us three things with pride - the dress patterns that each one had made to fit herself, the school baby who is getting quite rosy and chubby, and their home-cured bacon from one of their pigs. I wish that the Friends could see their girls."

Integrated with American methods, American games, American machinery, at the School, are age-old Greek customs. "We opened a new well up at the reservoir. We made a big circle around the well, starting the exercises with the hymn 'Christ Has Risen!'; then a Psalm was read in English and Greek, Charlie offered a prayer, and we sang the School Song. Then, as is the custom of the country, I handed a big white cock (alive) to the foreman and shook hands with all three workmen; as I handed the cock to the chief, there was a great fluttering of wings as the boys released a number of pigeons which had been hidden until the proper moment - the symbol of carrying the good news of water in a dry land."

At a friend's suggestion, we have prepared a card inscribed:

In Remembrance
A tree has been planted at the
American Farm School, Thessalonica, Greece
As a living memorial to

.....
The Gift of

Executive office
17 East 42nd Street, N. Y. 17

If you like this idea, and would rather have a tree planted than send flowers to express your sympathy and sorrow to the family of a friend you have lost, let us know if you have occasion to use it. The card can be sent directly from this office to the person you indicate, if you will give us the necessary information, or we can send it to you. A tree will be planted on the Farm with a memorial plaque bearing the name. The cost will be \$5.00.

The latest word from Mrs. House about packages for the School, is that there is a uniform Greek customs charge of \$1.00 per package, when the contents are not new, regardless of size. The simplest way for the sender to meet that charge is to send the money to this office where it will be allocated for that purpose. The maximum weight allowed by our Post Office is 22 pounds, maximum measurement (length and girth) 72 inches. The rate is 14¢ a pound.

In September, the third class of boys will enter. In greater numbers than ever, they are seeking admission, and the decision to accept or refuse each particular applicant is a difficult one. To many, admission to the School is their one sure hope for the future. To some it means life itself. The School is an oasis of peace in a desert of turmoil, where many boys for the first time experience life without fear or hatred. Boys from right, left, and center groups work and play together in peace, the fruit of the spirit of Christian brotherhood which is the mainspring of the School.

Elizabeth Alcott Shepard

Mrs. Lawrence H. Shepard
Executive Secretary