

CHRISTMAS DAY IN GALICIA, 1916.

We are only two English Sisters (or rather one Scotch and one Irish) in the small-pox "barak" in Tlusta, a small town in Galicia, but we determined to have as good a time as was possible under the circumstances. The other members of our household—a Russian Sister who acts as our housekeeper, the young Austrian doctor (really only a two years' medical student), and our clerk, all celebrate their Christmas on the Russian date, thirteen days later than ours.

There was no exchange of presents (shops being conspicuous by their absence here), except of English and Russian money as "luck money," so the Russian Sister, who speaks a good deal of English, called it.

We were kept busy all the morning in the hospital, which happens to be full (twenty patients) just when we would not mind if it had been a little slacker; but we managed to find time to go to the Polish R.C. church here. We did not stay long as it was packed to overflowing, and when others came in the crush and pushing were more like that at the early doors of the theatre than in church.

After lunch we prepared for our dinner-party. We had made the plum pudding a couple of weeks before, but there were cakes to be iced, the turkey to be stuffed, &c. Neither of us had ever stuffed a turkey before, and we were not quite sure which end was the proper place for it, but we thought the chest, and I believe we were right. We laid the table also ourselves, as our two "housemaids" are two young Galician boys, who looked fine in white overalls, and waited splendidly on the whole. We decorated the table with ivy dug out from under the snow, and the room itself was very festive with several small Christmas trees. We had twenty in the house altogether, one even at the head of each of our beds. This, by the way, was *not* our doing, needless to say.

We were visited during the day by parties of boys dressed up, some to represent Herod and the wise men, others the shepherds. To make the latter more real one boy represented a ram, and looked very comical. They sang and spoke parts which I'm sure we would have enjoyed if we could have understood a word of it, but it was all in Polish. Sister got some of them to pose for a photograph, and thoroughly they enjoyed it. As I write another party of six have visited me in my bedroom (without a "by your leave") and gone through their drama for my sole benefit.

Our dinner was quite a success, the turkey, including the stuffing and plum pudding, being quite homelike. We invited the Commandant, who is the principal man in the town, the "Chief of the district" (I am not quite sure what that is really), a Russian doctor, and two Russian Sisters. At the last moment the Commandant failed us, owing to illness, and the doctor, owing to a press of work. We were particularly disappointed about the latter, as he had promised us some brandy to fire the plum pudding, and to drink to "Absent

Friends." We had to toast them in coffee, the strongest drink we could produce, alcoholic drinks being impossible to buy.

The chief of the district is an ex-opera singer with a glorious baritone voice, so he did most of the entertaining. Our grand piano has been rescued from some ruins. Some of the notes are soundless, most of the ivory has gone from them, and the whole is terribly out of tune. Nevertheless we got some good fun out of it. We had some dancing and we gave the Russians a lesson in the Scotch Reel.

Our guests went soon after ten o'clock, and all said they had greatly enjoyed their first English Christmas dinner. We are a branch of the Epidemic hospital in Zaleschiki, twenty versts away. They will have been a much larger party but I doubt if they managed to have a better time than we did.

Our patients are all peasants from surrounding districts, and as none of them spoke of yesterday as being their Christmas, I presume they all celebrate it on the Russian date. We mean to give them as good a time as is possible, though it is hard to get anything here in this small place. We will probably have a Christmas tree with some little thing for each and an extra good dinner.

Nursing small-pox is not an enjoyable pastime, but it is an experience I am glad to have had. We hope the epidemic will soon be stamped out. We have been open nearly two months, have had forty-two patients and four deaths, all from black small-pox, of which we had several cases at first. When we took over the building which was destined for our hospital, there were no doors or windows, and horses were stabled in it, but soon we had it quite like a hospital. We take it in turns to come here two at a time, and never stay for more than a fortnight.

WOUNDED ALLIES RELIEF COMMITTEE.

Concerning last year's work of the Wounded Allies' Relief Committee, 8, Grosvenor Gardens, S.W., some interesting facts are reported. At the Committee's Branch of the Kensington War Hospital Supply Depot, 176, Cromwell Road, South Kensington, no less than 383,500 hospital requisites were made, and from these 170 consignments have been sent to over 120 hospitals. During the year the Committee have sent to the allied countries the following: To Belgium, motor operating theatre, two bath caravans, two hospital tents, one case of games each to nineteen Belgian hospitals; to France, three motor ambulances, bandages, splints, hospital clothing and special grants of warm clothing; to Portugal, bandages, splints, hospital clothing; to Russia, four motor ambulances, quantities of splints, bandages, and hospital clothing; to Roumania, drugs, surgical appliances and hospital requisites, to the value of £600; to Serbia (in addition to stores and one motor ambulance sent to the Committee's hospital at Vodena, Greece), one motor car and large quantities of splints, bandages, and hospital clothing.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)