

RED CROSS WORK IN RUMANIA.

In the summary of the work for November of the Joint War Committee the first annual report of work in Rumania appears, received from Captain D. C. L. Fitzwilliams, Officer Commanding the British Red Cross Unit on the work of the Prince Mircea Hospital, Roman. Having described the arrival of the unit at Jassy on November 25th, 1916, and its transfer to Roman, where the ground floor of the existing hospital was handed over to the unit on the suggestion of the Queen of Rumania, he says:—

"The British Red Cross began work in Roman in December, but only took over the hospital formally on January 1st, 1917. Shortly after this date the unit lost some of its members through illness, and some twelve returned home, leaving thirteen to carry on the work.

"It was the time when the great Rumanian retreat was going on. Wounded poured into the town, and the hospitals were all overcharged, two in a bed, three in two beds placed close together, and even five in three beds, while others slept on the floor. The numbers accommodated in our part of the hospital ranged sometimes over and sometimes under 300. Nursing was almost impossible in the circumstances. The cases were all surgical.

"The hospital had to be run upon the most economical scale as such numbers had not been counted on. Dressing material lacked sadly everywhere, and sawdust dressings prepared by the staff were introduced and largely used. Very luckily the stores sent by the British Red Cross arrived at this time, and supplied the hospital with sterilisers, operating tables, blankets, cotton wool, gauze, &c. Even then, with resources so limited, the B.R.C. was able to relieve the wants of many neighbouring hospitals in the matter of dressings, splints, bed-jackets, shirts, operating stockings, and, above all, chloroform, which the surgical hospitals lacked almost completely, so upset was the organisation by the catastrophe through which the country was passing.

"Soon after this the cold of the Rumanian winter struck the country. The temperature fell at night to 25 and 30 degs. below zero centigrade. The fighting stopped as if by magic, the rifles being too cold to touch. Then began that miserable stream of men frozen in the trenches, with hands and feet dead, or nearly so, and again the surgeons were busy. At the same time, owing to the huddling together of men for the sake of warmth, insufficiently clad and very poorly fed, louse infection began to make its appearance, and typhus and relapsing fever commenced their ravages. It is useless to attempt to picture the misery. Regiments with organisation lost a half of their effectives; whole villages with no organisation were inhabited only by children, the adults lay dead and unburied. And still the country clung to the hope of victory. The hospital, though surgical in name,

had now to accommodate hundreds of infectious cases. The relapsing fever cases were kept, the typhus cases were sent to the hospitals hastily provided for the purpose, which at Roman were largely equipped by the B.R.C. In February the strain under which the unit had been placed by the loss of its members was partly compensated for by the Russian authorities, who kindly lent us some sisters and sanitars.

"With the advent of the spring the work grew lighter. There was then time for the more thorough organisation of the hospital. Where necessary it was repainted, and the additions which had been going on slowly all the time were now finished.

"The Queen visited the hospital twice, and after her second visit the whole hospital was handed over to the care of the B.R.C., which then had a hospital of over 500 beds. A large barrack was then built to accommodate the *personnel*, which numbers about 130, so that there should be more room for the wounded.

"In July the great offensive began, and since that date the hospital has been continuously full of wounded. Only severely wounded are sent, the lightly wounded being sent elsewhere. An estimate of the present work of the hospital is found in the fact that 1,193 cases were admitted in the last three months. Russians, French, and English, and prisoners of varied nationalities, as well as Rumanians, have been admitted to the hospital. The X-ray apparatus has proved invaluable, though it only arrived in June. Not only has it done all the work of the hospital but that of all the other hospitals in the town and district.

"The work has naturally told heavily on the Sisters, of whose energy and cheerfulness under great difficulties too much cannot be said. The work of the Matron has been by far the most trying, owing to the lack of education, energy and initiative of the Rumanian peasant, who makes up the bulk of the *personnel*. Considerable pains have been taken to make the hospital a model of a modern military hospital, as an example of what can be done with a small amount of material, but a good deal of energy, and, above all, good will."

The War Pensions Joint Advisory Committee are opening an orthopædic sub-centre at Brighton, and training in lip reading will be taught at the deaf and dumb school there, and at the Royal School for the Deaf at Margate.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

We hope the present Hon. Officers and Members of the Royal British Nurses' Association will carefully read the aims of its Founders as set forth in our Paper, "A Practical Standard of Nursing," in part republished this week, after twenty years. It may not have been written in vain after all!

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)