

Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson, wife of Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, Governor-General of Australia, has forwarded to the Lord Mayor of London £1,000 from Western Australia, £700 from Tasmania, and £200 from Hay (New South Wales), for the "France's Day Fund," which sums were collected by local centres of the Australian branch of the British Red Cross Society, of which Lady Helen is the President.

The suggestion of Lord Northcliffe that funds shall be found to pay for visits to Switzerland of the wives of prisoners now enjoying a blessed change from German barbarity, has caught on. Mr. Fenwick Harrison is sending fifty, and Lord Derby and others are providing funds for this trip. Imagine the pure joy of these soldiers and their hard-working, devoted wives and mothers when once more they meet after all the terrible grief, anxiety and suffering to which they have been subjected during this terrible war. We heard a poor woman exclaim, "Bless the Lord!"; "Which?" we asked, "Why Northcliffe o'course," she replied with spirit.

#### BRITISH INTERNED IN SWITZERLAND.

"Excuse me, are you an English Sister?" With these words I was accosted in one of the principal streets in Berne, in the course of a ten days' rest from a hospital in the French Army zone.

Upon my reply in the affirmative I was informed, to my joy and surprise, that my interrogator was a British prisoner, who had been captured after being wounded and gassed in the battle of Ypres, and after many months of the usual hardship in Germany, had been invalided to Switzerland, first to Château d'Œx and later passed on to light clerical work in the British Red Cross offices at Berne.

He had two tales to unfold, and this he did with great eagerness. First, the tale of the gentle courtesy and kindly consideration of the Swiss people, and secondly, the hard unspeakable barbarity of the Boches.

The former is felt on every hand in Switzerland, and may be further illustrated by two facts, small in themselves. One is, the enthusiasm with which concerts, &c., "to the honour of the prisoners English," are received in Switzerland, and secondly, the reverent attitude and subsequent great acclamation with which the playing of the English National Anthem on a pleasure steamboat was received.

Of the latter, the boy tells that a few weeks after being severely gassed, and when, as war nurses know by experience, very little improvement can have taken place, he was put to work in coal mines; here for some time he suffered from the agonising feeling of imminent suffocation before a change of work was thought necessary. The food given was impossible even for a healthy man, both in quality and quantity; sleeping accommodation was revolting. He adds that it

was only the food received through English sources\* that kept them alive. Further, he says that the various tales of harshness and petty persecutions and insults aimed at Englishmen, as English, cannot be exaggerated, because they are simply inexpressible.

He spoke feelingly of the joy with which they hear that they are among the selected for transfer to Switzerland, and their sorrow at leaving others behind in Germany.

Château d'Œx, a place beautifully situated just above Lake Lemán, supplying beautiful mountain air and glorious views of the lake mountains, with the aid of generous care bestowed by those responsible, proves to be an excellent and very happy recuperating ground. Here, in spite of the few military rules which must be in vogue in dealing with a number of men, under these conditions, the life is one of freedom; far removed from the usual fate of the prisoner. In Berne the men experience yet more freedom, are allowed to wear civilian dress, and beyond giving a weekly report of themselves, may go about in the city at will.

And they are very proud of their part in the work of the British section of the "Bureau de secours aux prisonniers de Guerre," the headquarters, as the title suggests, of a wonderful organisation for supplying British prisoners in Germany with food and clothing. The committee undertakes to send parcels of various supplies, according to the needs of the individual, such articles including, in food—bread, dripping, chocolate, tea, condensed milk, cocoa, sugar, Quaker oats, jam, cheese, biscuits, soup tablets, Liebig, and extract of malt and cod liver oil; in the way of clothing—shirts, vests, drawers, socks, towels, handkerchiefs, and also such commodities as tooth pastes, sponges, soap, tobacco, &c.

Experience has proved that the chief need is bread, and of this an average of 5,000 parcels of 4 lb. each are despatched weekly, and usually take only five days in transit. I am informed that in case of delayed delivery the Germans are swift to show their honesty (?) by returning to the Bureau bread which has become uneatable!

The various packing rooms are a marvel of order and method, which need to be seen to be appreciated at their full worth.

Paper and correct lengths of string are prepared in the evening, so that on the following day parcels may be sent off with all possible despatch. The work is practically all paid labour, as difficulty is experienced in getting sufficiently dependable voluntary labour.

This great and useful organisation ought to call forth much gratitude from the British public towards the originators of the scheme and to those who so generously and skilfully give of themselves for the organisation which makes an effectual agent for the rendering of the necessities of life to those who have given their all for the safety of us and of our beloved Empire.

AMY PHIPPS.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)