

## THE BELGIAN CANAL BOAT FUND.

(Letters received by Miss Newcomb in reply to parcels and money sent by her).

17-19, James Street,  
Oxford Street, W.

The Belgian Canal Boat Fund (which in Belgium goes by the name of L'Oeuvre des Cantines Scolaires) is supplying a real need. The condition of the children behind the firing line is truly pitiable. Many of them for want of safe shelter were forced to live in the trenches with the soldiers. They had very little clothing and insufficient food.

The Belgian Government have taken a large number of these children and established them with their teachers in various Chateaux in Northern France given over for that purpose.

The Belgian Canal Boat Fund have undertaken to feed and clothe a colony of 120 little girls at Chateau les Vieux Le Paulu in charge of Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. There is also a colony of 80 boys at St. Jacques-sur-Darnetal, which looks to the Belgian Canal Boat Fund for boots and clothing for the little fellows, who have scarcely anything to protect them from the winter cold.

At Furnes, the Fund has undertaken the feeding of 300 children who have not yet been removed from the danger zone. It is here that Mrs Innes-Taylor, Miss McNeill and Miss Saunders are in charge of our depot. Every day they prepare and serve out the mid-day meal, and the Goute to these 300 children. On account of the danger of bombardment by day, the children are taken out to two huts at a little distance from the town. One of these huts is used as a school and the other as a dining room.

When the sound of bombardment becomes very loud, Mrs Innes-Taylor tells us that the children start singing to drown the noise. One day a bomb fell near the huts, much to the consternation of everyone. No harm however was done.

Last time they were not so fortunate. A bomb dropped from a Taube into Furnes, and injured both Miss McNeill and Miss Saunders. They were conveyed to the hospital at Le Panne, where they are doing well and hope soon to be back at work.

The children at Furnes, like those in Northern France, have to be provided with warm clothes and boots for

the weather is intensely cold, and there is much rain. There are also women and old people who are being helped through our Fund.

Twenty old couples of between 60 to 80 have no blankets for their beds, and clothing of all kinds, new or old, is badly needed.

(Letter from Mrs Innes-Taylor).

Furnes, October 7th, 1915.

Dear Mrs Adamson,

You cannot imagine the delight of the parents at having their children in safety all day long, and the poor ones at the thought of the good meal each day. The children's appetites are big, especially the boys. There are 86 children (boys and girls) from 5-7 in the juvenile class, all the boys salute and the girls curtsy as they come into the refectory, each child holding its fingers to its lip so as not to speak. When all are seated prayers are said, and the instant the final amen is spoken, there is a deafening rattle of spoons on the enamel plates. We stand at the ends of the tables and serve; it takes about an hour and a quarter to serve the two batches. We have got some fine trenches along the side of the school, and when the firing is very severe we shall put all the children there.

Yesterday and the day before we had more shelling than was comfortable, but fortunately the shells fell about 400 yards away from us. The first day we made all the children sing so that they should not notice the whistling of the shells, but it went on so long we took them out of the school and played games with them in the yard. Generally they leave school at 5, but when we are being bombarded we keep them until all danger is passed. To-morrow we start giving clothes, etc., to the children who are most in need of them. To-day we received a visit from M. Helleputte, who was delighted with everything, and most grateful. He was accompanied by M. Pyle, the Bourgemestre of Furnes, who thanked us in the name of the town of Furnes, and asked me to thank the committee and contributors who have so generously helped our fund. The people here cannot do enough to show their gratitude.

We have already a good many poor people whom we clothe, and amongst whom we distribute small quantities of cereals weekly, also condensed milk to babies and sick people, fresh milk being almost impossible to secure, and

we have some consumptive patients who depend absolutely on the milk supplied by us.

The weather is getting very cold, and there are many without blankets.

You have no idea how damp it is in Flanders. A woman came yesterday with six children, her house had been destroyed and they sleep in a stable and have no covering. I clothed the children and gave them 3 quilts. I will now tell you how we arrange the meals. The day we give a Hotch Potch we use 100 kilos potatoes (given by the government) six pounds of bully-beef, 30 loaves of bread, six tins of syrup, 12 tins of condensed milk (for a drink). Coal is given by the Government. The children have Hotch Potch twice a week, pea soup once, bean soup once, cabbage soup once, quaker oats once. Syrup twice a week, jam twice, butter twice, cocoa once, coffee twice, milk 3 times. If you can keep up the supplies as they are now we can manage splendidly.

We are a few miles from the fighting line, and constantly under fire, trying to continue the education of young Belgium. Surely people will listen to such an appeal and give freely. We have just had a pretty serious accident a few yards from our shop. A soldier brought an unexploded shell from the trenches and tried to empty it. The result was one killed and three wounded.

I want to tell you about Mlle. Hei. When I arrived at Furnes six weeks ago, she came to see if she could do anything to help us. She is a daughter of a very well-known deputy. Without her I could never have got things so quickly in working order; she worked day and night with us, and lent us everything she could, and went round begging plates and dishes from house to house. The people of Furnes are devoted to her. She has just been decorated by King Albert for her courage, as since the beginning of the war she has worked at Furnes station, last winter caring for the wounded, and she was the only person—man or woman—who stayed in the station whilst it was being shelled, and helped those in the train which caught fire when the town was so severely shelled. She helped the wounded in the streets, and even helped bury the dead.

We have a cat, and we need it with all our flour and stores. I hope to be able to write a full account of the progress of the work every week.