

The Times - 31/5/1916

CAPTIVES FROM GERMANY.

BRITISH ARRIVALS IN SWITZERLAND.

GREAT WELCOME TO OUR INVALIDS.

In accordance with the arrangement come to by the British and German Governments the first batch of British wounded and invalid captives from Germany arrived in Switzerland yesterday. Their triumphal progress and kindly reception by the Swiss are described in the dispatch from our Special Correspondent, which we print below.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

BERNE, MAY 30, 1 A.M.

The first train bringing the eagerly-awaited British prisoners from Constance, 304 all told, including 32 officers, has just left Zurich, where it made its first prolonged halt on Swiss soil

When we reach Berne we shall have travelled about five hours through German-speaking Switzerland, but, judging from the reception of our men so far, there is no danger of their not understanding that they are very much among friends. From the moment of crossing the frontier the enthusiasm of the welcome all along the route has been wonderful. In the east of Switzerland the Allies may claim to have won a bloodless victory, so complete is the change in the general feeling since the war began. The reception means something more than mere pity for brave fighters, men struck down by the fortune of war. Switzerland understands and knows now much that it did not 18 months ago. The strongest sympathy exists for us as well as for the French, and the demand for tickets of admission to the station platform at Zurich this evening was unexampled.

Even before giving the names of the officers released I feel it my duty in the name of England to thank the whole of Switzerland for this latest proof of their kindness to their neighbours. The Government, the military authorities, and Swiss reception committees of Zurich, Château d'Oex, and elsewhere have worked with untiring energy to secure the release of our men and to make them feel at home on arrival, and their official action has been splendidly supported by spontaneous outbursts of personal kindness on the part of the people. There is not the slightest doubt that the same welcome awaits the Russian prisoners, who I have just heard will arrive at the end of June.

When the train arrived at Zurich the platform was crowded with members of the British colony, and the Consulate-General, headed by Sir Cecil Hertslet and many prominent Swiss. Colonel Picot, appointed by the War Office as official *parrain* of all the British prisoners in Switzerland, was waiting to receive our men and make the journey with them to Château d'Oex. During the half-hour's halt the officers were allowed on the platform. All were astonished, delighted, and much touched by the wonderful heartiness of the welcome they received everywhere *en route* as soon as they entered Switzerland, and several officers spoke to me with high appreciation of the courtesy shown them by Prince Max of Baden at Constance.

The following are the names and regiments of the officers who were with the party :—

Col. E. Vansittart, Royal | Capt. Donald Baird-Doug-

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| Col. Maxwell Earle, Grenadier Guards | Capt. David Hill, R.F.A. |
| Lieut.-Col. O. D. Christopher, A.S.C. | Capt. Robert Alexander, 3rd Gurkhas |
| Maj. the Hon. R. B. F. Robertson, 21st Lancers | Capt. Ernest Orford, Suffolk Regt. |
| Maj. R. A. Birley, R.F.A. | Lieut. William Reid, R.F.C. |
| Maj. Ronald Meiklejohn, R. Warwickshires | Lieut. Harold Henderson, Duke of Wellington's Regt. |
| Capt. T. B. Butt, K.O.Y. L.I. | Lieut. Elliot Leybourne, D.L.I. |
| Capt. Ian Henderson, London Scottish | Lieut. D. C. W. Sanders, R.F.A. |
| Capt. Thomas Blackburn, K.O.S.B. | Lieut. Henry le Grand, Intelligence Corps |
| Capt. Cecil Morley, Manchester Regt. | Lieut. Humphrey Goode, R.F.C. |
| Capt. Arthur Hargreaves, Somerset L.I. | Lieut. Charles Turner, Connaught Rangers |
| Capt. Charles Darley, R.F.C. | Lieut. J. W. Reynolds, 8th Lincoln |
| Capt. E. D. Hanly, R. Inniskillings | Lieut. Theodore Dodson, R.N.V.R. (London) |
| Capt. Greville Irwin, S. Lancashire Regt. | Lieut. Kenneth Dennys, Somerset L.I. |
| Capt. C. E. Joliffe, Cheshire Regt. | Subadar Pirthi Sing Rana, 4th Gurkhas |
| Capt. J. Herbert Master, R.W. Surrey | Jemadar Nain Sing Gurung, 4th Gurkhas |

The two Indian officers will go to Leysin; all the rest to Château d'Oex.

FROM BERNE TO MONTREUX.

A TRIUMPHAL PROGRESS.

MONTREUX, MAY 30, 7 A.M.

We reached Berne at 1 o'clock in the morning, and the reception there and at Friburg, Lausanne, and Montreux was overwhelming.

During the two hours' stay at Berne all the officers and men detrained and were entertained at the first of several breakfasts by the Swiss. The very large crowd on the platform included Colonel Hauser, Médecin en Chef of the Swiss Army, and many other officers in uniform. At Fribourg, which was passed at 3.30 a.m., another large crowd was wonderfully enthusiastic.

At Lausanne certainly 10,000 people were in the station at 5 in the morning. The scene was indescribably moving, and none felt it more than our officers and men. "We never expected anything like this," they kept saying, "it's marvellous," "It's incredible," "It's top hole," "Do thank the Swiss for us," "You can't say too much." And I cannot.

Long before we reached Montreux every compartment was overflowing with flowers, cigarettes, flags, chocolates, newspapers, magazines, presents of every kind. On every platform was a mass of cheering people waving flags, handkerchiefs, and hats, and crying "Vive l'Angleterre!" and answered by our men with British hurrahs and handshakes and shouts of "Vive la Suisse!"—that is, when they were not drinking coffee brought into the train by Red Cross ladies.

At Montreux, where several French prisoners and men joined in the greeting, our men were welcomed by a band with the Swiss National Anthem and our own National Anthem, and afterwards "Tipperary" and the Marseillaise, all moving tunes for the British, but never more so than this morning. A sit-down breakfast was given here by the Swiss inhabitants on the terrace front of the Suisse Hotel overlooking the lake, and speeches were made by the Syndic of Montreux, Colonel Picot, and the British Vice-Consul.

As our men walked or limped or were carried one by one down the long flight of steps from the station to the hotel, their caps and tunics covered with flags and flowers, it was a wonderful sight, while the large crowd cheered every man. Our Tommies looked dazed and bewildered, and, most curious of all, shy. "We feel like children," one of them said to me. "After our time in Germany we can't understand it at all." But what they did understand was that they were being treated like old friends.

"Bonne chance, prompt guérison et toute notre admiration" was written on one of the post-cards thrown into the train addressed "Aux défenseurs du droit et de la