

Baltimore Woman Saves Lives Of War Orphans At A Chalet In Swiss Alps

Mary Virginia Barclay, Daughter Of The Late Joseph H. Barclay, D. D., Former Pastor Of First English Lutheran Church, Has Aided Hoover Relief Commission In Caring For Children In Switzerland.

By EMILY EMERSON LANTZ.

AMID Alpine heights of Switzerland, shut in by precipices of the Wetterhorn, Mettenberg and Eiger, between which two famous glaciers flow down, lies Grindelwald, a valley in the Bernese Oberland.

The little hamlet of scattered homes and shops is connected with Interlaken by a rack railway, and is one of the chief resorts in Switzerland for both summer and winter tourists. The valley is very beautiful, a green pastureland for many cattle, and with abundant fruit trees, while upon the heights are perched picturesque chalets in which before the great war travelers found entertainment and that repose which lingers, poets tell us, "above the heights."

One of these mountain domiciles, Chalet Berna, has specific interest for Baltimoreans because here for several months has been carried on, by a Baltimore woman, a most important and beneficent branch of reconstruction work, human reconstruction work—the sheltering, clothing, feeding and teaching of children rendered destitute and starving by the war.

The lady in question is Mrs. Mary Virginia Barclay, daughter of the late Rev. Joseph H. Barclay, D. D., who was at one time pastor of the First English Lutheran Church, of this city. Mrs. Barclay is a woman of vivid personality who, a number of years ago, served as an instructor in a governmental Indian school in the West. Here her work was most successful, so much so that at the end of seven years of teaching the Government granted her a furlough and permission to travel on an American transport to the Philippines, to China and finally to Japan.

In the latter country she was asked to become a teacher in the English and American "Foreign Children's School" in Tokyo, and while in that Oriental city she met, fell in love with and married Richard Herzog, a Hungarian of excellent family and captain in a crack cavalry regiment of the Austrian Army. Her married life was happy until she returned with her husband to his native country, where his family strongly disapproved of the son having married out of his own nationality. Estrangements ensued and the beginning of the great war found her earning her own living in Vienna by teaching, for which avocation she possesses veritable genius. The most aristocratic families of the Austrian capital were glad to secure the services of this experienced American teacher, but in time conditions became very difficult for anyone teaching English in Vienna, and Mrs. Barclay (or Mrs. Herzog, as she then was) returned to America. By the time the United States became involved in the war Captain Herzog had returned to army service, and when Dr. Constantin Theodor Dumba, former Austrian Ambassador to this country, summoned all Austrians to return to Austria Mrs. Barclay (or Mrs. Herzog, as she still was) went to Austria, not as an American subject, but to obtain a divorce and legal permission to resume her maiden name.

In Austria she learned she would have to wait for a legal separation until the close of hostilities, since men fighting at the front could not be troubled with divorce proceedings. The very small amount of money accorded her as an officer's wife proved insufficient for her support and again she had recourse to her old avocation of teaching. Soon she was wholly cut off from communication with American friends, but finally it was learned, through mutual acquaintances in Switzerland, that a formal divorce had been granted her, and her American citizenship restored to her, but that her health had utterly failed and that because of her serious condition of health she had been permitted to cross the Austrian frontier into Switzerland for a three months' sojourn in the Alps. Here her money allowance from Austria became worthless because of the low rate of exchange, and, sick as she was, she at once taught again.

Finally, after hostilities had ceased, she learned that a commission of business men of Berne, Switzerland, were coming to America to interest people of the United States in the intense need of providing food and shelter for destitute

children in the war-wrecked countries adjacent to Switzerland. She heard of Mr. Hoover's efforts to relieve children's sufferings, immediately visited the commission and wrote to relief headquarters in New York offering her services to care for and instruct such children with the aid of a volunteer assistant and a volunteer cook if money could be sent to her house and feed them.

During the Christmas holidays she had seen an unoccupied chalet—the Chalet Berna, above Grindelwald—that could be rented, and succeeded with the help of her friends in raising money to pay the rent for two months in the hope that the Hoover commission might allow her to take it. Her plan, as submitted to the commission, was so intelligently mapped out, it was approved at once, and the Hoover commission telegraphed her \$1,000 for the work. She got in touch with physicians at the heads of hospitals in the devastated countries who knew of only too many desperate cases of need, not only among children of the lower and middle classes, but of the aristocratic classes.

Thus, early last spring, the Chalet Berna opened with its volunteer helpers and 15 children. They came and went in relays of 15 every six weeks. In the morning the children were taught by Mrs. Barclay, while in the afternoon her assistant took them out to walk or play in the open, while Mrs. Barclay busied herself remodeling for the children wearing clothes sent out from America. The youngest children received were 6 years of age and the oldest 12. They arrived fearfully emaciated from lack of food and were sent back at the end of six weeks in fine physical condition, due to nourishing food and pure mountain air, with again a good fighting chance for life. One child developed measles, but was nursed back to health without the disease having been communicated to others.

Gladys Vanderbilt Sends Gift.

The Countess Szechenyi, formerly Gladys Vanderbilt, connected with the Hungarian children's relief work, at once sent her personal check for \$300, and later repeated the generous gift for the special benefit of Hungarian children.

Letters written home by children were full of enthusiasm over "good Mrs. Barclay," who was beloved by them all, though that capable lady often had her hands full maintaining discipline among her restless little brood. On one occasion the Hungarian and Austrian children began to fight for political reasons, but on being put to bed upon short rations, decided to sink their political differences and at least preserve outward peace.

With the coming of autumn, official support of the chalet will cease, since this work for German, Austrian and Hungarian children will not be pushed longer in a neutral country, but transferred to the countries themselves. However, the work has proved beneficent to so many that Mrs. Barclay will probably carry it on herself with the aid of philanthropic people, retaining the privilege of herself selecting the children to be befriended. She has regained to large extent her own health among the Alps and she has helped save the lives of many, many children who without her care would doubtless have perished from starvation and neglect.