

# Sixteen Months in Four German Prisons eBook

## Sixteen Months in Four German Prisons

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# Page 1

## PRISON ONE—WESEL

### CHAPTER I

#### ARRESTED AS A SPY

*“Start August First. Book tickets immediately.”*

Such were the instructions I received at Brighton early in July, 1914, from Prince ——. A few days previously I had spent considerable time with this scion of the Russian nobility discussing the final arrangements concerning my departure to his palace in Russia, where I was to devote two months to a special matter in which he was deeply interested, and which involved the use of special and elaborate photographic apparatus, microscopes, optical lantern and other accessories. I may mention that the mission in question was purely of scientific import.

During the discussion of these final arrangements a telegram was handed to the Prince. He scanned it hurriedly, jumped up from his seat, and apologising for his abruptness, explained that he had been suddenly called home. He expressed the hope that he would shortly see me in Russia, where I was promised a fine time, but that he would instruct me the precise date when to start. Meanwhile I was urged to complete my purchases of the paraphernalia which we had decided to be imperative for our purpose, and he handed me sufficient funds to settle all the accounts in connection therewith. That night the Prince bade me farewell and hurried off to catch the boat train. My next communication from him was the brief instruction urging me to start on August 1.[1]

[Footnote 1: I have never heard since from the Prince. A day or two after the outbreak of war, upon joining the Russian forces, he, with an observer, ascended in an aeroplane—he was an enthusiastic and skilled aviator—to conduct a reconnaissance over the German lines. He was never seen nor heard of again. Searching enquiries have been made without result, and now it is presumed that he was lost or killed.—H.C.M.]

Shortly after his departure there were ominous political rumblings, but I, in common with the great majority, concluded that the storm would blow over as it had done many times before. Moreover, I was so pre-occupied with my coming task as to pay scanty attention to the political barometer. I completed the purchase of the apparatuses, packed them securely, and arranged for their dispatch to meet me at the train. Then I remained at home to await developments. I was ready to start at a moment's notice, having secured my passport, on which I was described, for want of a better term, as a “Tutor of Photography,” and it was duly vised by the Russian Embassy.

Although the political sky grew more and more ominous I paid but little attention to the black clouds. The receipt of instructions to start at once galvanised me into activity to the exclusion of all other thoughts. I booked my passage right through to destination—Warsaw—and upon making enquiries on July 31st was assured that I should get through all right.

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I left Brighton by the 5.10 train on Saturday afternoon, August 1st. There was one incident at the station which, although it appeared to be trivial, proved subsequently of far reaching significance. In addition to many cameras of different types and sizes stowed in my baggage I carried three small instruments in my pockets, one being particularly small. I had always regarded this instrument with a strange affection because, though exceedingly small and slipping into a tiny space, it was capable of excellent work. As the train was moving from the station I took two parting snapshots of my wife and family waving me farewell. It was an insignificant incident over which I merely smiled at the time, but five days later I had every cause to bless those parting snaps. One often hears about life hanging by the proverbial thread, but not many lives have hung upon two snapshot photographs of all that is dearest to one, and a few inches of photographic film. Yet it was so in my case. But for those two tiny parting pictures and the unexposed fraction of film I should have been propped against the wall of a German prison to serve as a target for Prussian rifles!

Upon reaching Victoria I found the evening boat-train being awaited by a large crowd of enthusiastic and war-fever stricken Germans anxious to get back to their homeland. The fiat had gone forth that all Germans of military age were to return at once and they had rolled up *en masse*, many accompanied by their wives, while there was a fair sprinkling of Russian ladies also bent upon hurrying home. An hour before the train was due the platform was packed with a dense chattering, gesticulating, singing, and dancing crowd. Many pictures have been painted of the British exodus from Berlin upon the eve of war but few, if any, have ever been drawn of the wild stampede from Britain to Berlin which it was my lot to experience.

As the train backed into the station there was a wild rush for seats. The excited Teutons grabbed at handles—in fact at anything protruding from the carriages—in a desperate endeavour to be first on the footboard. Many were carried struggling and kicking along the platform. Women were bowled over pell-mell and their shrieks and cries mingled with the hoarse, exuberant howls of the war-fever stricken maniacs already tasting the smell of powder and blood.

More by luck than judgment I obtained admission to a saloon carriage to find myself the only Englishman among a hysterical crowd of forty Germans. They danced, whistled, sang and joked as if bound on a wayzegoose. Badinage was exchanged freely with friends standing on the platform. Anticipating that things would probably grow lively during the journey, I preserved a discreet silence, and my presence was ignored.



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The whistle blew, the locomotive screeched, and the next moment we were gliding out of the station to the accompaniment of wild cheering, good wishes for a safe journey and speedy return, and the strains of music which presently swelled into a roar about "Wacht am Rhein." The melody was yelled out with such gusto and so repeatedly that I hoped I might ever be spared from hearing its strains again. But at last Nature asserted herself. The throats of the singers grew hoarse and tired, the song came to a welcome end, and music gave way to vigorous and keen discussion upon the trend of events, which was maintained, not only during the train journey, but throughout the cross-Channel passage to Flushing, which we reached at six o'clock the following morning.

At the Dutch port the wild excitement and hubbub broke out with increased virulence. The report was circulated that the train now awaiting us would be the last through express to Berlin. There was a frantic rush for seats. Men, women, and children participated in the wild melee. The brutal shouts of the men contrasted vividly with the high-pitched adjurations of the women and the wails and cries of the terrified children. Within a few minutes the train was packed to suffocation, not an inch of standing-room being left, while the corridors were barricaded with the overflow of baggage from the guards' vans.

For two hours we stood there scarcely able to breathe. The heat of the waxing summer's day began to assert itself, with the result that it was not long before the women commenced to show signs of distress. Their spirits revived, however, as the train commenced to move. There was one solace—one and all were advancing towards home and the discomfort would not last for long.

So keen was the desire to get to Berlin that the great majority of the passengers had neglected to provide themselves with any food, lest they should lose their seats or miss the train. But they confidently expected that the train would pull up at some station to enable refreshments to be obtained. They were supported in this belief by the withdrawal of the usual dining car from the train. Those who trusted in luck, however, were rudely disappointed. The train refused to stop at any station. Instead, it evinced a decided preference for intermediate signal posts. It was described as an express, but a tortoise's crawl would be a gallop in comparison. It travelled at only a little more than a walking pace and the stops were maddeningly frequent.

The women and children speedily betrayed painful evidences of the suffering they were experiencing, which became accentuated as we advanced. The close confinement rendered the atmosphere within the carriages extremely oppressive. The weaker men and the women commenced to faint but no assistance could be extended to them. One could move barely an arm or leg. The afflicted passengers simply went off where they were, sitting or standing, as the case might be, and prevented from falling by the closely packed passengers around them, to come round as best they could when Nature felt so disposed. The wails of the children were pitiful. Many were crying from cramp and

hunger, but nothing could be done to satisfy them, and indeed the men took little notice of them.

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The arrival—in time—at the frontier station at Goch somewhat revived the distressed and drooping. Everyone seized the opportunity to stretch the limbs, to inhale some fresh air, and to obtain some slight refreshment. The Customs officials were unusually alert, harrying, and inflexible. There was the eternal wrangling between the passengers and the officials over articles liable to duty and it was somewhat amusing to me, even with war beating the air, to follow the frantic and useless efforts of old and experienced travellers to smuggle this, that, or something else through the fiscal barrier.

The Customs were so far from being in a conciliatory mood as to be absolutely deaf to entreaty, cajolery, argument, explanation or threat. They cut the operations summarily short by confiscating everything liable to duty. As may be imagined a rich harvest was garnered at the expense of the luckless returning patriot. While the Customs were busy the military officials, who appeared to be swarming everywhere, were equally exacting. They boarded the train and literally turned it inside out. Every man and woman and child was subjected to a close personal investigation and cross-examination. Foreigners were handled with even greater stress and with less ceremony. I saw four fellow passengers sorted out and rushed under a military escort into the waiting room.

At last it was my turn for military inquisition. I presented all my credentials, which were scanned from end to end, turned over, and even held up to the light, lest there should be something interwoven with the watermark. I followed the operations with a quiet amusement, confident in my security, but could not resist remarking upon the thoroughness of the search and the determination to leave nothing to chance. My passport created the greatest interest. It was dated July 7th, 1914. The official looked at me queerly in silent interrogation as he placed his finger beneath the date. I nodded and made no comment.

With a slight smile of self-satisfaction the officer turned on his heel and beckoned me to follow him. At the same moment two soldiers clicked their heels behind me and I saw that I was already under severe military suspicion. I was taken to a long-bearded individual sitting in state on a pedestal. The officer handed to him the papers he had found upon me. There was a hurried whispering, the superior individual eyeing me narrowly meanwhile. They compared the date of the passport with August 2nd, Sunday, the day on which I was travelling, and also examined the vise of the Russian Embassy in the corner.

Suddenly the long-bearded officer hurled a torrent of questions at me and at such a velocity that I was quite unable to follow him. Observing that his volcanic interrogative eruption was non-productive he slowed down and repeated the questions.

“Why are you travelling at this time?”

“To take up an appointment in Russia. There is the name—Prince ——”



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“Ah!” and his eyebrows were elevated so much as to mingle almost with his hair.

“But why have you so much photographic apparatus?”

“It is necessary for the work I am taking up.”

“Ah!” once again the eyebrows vanished scalp-wards.

“Have you a camera upon you?”

“No!”

“Ah!” another dance of the eyebrows.

He rapped out a short command and before I was aware of the circumstance two pairs of hands were running rapidly over my body and in and out of my pockets with the dexterity of men who had served a long apprenticeship under an Artful Dodger. It proved a blank search. I gave a sigh of relief, because had the searchers run their hands over the lower part of my person they would have come across two cameras, and my treasured little companion, wrapped in his leather jacket, alert and ready for silent service, but concealed in a most unexpected corner. I could scarcely repress a smile when I recognised that I was immune from further search. Evidently the Pooh-bah was somewhat disconcerted at the negative results achieved, because, after firing one or two other desultory questions at me, he handed back my passport and other papers, and told me I could continue my journey.

Desiring to disarm suspicion completely I did not hurry away but lingered around the little court and even indulged in a short idle conversation with my interlocutor, who, however, somewhat resented my familiarity. I lounged back to the train, hugely delighted with myself, more particularly as, quite unbeknown to the fussy individual with the beard, I had snapped a picture of his informal court with my little camera.

The frontier formalities at last concluded, the train resumed its crawl, ambling leisurely along for some two hours, stopping now and then to draw into a siding. On such occasions troop train after troop train crowded with soldiers thundered by us *en route* to Berlin. The sight of a troop train roused our passengers to frenzy. They cheered madly, throwing their hats into the air. The huzzas were returned by the soldiers hanging out of the windows with all the exuberant enthusiasm of school boys returning home at the end of the term.

But we were not destined to make a through run to the capital. Suddenly the train was pulled up by a military guard upon the line. We were turned out pell-mell and our baggage was thrown on to the embankment. This proceeding caused considerable uneasiness. What had happened? Where were we going? and other questions of a similar character were hurled at the soldiers. But they merely shook their heads in a



non-committal manner. They either did not or would not know. Our feelings were not improved when the empty carriages were backed down the line, the engine changed ends, and we saw the train steam off in another direction. The hold-up of the train had taken place at a depressing spot. We were completely stranded, without provisions or any other necessities, and at an isolated spot where it was impossible to obtain any supplies. The passengers pestered the guard for information, and at last the officers, to still any further enquiry, declared that they were going to do something, to carry us "somewhere."

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Some two-and-a-half hours slipped by when a loud cheer rang out at the appearance of a train of crazy carriages which backed towards us. The passengers scrambled in and made themselves as comfortable as they could. But where was the baggage to go? The soldiery had overlooked this item and they surveyed the straggling mass of bags and trunks littering the embankment ruefully. But they solved the problem in their own way. What could not be stacked within the trucks would have to go on top.

We forged ahead once more to pull up at a small station. Here there was a mad scramble for supplies and the refreshment room was soon cleared out of its small stock. On the platform an extortionate German drove a brisk trade selling small bottles of lemonade at sixpence a bottle. More excitement was caused by a news vendor mounting a box and holding aloft a single copy of the latest newspaper which he would sell to the highest bidder.

Being ignorant of what had transpired since I had left London I resolved to have that copy. I scrambled over a pile of baggage and came within arm's length of the news vendor. I threw down coins to the value of 2s. 8d., grabbed his paper and vanished before he could voice a protest. I scrambled back to my car. Here the paper was snatched from me to be read aloud to the expectant crowd thirsting for news. There was a tense silence as the reader ran through the items until he gravely announced the latest intelligence—Russia and Germany had declared war. The news was official. For a second a profound silence reigned. Then there broke out a further outburst of wild, maniacal cheering, above which, however, could be heard hysterical screams and shrieks from women, especially from those bound for Russia, which they now realised they would never reach.

I saw at once that it was hopeless to get to my destination, as the Russo-German frontier was now closed. But as it was quite as impossible to turn back I decided to push on to Berlin there to await events. So far Britain was not involved and might even keep clear of the tangle. This I might say was the general opinion on the train. The remainder of the journey to the capital was now far more exciting, and the animated conversation served to while away the tedium of the slow travelling, although the latter part was completed in darkness, the train running into Berlin at 1.30 in the morning of August 3rd, the journey from Flushing having taken about 18 hours.

The platform at Berlin was overrun with officials of all sorts and descriptions, ranging from puny collectors to big burly fellows smothered with sufficient braid and decorations to pass as field-m Marshals. But one and all seemed to be entrusted with swords too big for them which clanked and clattered in the most nerve-racking manner. They strutted up and down the platform with true Prussian arrogance, jostling the fatigued, cursing the helpless who lounged in their path, ignoring the distress of the children,

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sneering at the pitiful pleadings of the women—in fact caring about nothing beyond their own importance. They disdained to reply to any question, and said nothing beyond the terse statement that no more trains were going East to Russia. At this intelligence the travellers bound for the latter country collapsed, the majority, women, flopping upon their baggage and dropping their heads in their hands in grief and utter despair.

Yet, although the authorities were fully aware that no more trains were going East they made no attempt to cope with the influx of arriving and stranded passengers. They were left to their own devices. The majority of the women and children were famished, thirsty, and tired, but the officials resolutely refused to open the waiting rooms and buffets before the usual hour. Accordingly the travel-tired, grief-stricken women either threw themselves prone upon the platforms, or crawled into corridors, sub-ways, and corners to seek a little repose, using their luggage as head-rests, or being content with the cold hard steps. The few seats upon the platform were speedily occupied but the occupants were denied more than a brief repose. At the end of 15 minutes officials came round and emptied the seats of those in possession to allow other parties to have a quarter of an hour's rest.

While the worn-out passengers slept the light-fingered German gentry passed swiftly from bag to bag, the conditions offering favourable opportunities for the light-fingered gentry. They appeared to suffer no molestation from the officials, who could plainly see what was going on, but possibly officialdom regarded the belongings of tired and exhausted foreigners as legitimate loot to those who were prepared to take it. Outside the station the heavier baggage was stacked in barricades in a wildly haphazard manner with the heavier articles at the top. These, crushing the lighter and more fragile packages beneath, spread the contents of the latter in the roadway to serve as sport for gamins and other loungers who prowled around.

The utter chaos was aggravated by the rain which pelted down with torrential fury. Mothers with their little children drew closely into corners or sat upon doorsteps seeking the slightest shelter. As I turned out of the station my attention was attracted by a woman—she had come up on our train—who was sitting on the kerb, her feet in the gutter, the rushing water coursing over her ankles, feeding her child at the breast, and vainly striving to shelter the little mite from the elements. The woman was crying bitterly. I went up to her. She spoke English perfectly. She was Russian and had set out from England to meet her husband at Kalish. But she could not get through, she had very little money, could not speak German, and knew not what to do, or what would become of her. I soothed her as well as I could. There were hundreds of similar cases around. Notwithstanding their terrible plight



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not a hand was moved by the authorities on their behalf. They were even spurned and roughly moved out of the way by the swaggering officials. It was not until the British colony got busy the next day that they received the slightest alleviation, and the majority, being strangers in a strange land, were sent back to England, the Germans mutely concurring in the task. The wild rush from the Continent may have precipitated congestion at our ports and railway stations, but there never could have been that absolute chaos which reigned at Berlin on the fateful night of the 2nd of August. Humanity was thrown to the four winds. The much-vaunted Teuton organisation, system, and scientific control had broken down completely under the first test to which it was subjected.

The terrific downpour caused me to decide to spend a few hours in the comfort of an hotel. I hailed a taxi and jumped in. The car was just moving when the door was flung open, I was grabbed by the coat-collar and the next moment found myself skating across the roadway on my back. I jumped up, somewhat ruffled at this rude handling, to learn that it was an officer who had treated me so unceremoniously. I had no redress. Berlin was under martial law. The uniform of the military came before the mufti of the civilian.

Unable to find another vehicle I turned into the first place I found open. It was an all-night cafe. It was packed to suffocation with German soldiers and the feminine underworld of Berlin. There was a glorious orgy of drunkenness, nauseating and debasing amusement, and the incoherent singing of patriotic songs. The other sex appeared to have thrown all discretion and womanliness to the winds. A soldier too drunk to stand was assisted to a chair which he mounted with difficulty. Here he was supported on either side by two flushed, hilariously-shouting, partially-dressed harpies. He drew off his belt—his helmet had already gone somewhere—and pointing to the badge he shouted thickly and coarsely, “Deutschland, Deutschland, Gott mit uns”—(Germany, Germany, God is with us). Metaphorically he was correct, because the words are printed upon the belt of every German soldier, but if the Almighty was with that drunken, debased crowd that night, then Old Nick must have been wearing out his shoes looking for a job.

When the crowd caught sight of me, which was some time after my entrance because I had dropped unseen into a convenient corner, they rushed forward and urged me to participate in their revels. I declined. They had been hurling distinctly uncomplimentary and obscene epithets concerning Britain through the room. My decision was construed into an affront to the All-Highest. A big, burly, drunken soldier wanted to fight me. The crowd pressed round keenly anticipating some fun. We indulged in a spirited altercation, but as neither understood what the other said, words did not lead to blows. However, the upshot was the intimation that my room was preferred to my company. This was received with enthusiasm, the result being that I made the sudden

acquaintance of the pavement outside once more, being assisted in my hurried departure by fisticuffs and heavy boots.

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I picked myself up and walked until I caught sight of an hotel. I entered, booked a room, and indulged in an elaborate wash and brush-up of which I was sorely in need, following this with a substantial breakfast. Then I sauntered into the vestibule for a smoke. Three German officers and a squad of soldiers came clanking in. There was a short sharp order. One officer remained at the door while the others disappeared into the depths of the building.

I went over to the officer and entered into conversation with him. He spoke English fluently and was fairly affable. We discussed things in general and also the political situation, from which I gathered that matters were rapidly approaching a climax, and that there was no telling what would happen next. This was the first time I had been brought face to face with the situation and my outlook was serious. The officer at last turned to me, and with a friendly smile, remarked—

“Look here, my English friend, I would advise you to make for your country at once. Don’t stop for anything!”

“Why?”

“Don’t ask questions. Do as I say! Can’t you take a friendly warning? Take to-day’s train home! If you don’t—well, you may be detained!”

His advice was expressed in such significant tones that I looked at him sharply. He answered with another smile and a shrug which intimated only too plainly that he had said as much as he dared.

I was debarred from prosecuting the conversation farther by the return of his comrades with a crowd of waiters. They were all Russians and they had been rounded up by the military. No opportunity was given them to pack a few necessities. They were arrested at their tables, while performing their duties, were corralled and now were off to prison. No one possessed any more than he stood up in.

I followed them down the street, intending to proceed to the British Consulate. The streets were full of soldiers and the air rang with martial music. While proceeding to the Consulate I became aware that I was being shadowed. An individual resolutely dogged me. I had seen him previously but had taken no serious notice of his presence. Now he began to get a bit irksome. I bought some picture post-cards and addressed them to friends at home, announcing my immediate return, also introducing brief comments on the condition of things in Berlin as they appeared to me. A few hours later I regretted writing those post-cards.[2]

[Footnote 2: Upon my return to England I made enquiries and discovered that not a single one had been received. Undoubtedly they were stopped by the German military authorities and contributed somewhat materially to my subsequent troubles.—H.C.M.]

The Consulate was besieged by hundreds of compatriots thirsting for guidance as to what to do. After waiting an hour-and-a-half I secured an audience. I briefly explained my position.



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“Get home at once. The train leaves 1.13 mid-day.”

“But I’ve got luggage worth L400 at the station!”

“Get home!”

“But—”

“Leave your luggage where it is!”

“Do you think—?”

“You take the 1.13 train. Good morning.”

Further enquiries convinced me that the 1.13 was very likely to be the last train which would leave Berlin for Britain, so I scurried off to the station to recover my luggage. Many of the photographic instruments were exceedingly valuable because they had been made specially. I was bandied from one official to another. At last I alighted upon one who knew something. He led me to a huge building and flung open the door. It was stacked from floor to roof with baggage, which had been packed in without any semblance of order. I surveyed the pile ruefully. I asked him if he could trace my luggage but he shook his head. I held out a tempting pourboire. It was of no avail. If I wanted the luggage I could look for it myself. Reflecting that some six weeks at least would be required to complete the search I concluded that I should have to leave it behind willy-nilly. So somewhat depressed I prepared to leave by the 1.13 train.

The express was heavily laden and to it was attached a carriage reserved for the military, who were accompanying the departing Britishers to the frontier. Curiously enough, not one of us knew definitely what had happened. Rumour was busy, but it was inconclusive. The general feeling was that Britain had taken some drastic action which must have serious results, otherwise we should not have been bundled home so hurriedly.

We had been travelling some time when I noticed a lady sauntering along the corridor vainly searching for a seat. I was comfortable, but I instantly surrendered my place to assume a standing position in the corridor where I chatted with several fellow-travellers. I may say that slung over my shoulder was a black leather strap carrying a small camera case in the manner frequently affected by tourists. Ever after I have cursed that innocent looking camera case, and certainly when travelling in the future will favour some other means of carrying photographic apparatus.

About half-an-hour passed in this way. Then I observed a young German ambling along the corridor. He came up to us and entered into an idle conversation. One by one the others dropped away from him, not caring to talk with a German. I would have done the same but the strange youth would not let me. He pinned me to the spot with his

conversation. At first his questions were extremely innocent, but they soon became somewhat inquisitive and searching, and were purposely directed to discover why I was travelling, where I had been, how long I had been in Germany, and so forth. As the conversation assumed this turn I came to the alert. He was a typical German with all the inexperience of youth, though he doubtless prided himself upon his powers of observation,

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deduction, and cross-examination by apparently idle questions. But to one and all of his interrogations I gave the retort courteous. His pressing attentions did not escape the notice of my fellow-travellers within earshot. Looking out of the corner of my eye I saw that they did not regard this questioning of myself as being so innocent as it appeared. Many were apparently familiar with German methods of inter-espionage and they extended me silent warning, by sign, frown, and wink.

The raw youth disappeared and I forgot all about him. But to my surprise five minutes later I saw him returning along the corridor accompanied by a military official whom he had evidently brought from the military carriage attached to the train. They came straight up to me. The youth pointing directly at me remarked,

“Here he is. See! There’s the camera on his back!”

The officer looked at the strap and turning me round caught sight of the camera case. He nodded in acquiescence.

“And I saw him using it,” went on the youth triumphantly. “He has been taking photographs of the bridges and sentries along the line!”

I was distinctly amused at this charge because it was absolutely untrue. But I was somewhat impressed by the strange silence which had settled upon my fellow-travellers and the inscrutable look upon the officer’s face. Something serious was evidently amiss. I turned to the officer.

“The accusation is absurd. Why! Look at the windows! They have been kept closed all the time according to the military orders. And you could not take a photograph through the closed windows even if you wanted to. They are too begrimed with dirt.”

The officer did not say a word but continued to eye me narrowly.

I began to feel uncomfortable before that piercing gaze, so I decided to floor the aspiring detective working so zealously for the Fatherland and to point out the danger of jumping at conclusions. I turned to him:

“You say you saw me taking photographs?”

“Yes, with that camera on your back.”

“You are quite sure?”

“Yes!”



I swung the case which had been so offensive to his eyes round to the front of me.

“Now I’ll ask you again. You are quite certain you saw me taking photographs?”

“Ach! I distinctly saw you take the camera out of the case, take the pictures, and then put it back again!” was his rejoinder given with great emphasis.

I did not attempt to argue any further. I clicked the catch of the case. The lid flew open. Both the officer and the youth craned forward expectantly, to draw back, the officer giving vent to a smothered ejaculation.

*The camera case was full of cigarettes.*

Being a heavy smoker I had stocked myself with cigarettes with which I had filled the camera case. I turned them out into my hands leaving the case empty.



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The youth's face was a study. He was so completely trapped in his lying that he went all colours, while his jaw dropped. My fellow passengers who had been watching and listening in profound silence gave expression to uproarious mirth at the complete manner in which the immature detective had been bowled out. But their mirth was misplaced. A German resents discomfiture. The officer, too, was not disposed to throw over his subordinate, who undoubtedly had been acting in accordance with orders. Looking me steadily in the face the officer placed his hand on my shoulder and in cold tones said,

*"I formally charge you with being a spy in the pay of the British Government!"*

## CHAPTER II

### COMMITTED TO WESEL PRISON

To say that I was completely dumbfounded by this accusation is to express my feelings very mildly. But, with an effort, I succeeded in keeping my *sang-froid*, which I am afraid only served to convince the officer that he was correct in his charge.

He assailed me with interrogations, demanded my passport, and after perusing it closely, enquired why I was travelling to Russia at such a time. "Why!" he pointed out, "you only left England on August 1st, when Russia and Germany were on the eve of war!"

I gave a detailed explanation of my mission, but I failed to shake his suspicions. I had to surrender my ticket for inspection and this caused him to frown more heavily than ever.

"Where is your camera?"

I produced two which were in my pockets, keeping my tiny companion in its secret resting place.

At the sight of the two cameras he gave a smile of complete self-satisfaction. He handed them to the guard together with my ticket. Turning on his heel he remarked:

"You'll ask for these articles when you reach Wesel!"

As he strode down the corridor the serious character of my situation dawned upon me. My companions had already formed their opinions concerning my immediate future. All thoughts of the war vanished before a discussion of my awkward predicament. I saw that the injunction to make enquiry for my cameras and ticket at Wesel, which is an important military centre, was merely a ruse to prevent my escape. My arrest at Wesel was inevitable.



I was carrying one or two other articles, such as a revolver, about me. I saw that although they were apparently harmless, and could be fully explained, they would incriminate me only still more. I promptly got rid of them. I had half-a-mind to discard my little camera also, but somehow or other I could not bring myself to part with this. I thought it might come in useful. Moreover there was very little likelihood of it being discovered unless I was stripped. So I left it where it was. Afterwards I was thankful I acted upon second thoughts on that occasion.

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The outlook was certainly discouraging and when the train stopped at Wesel—outside the station I afterwards discovered—I acted on the impulse for self-preservation, darted along the corridor, found a place of concealment and tucked myself in. Now I realise that this was the worst thing I could have done, but then my thoughts were centred upon effecting my escape, in the half-hope that the Germans, unable to find me, would assume that I had surreptitiously left the train.

But I misjudged German thoroughness, especially when a suspected spy is the quarry. Fifteen, thirty, fifty minutes slipped by and still the train did not move. The other passengers were not being regarded kindly at my non-appearance. So, stealing out of my hiding place I sauntered as composedly as I could along the corridor to come face to face with the officer, who with his guard was diligently searching every nook and cranny and cross-questioning the other passengers. Directly he caught sight of me he sprang forward, uttering a command. The next instant I was surrounded by soldiers. I was under arrest.

The officer gave a signal from a window and the train pulled into the station. I was hustled unceremoniously on to the platform, where eight soldiers closed around me to form an escort and I was marched forward. As we crossed the platform the locomotive whistle shrieked, and about 9.30 p.m. the last train to leave Berlin on the outbreak of war bore my companions homewards.

Personally I was disposed to regard the whole episode as a joke, and an instance of Teuton blind blundering. The gravity of the situation never struck me for an instant. I argued with myself that I should speedily prove that I was the victim of circumstances and would be able to convince the military of my *bona fides* without any great effort.

But as I reflected it dawned upon me that my arrest had been skilfully planned. The youth on the train, whom I never saw again, had played but a minor part in the drama of which I was the central figure. My departure must have been communicated from Berlin. Otherwise how should Wesel have learned that a spy had been arrested? The station was besieged with a wildly shouting excited crowd who bawled:

“English spy! English spy! Lynch him! Lynch him!”

I was bundled into a military office which had evidently been hurriedly extemporised from a lumber room. The crowd outside increased in denseness and hostility. They were shouting and raving with all the power of their lungs. These vocal measures proving inadequate, stones and other missiles commenced to fly. They could not see through the windows of the room so an accurately thrown brick shattered the pane of glass. Through the open space I caught glimpses of the most ferocious and fiendish faces it has ever been my lot to witness. Men and women vied with one another in the bawling and ground their teeth when they caught sight of me.



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The excitement was intense and the chant “Bring him out! Give him to us! Let us lynch him! Down with the English spy!” even began to grate upon me. At the time it appeared to me to be somewhat extraordinary, seeing that we were not at war with Germany, but it conveyed a graphic illustration of the anti-British sentiment prevailing in the military centre. Indeed, the crowd became so menacing that my guard became apprehensive of my safety, and I was hurriedly thrust into an inner room. My removal there was more abrupt than dignified. I was hustled to the door. Then a German soldier, by an adroit movement of his rifle which he held reversed, pricked my leg with the bayonet and at the same time brought the butt against my head with a resounding thwack! Simultaneously he let drive with his heavily-booted foot in the small of my back. I discovered afterwards, from actual experience, that this is a very favourite movement of the rifle by the Germans, and is used on every possible occasion.

The outcome of this action was to send me sprawling headlong into the room to pull up with a crash against the floor. The entrance was rendered additionally dangerous to myself because I stumbled over the legs of several sleeping soldiers. I felt inclined to remonstrate with the officer-in-charge of the escort at the treatment I was receiving, but the uninviting armed sentry at the door frustrated my efforts very effectively.

It was an improvised guard-room. The soldiers sprawled upon the straw littering the floor, striving to snatch a brief rest before going on duty, sleepily raised themselves to ascertain the cause of the disturbance. The sentry told them excitedly the charge upon which I had been arrested, at which the men turned to blink wonderingly upon the “Englandische Spion!” I was not sorry when they at last wearied of gazing upon me as if I were a freak side-show, and sank down to finish their two hours’ rest before going on guard once more.

I had barely recovered my senses when the door again flew open and two further prisoners were injected into the room in a manner comparable with my own entrance. They were Hindoo students—young fellows returning to England after a continental holiday, who had been detained. Both were somewhat alarmed, but I speedily composed them. Later there was a repetition of the performance to admit three more Indian students. We all agreed that the German methods of introduction were decidedly novel and forceful if informal and unpleasant. The latest arrivals, however, were detained for only a short while. They were rich in funds and were equally astute in their distribution of largesse to advantage. Money talked in their instance to distinct effect. The three of us who were left maintained a conversation in whispers and finally came to the conclusion that the best thing we could do was to seek sleep so as to be fit for the enquiry which was certain to take place.



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I was dog-tired, but the authorities, as represented by the sentries, were not disposed to let us enjoy what they were denied. The guard was constantly changing and the clattering and rasping of orders and commands repeatedly woke us up. Then again, at frequent intervals, the sentry would enter. Seeing me asleep he would either give me a prod with his bayonet or a smart rap with the butt-end of his rifle to wake me up, the idea no doubt being to impress upon me the serious nature of my position and to inflict upon me the utmost discomfort.

Being prevented from sleeping and commencing to feel the pangs of hunger, having eaten nothing since lunch upon the train, I asked for something to eat. The sentry was very sorry but related that food was quite out of the question because none of the officers in charge of me from whom he could obtain the necessary instructions were available.

*[large gap]*

The absence of the officers was explained a little later. They had been searching for an interpreter, so that I might be put through another inquisition. This interpreter was about the most incompetent of his class that one could wish to meet. His English was execrable—far worse than Chinese pidgin—and he had an unhappy and disconcerting manner of intermingling German and English words, while either through a physical defect or from some other cause, he could not pronounce his consonants correctly.

I was taken through the usual rigmarole such as I had at first experienced at Goch. The evidence also, as usual, was committed to paper. It was a perfunctory enquiry, however, and was soon completed. Naturally upon its conclusion I considered that I would be free to resume my journey. I turned to my interpreter.

“Now this is all over I suppose I can go?”

“Ach! nein zoo tant doh!”

His English was so vile that I thought he said and meant “ah! at nine you can go!”

Seeing that it was about eleven o'clock at the time, I thought I had better hurry in case there was another Flushing-bound train. So I scuttled towards the door only to receive another heavy clout from the sentry's rifle. What the interpreter really said was “Ah! No, you can't go!” As I rubbed my bruised head I treated that interpreter to a candid opinion of his English speaking qualifications, but he did not understand half what I said.

As I realised nothing further could be done that night I lay down to snatch another rest. But after midnight my trials and troubles increased. Every few minutes the door would rattle and be clanked open to admit an officer who had brought a number of friends to see the latest sensation—the English spies. The friends, who were brother-officers,



regarded us with a strange interest, while the officer who had charge of me strutted to and fro like a peacock drawn to his full height, at the unique greatness thrust upon him, and dwelling at great length upon the enormity of our offence related a weird story about my capture.

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Upon such occasions I and my two Hindoo companions were compelled to stand at attention. At first I regarded the incident with amusement, but after we had been through the circus-like performance about a dozen times, it became distinctly irksome, especially as I was dog-tired. It was with the greatest difficulty I maintained my self-control.

About four o'clock in the morning I heard voices in the adjoining room. Evidently someone in authority had arrived. I decided to seize the opportunity to secure an interview with one who at least would be able to give me some satisfaction. I moved smartly towards the door. The sentry lowered his rifle, but I evaded the bayonet, I saw a flash and then all was darkness.

Some time later I woke up. I was lying at full length upon the floor and my head was singing like a kettle, while it ached fearfully. I opened my eyes but for some minutes could descry nothing but stars. As I came round I made out the dim forms of the two Hindoo students bending over me. They were extremely agitated, but their peace of mind became restored somewhat when I at last sat up. Then they explained what had happened. After I had dodged the bayonet the soldier had swung his rifle round bringing the butt end smartly down upon my head and had knocked me silly. From the pain I suffered and the size of the lump which I could feel I tacitly agreed that I had received a pretty smart rap.

I felt round for the tin of cigarettes which I had extemporised to form a pillow before the incident, but was suddenly reminded that smoking was very much *verboden*. Regarding the tin longingly I absent-mindedly opened it. To my surprise I found that the fifty cigarettes which it had originally contained had dwindled down to one! I looked at the sentry and smiled quietly to myself. Rising to my feet I held out the open tin to him.

"You've been helping yourself while I have been asleep and I think you might as well take the last one," I muttered sarcastically.

The phlegmatic sentry looked at me cunningly. His face lapsed into a broad grin. Growling "danker!" (thank you!) he calmly took it and lighted up. From this incident I discovered that even a thick-skulled, dull-witted German infantryman has a bump of humour.

The din which still reigned around the station told me that the crowd was impatient to see me. In fact Bedlam appeared to have been let loose. The news of my capture had spread through Wesel like wildfire, and public animosity and hostility towards me had risen to fever-heat. During the night the crowd had swollen considerably, and it clung tenaciously to the station in the hope of having some glorious fun at my expense.

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At six o'clock an officer entered with one or two subordinates and a squad of soldiers. Certain formalities had to be gone through in which I played a prominent part. These completed the officer stood before me with all the pomposity he could command and delivered a harangue at high speed in a worrying monotone. To me it was gibberish, but one of the men who could speak English informed me that the gist of his wail was the intimation that "if I moved a pace to the right, or a pace to the left, or fell back a pace, or hurried a pace during the march to the Wesel Arresthaus—Wesel Prison—I would be shot down immediately." I mentally decided to obey the injunction to the absolute letter, and must admit that never before or since during my life have I walked such a straight line.

With four soldiers behind with lowered bayonets, four in front and two on either side we moved out of the station. The clock was chiming seven, but the droning of the clock was drowned by the howls of rage, snarlings, screeches, shrieks and groans of fury which went up from the mob the moment they caught sight of us. Despite my self-control I winced. Directly we gained the roadway an ugly rush was made. I thought I was doomed to be torn limb from limb, for I was overwhelmed by a sea of itching hands, shaking fists, and gnashing teeth. The escort wavered and was all but overwhelmed. Although it quivered ominously before the mob assault it stood its ground. Swinging their rifles over their heads the soldiers lashed out with the butt-ends. A sharp order rang out. We turned about and hastily returned to the station. Here the officer demanded a double escort, which was granted, and we made another attempt to reach the Arresthaus.

But the increased parade of military power only served to infuriate the crowd still more. They surged, swayed, and pressed, and howled, groaned, and shrieked as if bereft. Baulked in their desire to snatch us from the soldiers they began to fling missiles of all descriptions. Fortunately they were too excited to throw with pronounced accuracy, although my two Hindoo companions and I were struck several times with vegetables. Then a bottle came singing through the air. I ducked, but it struck the soldier beside me full on the side of the face to shatter into a score of pieces. The blow was so terrific as to cause a gaping wound in the soldier's face, extending from his temple to his chin. The blood spurted out. The wounded man saluted, and requested the officer to permit him to drop out to have his wound dressed. But the officer curtly refused, and so the unfortunate soldier was compelled to walk, or rather to stumble, beside me, the blood pouring from his lacerated face.

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As we turned into the square immediately facing the entrance to the prison I blanched. The mob which had gathered here was so dense, and was lashed to such a high pitch of vicious fury, that I felt convinced we should have to succumb to overwhelming numbers. The air was thick with missiles, and the soldiers suffered severely, although we three prisoners were not often struck. The soldiers tolerated the fusillade with the best grace they could command for some time, but even their endurance had its limits, and at last they turned. But the crowd was by no means daunted. By hook or by crook they intended to prevent us reaching the prison, and, they having closed behind us, we were completely hemmed in.

“Our last chance! Give them to us! English spies! Seize them, comrades! Lynch them! Lynch them!” were the coarse cries which rang out without ceasing.

It was a thrilling and critical moment. The mass of screaming men and women was now so dense that we could not move. The soldiers could no longer even swing their rifles. The outstretched hands of the mob were snapping and tearing within an inch or two of my coat. Had I swayed a trifle they must have grasped me.

A shrill whistle rang out. The prison door was flung open and a number of soldiers came out at the double with arms lowered, while the officers were waving their swords. The crowd around the entrance fell back, and the next moment a passage was being cleaved through the mass of raving humanity. This sudden appearance of extra force created a diversion of which our escort took advantage. We slipped through the gap which had been cut in the crowd, and the next moment were in the prison. As the gate closed with a resounding bang I gave a sigh of relief. We were safe from mob violence whatever other fate might be in store for us. Personally, although I passed through many exciting experiences subsequently, and was often a victim of Prussian brutality, I regard that march from the station to the prison at Wesel as the most dangerous few minutes which I have ever encountered.

We were promptly taken into an office and subjected to another inquisition. The questions were merely repetitions of those I had already answered half-a-dozen times previously. Then I was submitted to my second search. I was ordered to throw my hands above my head, a bayonet point being held at my stomach to enforce the command. Searchers went adroitly through my pockets, taking everything which they contained. These included a batch of letters which I had received just before starting from home, and which I had thrust into my pocket to read at leisure during the journey.

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These letters provoked a considerable amount of whispering, head-shaking, wise smiles, and significant noddings. No one could read a word of English—but that was immaterial. In the wisdom of their conceit these inquisitors considered the communications to be fully incriminating, and the frequent recurrence of the word “Russia” in the letters convinced them that my guilt was now fully and truly established beyond a shadow of a doubt. The various articles were carefully wrapped up and tied with blue ribbon. Knowing the significance of red-tape at home, I concluded that this was the Prussian analogue of our official preference. Afterwards, however, I was told that “blue” ribbon was employed for a specific purpose—the sealing of articles and goods belonging to one arrested on the charge of espionage. How far this is true I do not know, but I did observe that in every instance blue ribbon was employed to secure the parcels belonging to spies.

My two cameras were regarded with reverent awe. As they were being examined I urged them to be careful. I suggested that they should allow me to develop the films, but this proposal was regarded with consternation and emphatic negative head-shakings. The authorities would see to that.

Suddenly there was intense excitement. One of the searchers had drawn a watch-like contrivance from my waistcoat pocket. It was not a watch, because it had no dial or works, but something which was quite foreign to them. First they dropped it as if fearing it might explode. Then finding that the fall brought about no ill-effects they approached it warily, picked it up gingerly, and held it to their ears. It did not tick. Then they shook it, banged it on the desk, studied it closely with a wise, old-owlish look, and at last, shaking their heads quizzically, consigned it to wrapping paper and sealed it with the blue ribbon.

Despite my serious predicament I could not refrain from indulging in an outburst of laughter which only served to annoy them still further. The mystery was not a new type of infernal machine as they imagined but merely a home-made actinometer! It was contrived from an old cheap watch-case, while the strange contents were merely strips of paper which had been soaked in a solution of potassium bichromate!

These preliminaries completed, my two companions and I were paraded before another pompous official who, like the majority of his ilk, was smothered with decorations. Drawing himself to his full height he fired a tirade at us for several minutes without taking the slightest pause for breath. What it was all about I do not know. He spoke so rapidly, and so in the style of a gramophone, that I came to the conclusion he was in the habit of holding forth in this strain at intervals of every few minutes. But his manner was so menacing as to lead me to apprehend that no feelings of affection or hospitality were to be extended towards us.

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His speech completed, he shouted an order. Soldiers hurried in, and at the word of command they commenced to load their rifles. I was quite at a loss to understand this action, but my heart thumped and a queer, indescribable feeling came over me. I felt sick and faint, especially when I saw the men, upon completing loading, form up in two lines. Like a flash it dawned upon me that according to German military form I had been found guilty of the charge levelled against me, and that the harangue of the pompous individual was no more or less than the promulgation of my death sentence! For what else could these men have loaded their rifles so ostentatiously? And why were there so many soldiers? Their numbers plainly indicated the firing party.

My eyes grew dim with tears in spite of myself. Visions of my wife and family at home, waiting and momentarily expecting “Daddy,” who had notified them of his return, flitted through my brain. A lump rose in my throat and for the first time I was within an ace of breaking-down. But smothering my thoughts, I pulled myself together. Assuming a bravado I was far from feeling, I demanded to see the Commandant. To my surprise the request was granted. This functionary was seated at his desk in a corner of the room, and I was escorted to him. Seeing me he curtly demanded what I wanted.

“Can I write to my wife?”

The officer who accompanied me explained the situation, and although I did not understand what transpired I caught the words “Englische Spion!” The Commandant glared at me.

“Where is she?” he roared.

“In England!”

“England!” and the word, full of venom and hate, burst out like the cork from a pop-gun. “Nein! Certainly not! It is impossible! Get out!”

Assisted by a vigorous prod I was brought alongside my two companions.

The soldiers lined up to march. My head was swimming, but all thoughts of my own plight were dispelled by an incident which was as unexpected as it was sudden. At the command “March” one of the two Indian students, positive that he was now going to his doom, staggered. I caught him as he fell. He dropped limply to the ground, half-dead with fright, and with his face a sickly green.

“Are we going to be shot? Are we going to be shot?” he wailed agonisedly.

He clutched the sleeve of a soldier, who, looking down and evidently understanding English, motioned negatively. Then he added as an afterthought, “Not now!”



While his negative head-shake revived my drooping spirits, his words afterwards sent them to zero once more. I hardly knew whether to feel relieved or otherwise. It would have been far better had the soldier curbed his tongue, because his final words kept us on the rack of suspense.

We were hustled out of the room. As we passed out I glanced at the clock. It was just nine o'clock—Tuesday morning, August 4. I shall never forget the day nor the hour. Like sheep we were driven and rushed downstairs, the guards assisting our faltering steps with sundry rifle prods and knocks. We tramped corridors, which seemed to be interminable, and at last came to a ponderous iron gate. Here we were halted, and the military guard handed us over to the gaolers. We passed through the gates, which closed with a soul-smashing, reverberating bang.



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Over the top of this gate I had noticed one of those mottoes to which the German is so partial. I do not recall the actual words, but I was told that it was something to do with crime and punishment. It would have been far more appropriate had it been inscribed "Main entrance to Hell. No pass-out checks!" According to many accounts which reached my ears during the succeeding few days, many entered those gates, but few passed out alive. I can substantiate this from my own observations, which are duly narrated, while my experience was sufficient to vouch for its similarity to Hades.

This gate gave approach to a long corridor, flanked on either side by cells. This corridor is facetiously nick-named by the prisoners as "Avenue of the Damned," because it is in these cells that the tenants await their doom. I was separated from my two companions, who were already being treated more leniently than myself, the case against them being obviously very thin, and was brought to a stop before cell "No. 11."

The massive door swung open, and accompanied by four soldiers I entered. The door closed, there was a grating in the lock, and we were alone. Even now I could not keep back a smile. Although I had been thrust into the cell, together with four armed soldiers, and the door had been bolted and barred, I turned at the sound of a slight click. The head gaoler, who had ushered us in and had locked the door upon us, according to the regulations of the prison, had opened the peep-hole to satisfy himself that I was safely inside!

## CHAPTER III

### HOW GERMANY DRIVES HER PRISONERS MAD

The soldiers had accompanied me into the cell to complete the preliminaries which comprised the final search. This involved my transition to a state of nature. My frock coat was removed and all pockets further examined. The seams and lining were closely investigated while even the buttons were probed to make certain they concealed nothing of a dangerous nature. In a few minutes they discovered my silent companion, the tiny camera, which I had deftly removed from its secret hiding-place to a tail pocket in my coat, as I did not wish to have it found in its hiding-place, which would have been far more incriminating. I had done this while coming down the steps to the cells. Also I had extracted the exposed film and had placed this in a spot where it was absolutely safe from discovery.

When the soldiers alighted upon the instrument they were sorely puzzled. All my pockets had been turned inside out in the room upstairs and now this camera had been brought to light. They shook their heads completely baffled, and looked at me meaningly. But my face was inscrutable.

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Every garment was subjected to a rigorous search. Yet beyond the camera they found nothing. Certainly no papers were brought to light. There was no mistaking their bitter disappointment; this was plainly written upon their faces. My watch was prized open, and the works were turned out, while a photograph of my wife and children was torn from the back case to make certain there was nothing concealed behind it. My shirt was turned over and over and held up to the light to be examined inch by inch for any traces of secret writing. But all to no purpose. From their mortification and behaviour I surmised that they had been promised a monetary reward if they succeeded in finding anything in writing. And now they were destined to go empty-handed. Thereupon, after laying their heads together for a few seconds, they drew pencil and paper from their pockets and commenced writing.

I was suspicious of this action. To me it was palpable that, animated by the lure of money and foiled in their efforts, they were prepared to go the length of concocting evidence against me. At least I thought so, and summarily frustrated their action. I went to them and by the aid of signs demonstrated that I wanted the paper torn up, or I would ring the emergency bell and summon the head gaoler to explain matters. They apparently did not relish my threat, because they instantly tore the paper to shreds.

By the time their search was completed I was stripped to the skin. But I was not permitted to re-dress. Evidently they concluded that I might have pockets in my epidermis because they went over me, inch by inch, resorting to actions which were wholly unnecessary and which were revolting, degrading, and demoralising to the last degree—such actions as one would hardly expect even from the lowest animals. During the process they joked and gibed freely at my expense.

Although it was with the utmost difficulty I controlled my feelings, my blood soon began to boil, rapidly rising to fever heat, when they descended to familiarities and personalities which flesh and blood could not stand. I suffered their indignities as long as I could. Then unable to contain my rage any longer I threw myself at the leader of the party, pitching into him with all the strength I could command. I pommelled him unmercifully with my fists and he began to howl somewhat vociferously. His comrades were too surprised at my unexpected rebellion to extend assistance, until at last their dull wits took in the situation. I caught a glimpse of one of the soldiers grasping his rifle. I saw it flash in the air—I remembered no more.



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When I awoke I was lying stark naked upon the floor of my cell. My head was racking and throbbing like a hammer. Raising my hand to my forehead I sharply withdrew it. It was quite wet, and as I looked more closely, I saw that it was blood. I felt again and found my face clotted and my hair reeking wet from a ragged wound on the head. Evidently the soldier whose rifle I had seen swinging through the air, had brought it down heavily upon my skull, felling me like an ox. How long I had lain unconscious I never knew, but it must have been for some time, judging from the quantity of blood I had lost, which was partially congealed on my face, neck and shoulders. I shivered with the cold and collecting my senses I commenced to dress my wound. For bandages I had to tear my shirt to ribbons. I swabbed the ragged wound as well as I could, and then bound it up. Weary and faint from loss of blood I dressed myself with extreme difficulty and then proceeded to examine my present abode.

We are familiar with the cramped quarters at the Tower of London into which our mediaeval sovereigns were wont to thrust our ancestors who fell foul of authority. Wesel Prison is the German counterpart of our famous quondam fortress-prison. The cells are little, if any, larger than those in the Tower, and are used to this day. My residence measured about nine feet in length by about four and a half feet in width, and was approximately ten feet in height—about the size of the entrance hall in an average small suburban residence. High up in the wall was a window some two feet square. But it admitted little or no daylight. It was heavily barred, while outside was a sloping hood which descended to a point well below the sill, so that all the light which penetrated into the cell was reflected from below against the black interior of the hood. In addition there was a glazed window, filthy dirty, while even the slight volume of light which it permitted to pass was obstructed further by small-mesh wire netting. Consequently the interior was wrapped in a dismal gloom throughout the greater part of the day, through which one could scarcely discern the floor when standing upright. After daylight waned the cell was enveloped in Cimmerian blackness until daybreak, no lights being permitted.

The bed comprised three rough wooden planks, void of all covering and mattress, and raised a few inches above the floor. The other appointments were exceedingly meagre, consisting of a small jug and basin as well as a small sanitary pan. High on the wall was a broken shelf. That was all. The wall itself was about two feet in thickness and wrought of masonry.

The walls themselves were covered with inscriptions written and scratched by those who had been doomed to this depressing domicile. Some of the drawings were beautifully executed, but the majority of the inscriptions testified, far more eloquently than words can describe, to the utter depravity of many of those who had preceded me, and who had passed their last span of life on this earth within these confines.

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A few minutes sufficed to take in these general features. Then my attention was riveted upon the floor, and this told a silent, poignant story which it would be difficult to parallel. The promenade was less than nine feet—in fact, it was only two full paces—and barely twelve inches in width. Consequently the occupant, as he paced to and fro, trod always upon the same spots. And the patterings of the feet in that short walk had worn the board into hollows at the treads. I felt those hollows with my hands, traced their formation, and despite my unhappy plight could not refrain from musing upon the stories which those hollows could relate—stories of abandoned hope, frenzy, madness, resignation, suppressed fury, and pathetic awaiting of the doom which could not be averted.

Those hollows exercised an irresistible fascination for me, and when I started to walk they drew my feet as certainly as the magnet attracts the iron filings. I would strive to avoid the hollows and for a few seconds would succeed, but within a short time my feet fell into them. Later I learned from one of my wardens that the paces of the criminals condemned to this and the other cells is so persistent and ceaseless as to demand the renewal of the boards at frequent intervals.

In the United States the third degree has attained a revolting ill-fame. But the American third degree must be paradise in comparison with what can only be described as its equivalent in Germany. The Teuton method is far more effective and brutal. The man is not badgered, coaxed, and threatened in the hope of extorting a signed confession, but he is condemned to loneliness, silence and solitude amid a gloom which can be felt, and which within a short time eats into your very soul. Add to this complete deprivation of exercise and insufficient, un-nourishing, food, and one can gather some faint idea of the effect which is wrought upon the human body. The German idea is to wear down a man physically as well as mentally, until at last he is brought to the verge of insanity and collapse. By breaking the bodily strength and undermining the mind he is reduced to such a deplorable condition as to render him as pliable as putty in the hands of his accusers. He is rendered absolutely incapable of defending himself. He fails to realise what is said against him or the significance of his own words.

His brain is the first to succumb to the strain, utter loneliness speedily conducing to this result, aggravated by a sensation which is produced by walking the cell, and which I will describe later. Consequently he invariably achieves with his own mouth what his persecutors desire—his own condemnation. To make their devilry complete German justice resorts to a final phase which seals the fate of the poor wretch irrevocably, as I will narrate.

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I had been deprived of every belonging. I was denied paper, pencil and reading material. Solitary confinement in Germany is carried out in strict accordance with the interpretation of the term. One is left alone with one's thoughts. At intervals of ten minutes the gaoler opens the peep-hole and peers within. Consequently you are under constant surveillance, and this contributes towards the unhinging of the mind. Night and day, without a break, the peep-hole opens with mechanical regularity. Not only is all mental exercise denied but physical exercise as well. All that one can do towards stretching one's limbs is to pace the tiny cell. The method is typically Prussian, and is complete in its Prussian thoroughness and devilishness.

I sat down upon my bed with my bleeding, aching head in my hands, an object of abject misery. Not a sound beyond the clanging of doors was to be heard, punctuated at frequent intervals by the dull thud of blows, as some hapless wretch was being clubbed, the shrieks and howls of prisoners, and the groans of those on the verge of insanity. It was just as if all the demons of the Nether Regions were at work worrying and harrying their victims. While rocking myself to and fro I heard the turning of the key. The gaoler entered with a bowl containing some evil-looking and worse smelling soup. I ventured to speak, but he merely glowered threateningly and departed without uttering a sound. The dinner was revolting, but recognising that I was considered to be a criminal, and as such was condemned to prison fare I ventured to taste the nauseous skilly. I took one mouthful. My nose rebelled at the smell and my stomach rose into my throat at the taste. One sip was more than adequate, so I pushed the basin to one side. I threw myself upon the plank bed. Ten minutes later the peep-hole opened. I took no notice but started when a gruff voice roared "Get up!"

I ignored the command. The door opened and the guard came in. He gave me a savage prod with his rifle. I sat up.

"Get up! Pace!" he roared.

I relapsed on to my bed without a murmur only to receive a resounding clout which set my head throbbing once more with accentuated intensity.

"Get up! Pace!" came the roar again.

The guard pointed to the floor.

I saw what was expected of me. I was to walk to and fro up and down the cell. I was not to be allowed to sit down. Warily I got up and started to "pace!" One—two—steps forward: one—two—steps back! Only that and no more. The guard watched me for a few seconds and then went out.

I continued to do his bidding for a short while, but walking two paces, then swinging round on the heels, taking two more strides, turning round again, to make another two



steps, soon brought on violent giddiness. But that doesn't matter to the German. Within a few minutes I felt as if I had been spun round like a top and stumbled rather than paced. But to stumble was to court disaster because my ankles came into violent contact with the plank bed. Again I had to keep my thoughts centred upon the pacing. To allow them to stray was to essay a third step inadvertently which brought my face into violent collision with the wall. More than once I made my nose bleed copiously from this cause.



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Within a few minutes my brain was whirling madly, my head throbbed from my wound, while my face was bruised from colliding with the wall. I was so giddy that I could not stand erect, while my eyes burned and ached as if they had been seared with a red-hot iron. I fell upon the plank bed, but open flew the peep-hole and again rang out the ominous growl, "Pace!"

And this is what I was condemned to do hour after hour through the livelong day. The only respite comes when meals are brought in and during the night, when the prisoner is left alone. But throughout the day, from 6.30 in the morning to about 7 at night one must pursue the eternal round—two paces forward, right about, two paces back, right about, and so on. The punishment cannot be escaped; it is not suspended for illness until collapse comes to the relief of the hapless wretch. It is a refinement of cruelty which probably is not to be found in any other country. Little wonder that the continued dizziness and lack of ability to stretch the limbs bring about a complete nervous prostration and reduce the strongest man to a physical wreck within a very short time. And if the hapless prisoner declines to answer the stern command "Pace!" then bayonet prodding, clubbing and head-cuffing are brought into action as a stimulant.

Ages seemed to have passed before the door opened again, although as a matter of fact, there is only about 4-1/2 hours between the mid-day and the afternoon meals. I lost all account of time, even during the first day of my incarceration. An hour's pacing seemed like weeks. This time the gaoler brought me another basin containing a greenish liquid, very much like the water in which cabbages are cooked, accompanied by a hunk of black bread.

The method of serving the meals is distinctly German. The gaoler opens the door. He places the food on the ground at the entrance and pushes it along the floor into the cell as if the inmate were a leper. I tasted this repast, but it was even more noisome than the dinner, so I placed it beside the bowl which I had first received, and which with its spoon was left with me. Even if one could have swallowed it I should not have received a very sustaining meal, seeing that it had to suffice until 5.30 the next morning—13 hours without food. Moreover the food is served out sparingly. It is not designed to nourish the frame, but is just sufficient to keep it going though with depreciating strength.

Daylight waned to give way to the blackness of night and in my cell I could not see my hand before my face. Yet darkness was not an unmitigated evil. It did bring relief from the enforced pacing for which I was devoutly thankful. Although torn with hunger I was so exhausted as to jump at the opportunity to lie down. But the planks were hard, and being somewhat slender in build my thighs speedily became sore. My brain from the fiendish exercise refused to stop spinning. I was like a drunken man and

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to lie down was to provoke a feeling of nausea which was worse than pacing. Then as the night wore on I began to shiver with the cold because I was denied any covering. How I passed the first night I cannot recall, but I am certain that a greater part of the time passed in delirium, and I almost cried with delight when I saw the first rays of the breaking day filter through the window. They at least did modify the terrible darkness.

At 5.30 in the morning along came the gaoler. The cell was opened and a broom was thrust into my hands. To me that domestic utensil was as a new toy to a child. I grasped it with delight: it at least would give me some occupation. I set to sweeping the cell furiously. I could have enjoyed the company of that broom for hours, but a prisoner is only allowed two minutes to sweep his cell. Then the broom was snatched out of my hands and to the droning of "Pace!" which rang out continually like the tolling of a funeral bell, I knew the next day had begun.

I fell back on to my bed almost broken at heart at being deprived of the humble broom. But by now the significance of German solitary confinement had been brought home to me fully. I would not be broken. I would ward off the terrible results at all hazards. So when the gaoler came with my breakfast he found me in high spirits—assumed for the occasion I may say. When he pushed in the basin of skilly I picked it up and set it beside the others. Pointing to the row of untouched food I turned to him cynically and remarked, "Don't you think you're making too much fuss of me?"

"Ach!" he growled in reply.

"If you persist in going on like this I shall think I am in a nursing home!"

"Ach!" he retorted sharply, "If you think you are in a nursing home you'll soon change your mind," saying which he slammed the door with extra vigour.

The only interlude to the daily round is shortly after sweeping cells. The doors are thrown open and each prisoner, armed with his water jug and sanitary pan, forms up in line in the corridor. They are spaced two paces apart and this distance must be rigorously maintained. If you vary it a fraction a smart rap over the head with the rifle brings you back again to the correct position. The German warders never attempt to correct by words. The rifle is a handy weapon and a smart knock therewith is always forceful. Consequently, if you are dull of comprehension, your body speedily assumes a zebra appearance with its patches of black and blue.

We were marched off to a huge yard flanked by a towering wall studded with hundreds of heavily barred windows—cells. Only those resident in the "Avenue of the Damned" experience this limited latitude, the ordinary prisoners being extended the privilege of ordinary exercise. Not a word must be spoken; to do so is to invite a crash over the

head, insensibility being an effective protection against communication between prisoners.



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Reaching the yard we were lined up, still two paces apart and under the hawk-eyes of the guard. Then the first man from one end advanced to the pump, alongside which stood two soldiers with fixed bayonets with which the man was prodded if he evinced signs of lingering or dwelling unduly over his work. The duty involved cleaning out the sanitary pan, in which by the way dependence had to be placed upon the hands alone, no mop or cloth being allowed. Then the jug had to be refilled from the pump, which was a crazy old appliance worked by hand. I may say that so far as we prisoners residing in the ill-famed avenue were concerned we had to depend upon water entirely for washing purposes—soap was an unheard-of luxury—while a towel was unknown. Under these circumstances it was impossible to keep clean. Shaving was another pleasure which we were denied, and I may say that the prisoners residing in the salubrious neighbourhood of the condemned cells had the most unkempt and ragged appearance it is possible to conceive. When the man had finished his task he marched to the opposite end of the line, his place being immediately taken by the next man, and so on until the work was completed, which usually involved about ten minutes.

Although intercourse was rendered impossible by the vigilance and number of the guards yet I was able to take stock of my neighbours. We were a small but cosmopolitan family, the French predominating. For some inscrutable reason the Germans appear to have been unusually successful in their haul of French spies, although doubtless the great majority were as innocent of the charge of espionage as I was. Yet we were a motley throng and I do not think any self-respecting tramps would have chummed up with us. Many of my fellow prisoners bore unmistakable evidences of premature old age—the fruits of solitary confinement, lack of exercise, and insufficient food. Others seemed half-witted and dazed as a result of the brutal treatment which they had received. Some were so weak that they could scarcely manipulate the crazy pump. Many were garbed only in trousers, being void of boots, socks, shirts and vest. Unkempt beards concealed thin, worn and haggard faces studded with red bloodshot eyes.

While I was waiting in the line my attention was arrested by one man, who formed a member of our party. He was a German, but he did not appear as if he had been guilty of any heinous crime—at least not one of sufficient calibre to bring him into our Avenue. He was well built, of attractive personality, and was well dressed in a blue suit complete with clean collar, tie and other details.

Who was he? What was he doing with us? Was he a spy? My curiosity was thoroughly aroused. I became interested in him, and strange to say the sentiment was mutual because he could not take his eyes from me. I keenly wanted to speak to him but this was frankly out of the question. Yet we seemed to be drawing together.

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I did not attempt to speak but contrived by sundry movements and shuffling on one pretext or another to get closer to him. Then I resorted to subterfuge. Standing with my hands in front of me I began to twiddle my fingers rapidly. The action appeared to be natural and did not arouse the slightest suspicion. Within the limitations available I was forming some of the letters of the deaf and dumb alphabet with which I am fully acquainted and dexterous. Did he understand the language? I watched him closely. Presently I saw his fingers begin to move with apparent equal aimlessness. I watched intently. He was answering me and to my joy I discovered that he understood English.

Our fingers were now working briskly and we carried on a brief monosyllabic conversation while the other prisoners were completing their work. From him I learned that I was certainly in great danger. But he urged me to cheer up. Then he asked me the number of my cell, which I gave. He replied that he was directly opposite me, and he told me to look out for him whenever I got a chance, which, needless to say, under the stringency of my life, was not likely to be often. He had such a frank open face that I felt as if I could trust him, although I had come to regard every German, no matter how apparently innocent his conversation might be, with the gravest suspicion. But a quaint, quiet, suppressed smile which he gave restored my confidence completely.

The hours dragged along as during the previous day. It was wearying and exhausting. I refused all my food and was making an imposing collection of bowls of foodstuff. None was taken away. The gaoler merely observed that I had not touched anything, but he made no comment. When night fell I essayed to lie down, but this was impossible. The sores on my projecting thigh bones had broken into large wounds which were now bleeding and suppurating and were so painful as to render lying down impossible. As a matter of fact more than two months passed before those wounds healed and the scars are still visible.

I was lying as best I could upon my bed vainly striving to woo sleep. It was about midnight. The key grated in the lock and a young officer entered. He was gruff of manner, but according to the German standard was not unkind. I found that his manner was merely a mask to dissipate any suspicion among others who might be prowling round, such is the distrust of one German of another. After he had shut the door his manner changed completely and he was disposed to be affable. But I resented his intrusion. Had he come to fathom me? Was he an emissary seeking to induce me to commit myself inadvertently? Frankly I thought so. He spoke softly and his voice was intentionally kind, while he spoke English perfectly.

“I would like to help you,” he began.

“Would you?” I retorted cynically.

“Yes, I am very fond of the English. I have lived in London several years and have many friends over there.”



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“Well, it’s a thousand pities we don’t serve some of your blighted countrymen the same as they are serving me,” I shot back.

“Yes, I know. I am very sorry for you. But it is our way. Now I, myself, don’t think you are a spy. I think your story is honest and straightforward.”

“Then why in the name of Heaven don’t they treat me so until they have tried me?”

“Ah! That is the English way. Here, in Germany, a man is guilty until he is found innocent!”

“Oh! So that’s your much-vaunted German ‘Kultur,’ is it?” I laughed sarcastically.

Seeing that I was a bit overwrought he sought to pacify me.

“Would you like a cigarette?”

At the thought of a smoke I nearly jumped for joy. There was nothing for which I had been yearning so much as the solace of a cigarette. I took one from his proffered case.

“H’sh! I cannot stay any longer now. The guard might get suspicious. But I will do all I can for you. I will come to see you every night at this time. I will make you as comfortable as I can as a return for the many courtesies and kindnesses I received while in London. Now light up and jump up to the ventilator to puff the smoke out. If they smell tobacco in the cell you will get into serious trouble.”

He bade me good-night and the next instant I was at the window to enjoy the only peaceful few minutes of pleasure which had come my way since my arrest. My smoke completed I settled down to sleep with additional comfort.

At 2.30 in the morning I was once more awakened. The door flew open and in rushed my friend the young officer. He was terribly agitated. He grasped both my hands and I felt that he was trembling like a leaf. His voice was so broken that he could scarcely speak.

“Good God! Do you know what has happened? Great Britain has declared war on Germany!” Like a child he burst out crying. As for myself I knew hardly what to think. I had been hoping against hope that the circumstance of our still keeping friendly relations would facilitate my speedy release. This hope was fairly blasted now, and I was certain to meet with far shorter shrift and harsher treatment than had already been meted out to me. I may say that this was the first intelligence I had received about the outbreak of war with Great Britain.

Stifling his emotion the officer went on.



“I am very sorry it has happened. I shall not be able to see you again!”

“Why?”

“I have to leave for the front. I have ten minutes to say farewell to my poor old mother.” Here he broke down once more. “My poor mother,” he wailed. “It will kill her. She does not know a soul in Wesel. We are utter strangers. I was summoned back from London only a week or two ago.” He gave vent to another outburst of sobbing.

“Cheer up!” I said soothingly, “you’ll see her when you come back!”

“Come back?” he echoed bitterly. “No! I shall never come back. I shall never see her again! Good-bye! Remember that I always thought kindly of the English. But I won’t forget you before I go!”



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His fatalistic resignation somewhat moved me. He was inwardly convinced that he was going to his death. But I appreciated his sparing a little of his bare ten minutes to give me a parting visit. I also thank him for remembering me as he had promised. Shortly after he had gone the gaoler came to my cell with a sack of fresh straw to serve as a mattress. The young officer had paid him to extend me this slight privilege. To me it was like a Heaven-sent blessing, because it enabled me to seek a little repose without subjecting my bleeding hips to further damage.

During the following day, Wednesday, I was enabled to snatch a peep of the corridor without, owing to the gaoler paying me a visit in response to my summons. To my utter astonishment, looking across the corridor, I saw the mysterious prisoner with whom I had been talking by aid of the mute alphabet, lounging at the door of his open cell smoking a cigar. This discovery startled me, and I decided to be more than ever on my guard. To my mind, which was becoming distracted, everyone appeared to be spying upon my actions. The mysterious prisoner looked across the corridor and saw me. Instantly his fingers commenced to move rapidly. I was talking to the gaoler, but was looking beyond him at the prisoner opposite, greedily taking in the signs. I almost jumped as I read off the letters. "Be alert! Something is going to happen!"

## CHAPTER IV

### MY SECRET MIDNIGHT TRIAL

It was Wednesday evening. I should judge the hour was about eight, although to me it appeared to be nearer midnight. I was lying upon my planks thinking and wondering what the end of it would be. My head was whirling with giddiness from the eternal pacing, and from the wound which I had received, while I was faint from hunger, having eaten nothing since the lunch on the train on Monday, save for the two small rolls upon Wesel station. I had not refused the prison fare from feelings of obstinacy, but simply because my stomach revolted at it. The untouched basins were still standing beside me in a row, the one which had been served first now commencing to emit distinct signs of its staleness.

The door opened, but I ignored it. In fact I was in a semi-comatose condition.

"Rouse! Get up!" growled the head gaoler.

I struggled to a sitting posture and looked up. Standing beside me was a military officer. I could not repress a start. But the absence of arrogance somewhat reassured me, and I struggled to my feet.



“Herr Mahoney,” he commenced, “a serious view has been taken of your case. However, as you have money the authorities are prepared to give you every chance to prove your innocence. You can have counsel if you choose. I can arrange it at once!”

I reflected for a moment. The crisis had been reached at last, and the moment for which I had been longing for bracing myself up to meet the supreme ordeal had arrived. I decided to maintain a stiff upper lip. Yet, in all fairness I must admit that the authorities were treating me justly. Here was I, an absolute stranger in their country, ignorant of the language beyond a few colloquialisms, and in the most dangerous situation in which a man could possibly find himself.

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Yet I did not regard the offer favourably. I feared that it was a move to trap me decisively. I should be at the mercy of counsel. This was the thought which harassed me. However, subsequently, I discovered that throughout that Wednesday the trials of other spies had been held, and that in no other instance, so far as I could ascertain, had the privilege of representation by counsel been extended. But I swiftly made up my mind as to my course of action.

“Thank you for the offer,” I retorted at last, “but I prefer to undertake my own defence. Besides I am absolutely innocent and it will not be a difficult matter for me to convince the Court.”

“As you will,” and the officer shrugged his shoulders.

He went to the door, and at his command four soldiers came up with loaded rifles. They closed around me, their bayonets levelled, to run me through should I make an attempt to escape. We marched out of the cell. Up, up, up, we went, the steps appearing to be interminable. I walked as if in a dream, and being faint and weary I moved somewhat slowly. But, strange to say, my escort did not hurry me. I was certainly shown every consideration upon this occasion. During the procession I was thinking hard and swiftly, and with a superhuman effort pulled myself together for the coming fight for life.

We entered a spacious, well-lighted room. At the opposite end was a long table set transversely, around three sides of which were seated a number of military dignitaries. That they were of considerable eminence was evident from their prodigal array of decorations. They glanced at me as I entered, but instantly resumed their low conversation and perusal of documents and other material connected with my case. It did not require a second thought to realise the importance of this court-martial, but I felt somewhat perturbed at one circumstance.

*My trial was to be held in secret.*

I was made to take up a position some distance from the table and immediately opposite the central figure who was acting as chairman and inquisitor-in-chief. The soldiers formed a semi-circle around me, the only open space being immediately before me.

At this date I often reflect upon the strange and sorry sight I must have presented. I was dressed in a frock coat which was sadly soiled, a white waistcoat extremely dirty and blood-stained, and trousers sadly frayed at the bottom where the searchers had ripped off the turn-ups. I was without a shirt, having torn this up to bandage my head, which even now was swathed in a dirty, blood-stained dressing, while the buttons had become detached from my under-vest so that the soiled ends flapped over my waistcoat. My face was none too clean, being besmirched with smudges, since I had been denied the luxuries of soap and towel, and it was covered with a stubbly growth.

Altogether I must have been the most sorry-looking, if not revolting specimen of a spy ever arraigned before that immaculate Tribunal.



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It is useless to relate the trial in extenso because there were so many details which were completely void of interest except to me and my judges. Although every word, passage, and scene is burned into my brain I have only committed the most important episodes to paper. The proceedings opened with the chairman holding forth in monotone German. Seeing that I took no notice of his tirade he paused. We were soon to come to grips. He fired at me in English:

“You understand German?”

“No!”

“Well, we think you do!”

“You are at liberty to think what you like, but the fact remains that I don’t!”

Seeing that I was not to be over-awed by his arrogance or to be brow-beaten he modified his attitude. This spirited bout sobered the tribunal, and the trial proceeded more smoothly, except for a few outbursts now and again which were sharp and pointed while they lasted.

“Well, we will provide you with an interpreter,” he continued in a more placid tone, “but we still hold the opinion that you can speak and understand German!”

There was delay for a few minutes. Then the door opened and a second later my interpreter stood beside me. How it was I did not jump into the air I do not know, because the man summoned to assist me was none other than the mysterious prisoner with whom I had been talking in the mute alphabet.

This *denouement* almost unnerved me. I was now more positive than ever that he had been deputed to spy upon me in prison. I looked at him askance, but received not the slightest sign of recognition. I had refused to entrust my cause to counsel and now I was placed in the hands of an interpreter who, if he so desired, could wreak much more damage by twisting the translations from English to suit his own ends.

As events proved, however, I could not have been in better hands. He was highly intelligent, and he interpreted my statements with a fluency and accuracy which were astonishing. Only now and again did he stumble and hesitate. This was when he was presented with an unfamiliar expression or idiomatic sentence.

As the trial proceeded I gained an interesting side-light upon German methods and the mutual distrust which exists. Ostensibly, and so I was led to believe, none of the Tribunal spoke English with any fluency, but when, on one occasion, my interpreter was floored by a particularly difficult colloquialism which I uttered, the Clerk of the Court came to his aid, and in a moment turned the sentence properly to convey my exact meaning. This revelation placed me on my guard more than ever, because it was



brought home to me very convincingly that if my interpreter tended to lean unduly towards me, he himself would be in serious jeopardy. Later, during the trial, I discovered that the Clerk spoke and understood English as well as I did. It was a telling illustration of the German practice of spying upon one another.



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The first part of the trial was taken up with a repetition of the numerous questions I had already answered times out of number, accompanied by a more searching cross-examination. As the trial proceeded I saw that the authorities had collected every vestige of evidence from every official who had questioned me and with whom I had held any conversation.

There was one exciting moment. An officer, evidently of high rank, entered the room. He looked at me in a manner which I resented. With a sneering grin he enquired,

“Englander? Ha! Ha! Spion? What are you doing here?”

“I have come at the pressing invitation of four gentlemen with four points!” I suavely replied.

This sly allusion to the four soldiers with their bayonets lashed the interrupting officer to fury. The whole court indulged in a wild and loud conversation. The chairman waved his arm wildly. Before I grasped what had happened the soldiers closed round me, I was roughly turned round, and to the accompaniment of liberal buffeting was hustled down the steps to my cell.

A few minutes later my interpreter came to me.

“Listen to me, English friend. You must not annoy the Court. I am trying to do all I can for you. I do not think you guilty. But if you are—what do you call it—h’m——” and he snapped his fingers perplexedly.

“Sarcastic?” I ventured.

“Yes! That’s it. If you are sarcastic you make my work very hard!”

“But that officer had nothing to do with the Court, had he? Why did he interfere with a gratuitous insult?”

“Ah! I see. You don’t understand. They will do that. But you must remember the uniform!”

Further conversation was prevented by the reappearance of the soldiers. I was to be taken back to the Court. I decided to take my interpreter’s advice, and although I was frequently roused intentionally, I bit my lip at the insults and choked down sharp retorts.

“Do you realise the nature of the charge and the gravity of your position?” asked the chairman, after proceedings had been resumed. There was no trace of resentment at the recent incident in his voice.

“I do perfectly.”



“Then do you not think it somewhat strange that a man like you should be travelling to Berlin, on the way to Warsaw, on the very day when war was declared against Russia? Is it not strange also that you should be here after Great Britain has declared war?”

“When I set out for Berlin war had not been declared between Germany and Russia. On Monday when I was arrested war had not been declared against Germany by Great Britain. I was arrested on the flimsiest pretext and upon the word of a deliberately lying youth before war had been declared with my country!”

“Ah! we shall see. You do not think it strange to be travelling through Germany at such a perilous time with so much photographic apparatus?”



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“No! I was not using it!”

“So you took no photographs in Germany?”

“No!” And the lie flew out in spite of myself. But I felt perfectly secure because I knew exactly where the film, which I had exposed, was. It was beyond their reach!

“Then what is this?” And to my surprise he held up somewhat triumphantly the length of photographic film from the camera with which I had taken the two farewell pictures of my family.

Up to this point I had successfully maintained a stiff upper lip and perfect composure. But at the sight of the film carrying the parting pictures, my thoughts flew to home and its associations. I broke down.

The court was jubilant. My spontaneous outburst of weakness at memories of home was misconstrued into a recognition of the fact that I had been trapped.

Amid a silence which was soul-burning and which caused my voice, quivering at first but rapidly regaining strength and its natural ring, to echo strangely through the room, I narrated the history of that film. As I had expected it provoked a fearful wrangle. The fight was sharp and hot while it lasted, but I thanked my lucky stars that I was not only well skilled in the technics of photography but the chemistry side as well. The film in question was sufficient for six exposures. Three had been made. In addition to the two pictures of my family’s farewell which corresponded to exposures two and three there was another picture, of archaeological interest, concerning a Sussex church, which was exposure number one. The rest of the film, which would have corresponded to pictures 4, 5 and 6, had never been exposed.

The film which was held up had been developed by order of the court. The unexposed portion had been passed through the development processes, and I experienced a thrill of joy. I saw that I was now on solid ground.

“How did you expose this film?”

“In the usual way. The church was taken first, followed by the two pictures of my family. The rest of the film has never been exposed.”

“That is what you say. But the Court thinks differently. Listen, the two pictures of your family were taken first and this of the church last—possibly, indeed probably, in Germany?”

“It was not. No photographer, even the tyro, would pass half a film through his camera before making an exposure.”



For ten minutes we fought tooth and nail over the way in which that film had been passed through the camera. Then, seeing that they could not shake my evidence, and doubtless impressed by my vehemence, they turned round completely to return to the attack.

“Well, granted, as you say, that the church was taken first, the second half of the film was exposed in Germany. But you, seeing the danger of your position upon arrest, contrived to ruin these last three pictures before the camera was taken away from you,” snapped the Chairman.



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In spite of myself I laughed.

“The second half of the film has never been exposed at all,” I rejoined.

“How can you prove that?”

“Very easily. If I had ruined it by exposing it to the light as you suggest, *the film upon development would have come out black! But it is quite transparent!*” I replied in triumph.

My retort floored the Court. We were dipping into matters about which they were completely ignorant. There was a hurried whispering and then the Chairman commented:

“We’ll soon prove that you are wrong!”

Proceedings were suspended. A clerk left the room to return a little later with a civilian who proved to be a photographer in Wesel.

The problem was presented to him, but I saw at once that he knew nothing whatever about the chemistry of photography. He was turned over to me for cross-examination, and within three minutes I had so pulverised his statements that he was quite bewildered, and he left the Tribunal with his photographic reputation sadly shattered.

Another witness was summoned, the Court being determined to get at the bottom of the problem which had been raised. They certainly recognised the significance of my contention. This time it was a military officer. He was examined by the Court, and then I was given the liberty to cross-examine. My very first question was adequate to satisfy myself that he knew even less about the subject than the previous witness. But he was nervously anxious not to betray his ignorance. He had been called in as an expert and fervently desired to maintain this reputation. He did so by acquiescing in every statement which I put to him concerning the action of light upon nitrate of silver.

“Now,” I asked emphatically, when I had completely caught him, “under these circumstances, and according to what you have been explaining to the court, the second half of this film which is transparent has never been exposed?”

“It has not.”

His negative was so emphatic as to convince the Court. I had scored the crucial point and felt, now my supreme difficulty had been subjugated so conclusively, that all was plain sailing. It was only too evident that everything had turned upon that short length of unexposed film, and I felt devoutly thankful to Providence that the light had not accidentally penetrated to the sensitised surface. Had the unexposed section been black my fate would have been irrevocably sealed.



Now I was asked to present my defence.

“Can you give us a complete and detailed narrative of your journey, say from the time you left Brighton by the 5.10 p.m. train, on Saturday, August 1, up to your arrest.”

I nodded affirmatively.

“Well, go ahead!”

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Forthwith I launched out. I am naturally a rapid speaker and although my interpreter was confronted with a gigantic task, he performed his work magnificently. Only once or twice did he falter for a moment or two. But I was never interrupted nor asked to repeat a statement, so that the thread of my story remained unbroken. For two hours and a half I spoke and I think the readiness and clearness with which I proceeded must have impressed the Court. As I warmed to the subject my head grew clearer and clearer. I knew I was fighting for my life, but the whole of the episodes and scenes during the critical fifty odd hours passed through my mind as if delineated upon a continuous cinematograph ribbon of film.

Midnight had passed before I had finished. The clerks of the Court had been steadily writing during the whole period, and I knew that every word I had uttered had been faithfully recorded. The Tribunal gave a sigh of relief as I intimated that I had nothing more to say. I was returned to my cell, accompanied by my interpreter, whom I thanked for his assistance which I could never repay. The Court might decide what it liked. I had put up a stiff fight and could do no more. I thought I was to be left alone for the night. I was sorely in need of rest, and the nervous tension under which I had been labouring now began to reveal itself. The reaction commenced to set in. But there was no rest for me yet. Hardly had I sat down upon my plank bed before I was re-summoned. By this time I was so weak that I could hardly stand. The perspiration was pouring out all over my body. Indeed, I had to be assisted up the stairs.

To my utter surprise, when I entered the court, I found the record of my defence completed. There it was in a pile of neatly inscribed sheets, numbered, and secured together. The Chairman pushed the depositions before me.

“Sign here,” and he indicated the foot of the last page.

I picked up the papers. They were in German. I returned them unsigned to the table.

“I decline!” I replied emphatically.

“But you must!”

“Well, I shall not. I don’t understand German. I don’t know what it’s about!”

“It’s your defence!”

“So it may be, but I have only your word for that. I decline to sign anything I do not understand. It may be my death warrant!”

“If you don’t sign I can tell you that we have means of making you do so,” he continued somewhat menacingly.

“I don’t care. You can do as you like, but I am not going to sign those papers.”



My determination provoked another animated discussion. Finally another pile was pushed towards me, I could not curb a start. It was my defence written throughout in English, and had undoubtedly been written simultaneously with the German version. I eyed the Clerk of the Court narrowly and he returned the gaze just as keenly.

I ran through the depositions. They were perfect. Picking up the pen I signed my name without hesitation. The signature was inspected, and then the original German papers were once more presented with the invitation to sign. Again, I refused.

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“But,” expostulated the Chairman, “this is a literal German translation from the English which you have signed!”

“So it may be, but the fact remains that I don’t understand German,” I retorted.

Another storm burst, but the Tribunal saw that it was impossible to shake my resolution. There was another brief discussion. Then the Chairman turned to one of his colleagues, and in a despairing voice asked, “Can you suggest a way out of the difficulty?”

“Yes!” I interrupted. “Give the interpreter the German and me the English copy. Let him translate from the German and I will compare with the English version.”

The offer was accepted, but now another hitch arose. The interpreter said he did not think he could read off the translation from the German right away—at least, it would take time.

The Court was in a quandary. Seeing that this unexpected obstacle was likely to prejudice my position I grabbed the English text and thrust the German copy into my interpreter’s hands. Telling him to go ahead I remarked that we could make something out of it. We wrestled with the translation, although it was a slow and tedious operation, but at last we finished the task. The German depositions being quite in order, and fairly translated I signed the papers without further ado.

Now I thought the ordeal was over, but it was not. Picking up my signed depositions the Chairman proceeded to re-examine me on my defence. He started from the moment I arrived at Flushing and traced my movements, minute by minute, to Berlin, followed what I did in the capital between 1.30 a.m. the hour of my arrival and 1.13 p.m. the time of my departure. The manner in which my movements had been dogged was astonishing and I recalled the individual whom I had noticed shadowing me in the city. I saw at once that everything turned upon the instant nature of my answers, so I replied to every question without the slightest hesitation and to such effect that I never once contradicted myself.

Only one interval, and that of ten minutes in Berlin, threatened to engulf me. I could scarcely fill up this gap. It happened to be one of those idle intervals which one can never explain away very readily or satisfactorily. We disputed this ten minutes vigorously for about half an hour, and by the time we had finished I do not think there was a single second for which an account had not been rendered. My interview with the Consul also precipitated a storm, especially as by this time I was becoming bored and felt dead-tired. Every question, however, sufficed to prove that I was firmly considered to be a spy, and a dangerous one at that. But even the re-examination came to a close at last.



Now my heart nearly jumped out of my body. The chairman, picking up the papers which had been taken from my pocket, withdrew a little book. It was my diary, which was full of notes. The moment I saw its familiar cover I cursed the inspiration which had prompted me to keep a diary. I knew what it contained and I knew the cryptic notes therein would bring about further explosions and protestations. I was not disappointed. Opening the little book the Chairman enquired innocently:



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“What do you mean by things being ‘lively’ in Berlin?”

“It is a British expression,” I retorted, my brain working rapidly to advance a conclusive reply as I recalled the phrase which I had jotted down. “We term things ‘lively’ when say, as in my case, one is first thrown out of a cab by a officer and shortly afterwards is flung out of a restaurant!”

“Rather an unusual phrase to use when one recalls the political situation which prevailed in the capital last Sunday, is it not?”

“Possibly from the German point of view, in the light of events.”

“Then you had an enlightening chat with an officer? What was it all about? How did you open conversation with him?”

“In the usual British manner. We just chatted about things in general.”

“Especially of the war between Germany and England?”

“No! Because we were not at war!”

“But the officer advised you to return home! Why?”

“Because I could not get through to Warsaw!”

Other incidents of a spirited character raged about other phrases in the little book, but I was on the alert. The Chairman evidently considered me to be a match for him in these wrangles because he speedily put the diary down.

During the proceedings the Chairman made one frantic endeavour to trap me, and to prove that I was more fully conversant with the language, as he confidently believed, than I felt disposed to concede. Something was being read over to me by the Clerk upon which my thoughts were concentrated. Suddenly the Chairman roared out a terrifying word in the vernacular. I never moved a hair. I behaved just as if the Chairman had merely sneezed. My imperturbability appeared to convince him that I really did not understand German, because no further reference was made to the fact. Subsequently my interpreter told me that it was fortunate I did not understand German or I would certainly have retorted to the Chairman’s sudden interjection. I should not have been human had I not done so. He refused to tell me what the word was or what it meant, so I was never a whit the wiser.

At last I was told the proceedings with reference to myself were closed. I had been on the rack for several hours, and when the gate of my cell clicked upon me for the last time that eventful evening the morning hours were well advanced. As my interpreter left me to go to his cell I enquired wearily, though with a trace of anxiety,



“When shall I know the result?”

He shrugged his shoulders.

“Perhaps to-morrow. Who knows?”

Personally I felt confident that a speedy release would be granted. It seemed to me impossible to convict upon the evidence. But I was ignorant of German ways and military court procedure. I was destined to receive a greater surprise than any which had yet befallen me.

## **CHAPTER V**



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### WAITING TO BE SHOT

I shall never forget the night of Wednesday, August 5th. After the excitement of my trial which had left me well nigh exhausted, I threw myself upon my wooden plank bed to recuperate with a well-earned rest. But I had just made myself comfortable when a terrible uproar broke out. The prison trembled and I half feared that it would tumble about our ears. The emergency bells commenced to clang madly, while the building was torn with the most terrifying shrieks and howls.

Then the deafening sounds of explosions burst on our ears. At the time I wondered what was the cause for this din, but the next morning I was told that during the night the French had made an aerial raid upon Wesel. From within it sounded as if the whole Allied Army were pounding the building. On top of the prison anti-aircraft guns were mounted and when they were discharged, which was continuously and rapidly, they shook the building violently. Indeed an earthquake could scarcely have set up a more agitated oscillation of the fabric.

Although the bells rang madly they were not answered. Every gaoler had left his post; gone no one knew whither. The prisoners thought they had been deserted. They were haunted by the terror of the prison being set in flames by the bombardment. The shrieks, cries, howls and wails born of fright made my blood chill. Outside one could hear the muffled shouts of officers giving orders, curses, and rapid firing by small arms. The whole place appeared to have been afflicted with panic, as acute among the soldiers without as among the prisoners within. For about an hour pandemonium reigned. Even to me, shut up as I was in a narrow cell, it was easy to appreciate the terrible and far-reaching undermining effect which an aerial raid has upon the Teuton mind.

Within the prison next morning it was possible to see the dire effects which the French aviators had caused. A few cells below me was a prisoner. When I saw him on the Thursday morning I scarcely recognised him. As a result of that hour of terror *his hair had gone completely white!* Other prisoners were sadly bruised and scarred from frantically beating their hands and heads against the doors of their cells in the desperate endeavour to get out. One poor wretch went raving mad.

Notwithstanding the ordeal of the trial, which had deprived me of my normal span of rest, I was woke up at 5.30 to sweep out my cell. The strain of the prolonged inquisition of the previous evening upon an enfeebled physique and brain now commenced to assert itself in an emphatic manner. I had eaten nothing, not even a crust of the black bread, for fifty-four hours. Little wonder that I could scarcely keep my feet. My gaoler observed my condition, but said nothing, although he modified his customary boorish attitude towards myself.



When I had to make my daily visit to the yard to clean my utensils and to re-charge my water-jug I staggered down the steps. I stepped out of the line in my turn and grasped the pump-handle. But I was too weak to move it. A fellow-prisoner, recognising my plight, dashed forward to work the pump. As he did one of the guard raised his rifle to club the man across the head, but thinking better of his action, dropped his weapon, and permitted him to assist me.



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How I crawled back to the cell I can scarcely remember. But I recall being spurred forward with sundry jabs and prods by the rifle. Reaching my cell I sank down upon my bed.

How long I lay there it is impossible to say, but presently I became conscious of some one standing beside me. I wearily sat up to see an officer. Had he brought me the verdict of the Court? At the thought I rose to my feet. But no! He had nothing to do with the Tribunal. He eyed me closely and then turning to the array of basins containing the untouched food and hunks of black bread he remarked grimly:

“Do you know you will die if you don’t eat your food?”

“I shall if I do, so what’s the odds? Its smell is sufficient!”

“Do you know we can make you eat it?”

“You try, and I promise you that you will get it back in double quick time,” I retorted significantly and defiantly.

“Well, what would you like to eat?”

“Like to eat?” I repeated. “Why, I could do with a six-course dinner,” was my sarcastic rejoinder, feeling confident that he had merely asked the question to tantalise me. But seeing that he really meant what he said I rattled off a complete menu, not forgetting the cup of black coffee and an Egyptian cigarette. Feeling that the officer was in reality the prison doctor I grew reckless and cynical.

“Well, I’m damned!” was his ejaculatory comment when I had finished. And he gave a loud, long laugh.

My temper was rising, and I think my face must have betrayed my wish to strangle him, because he continued, “You’ve got money, and you can buy one meal a day from outside if you like. I’ll grant you your gluttonous feed to-day—except the cigarette—seeing that you’ve eaten nothing for three days. The cigarette is impossible: it is quite against the rules and regulations of the prison. But to-morrow you’ll have to rest content with a plate of meat and vegetables.”

After he had left the cell I came to the conclusion that he had been merely having a huge joke at my expense. But ten minutes later the gaoler entered bearing two big trays upon which were arrayed the six courses. My eyes glittered with a wolfish greed, but I restrained myself. I sat down to the meal and proceeded with it very leisurely, getting up now and again to pace a little while to assist my weakened digestion. Indeed, by the time I had swallowed the last morsel the gaoler entered with my tea. But that meal put new life into me. Afterwards I easily subsisted upon the dinner from without; that was adequate for the twenty-four hours. I think I paid sufficient for the

privilege seeing that the six-course dinner and three subsequent plates of meat and vegetables cost me twenty-six marks.



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While I was denied all conversation with any of the prisoners I saw them at least once a day. But if I did not see much of them I heard them frequently, especially when punishment was being dealt out. Then the corridor would ring with dull thuds as blows by the rifle were administered, followed by violent shrieking and wailing. The prison, at least the precincts of the Avenue of the Damned, was ruled with a rod of iron, and various brutalities were practised and often upon the slightest pretext. It is only necessary to relate one revolting episode which I witnessed with my own eyes. On Friday morning, August 7, my cell-pacing was rudely interrupted by the appearance of the gaoler who curtly ordered me to stand outside my cell door. I found that all the cells—except one—along the corridor were wide open, and with their occupants similarly standing at the entrances. Between each two cells stood a soldier with his rifle ready to jab his bayonet to right or left at an instant's notice.

I wondered what was the matter, and was told that we were to witness and to profit from the punishment which was to be dealt out to a prisoner who had broken one of the prison rules. Lying in the centre of the corridor was the prone groaning form of a prisoner—a Frenchman, I believe—who had been dragged from the cell before the open door of which no one was standing. He was terribly weak and ill. Beside him stood four hulking, burly and heavily-booted Prussians.

At the word of command these four men rushed forward and commenced to kick the hapless prisoner for all they were worth. The man shrieked, groaned and howled. We all shivered at the sight and at his terrible cries. It sickened me. But the brutes never relented. The more he writhed and the louder he howled the harder they kicked, face, body and head receiving the blows indiscriminately. In a minute or so the man lay still upon the floor, literally kicked into insensibility. Whatever any of the prisoners around may have felt none could extend assistance or interfere. Some strove to shut out the terrible sight by covering their faces with their hands, but the bayonet point speedily induced them to look as commanded. If any one of us had moved a step to proceed to the poor wretch's aid we should certainly have been run through without the slightest compunction.

The unconscious prisoner was picked up and thrown into his cell, while we were likewise rushed in upon the conclusion of the disgusting exhibition. Subsequently I enquired the reason for such a ferocious outburst. Then I found that the prisoner, who was so ill that he really ought to have been in hospital, had rung his bell, to summon the gaoler for permission to respond to one of the calls of nature, but that he had been unable to contain himself until the dilatory official arrived. I might mention that I had heard the bell ringing for fully ten minutes but without avail. Although scrupulous cleanliness is demanded from each cell I know from experience that the gaolers are ever reluctant to reply to a call of the emergency bell, and think nothing of causing the hapless wretch terrible misery. It serves to bring home to the prisoner that he is under confinement and not in a hotel to be waited on hand and foot. Such is the German argument.



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Next morning on our going into the yard the unfortunate prisoner who had been punished so diabolically was not to be seen. More significant still his cell was empty, and the door was wide open. I could only surmise that his worldly troubles were over. If so he would be officially declared to have "died in prison!"

Favoured prisoners are granted a sack of straw to serve as a mattress. I had been denied this luxury but secured it later through the good offices of the lieutenant who visited me on Tuesday night. I was lucky enough to get new straw. Apparently the sacks are never renewed during a prisoner's incarceration. He merely replenishes his stock when another cell becomes vacant, irrespective of the period the straw therein has been in use. There is a mad rush for the empty cell, and the prisoners fight like wolves among themselves for the possession of the derelict straw, each bearing away triumphantly the small dole he has obtained from the struggle.

As may be supposed, under such conditions, the straw is not very inviting. It soon becomes verminous, and this deplorable state of affairs becomes worse the longer the straw is in use. In fact it becomes alive with lice. In one instance I saw a dropped wisp so thickly encrusted with the parasites that it actually moved along the ground under the united action of the insects.

There is one inflexible law in German prisons. Under no pretence whatever must one prisoner enter the cell of another while it is occupied. This regulation is not to prevent conversation or communication between prisoners, but is for reasons which it is not necessary to describe. When one recalls the utter depravity which prevails in German military centres the wisdom of the ordination is obvious. The punishment is severe, the easiest being a spell of confinement upon a black bread and water diet, but generally and preferably clubbing into insensibility.

A few cells above me was a prisoner who had been incarcerated for fifteen years. Whether the whole of this time had been spent in Wesel or not I could not say, but when I came face to face with him for the first time he gave me a severe shock. He was a walking skeleton. Every bone in his body was visible, while his skin was the colour of faded parchment. He looked more like an animated mummy than a human being. I stood beside him one day in the corridor, and a bright ray of sunshine happened to fall across his face which was to me in profile. I started. His face was so thin that the cheek and jawbones were limned distinctly against the light, producing the effect of the X-ray photograph, while the sun shone clean through his cheeks. You could have read a paper on the off side of his face by the light which came through.



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This prisoner unnerved me. From morning to night, as he paced his cell, he groaned dismally: not fitfully but continually. It was like the wail of a dog suffering excruciating agony, only a thousand times more irritating and nerve-racking. Even during the night he groaned, apparently in his sleep. Another day, when similarly paraded beside him, I asked if he would like a piece of black bread. He made no reply, but turned such a wolfish look upon me that I hastily told him to dive into my cell—No. 11. He watched the guard for a second, and while all backs were turned he was gone and back beside me with the prize which he clutched in his hand. I have never seen such a rapid movement. He slid into the cell like a shadow and as stealthily and as quickly returned. This poor wretch doubtless enjoyed this unexpected addition to his quantity of food, since he was apparently being given just enough to keep him alive, and no more. Otherwise he could never have become so fearfully thin.

Once again I was to receive another shock from my mysterious prisoner who had acted as interpreter. On Thursday he came to my cell in the uniform of a warder. Consequently I saw a good deal of him, and, he being friendly, we had many brief snatches of surreptitious conversation. He was highly intelligent, well-educated and sympathetic. I enquired as to how he happened to be in our unsalubrious avenue. He informed me that he was awaiting the Kaiser's pardon. His offence was not heinous. He had not responded to his country's call, upon mobilisation, with the celerity which the officials declared he should have shown. As a punishment he was committed to the cells for three days. Upon the expiration of this sentence he had been made under-gaoler. His name was M——, and he told me he had a prosperous business outside Germany.

I was on the tip-toe of anticipation and suppressed excitement throughout Thursday and Friday, hoping for news concerning the decision of the Tribunal. But when Friday passed without my receiving any tidings I commenced to get fidgety and anxious. My feelings were not assuaged by hearing volleys ring out every morning, followed by a death-like stillness. These reports appeared to stifle the cries and groans of the prisoners a little while. To me the sounds presaged serious news. Apparently there were several prisoners condemned for spying, and each volley, I was told, signified the flight of one or more hapless souls. My spirits were not revived by noticing the cells on either side of me rapidly emptying, while the little party which went down into the yard in the morning began to dwindle in numbers very rapidly.

When the head-gaoler came round on Friday night I decided to tackle him. The suspense was becoming intolerable. By this time he had become somewhat more friendly towards me, and if in the mood would talk for a brief while.

“Were any other prisoners tried on Wednesday as spies?” I asked innocently.



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“Jah! All day!”

“How many?”

“May-be twenty-three!”

“How many have been shot?”

“Ach! I cannot give prisoners news of that kind. But I can tell you that there are three left, and you are one of them!”

I smiled to myself at the gaoler’s rigid observance of the letter of German prison law to refuse news to prisoners, yet giving the desired information in an indirect manner.

“When shall I hear the result of my trial?”

“Trial? You have not been tried yet!”

“What? You must be mistaken. I was tried on Wednesday night!”

“That wasn’t the trial. That was the enquiry!”

“Then when will the trial come off?”

“You’ll learn the *result* of the trial soon enough!” and he slammed the door to prevent further discussion.

I was completely flabbergasted. I scratched my head and endeavoured to collect my thoughts. Surely I could not have heard aright. Yet the man must know what he was talking about. The more I pondered the more perplexed I became. Then the head-gaoler’s stress upon the word “*result!*” What did that portend? New fears crept into my mind. So when M——, the under-gaoler, came round next morning, I badgered him, but he would say no more than that the trial had not yet come off.

I was completely unnerved and now commenced to fear the worst. If the ordeal I experienced on the Wednesday night was not the trial, then what on earth was it? I made up my mind to find out. I rang the bell wildly and demanded to see the Commandant. He sent down word to say he could not see me. But I was insistent, and at last, to avoid further worry, he conceded an audience.

As I entered the office of the Commandant I was surprised to see him handling my little camera. At my entrance he slipped it into his desk. He looked at me curiously, and then grunted,

“What do you want?”



“I wish to know when my trial is coming off. I thought I was tried last Wednesday night.”

“No! That was the enquiry. We’ll let you know the *result* of the trial pretty quickly,” and he grinned complacently, in which little pleasantry at my expense the officer of the guard joined in.

“I don’t want to know the *result*! I want to be there!”

“That is impossible. You gave all your evidence before the enquiry!”

“Then don’t I appear at my trial?”

“Certainly not!”

I was completely non-plussed at this confirmation of the head-gaoler’s statement. It was a new way, to my mind, of meting out justice to a prisoner to deny him the right to appear at his own trial. Truly the ways of Teuton jurisprudence or military court procedure were strange.

“Then when will my trial be held?” I asked, determined to glean some definite information.

“Ach! We cannot be bothered with a single case whilst mobilisation is going on. We are too busy. You must wait,” and with that he dismissed me.

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“But surely you can give me some idea when it will be held,” I persisted.

“Ach!” and he fumed somewhat. Seeing that I was not to be turned away without satisfaction he continued, “Your trial will be on Monday. Get out!”

My reflections upon gaining my cell may be imagined. I could not resist dwelling upon the methods of German justice, and I commenced to conjure up visions of the trial from which I was to be absent, and to speculate upon the final result. What would it be? I saw the heavy disadvantage under which I was labouring, and as may be supposed my thoughts turned to the blackest side of things. I had another forty-eight hours of suspense in solitary confinement to bear.

To take my mind off the subject I set to work sketching an ornate design upon the prison wall with a safety pin which I had picked up unobserved. In the perpetual twilight which prevailed during the day in my cell I drew, or should it be engraved? a huge Union Jack intertwined with the Royal Standard, surmounted by the crown of Great Britain and the Royal Arms. It occupied considerable time, but I took a quaint delight in it. It successfully moved my thoughts from my awkward position, although at nights I kept awake for hours on end turning over in my mind my chances of acquittal and condemnation, more particularly the latter.

On Sunday I applied for permission to attend church, but after a long official discussion the request was refused. The prison had no facilities for administering spiritual pabulum to a British prisoner. This was a mere excuse, because several of the other prisoners attended church. How I passed that day it is difficult to record. I paced my cell in a frenzy until I could pace no longer. I completed my design on the wall, fumbled with my fingers, and dozed. But the hours seemed to drag as if they were years. By now I was so overwrought that I declined to send out for my dinner.

Monday was worse than Sunday. Throughout the day I was keyed to a high pitch of nervous expectancy. I could scarcely keep a limb still. Every sound made me jump, and I kept my eyes glued to the door, momentarily expecting to gain some tidings of how my trial had gone. When the gaoler entered with my meals and stolidly declined to enter into conversation, I grew more and more morose, until at last I can only compare my feelings with those of an animal trapped and at bay, waiting and ready to land some final, fearful blow before meeting its fate.

Early in the evening of the Monday I was pacing my cell, a bundle of twitching nerves, when the door opened to admit an officer. I almost sprang towards him. I was to learn the truth at last. But he had not come from the Court.

“Do you feel hungry?” he asked, not unkindly.

“No.” I answered feebly, my heart heavy within me. As a matter of fact I was so overwrought with anxiety that I failed to feel the pangs of hunger.



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“Well,” he went on, “you can have what you like.”

Thump went my heart again. The verdict had certainly gone against me. For what other reason had I been offered what I liked to eat? It sounded ominous. It recalled our practice in Britain where a condemned man is given his choice of viands on the morning of his execution. Most assuredly I was going to be shot on the following morning, and daybreak was not far distant.

“I should certainly have something to eat if I were you,” suggested the officer.

“Oh, very well,” I replied resignedly, “I’ll have a roll, butter, and a black coffee.”

Directly the officer had gone I rang the emergency bell. M——, the under-gaoler, answered it. With a tremendous effort I pulled myself together.

“So I’m going to be shot in the morning,” I ventured, in the hope of drawing some comment.

“Ach! What? Lie down and keep quiet!” was his stolid retort.

“Look here! I want to write to my wife. Can you get me a pencil and a sheet of paper?”

“Impossible!”

“But I must write. She does not know where I am, and she will not know what has become of me!”

*[large gap]*

German military prisons hold their secrets tightly.

But the time crept on and no guard appeared as I had been dreading. My drooping spirits revived because the hour of the day when prisoners were customarily shot had passed. When I went out into the yard on the Tuesday morning I chanced to meet the two Hindoos who had been arrested with me. Then I realised that they were two out of the three remaining spies. I was the third. They were in high spirits. When the guard was not looking they told me they had been acquitted of the espionage charge, and expected soon to be taken as far as the frontier to be released.

I was the only one left, and I had not been told the result of my trial. Yet these two Hindoo students who also had been before the Court on the Wednesday had learned the verdict in their cases. But I had been denied all communication. I regained my cell in a kind of stupor. To me it seemed that all was lost, and I fell into the depths of despair. When the friendly M—— came with my breakfast I pestered him with questions.



“Has the court been sitting?”

“Yes, all day Monday and all last night.”

“Have you heard the result of my trial?”

“No.”

“But the two Hindoos have been acquitted. Have I?”

“I cannot say,” he replied sullenly.

The manner in which he avoided my eager look served to confirm my worst fears. I strove hard to draw something further from him, but he briefly remarked that he was forbidden to speak to prisoners.

I scarcely knew what to think. To me it was extraordinarily strange that the two Hindoos should have heard of their acquittal and yet no one seemed to know anything about my case. No! There was only one construction to be placed upon the situation. The Court had gone against me. My thoughts throughout that day were most unenviable. I fretted and fumed, wondering when it would all be over. My nerves started to twitch and jump, and within a short while I could not keep a limb still. The fearful suspense was certainly driving me mad.



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Later in the day an escort arrived, and to my surprise and intense relief the officer informed me that I was not going to be shot. I took this for an acquittal, but I was speedily disillusioned. I was taken to the office of the Commandant.

Reaching this official I was surprised to see among a stack of other baggage my own belongings. The Commandant sharply ordered me to sort my things out, and to run through them to see that everything was intact. I could have danced for joy. Like an excited child I fell upon the baggage, disentangled my belongings, and ran through the contents. Two purses and a camera were missing. I reported my loss, and there was a terrific hullabaloo. Who had touched a prisoner's goods? The purses were brought in by the gaoler, who declared to me that, finding they contained money, he had put them in his pocket for safety. I smiled at his ingenuous excuse. Now I worried about the missing camera, but this defied discovery. Suddenly I remembered where I had seen it last and kept quiet.

After I had gathered my luggage together I was marched back to my cell. Again my spirits drooped upon being asked to give my English address. I saw it all! In my highly strung condition I took this latest expression of Teuton methods to mean that my goods were to be sent home, but that I would have to suffer some dire penalty. I nursed this dark imagining because the prison treatment was not relaxed one iota. I passed a restless half-hour. I was heavy-eyed from want of sleep, while my face had assumed a sickly, revolting pallor from rapidly collapsing health.

Again I was summoned to the Commandant's office. My goods were exactly as I had left them thirty minutes before.

*[large gap]*

I was busily strapping up my goods when the door opened to admit the Commandant, guard and four other prisoners, whom I had not seen before. One tall, good-looking, sprucely dressed fellow impressed me. He looked like a fellow-countryman. I went up to him.

"Are you English?" I asked.

"Holy smoke! What a treat to hear an Englishman. 'Put it there,'" and he extended his hand. I proffered mine which he shook as if it were a pump handle. He with others had been arrested, not as spies, and had been detained in Wesel Arresthaus. But being wealthy he had experienced an easy time.

"What are they going to do with us?" I enquired.

"Why, haven't you heard? They're going to send us to a hotel and then it won't be long before we strike good old England once more!"



*[large gap]*

The party were in high spirits. But I was not so elated. I had every occasion to be suspicious of German bluff and inwardly would only believe we were going home when I was safely out of the country. My fellow-countryman, F—— K——, who is a well-known figure in City commercial circles, was wildly excited, and was discussing his future arrangements very keenly.



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An escort appeared to accompany us to the mysterious “hotel” about which the Commandant had been talking so glibly. We swung out of the prison. Glancing at the clock I saw the time was 8.30 p.m. As the main gate clanged behind me I pulled myself together, a new man. My eight days’ solitary confinement had come to an end.

We tramped the street, the people taking but little notice of us. Presently we met a big party of tourists advancing and also under escort. They proved to be the passengers of the pleasure steamer *Krimhilde*, who had been detained. When they saw me, unkempt, ragged, blood-stained, and dirty they immediately drew away. They took me for an excellent specimen of the genus hobo. Within a few seconds however they learned something about my experiences and became very chummy. F—— K—— communicated the fact that we were bound for an hotel, and the spirits of one and all rose.

The escort who had accompanied us from the prison here handed us over to that accompanying the tourists and we marched to the station. A train was waiting and we stepped aboard at nine o’clock. There appeared to be as many soldiers as passengers. The members of my party confidently thought the train was bound for a point near the frontier or a restricted area by the seashore. But I was not to be lulled into a false sense of security. I questioned one of the officers and ascertained our destination. Returning to the party I laughingly asked, “Do you know for what hotel we’re bound?”

“No! What is it? Where is it?” came the eager request.

“The military camp at Sennelager!”

## PRISON TWO—SENNELAGER

### THE BLACK HOLE OF GERMANY

## CHAPTER VI

### OUR “LUXURIOUS HOTEL”

Although it was 9.25 Tuesday evening when we boarded the train in Wesel station, *en route* for the “luxurious hotel where we were to receive every kindness consistent with the noblest traditions of German honour,” there did not appear to be any anxiety to part with our company. There were about sixty of us all told, and we were shepherded with as pronounced a display of German military pomp and circumstance as would have been manifested if the All-Highest himself, had been travelling. Wesel station swarmed with officers and men who apparently had nothing else to do but to perambulate the platforms, the officers swaggering with typical Teuton arrogance, and the humble



soldiers clattering to and fro in utter servility, merely emphasising their existence by making plenty of noise with their cumbrous boots and rifles.

At midnight the train started. The majority of my companions were the male passengers of military age who had been detained from the pleasure steamer *Krimhilde* while travelling up the Rhine. The military authorities in charge of the train received bulky sheafs of papers, each of which related to one passenger, and was packed with the most minute details. I am afraid my record must have been somewhat imposing, inasmuch as I commanded considerable and unappreciated attention from the military, while my fellow prisoners regarded me with a keen curiosity.



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I must admit that my personal appearance was far from being attractive. I looked even more ragged, un-cared for, and ill than I was when facing my accusers at the midnight trial some days before. I was shirtless, collarless, and tie-less. My hair was matted and clotted with congealed blood freely mixed with dirt. My face, in addition to a week's growth of hair, was smeared with black marks which I had not been able to remove owing to my inability to get soap to wash myself with. My frock-coat and trousers, frayed at the bottoms, were sadly soiled and contrasted strangely with the fancy pattern tops of my patent boots. In fact, I admitted to the party, that "I must have looked a 'knot' of the finest type!" All things considered I am not surprised that at first I was shunned by one and all, both compatriots and the military guards.

Although the distance from Wesel to Paderborn—Sennelager is three miles outside the latter town—is only about 95 miles as the crow flies, the railway takes a somewhat circuitous route. Owing to the extensive movement of the troops we suffered considerable delay, the result being that we did not reach our destination until about mid-day on the Wednesday, the journey having occupied nearly twelve hours. The heat was unbearable, and confinement within the carriages, the windows of which were kept sedulously closed by order of the military, thus rendering the atmosphere within stifling, speedily commenced to affect some of the passengers. Each compartment carried seven prisoners, and the eighth seat, one of the windows beside the door, was occupied by a soldier—the guard of the compartment—complete with loaded rifle and fixed bayonet.

Sleep was out of the question, but this did not affect us seriously. We were somewhat excited, and spent the hours of the night in conversation and the exchange of experiences. In our party was an English gentleman, Mr. K——,[3] who held an important position in a large business house in one of the cities on the Rhine. Somehow he was attracted to me, moved, no doubt by my general appearance, and because I was now showing visible signs of my incarceration and experiences in Wesel prison. I may say that to Mr. K—— I undoubtedly owe my life, and I never can express my thanks sufficiently for his unremitting attention and kindness during my subsequent illness, as I narrate in due course. Moreover, during his sojourn among us he was a tower of strength, having long been resident in the country, and thoroughly conversant with the language and manners of the Germans.

[Footnote 3: The names and occupations of fellow-prisoners who are still in captivity are purposely disguised, because if the German authorities should happen to read this narrative, and be enabled to identify any of my compatriots who participated in any of the incidents recorded, they would receive treatment which would be decidedly detrimental to their welfare.—H.C.M.]



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It was during this tedious train journey that he related the experiences of the passengers upon the unfortunate steamer *Krimhilde*. Many of the Englishmen who happened to be upon this boat had been held up for a week in various towns, owing to the stress of mobilisation. But at last permission was given by the authorities to proceed, and the delayed travellers were assured of an uninterrupted journey to England. Unfortunately the passage down the Rhine was impeded by fog, and this delay proved fatal. When it was possible to resume the journey, and while the steamer was making a good pace, a river patrol boat dashed up and ordered the captain of the steamer to stop, the reason being that no intimation had been received of the vessel's coming.

The captain protested, but at the point of the revolver he was compelled to turn round and return to the place which he had left only a few hours previously. The re-arrival of the *Krimhilde* at this point aroused considerable interest, and the authorities demanded the reason. The captain explained, but receiving a re-assurance that everything was in order and as originally expressed, he was free to travel down the river.

Again the journey was attempted and all went well until the boat was approaching Wesel. Then another patrol boat fussed up, the officer of which boarded the steamer. Again the captain presented his permit and expressed his determination to go ahead.

"We don't know anything about that," returned the boarding officer, referring to the permit. "My orders are to stop every vessel carrying Englishmen!"

The boarding-officer turned and ordered all the male prisoners to separate themselves from the ladies. Passports were produced upon demand and closely scrutinised. Then the officer, stepping back a few paces, beckoned the nearest man. His name was demanded to identify the passport and then a brief hurried cross-examination proceeded, culminating in the question:

"How old are you?"

"Thirty-eight!"

"Step this side!" retorted the officer, who proceeded to examine the succeeding passenger, to whom the self-same questions were repeated, the final interrogation being the passenger's age.

"Fifty-seven!" came the response.

The officer scanned the passport and finding the answer to be correct remarked, "Step over there!" indicating his left.

By the time the officer had completed his interrogations the male passengers were divided into two groups. Meanwhile the women and children had gathered round,

following the proceedings, which appeared inexplicable to them, with a strange silence and a fearful dread.

“All you men of military age,” continued the officer speaking to the group of younger-looking men, “are to go ashore. You will be detained as prisoners of war. You have ten minutes to pack your trunks and to say ‘Good-bye!’ So hurry up!”



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At this intelligence a fearful hubbub broke out. The women and children who were to be separated from their husbands, fathers, and relatives gave way to lamentation and hysterical raving. While the men packed their trunks under official supervision their wives and children clung to them desperately. But the men realising that war is war, accepted the situation philosophically, even cheerfully. They were buoyed up by the official assurance that their detention was merely a matter of form, and that they would soon be released and free to proceed to their homes.

I may say that this is a favourite ruse followed by the Germans in all the camps in which I was interned, and I discovered that it was general throughout the country. It is always expressed whenever the Teutons see trouble brewing. Undoubtedly it is practised to keep the prisoners keyed up to a feverish pitch of hopefulness. Certainly it succeeded for a time, although such announcements at a later date, when we had seen through the subterfuge, were received with ironical cheering and jeers.

At such a sudden and summary cleavage between families many distressing and pathetic scenes were witnessed. On board there happened to be a wealthy young member of the Russian nobility—Prince L——. He was travelling with his sister and friends and was far from well.

The sister approached the officer and pleaded hard for her brother's release. It was refused. Grief-stricken the Princess fell on her knees and with tears streaming down her cheeks, kissed the officer's boots and offered all her jewels—they must have been worth a considerable amount of money—which she hastily tore off and held in her outstretched hands.

For the moment even the officer was somewhat moved. Then in a quiet, determined voice he remarked,

"I am exceedingly sorry, but I cannot grant your request. I am merely acting on my orders. But I can assure you that your brother in common with all the others here, will be looked after. Not a hair of their heads shall be injured. They will all be treated according to the best and noblest traditions of German honour,[4] and the regulations which have been drawn up among the Powers concerning the treatment of prisoners of war." With these words the Prince was cast aside with the others.

[Footnote 4: The traditions of German honour were dinned into our ears at every turn.—H.C.M.]

In another instance the wife and child of an Englishman, Mr. C——, refused to be parted. The wife clung round her husband's neck while the child held to his coat. She expressed her determination to go with her husband, no matter what might happen, and was on the verge of hysterics. Every one was moved and strove to coax her into quietness, while an officer even accompanied her off the boat with her husband. On the

quay efforts were repeated to placate her and to induce her to allow her husband to proceed. But all in vain. At last, drawing the lady forcibly away, though with no greater force than was necessary, the officer himself attempted to console her.



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“Do not worry. I will do all I can for you, and will see you do not want during the time your husband is interned.”

What became of Mrs. C—— and her child just then I do not know, because at that moment the boat sheered off with a sorrowful and crying list of passengers who waved frantic farewells. Alas! I fear that in some instances that was the last occasion upon which husband and wife ever saw one another, and when children were parted from “daddy” for life.

Such was the story related by Mr. K——. After the boat had left, the detained prisoners, he explained, were formed up on the quay, and surrounded by an imposing guard with fixed bayonets, were marched off. It was a sad party. All that was dearest in life to them had been torn away at a few minutes’ notice through the short-sightedness of Prussian militarism or the desire of the Road-hog of Europe to display his officialism and the authority he had enjoyed for but a few days. Many of these tourists, as one might naturally expect, were sorely worried by the thoughts as to what would become of their loved ones upon their arrival in England, many without money or friends to receive them. This was the discussion that occupied their minds when they were marching towards Wesel Station, and when the tiny party, of which I was one, being marched from Wesel prison, met them in the street, as already related.

As for ourselves we were soon destined to taste the pleasures of the best traditions of German honour. No provisions of any kind whatever had been placed on the train for our requirements. What was more we were denied the opportunity to purchase any food at any station where we happened to stop. At one point a number of girls pressed round the carriages offering glasses of milk at 20 pfennigs. As we were all famished and parched there was a brisk trade. But the moment the officers saw what was happening they rushed forward and drove the girls back by force of arms.

So far as our compartment was concerned we were more fortunate than many of our colleagues. Our soldier warden was by no means a bad fellow at heart. In his pack he carried his daily ration—two thick hunks of black bread. He took this out and instantly proffered one hunk to us, which we gladly accepted and divided among ourselves.

Those being the early days of the war the German soldier was a universal favourite among the civilians. Directly one was espied he became a magnet. The women, girls and elder men rushed forward and wildly thrust all sorts of comestibles into his hands. Unhappily we did not stop at many stations; our train displayed a galling preference for lonely signal posts, so that the chances of our guard receiving many such gifts were distinctly limited. But at one station he did receive an armful of broedchen—tiny loaves—which he divided amongst us subsequently with the greatest camaraderie.

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But his comrades in other compartments were not so well-disposed. With true Prussian fiendishness they refused to permit their prisoners to buy anything for themselves, and to drive them to exasperation and to make them feel their position, the guards would ostentatiously devour their own meals and gifts. While we did not really receive sufficient to stay us, still our guard did his best for us, an act which we appreciated and reciprocated by making a collection on his behalf. When we proffered this slight recognition of his courtesy and sympathetic feeling he declined to accept it. [gap] *He was one of the very few well-disposed Germans I ever met.*

Upon arriving at Sennelager Station we were unceremoniously bundled out of the train. Those who had trunks and bags were roughly bidden to shoulder them and to fall in for the march to the camp. The noon heat was terrible. The sun poured down unmercifully, and after twelve hours' confinement in the stuffy railway carriages few could stretch their limbs. But the military guards set the marching pace and we had to keep to it. If we lagged we were prodded into activity by means of the rifle.

Sennelager camp lies upon a plateau overlooking the railway, and it is approached by a winding road. The acclivity although somewhat steep is not long, but we, famished and worn from hunger, thirst, and lack of sleep, found the struggle with the sand into which our feet sank over our ankles, almost insuperable. Those burdened with baggage soon showed signs of distress. Many were now carrying a parcel for the first time in their lives and the ordeal completely broke them up. Prince L—— had a heavy bag, and before he had gone far the soft skin of one hand had been completely chafed away, leaving a gaping, bleeding wound. To make matters worse the hot sand was drifting sulkily and clogging his wound set up untold agony.

Prince L—— made a representation to the officer-in-charge, showing his bleeding hand, but he was received with a mocking smirk and a curt command to "Move on!" The weaker burdened prisoners lagged, but the bayonet revived them. One or two gave out completely, but others, such as myself, who were not encumbered, extended a helping hand, half-carrying them up the hill.

Reaching the camp the Commanding Officer, a friendly old General whose name I never heard, hurried up.

"What's the meaning of this?" he blurted out in amazement.

"Prisoners of war for internment!" replied our officer-in-charge.

"But I don't know anything about them. I have received no instructions. There is no accommodation for them here!" protested the General.

Our officer produced his imposing sheaf of papers and the two disappeared into the office.

The feelings of the party at this intelligence may be conceived. The majority dropped, in a state of semi-collapse in the sand, their belongings strewn around them, utter dejection written on their faces.

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After what I had experienced at Wesel I was prepared for anything. I had already learned the futility of giving way. I felt no inclination to sit or lie in the blistering sand. I caught sight of a stretch of inviting turf, made my way to it, and threw myself down upon it. But I was not to enjoy the luxury of Nature's couch. A soldier came bustling up and before I grasped his intentions I was hustled off, with the intimation that if I wanted to lie down I must do so in the sand.

The fact that no arrangements had been made for our reception was only too obvious. It was about noon when the two officers disappeared into the official building to discuss the papers referring to our arrival, and it was six in the evening before they had come to any decision. Throughout these six hours we were left lying on the scorching sand in the broiling sun without a bite of food. Seeing that many of us had eaten little or nothing since the early evening of the previous day it is not surprising that the greater part were knocked up. One or two of us caught sight of the canteen provided for the convenience of recruits, and succeeded in getting a few mouthfuls, but they were not worth consideration. I myself whiled away the time by enjoying a wash at the pump and giving myself the luxury of a shave. I bought a small cake of coarse soap and never enjoyed an ablution so keenly as that *al fresco* wash, shave, shampoo, and brush-up at Sennelager. When I came back thoroughly refreshed I had changed my appearance so completely that I was scarcely recognised. Even the soldiers looked at me twice to make sure I was the correct man.

Later a doctor appeared upon the scene. His name was Dr. Ascher, and as events proved he was the only friend we ever had in the camp. He enquired if any one felt ill. Needless to say a goodly number, suffering from hunger, thirst and fatigue, responded to his enquiry. Realising the reason for their unfortunate plight he bustled up to the Commanding Officer and emphasised the urgent necessity to give us a meal. But he was not entirely successful. Then he inspected us one by one, giving a cheering word here, and cracking a friendly joke there. The hand of Prince L—— received instant attention, while other slight injuries were also sympathetically treated. The hearts of one and all went out to this ministering angel, to whose work and indefatigable efforts on our behalf I refer in a subsequent chapter.

At last we were ordered to the barracks near by. It was a large masonry building, each room being provided with beds and straw upon the floor. Subsequently, however, we were moved to less comfortable quarters where there were three buildings in one, but subdivided by thick masonry walls, thereby preventing all intercommunication. Here our sleeping accommodation comprised bunks, disposed in two tiers, made of wood and with a sack as a mattress.

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Whether it is my natural disposition or ancestral blood I do not know, but it has ever been my practice in life to emulate Mark Tapley and to see the humorous aspect of the most depressing situation. The “luxurious hotel,” to which we were consigned according “to the best and most noble traditions of German honour,” moved me to unrestrained mirth, when once I had taken in our surroundings. My levity fell like a cold water douche upon my companions, while the guards frowned menacingly. But to me it was impossible to refrain from an outburst of merriment. It was quite in accordance with German promises, which are composed of the two ingredients—uncompromising bluff and unabashed deliberate lying, leavened with a sprinkling of disarming suavity. I had tasted this characteristic at Wesel and frankly was not a bit surprised at anything which loomed up, always resolving at all hazards to make the best of an uncomfortable position.

Upon turning into our unattractive suite our first proceeding was to elect a Captain of our barrack. Selection fell upon Mr. K——, as he was an ideal intermediary, being fluent in the language. We turned in, the majority being too tired to growl at their lot, but there was precious little sleep. During the day, the heat at Sennelager in the summer is intolerable, but during the night it is freezing. Our arrival not having been anticipated, we had nothing with which to keep ourselves warm. A few days passed before the luxury of a blanket was bestowed upon us.

The morning after our arrival we drew up an imposing list of complaints for which we demanded immediate redress. We also expressed in detail our requirements, which we requested to be fulfilled forthwith. Then we decided to apportion this part of the camp for cricket, that for general recreation and so forth. By the time we had completed our intentions, all of which were carried unanimously, several sheets of foolscap had been filled, or rather would have been filled had we been possessed of any paper. This duty completed we set out upon an exploring expedition, intending to inspect all corners of the camp. But if we thought we were going to wander whither we pleased we were soon disillusioned. We were huddled in one corner and our boundaries, although undefined in the concrete were substantial in the abstract, being imaginary lines run between sentries standing with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets.

One and all wondered how we should be able to pass away the time. We could neither write nor read owing to a complete lack of facilities. Idleness would surely drive us crazy. Our recreations were severely limited, depending upon our own ingenuity. For the first few days we could do nothing beyond promenading, discussing the war and our situation. These two subjects were speedily worn thread-bare since we knew nothing about the first topic and were only able to speculate vaguely about the second. The idea of being made to work never entered our heads for a moment. Were we not civilian prisoners of war: the victims of circumstances under the shield of the best traditions of German honour?



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But we were not the first arrivals at Sennelager. We were preceded by a few hours by a party of French soldiers—captives of war. They were extremely sullen. Travel and battle-stained they crouched and stretched themselves upon the ground. Whence they came I was never able to discover. One or two of our party who were versed in the French tongue endeavoured to draw them into conversation, but to no purpose. They either replied in vague monosyllables or deliberately ignored the questions. There is no doubt the poor fellows felt their early capture very sorely, and had accordingly sunk into the depths of despair. Sulky and morose they glared fiercely upon any approach, and when they did anything it was with an ill-grace impossible to describe. Indeed, they were so downcast that they refused to pay the slightest attention to their personal appearance, which accentuated their forbidding aspect.

Killing time as best we could, doing nothing soon began to reveal its ill-effects upon those who, like myself, had always led an active life. I approached Dr. Ascher, explained that idleness would drive me mad, and petitioned him to permit me to work in the hospital. I did not care what the job was so long as it effectively kept me employed. He sympathised with my suggestion and hurried off to the Commanding Officer. But he came back shaking his head negatively. The authorities would not entertain the proposal for an instant.

Suddenly we were paraded. Rakes and brooms were served out to every man and we were curtly ordered to sweep the roads. We buckled into this task. But the dust was thick and the day was hot. Soon we were all perspiring freely. But we were not permitted to rest. Over us was placed a bull-headed, fierce-looking Prussian soldier armed with a murderous looking whip. I should think he had been an animal trainer before being mobilised from the manner in which he cracked that whip. When he saw any one taking a breather up he came, glaring menacingly and cracking the whip with the ferocity of a lion-tamer. We evinced a quaint respect for that whip, and I firmly believe that our guardian inwardly fretted and fumed because he was denied the opportunity to lay it across our backs. Several of us nearly got it, however.

We were sweeping away merrily when, suddenly, we gave way to a wild outburst of mirth. One couldn't sweep for laughing. The guards around us looked on in wonder.

"Christopher! boys!" I at last blurted out, "We were talking just now about recreation, and were emphatic about what we were, and were not, going to do. I reckon this wants a lot of beating for recreation!" The oddity of the situation so tickled us that we had to collapse from laughter.

But a warning shout brought us to our feet. Mr. Mobilised Lion Tamer was bearing down upon us waving his whip. He lashed out. We saw it coming and dodged. By the time the thong struck the road we were brushing up dense clouds of dust, singing, whistling, and roaring the words, "Britons never shall be slaves!"



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The dust screen saved us. It was so efficient that the furious guardian with the whip had to beat a hurried retreat.

One morning we were paraded at six o'clock as usual. The adjutant, another fierce-visaged Prussian, astride his horse, faced us. With assumed majesty he roared out an order. The guards closed in. What was going to happen now?

Amid a tense silence he shouted spluttering with rage:—

“You damned English swine! Yes! You English dogs! You are the cause of this war, and you will have to suffer for it. We could punish you severely. But that is not the German way. We could make you work. But the traditions of German honour forbid. Your Government has gouged out the eyes of German prisoners who have had the misfortune to fall into their hands. We don't propose to take those measures. While your Government has stopped at nothing we are going to show you how Germany fulfils the traditions of her honour, and respects the laws to which all civilised nations have subscribed. But remember! We are going to bring England to her knees. Aren't we, men?”

“Ja! Ja!” (Yes! Yes!) came the wild singing reply from the excited guards.

## CHAPTER VII

### BREAKING US IN AT SENNELAGER

No doubt the pompous adjutant plumed himself upon his tirade and the impression it had created among the guards. But at the time it was as so much Greek to us. We wondered what it all meant and what had prompted his strange speech.

It was not until my return home that I was able to appreciate the reason. But the bitterness with which he delivered his harangue certainly proved that he believed the stories which had evidently been sedulously circulated throughout Germany relative to the alleged mal-treatment and torture of German military prisoners by the British. Unfortunately, no steps apparently were taken to disprove these deliberate lying statements for which we had to pay the penalty.

But I was not reassured by the Adjutant's honeyed words concerning the example which Germany proposed to set to the British. I guessed that something which would not redound to our welfare and comfort was in the air. It is the German method to preach one thing and to practise something diametrically opposite. I had already learned this. Nor was I destined to be mistaken in my surmise.

A little later there was another parade. The officer roared,



“All those who are engineers step out!”

A number, including myself, although absolutely ignorant of the craft, stepped out, because here was the opportunity to secure some form of active employment.

“You are engineers?” he shouted.

We nodded assent.

“Can you build a drain?”

Again we nodded affirmatively.

We were marshalled, and one of us, Mr. C——, who was a civil engineer, was selected as leader. We were marched off and set to work to dig a drain for the camp.



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We built that drain, but it was necessity's labour lost. We were not provided with proper drain pipes but made an open conduit. We had to go to the quarry to get the stone, which we broke into small pieces, and these were set out in concave form at the bottom of the trench we had excavated after the manner in which cobble stones are laid. I believe it was considered to be an excellent piece of work, but unfortunately it was of little use. The first wind and rain that came along dumped the sand into it with the result that it became filled up.

A day or two later there was another parade. Once more the officer stood before us with a long sheet of paper in his hand.

"All those who can do wire-pulling stand out!"

Those who knew about what he was talking advanced to form a little group.

"All those who are gardeners stand out!"

More men advanced and another group resulted.

The officer went right through his list calling out a long string of trades and callings. The result was our sub-division into a number of small units, each capable of fulfilling some task. A sentry was appointed to each group and we were hurried off to the particular toil for which we considered ourselves to be fitted, and about which I will say more later.

If the accommodation at the "luxurious hotel" was wretched the routine and cuisine were worse. We were under military discipline as it is practised in Prussia, and it was enforced with the utmost rigour. We were not permitted to speak to an officer under any pretext whatever. Any complaints or requests had to be carried to the authorities through our "Captain," who was also the officially recognised interpreter. If we met an officer we were commanded to raise our hats.

[gap]

The day started at 6.0 a.m., with parade. If we desired to have a wash and shave we had to be astir an hour earlier because otherwise we were not allowed to perform those essential duties until late in the evening. After parade we had breakfast—a basin of lukewarm "coffee" made from acorns roasted and ground, which we had to fetch, and with which neither milk nor sugar was served.

At seven o'clock we started the day's work, which was continued without respite until mid-day. At least that was the official order, but one or two of the guards were far from being harsh towards us. In the middle of the morning, as in our case, the warder, after a wary look round, would ask if we would like to rest for ten minutes to snatch something to eat if we had it. Needless to say the slight respite was greatly appreciated. But it was by no means the general practice. One or two of the sentries were so deeply



incensed against England that they took the opportunity to bait and badger the men in their charge without mercy. They kept the prisoners under them going hard without a break or pause.

At noon we returned to barracks for dinner. Arming ourselves with our basins we scrambled down to the cook-house for our rations. It was red-cabbage soup, and it was never varied. But it was the strangest soup I have ever seen made or tasted, more particularly during the early days.



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There was a big cauldron with boiling water. Alongside was a table on which the cabbages were cut up. A handful of cabbage was picked up and dumped into the cauldron. Directly it hit the water the cabbage was considered to be cooked and was served out. Consequently the meal comprised merely a basin of sloshy boiling water in which floated some shreds of uncooked red cabbage. Sometimes the first batch of men succeeded in finding the cabbage warmed through: it had been left in the water for a few seconds. But the last batch invariably fared badly. The cooks realising that there would be insufficient to go round forthwith dumped in two or three buckets of cold water to eke it out. Sometimes, but on very rare occasions, a little potato, and perhaps a bone which had once been associated with meat, would be found in the basin lurking under a piece of cabbage leaf. Ultimately some French and Belgians were put in charge of the kitchen. Then there was a slight improvement. The cabbage was generally well-cooked and the soup was hot. But although these cooks did their best, it did not amount to much, for the simple reason that the authorities would not permit any further ingredients whatever.

At 2.0 p.m., there was another parade, followed by a return to work which was continued without intermission for another four hours. At six in the evening we returned to barracks for a third parade after which we were dismissed for tea. This was another far from appetising meal, merely constituting a repetition of the breakfast ration—a basin of lukewarm acorn coffee without milk or sugar. In addition to the foregoing we were served with a portion of a loaf of black bread on alternate mornings. This supply, if you got it, had to last six meals.

It will be realised that our wardens were far from being disposed to feed us up. We grumbled against the rations, their monotony and insufficiency, but we received no amelioration of our condition. In fact, our petitions were ignored. We were told that if we wanted more or greater variety of food we must buy it from the canteen. We had to act upon this recommendation just to keep ourselves alive.

The canteen was run by the most unprincipled scoundrel I have ever met. He was a civilian speculator who saw the chance to fatten on the British prisoners. He fleeced us in two ways. Not only were his prices extortionate, but he gave a ridiculous exchange for British currency, especially gold. After considerable persuasion and deliberation he would change a half sovereign for 7-1/2 marks—7s. 6d. We complained but could get no redress for such a depreciation. Other coins were in proportion.



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Broedchen in limited quantities were brought in every day. We could buy these at 5 pfennigs—one halfpenny—apiece, or in the early days three for 10 pfennigs. The latter practice was abandoned when the pinch of flour shortage commenced to be felt. The broedchen came in during the night, and owing to the totally inadequate quantity purchased to meet our needs, one had to be about early to secure a supply. I, with others, have often been up at four o'clock in the morning, lounging around the canteen, so as to be among the first to be served when it opened at five o'clock. The scenes which were enacted around the canteen in the early morning are indescribable. Civilians strangely clad, and later badly wounded, limping soldiers, sickly and white, waited patiently, no matter what the weather, to buy a little bread.

The necessity to depend upon the canteen for a sufficiency of food to keep us alive hit those who were blessed with little money extremely hard. There was one man—he said he was an Englishman, although I have my doubts about it—who was brought to the camp. He had not a farthing in his pocket. He said his home was near the frontier, and that he often slipped across it for a ride on his bicycle. He related that he had been caught during one of these excursions, to find himself ultimately at Sennelager. That man was a mystery. He was kept alive by the others more or less, and he accompanied us to various prisons. But subsequently he obtained his papers in a mysterious manner, and was seen no more. He vanished in the darkness as it were, and the German guards were not disposed to talk about him. It has always been our suspicion that he was sent among us with an ulterior motive which it is impossible to divine.

Those who could not purchase supplies from the canteen were assisted by their more fortunate comrades. The lucky ones divided their purchases so that the unfortunate individuals might not feel their position or suffer want. This practice was tangibly assisted by one or two prisoners who were well supplied with money, especially Prince L——, who became the general favourite of the camp from his fellow-feeling, camaraderie, sympathy, and sportsmanship.

One morning he came across a poor prisoner who looked very ill. He appeared to be half starved, as indeed he was from his inability to buy any food. After a short conversation the Prince slipped five sovereigns into the man's hand and bolted before he could be thanked. Unfortunately this poor fellow is still in prison, but he has never forgotten the Prince's kindness.

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The day after our arrival at Sennelager the Prince came to me and drew my attention to my shirtless condition. I explained the reason for its disappearance and that I could not get another as the authorities were still holding my heavy baggage containing further supplies. He said nothing as he went away, but a quarter of an hour later he returned with a new garment from his own kit which he forced me to accept. Another day, the party with which I was working were coming in to the evening meal. He hailed us and invited one and all to accompany him to the canteen to have a chop with him. That was the finest meal I had tasted since my feast in Wesel prison. Some time later Prince L—— succeeded in getting home. Although he was heartily congratulated upon his good fortune, his absence was sorely felt by those whom he was in the habit of befriending.

At nine o'clock we had to be in bed. Some of the more untameable spirits rebelled at the order to extinguish lights at this hour, but in our barrack Captain K—— rigidly insisted that the regulation should be observed. He feared the antagonism of the officers might be aroused, in which event we should be made to suffer for our fractiousness. The disputes between the prisoners and the sentries over the lights were interminable. The men would be ordered to extinguish their oil lamp. If they did not respond with sufficient alacrity the sentry cluttered up and put it out himself. At a later date, however, the hour for "lights out" was extended to 10 p.m.

The German nation is ever held up as the world's apostle of hygiene and sanitary science. However true this may be in regard to civic and rural life it certainly does not apply to prison and military existence. We were occupying the quarters normally assigned to recruits. Yet Sennelager was absolutely devoid of the most primitive features of a safe sanitary system. There was an open cesspool within a stone's throw of the barracks, the stench from which, during the heat of the summer, may be better imagined than described. No disinfectants whatever were used, and at intervals of three days it was emptied by the crudest means imaginable, on which occasions the barracks were not only untenable but absolutely unapproachable. In fact, the conditions were so primitive and revolting that the outbreak of an epidemic was momentarily expected, not only by ourselves but by the authorities as well.

This danger was brought home to us when we were compelled to submit to the ordeal of vaccination. Even this task was carried out under conditions which no other civilised country would permit for a moment, for the simple reason that antiseptic precautions were conspicuous by their complete absence. The order arrived that we were to be vaccinated on such and such a morning "in the interests of the camp—both prisoners and soldiers." We were ordered to line up in a queue outside a small building which we were to enter singly in succession. We were commanded to have our arms bared to the shoulder in readiness. Vaccination was not carried out by Dr. Ascher, the official medical attendant to the camp, but by a young military doctor who came especially for the purpose.



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Whether it was because the temperature within the small building was too sultry or not I cannot say, but the vaccinator decided to complete his work in the open air, the fact that a dust-storm was raging notwithstanding. The military doctor was accompanied by a colleague carrying a small pot or basin which evidently contained the serum. The operation was performed quickly if crudely. The vaccinator stopped before a man, dipped his lance or whatever the instrument was into the jar, and gripping the arm tightly just above the elbow, made four big slashes on the muscle. The incisions were large, deep, and brutal-looking. Then he passed to the next man, repeating the process, and so on all along the line. He took no notice of the dust which was driving hither and thither in clouds.

Whether by misfortune or mishap I received four striking gashes, and the shape of the incisions made me wonder whether the vaccinator thought he was playing a game of noughts and crosses with a scalpel upon my arm. After we had been wounded in this manner we were in a quandary. Our arms were thickly covered with the drifting sand. Our shirt sleeves were equally soiled. Consequently infection of the wound appeared to be inevitable whatever we did. In this unhappy frame of mind and dirty condition we were dismissed. Unfortunately for me I proved resistant to the serum, and had to submit to the operation a second time with equally abortive results. One or two of the prisoners suffered untold agonies, blood-poisoning evidently setting in to aggravate the action of the serum.

The primitive sanitary arrangements which prevailed brought one plague upon us. We suffered from a pestilence of flies which under the circumstances was not surprising, everything being conducive to their propagation. They swarmed around us in thick black clouds. They recalled the British housefly, only they were much larger, and extremely pugnacious. Life within the barracks became almost impossible owing to their attacks and the severity of their stings, which set up maddening irritation. We petitioned the authorities to allow us a supply of fly-papers. After considerable demur they acquiesced, but we could not use them, or rather they were used up too rapidly. The evening we received them we decided to attach a few to the ceiling, but before we could fix them in position their fly-catching capacities were exhausted. They were covered with a heaving, buzzing black mass of insects within a minute. So we abandoned fly-catching tactics.

This pestilence harassed us sorely during our meals. They settled everywhere and upon everything. While butter or margarine were unobtainable at the canteen we were able to purchase a substance which resembled honey in appearance, colour, and taste. Indeed we were told that it was an artificial product of the beehive. When we spread this upon our bread the flies swarmed to the attack, and before the food could be raised to our mouths the bread was not



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to be seen for flies. At first we spent considerable effort in brushing the insects away, but their numbers were too overwhelming to be resisted, so we were compelled to run the risk of the flies, and I, in common with others, have eaten bread, honey, and flies as well! It took considerable time and effort to master such a revolting meal, but under these conditions, it was either flies or nothing, so we ran the risk of the insects, although it cannot be said that they contributed to the tastiness of an already indifferent food, or our peace of mind, because we could not dismiss thoughts of the cesspool which the flies made their happy hunting-ground during the periods between meals.

Infraction of the rules and regulations were frequent, for the simple reason that they were never explained to us. We had to learn them as best we could—invariably through the experience of punishment. This state of affairs placed us at the mercy of the guards. Those who were venomously anti-British expended their savagery upon us on every occasion. For the slightest misdemeanour we were consigned to the cells for one, two, three, or more days. The cell recalled my domicile in Wesel, and I must confess that I made the acquaintance of its uninviting interior upon several occasions through inadvertently breaking some rule. But the others fared no better in this respect. It was cells for anything.

This prison was a small masonry building, fitted with a tiny grating. It was devoid of all appointments, not even a plank bed being provided. To sleep one had to stretch one's self on the floor and secure as much comfort as the cold stone would afford. Bread and water was the diet. All exercise was denied, except possibly for the brief stretch accompanied by the sentry to fetch the mid-day meal of soup, assuming the offence permitted such food in the dietary, from the cook-house. Conversation with a fellow-creature was rigidly *verboden*. It was solitary confinement in its most brutal form.

The method of punishment was typically Prussian. If one upset the guard by word or deed, he clapped you in the cell right-away and left you there. Possibly he went off to his superior officer to report your offence. But the probability was that he did not. Indeed it was quite likely that he forgot all about you for a time, because the sentry at the door never raised the slightest interrogation concerning a prisoner within. More than once a prisoner was forgotten in this manner, and accordingly was condemned to the silence, solitude, and dismal gloom of the tiny prison until the guard chanced to recall him to mind.

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During my period of incarceration at Sennelager the number of civil prisoners brought in to swell our party was somewhat slender. They came in small batches of ten or twelve, but were often fewer in number. They invariably arrived about two o'clock in the morning. Then the sentry would come thumping into the barrack, his heavy boots resounding like horse's hoofs and his rifle clanging madly. Reaching the room he would yell out with all the power of his lungs, thus awaking every one, "Dolmetscher! Dolmetscher!" (Interpreter! Interpreter!) "Get up!" That luckless individual had to bestir himself, tumble into his clothes and hurry to the office to assist the authorities in the official interrogation of the latest arrivals. This was one of the little worries which were sent to try us, but we soon became inured to the rude disturbance of our rest, in which the average sentry took a fiendish delight.

By the time the first Sunday came round, and having nothing to do—all labour was suspended, although no religious service was held—I decided to wash my solitary shirt. I purchased a small cake of cheap rough soap from the canteen, got a wooden tub, and stripping myself to the waist, washed out the article in question outside the barrack door to the amusement of my colleagues. While I was busily engaged in this necessary occupation I was attracted by tittering and chattering. Looking up I found I was the object of curiosity among a crowd of civilians dressed in their Sunday best. Together with my fellow-prisoners I hurriedly retired to the sanctuary of our barracks.

Later we learned that on Sundays the residents of Paderborn and the countryside around were free to enter the camp to have a look at the British prisoners. Indeed they were invited. They stalked and wandered about the camp in much the same manner as they would have strolled through the Zoological Gardens in Berlin, looking at us as if we were strange exotic animals, chattering, laughing, and joking among themselves at our expense. We considered this an unwarrantable humiliation, and we countered it by the only means within our power. We resolutely stayed indoors until the gaping crowds had gone. This diversion of the German public, if such it may be called, speedily fell into desuetude, not because the novelty wore off, but because the "Englaender" were never to be seen, so that the six-mile tramp from Paderborn to Sennelager and back was merely wasted. It was a bitter disappointment to the curiosity-provoked crowds, but we scored a distinct success.

The first Sunday I had to wander about shirtless, the only garment of this character which I possessed hanging upon the line to dry. But the sight of a crowd of us, on Sunday mornings, stripped bare to our waists, washing and scrubbing the only shirts to our backs, became quite a common sight later, and I must confess that we made merry over this weekly duty for a time.

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We had not been in Sennelager many days before we discovered to our cost that we were all suffering solitary confinement. We were completely isolated from the outside world. We were not permitted to receive any letters or parcels. Neither were we allowed to communicate with anyone outside. Newspapers were also sternly forbidden. These regulations were enforced with the utmost rigour during my stay at this camp. Consequently we knew nothing whatever about the outside world, and the outside world knew nothing about us. Early in September I did succeed in getting two post-cards away, but I ascertained afterwards that they did not reach their destinations until some weeks after I had left Sennelager. We felt this isolation very keenly because one and all were wondering vaguely what our wives, families, friends, or relatives were doing.

About ten days after our arrival at this hostelry there was a parade. The adjutant strutted before us with the pride of a peacock, and in his pompous voice cried:

“All prisoners who reside in Germany because of their business connections, or who are married to German wives, will be permitted to return to their homes!”

This announcement precipitated wild excitement because it affected from twenty to thirty prisoners. Needless to say they packed their bags with frantic speed, as if fearing cancellation of the welcome news, and emerging from the barracks hastened to receive their passes to make their way to Paderborn. Among them was the head of our barrack, Captain K——. A strong friendship had sprung up between him and me, and we shook hands vigorously though silently. He invited many others and myself, in the event of our being given permission to move about the country, to come and stay at his house near C——.

While every man Jack of us who was left behind was heavy in his heart and became sad because he was not numbered among the privileged few, we were by no means cast down. As the small party of free men walked towards the entrance we gave them a frantic and wild parting cheer. It was the first time we had let ourselves go and we did it with a vengeance. The German officers and men started as if electrified, and looked at us in amazement. They thought we had gone mad. Beside us stood one of the guards. He turned to us, his eyes and mouth wide open, to mutter:

“My God! You English are a funny race!”

“What’s the matter?” we returned.

“What? You cheer those fellows who are going home and yet you are being left here!”

“Why not? Good luck to them!” and we let fly another terrific huzza to speed them on their way.



The guard shook his head, thoroughly puzzled. He did not understand the psychology of the British race any more than his superiors.

“But why do you cheer?” pursued the guard.

“Because we are English,” swiftly retorted one of our party. The guard said no more.



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A day or two after the departure of our colleagues there was a change in the command of the camp. The old General was superseded by a man whose name will never be forgotten by the British prisoners of Sennelager Camp. They will ever couple him with the infamous instigator of the “Black Hole of Calcutta.”

This was Major Bach. Upon his assumption of the command he inaugurated what can only be truthfully described as a Reign of Terror. Tall, of decided military bearing, he had the face of a ferret and was as repulsive. With his sardonic grin he recalled no one so vividly as the “Villain of the Vic!”

The morning after his arrival he paraded us all, and in a quiet suave voice which he could command at times stated:

“English prisoners! Arrangements are being made for your instant return to England. A day or two must pass before you can go, to enable the necessary papers to be completed and put in order. But you will not have to do any more work.”

We were dismissed and I can assure you that we were a merry, excited crowd. We jumped for joy at the thought that our imprisonment had come to an end. Like schoolboys we hastened to the barracks and feverishly set to work packing our bags, whistling and singing joyously meanwhile.

Suddenly the bugle rang out summoning us to parade again. We rushed out, all agog with excitement, and half hoping that our release would be immediate. The Adjutant confronted us and in a loud voice roared:

“English prisoners! You’ve been told that you are going back to England. That was a mistake. You will get to work at once!”

## CHAPTER VIII

### BADGERING THE BRITISH HEROES FROM MONS

It was about a fortnight after my arrival at Sennelager. Our rest had been rudely disturbed about the usual hour of 2 a.m. by the sentry who came clattering into the barrack roaring excitedly, “Dolmetscher! Dolmetscher!”

C—— who, after the departure of K——, had been elected Captain of our barrack and who was also the official interpreter, answered the summons. He was required to accompany the guards to the station. A further batch of British prisoners had arrived. By this time we had grown accustomed to this kind of nocturnal disturbance, so after C—— had passed out the rest of the barrack re-settled down to sleep.



I was astir just after four o'clock. It was my turn to serve as barrack-room orderly for the day, and I started in early to complete my task before 5.30 so as to secure the opportunity to shave and wash before parade.

I was outside the barrack when my attention was aroused by the sound of tramping feet. Looking down the road I was surprised to see a huge column of dust, and what appeared to be a never-ending crowd of soldiers, marching in column. It was such an unusual sight, we never having witnessed the arrival of more than a dozen prisoners at a time, that, especially the moment I descried the uniforms, my curiosity was aroused. Many of my comrades were astir and partly dressed when I gave a hail, so they hurried out to join me.



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The army, for such it seemed, advanced amidst clouds of dust. As they drew nearer we identified those at the head as Belgian soldiers. They swung by without faltering. Behind them came a small army of French prisoners. We could not help noticing the comparatively small number of wounded among both the Belgians and the French, and although they were undoubtedly dejected at their unfortunate capture they were apparently in fine fettle.

But it was the men who formed the rear of this depressing cavalcade, and who also numbered several hundreds, which aroused our keenest interest and pity. From their khaki uniforms it was easy to determine their nationality. They were British military prisoners.

It was a sad and pitiful procession, and it was with the greatest difficulty we could suppress our emotion. The tears welled to our eyes as we looked on in silent sympathy. We would have given those hardened warriors a rousing cheer but we dared not. The guards would have resented such an outburst, which would have rendered the lot of the British, both civilian and military, a hundred times worse.

The soldiers, battle-stained, blood-stained, weary of foot, body and mind walked more like mechanical toys than men in the prime of life. Their clothes were stained almost beyond recognition; their faces were ragged with hair and smeared with dirt. But though oppressed, tired, hungry and thirsty they were far from being cast down, although many could scarcely move one foot before the other.

The most touching sight was the tenderness with which the unwounded and less injured assisted their weaker comrades. Some of the worst cases must have been suffering excruciating agony, but they bore their pain with the stoicism of a Red Indian. The proportion of wounded was terrifying: every man appeared to be carrying one scar or another. As they swung by us they gave us a silent greeting which we returned, but there was far more significance in that mute conversation with eyes and slight movements of the hands than in volumes of words and frantic cheering.

The brutal reception they had received from their captors was only too apparent. Those who were so terribly wounded as to be beyond helping themselves received neither stretcher nor ambulance. They had to hobble, limp and drag themselves along as best they could, profiting from the helping hand extended by a comrade. Those who were absolutely unable to walk had to be carried by their chums, and it was pathetic to observe the tender care, solicitude and effort which were displayed so as to spare the luckless ones the slightest jolt or pain while being carried in uncomfortable positions and attitudes over the thickly dust-strewn and uneven road. The fortitude of the badly battered was wonderful. They forgot their sufferings, and were even bandying jest and joke. Their cheeriness under the most terrible conditions was soul-moving. No one can testify more truthfully to the Tapley cheeriness of the British soldier under the most

adverse conditions than the little knot of civilian prisoners at Sennelager when brought face to face for the first time with the fearful toll of war.

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The unhappy plight of our heroic fighting men, as we watched them march towards what was called the "field," which was nearly a mile beyond our barracks, provoked an immediate council of war among ourselves. It was only too apparent that we must exert ourselves on their behalf. Unfortunately, however, we were not in a position to extend them pronounced assistance: our captors saw to that. But we divided up into small parties and succeeded in giving all the aid that was in our power.

The soldiers were accommodated in tents. We had observed the raising of a canvas town upon the "field," and had been vaguely wondering for what it was required. Were German recruits coming to Sennelager to undergo their training, or were we to be transferred from the barracks to tents? At first we thought the latter the more probable, but as we reflected upon the size of canvas-town we concluded that provision was being made for something of far greater importance.

The Belgian prisoners were sent into the stables. These, however, were scrupulously clean and empty of all the incidentals generally associated with such buildings, because the civilian prisoners had been compelled to scour them out a few days before. Consequently the Belgians had no room for protest against the character of their quarters, except perhaps upon the ground of being somewhat over-crowded. A number of the French soldiers were also distributed among the stables, but the surplus shared tents near their British comrades.

Upon reaching the field the prisoners were paraded. Each man was subjected to a searching cross-examination, and had to supply his name and particulars of the regiment to which he belonged. All these details were carefully recorded. In the preparation of this register the German inquisitors betrayed extraordinary anxiety to ascertain the disposition of the British troops and the regiments engaged in the battle-line. Evidently they were in a state of complete ignorance upon this point. Nearly every soldier was requested to give the name of the place where he had been fighting, wounded, and captured. But the British soldiers did not lose their presence of mind. They saw through the object of these interrogations and their replies for the most part were extremely unsatisfactory. The man either did not know, could not recall, or had forgotten where he had been fighting, and was exceedingly hazy about what regiments were forming the British army. In some instances, however, the desired data was forthcoming from those who were most severely wounded, the poor fellows in their misery failing to grasp the real significance of the interpellations. It was easy to realise the extreme value of the details which were given in this manner because the Germans chuckled, chattered, and cackled like a flock of magpies. As may be supposed, owing to the exacting nature of the search for information, the registration of the prisoners occupied a considerable time.

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[large gap]

Later, during the day of their arrival, we civilian prisoners had the opportunity to fraternise with our fighting compatriots. Then we ascertained that they had been wounded and captured during the retreat from *Mons*. But they had been subjected to the most barbarous treatment conceivable. They had received no skilled or any other attention upon the battlefield. They had merely bound up one another's wounds as best they could with materials which happened to be at hand, or had been forced to allow the wounds to remain open and exposed to the air. Bleeding and torn they had been bundled unceremoniously into a train, herded like cattle, and had been four days and nights travelling from the battlefield to Sennelager.

During these 96 hours they had tasted neither food nor water! The train was absolutely deficient in any commissariat, and the soldiers had not been permitted to satisfy their cravings, even to the slightest degree, and even if they were in the possession of the wherewithal, by the purchase of food at stations at which the train had happened to stop. What with the fatigue of battle and this prolonged enforced abstinence from the bare necessities of life, it is not surprising that they reached Sennelager in a precarious and pitiful condition.

Among our heroes were five commissioned officers, including a major. These were accommodated at Sennelager for about a fortnight but then they were sent away, whither we never knew beyond the fact that they had been condemned to safer imprisonment in a fortress. Among the prisoners were also about 200 men belonging to the R.A.M.C., taken in direct contravention of the generally accepted rules of war. They were treated in precisely the same manner as the captured fighting men. There were also a few non-commissioned officers who were permitted to retain their authority within certain limits.

One of the prisoners gave me a voluminous diary which he had kept, and in which were chronicled the whole of his movements and impressions from the moment he landed in France until his capture, including the Battle of *Mons*. It was a remarkable human document, and I placed it in safe keeping, intending to get it out of the camp and to send it to my friend at home upon the first opportunity. But ill-luck dogged this enterprise. The existence of the diary got to the ears of our wardens and I was compelled to surrender it.

The next morning the wounded received attention. The medical attendant attached to the camp for the civilian prisoners, Dr. Ascher, was not placed in command of this duty, although he extended assistance. A German military surgeon was given the responsibility. The medical arrangements provided by this official, who became unduly inflated with the eminence of his position, were of the most arbitrary character. He attended the camp at certain hours and he adhered to his time-table in the most rigorous manner.

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If you were not there to time, no matter the nature of your injury, you received no attention. Similarly, if the number of patients lined up outside the diminutive hospital were in excess of those to whom he could give attention during the hours he had set forth, he would turn the surplus away with the intimation that they could present themselves the next day at the same hour when perhaps he would be able to see to them. It did not matter to him how serious was the injury or the urgency for attention. His hours were laid down, and he would not stay a minute later for anything. Fortunately, Dr. Ascher, who resented this inflexible system, would attend the most pressing cases upon his own initiative, for which, it is needless to say, he received the most heartfelt thanks.

Before the duty of examining the wounded soldiers commenced there was a breeze between Dr. Ascher and the military surgeon. The former insisted that the patients should receive attention as they lined up—first come to be first served, and irrespective of nationality. But the military doctor would have none of this. His hatred of the British was so intense that he could not resist any opportunity to reveal his feelings. I really think that he would willingly have refused to attend to the British soldiers at all if his superior orders had not charged him with this duty. So he did the next worst thing to harass our heroes. He expressed his intention to attend first to the Belgians, then to the French, and to the British last. They could wait, notwithstanding that their injuries were more severe and the patients more numerous than those of the other two Allies put together. This decision, however, was only in consonance with the general practice of the camp—the British were always placed last in everything. If the military surgeon thought that his arbitrary attitude would provoke protests and complaints among the British soldiers he was grievously mistaken, because they accepted his decision without a murmur.

The queue outside the hospital was exceedingly lengthy. The heat was intense and grew intolerable as the day advanced and the sun climbed higher into the heavens. To aggravate matters a dust-storm blew up. The British wounded at the end of the line had a dreary, long, and agonising wait. Half-dead from fatigue, hunger, and racked with pain it is not surprising that many collapsed into the dust, more particularly as they could not secure the slightest shelter or relief from the broiling sun. As the hours wore on they dropped like flies, to receive no attention whatever,—except from their less-wounded comrades, who strove might and main to render the plight of the worst afflicted as tolerable as the circumstances would permit. Dr. Ascher toiled in the hospital like a Trojan, but the military doctor was not disposed to exert himself unduly.

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To make matters worse this despicable disciple of AEsculapius came out, and, notwithstanding the drifting and blowing sand, ordered all the British prisoners to remove their bandages so that there might be no delay when the hospital was reached. The men obeyed as best as they could, but in many instances the bandages refused to release themselves from the wound. The military doctor speedily solved this problem. He caught hold of the untied end of the bandage and roughly tore it away. The wounded man winced but not a sound came from his lips, although the wrench must have provoked a terrible throb of pain, and in some instances induced the injury to resume bleeding. Finding this brutal treatment incapable of drawing the anticipated protest he relented with the later prisoners, submitting the refractory bandages to preliminary damping with water to coax the dressings free.

With their bandages removed the soldiers presented a ghastly sight. Their clothes were tattered and torn, blood-stained and mudstained, while the raw wounds seemed to glare wickedly against the sun, air, and dust. It was pitiable to see the men striving to protect their injuries from the driving sand, in vain, because the sand penetrated everywhere. Consequently the gaping wounds soon became clogged with dust, and it is not surprising that blood-poisoning set in, gangrene supervening in many instances. Under these conditions many injuries and wounds which would have healed speedily under proper attention and which would have left little or no permanent traces, developed into serious cases, some of which resisted all treatment, finally demanding amputations. The mutilation which ensued was terrible, and there is no doubt whatever that many a limb was lost, condemning the wounded man to be a cripple for life, just because he happened to be British, incurred the hostility of the military surgeon, and was intentionally neglected. Matters were aggravated by the military surgeon coming out of the hospital finally, after the men had been standing uncomplainingly for several hours in the baking heat, going a certain distance along the line, and then brutally telling all those beyond that point that they could re-bind up their wounds and come to see him the next morning. He had no time to attend to them that day, he remarked.

I do not know how our wounded heroes from Mons would have got on had it not been for Dr. Ascher, the R.A.M.C. prisoners, ourselves, and a British military doctor who happened to be among those captured on the battlefield. The latter was not discovered for some time because he refused to reveal his identity. Subsequently, realising the serious turn which matters were taking, and observing the intentional and systematic neglect which was being meted out to his unfortunate fellow-countrymen, he buckled in and did wonderful work. Prince L—— and K—— also toiled incessantly in the attempt to ameliorate the plight of our wounded. Many of the soldiers were absolutely without funds, but these two civilians extended them the assistance so sorely needed out of their own pockets, purchasing food-stuffs from the canteen, which they distributed together with other articles which were in urgent request, with every liberality.



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The lack of funds hit our wounded exceedingly hard. Although they were on the sick list they received no special treatment. They were in dire need of nourishing food suitable for invalids, but they never received it. They were compelled, in common with ourselves who were in tolerably good health, to subsist on milkless and sugarless acorn coffee, cabbage-soup, and black bread, which cannot possibly be interpreted as an invalid body-restoring dietary. As a result of this insufficient feeding the soldiers commenced to fall away.

This systematic starvation, for it was nothing more nor less, rendered the soldiers well-nigh desperate. In order to secure the money wherewith to supplement their meagre and uninviting non-nutritious food with articles from the canteen, they were prepared to sell anything and everything which could be turned into a few pence. Khaki overcoats were freely sold for six shillings apiece. For sixpence you could buy a pair of puttees. Even buttons were torn off and sold for what they would fetch. One morning, on parade, a soldier whose face testified to the ravages of hunger tore off his cardigan jacket and offered it to any one for sixpence in order to buy bread. Little souvenirs which the soldiers had picked up on the battlefield, and which they treasured highly, hoping to take them home as mementoes of their battles, were sold to any one who would buy. As a matter of fact some of the soldiers were prepared to part with anything and everything in which they were standing in order to get food.

While we fraternised with the soldiers at the very first opportunity to secure details of their experiences which were freely given and to learn items of news, the German guards interfered. We had been kept in complete ignorance of the progress of the war, and now we were learning too much for our captors. I may say that all we heard about the war was the occasional intelligence given when we were on parade. Major Bach would stroll up with German newspapers in his hands and with fiendish delight would give us items of news which he thought would interest us. Needless to say the fragments always referred to brilliant German victories and he used to watch our faces with grim pleasure to ascertain the effect they produced upon us. At first we were somewhat impressed, especially when he told us that Paris had been captured. But when he related ten days later that it had fallen again, and that London was in German hands, we smiled in spite of ourselves because we had trapped him in his lying.

We were now separated from our soldier friends, from whom we had gained a more reliable insight concerning the state of affairs. The German guards also gave themselves away by relating that they were embittered against the British soldiers because they had fought like devils and had wrought terrible havoc among the ranks of the German army. Consequently the only opportunity which arose for conversation was during the evenings around the canteen. Even then we had to be extremely cautious. If the guard saw one or two civilians associated with a group of Tommies, he would come up, force us apart at the point of the bayonet, and make us proceed different ways.



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Our practice was to mingle singly and discreetly with the soldiers, and then upon return to barracks exchange news we had gleaned. I may say it became an unwritten law of the camp that, if a civilian took a soldier into the canteen and asked him any questions, he was to reciprocate by treating the Tommy to some little dainty which was obtainable. If we asked nothing the soldier got nothing. This latter attitude was not due to our resenting the idea of treating the soldier, but because many of us were poor, or empty, in pocket ourselves. Although we did a considerable amount of forced labour we never received a penny for it.

I had a tilt at my guard one day over the payment of prisoners of war. Although I knew nothing about the International law upon the subject I made a venture.

“Do you know?” I asked, “that as prisoners of war we are entitled to 60 pfennigs—sixpence—a day for what work we do?”

“Ja! Ja!” he grinned. “But as it costs us 90 pfennigs a day to keep you, after deducting the 60 pfennigs, you still owe us 30 pfennigs a day!”

The idea of us being in Germany’s debt for our board and lodging was certainly humorous. If any one asked me how much it cost the Teutonic Government in this direction I should consider a halfpenny a day a very liberal figure.

The efforts of the prisoners to supplement their meagre and monotonous official allowance of food by purchases at the canteen were handicapped by the avariciousness and unprecedented rascality of the unprincipled rogue who was in charge of this indispensable establishment.

When a soldier had secured a few pence, say a shilling, by the sale of this or that personal belonging, and proffered the coin to the canteen proprietor, this worthy would pick it up, shrug his shoulders, and disdainfully push the shilling back with the remark, “English money? No good here! I can get very little for it!”

At this pronouncement the soldier’s face would fall. But dreading denial of a “broetchen” of which he was in urgent need he would grow desperate. He would push the coin across the counter again.

“It must be worth something! Now how much will you give for it?” he would ask pleadingly.

With further demur, elevation of eyebrows, puckering of brows and hesitancy the canteen proprietor would complete a mental arithmetical sum in currency exchange. At last he would reluctantly quote a figure, and as a rule it was about fifty per cent. below the face value of the coin. Thus the soldier’s shilling would only be valued at sixpence in German money.

The soldier, satisfied at being able to get a “broetchen” even at such a sacrifice, would submit. But although the unwarranted depreciation was robbery it was not the worst feature of the methods of this greedy money-changer.



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The soldier would receive, not five English pennies or 50 German pfennigs as his change but a French half-franc. Then the next time he visited the canteen for another “broetchen” or something else, he would put down the half-franc he had previously received. Again the soldier received a rude surprise. The canteen proprietor would reluctantly say that the French money was useless to him. There would be a repetition of the previous bickering over the British shilling, and at last the astonished soldier would learn that he could only change the French half-franc at a discount of forty per cent. In this instance the change would be the equivalent of twopence in English money, but it would be given in Belgian coins. Upon the third occasion when the British soldier visited the canteen to buy a “broetchen” and proffered the Belgian coinage he would learn that this had also undergone a sudden depreciation of fifty per cent. So that by the time the soldier had expended his shilling he had really received goods to the value of about threepence.

It was a cunning method of conducting business and the canteen proprietor was a master in keeping the hated currency of the three nations in circulation among themselves, and always exacted a heavy charge for its acceptance.

With such a novel means of ringing the changes upon soldiers of the three nationalities it is not surprising that the canteen proprietor waxed rich within a very short time.

Such a state of affairs not only adversely affected the soldiers but the poor civilian prisoners as well. At last things came to such a pass that one of our interpreters, F. K——, the fellow-prisoner whom I had met in Wesel prison, tackled the canteen proprietor upon his unfair method of conducting business, and emphasised how harsh it was upon the prisoners who were not flush in funds. For this attempt to improve our position F. K—— had to pay the penalty. The canteen proprietor promptly reported the interpreter to the Commanding Officer of the camp, who forthwith sentenced our comrade to three days' cells for daring to interfere with German organisation!

The Germans, in their determined intention to prevent the British civilian and military prisoners from mingling, adopted the most drastic measures. Guards were posted everywhere and we were sternly forbidden to enter the soldiers' reservation. If we were detected the guards were instructed to let drive with their rifles without giving any previous warning. The anti-British sentiment was so acute that any one of our guards would have only been too delighted to have had the chance to put this order into effect, and that upon the slightest pretext. As he would have been upheld in his action we decided to give these amiable wardens no opportunity to turn us into targets.



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There is no doubt that we were regarded as little less than desperadoes of the worst type. Our troops had given the Germans such a severe shaking up as to throw our guards into a state of wild panic. This was proved only too conclusively by an incident which occurred one night. After we had retired we were not permitted to put our heads out of the windows. To do so was to court a bullet, also according to instructions. On this particular night, after we had turned in, one of the prisoners, unable to sleep owing to mental worry and the heat, strolled to the door to get a breath of fresh air. As he stepped out into the dusty footway a terrifying fusillade rang out and continued for several minutes. We all sprang up wondering what was the matter.

The poor fellow had been spotted coming out of the door by the sentry who, too excited to recognise the man, had fired his rifle at the prisoner for all he was worth. Instantly the guard turned out. The prisoner brought abruptly to his senses had darted back into the barrack safe and sound but fearfully scared. Only the wild shooting of the sentry had saved him from being riddled. The guard itself, upon turning out, evidently thought that a rebellion had broken out or at least that a prisoner had escaped. Seizing their rifles they blazed away for dear life. They did not aim at anything in particular but shot haphazardly at the stars, haystacks, and trees in the most frantic manner imaginable and as rapidly as their magazine arms would let them. Undoubtedly the Germans were half-mad with fear. It rained bullets around the barracks and every man within crouched down on his bed, away from the windows through which we momentarily expected the bullets to crash. None of us dared to move for fear that there might be a collision with one or more of the missiles which pattered around us.

The next morning we were paraded hurriedly. The guard ran about among us, searching every corner of the barracks, as if bereft. The roll was called with wild excitement. A prisoner had escaped! Had he not been seen by every imaginative member of the guard? But when they discovered that we were all safe and sound, and that we were perfectly composed, they presented a sorry array of stalwart warders. Their sheepishness provoked us to laughter when we learned the true reason for all the bother. But it brought home to us the extreme danger of falling foul of such a panicky mob.

The military reservation was fenced off from our quarters by barbed wire. The rule ran that no prisoner on either side of the barrier was to advance within a metre's distance—about one yard—of the fence. Guards were on duty to see that this regulation was obeyed. One day a British Tommy, in a moment of forgetfulness, ventured within the forbidden distance. With a flash the excited guard standing near by raised his rifle and jabbed fiercely at the soldier. The bayonet got home in the luckless Tommy's shoulder and passed clean through from front to back, the ugly point of the bayonet protruding about three inches.

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This incident and unwarranted savagery, although born of “nerves,” sickened and also roused those of us who had seen it. Seeing that the soldier was quite unarmed the sentry might have used the butt end of his weapon just as satisfactorily. But no! It was a swine of an Englaender who had infringed the rule and the bayonet was the instrument for correction, to be plied with the utmost effect.

Seeing the desperate condition of the British wounded and the inhuman manner in which they were treated one might naturally conclude that they would have died off like flies. Sennelager has the most evil reputation among the German prison camps for systematic brutality and unprecedented ferocity. But to levy such an accusation is to bring an immediate German denial. In reply they turn to the official reports and retort that conditions could not possibly be so terrible as they are painted, otherwise the camp would be certain to reveal a high mortality. On the other hand the death-rate at Sennelager is strikingly low, and the German officials smile contentedly while the Press comforts itself smugly.

The presentation of the low death-rate is even likely to arouse doubt in the minds of the unsophisticated British at home. They are not versed in German cunning. Sennelager camp carries a low death-rate for the simple reason that a prisoner is not permitted to die there. When a man has been reduced to a hopeless condition and his demise appears imminent he is hurriedly sent off to some other place, preferably a hospital, to die. By a slice of luck he might cheat Death, in which event, upon his recovery, he is bundled off to another prison. But he seldom, if ever, comes back to Sennelager! During my period of incarceration only one man, B——, who was sent to Paderborn hospital to die as the Germans thought, but who recovered, returned to Sennelager. When a man was hastened out of the camp in this manner we never knew his fate. It became a by-word that few men went from Sennelager but none returned. Consequently, whenever we saw a sick case leave the camp we surmised that the poor wretch was making his final journey to the Great Beyond. We assumed his speedy *death from natural causes*—as the German authorities would relate—to be inevitable.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE PERSECUTION OF THE PRIESTS

Although we British prisoners, both civilian and military, constituted the principal butt for the spleen of Major Bach, we never raised the slightest audible complaint or protest, although inwardly and in the seclusion of our barracks we chafed at the unrelenting tyranny to which we were exposed and against which we were completely helpless. In strict accordance with the instructions of the Commandant we were always the last to receive attention. If we ever had to go to the hospital to receive any treatment and were the first to arrive at its doors, we had to kick our heels outside and possess ourselves in patience as best we could until all the prisoners of other nationalities had seen the

surgeon. As a rule we had a lost journey. The surgeon in his haste to get away either would notify us that our cases could not receive enquiry until the morrow, or he would treat us in a perfunctory manner.

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As at the hospital so at the cook-house at meal times. We were never given our rations until all the others had been satisfied. The consequence was that we generally went short of food. The first to be treated received liberal quantities of the cabbage soup. What was left had to be eked out amongst us.

“The damned English swine can wait!” This was the dictum of those in authority and the underlings were only too eager to fulfil it to the letter. If there were the slightest opportunity to deprive us of our food, on the flimsy pretext that we had not answered the summons with sufficient alacrity, it was eagerly grasped. Under these conditions we had to go supperless to bed, unless we could procure something at the canteen or our more fortunate comrades came to our assistance by sharing with us the comestibles they had purchased.

Some ten days after the appearance of Major Bach a new target for his savagery and venom appeared. This was a party of Belgian priests. I shall never forget their entrance to the camp. We were performing necessary daily duties outside our barracks when our attention was drawn to an approaching party surrounded by an abnormally imposing force of soldiers. Such a military display was decidedly unusual and we naturally concluded that a prisoner of extreme significance, and possibly rank, had been secured and was to be interned at Sennelager.

When the procession drew nearer and we saw that the prisoners were priests our curiosity gave way to feelings of intense disgust. They were twenty-two in number and were garbed just as they had been torn from prayer by the ruthless soldiers. Some were venerable men bordering on seventy. Subsequently I discovered that the youngest among them was fifty-four years of age, but the average was between sixty and seventy.

The reverend fathers with clasped hands moved precisely as if they were conducting some religious ceremonial among their flocks in their beloved churches. But the pace was too funereal for the advocates of the goose-step. They hustled the priests into quicker movement, not in the rough manner usually practised with us, but by clubbing the unfortunate religionists across the shoulders with the stocks of their rifles, lowering their bayonets to them and giving vent to blood-freezing curses, fierce oaths, coarse jeers, and rewarding the desperate endeavours of the priests to fulfil the desires of their captors with mocking laughter and ribaldry.

The brutal manner in which they were driven into the camp as if they were sheep going to the slaughter, made our blood boil. More than one of us clenched our fists and made a half-movement forward as if to interfere. But we could do nothing and so had to control our furious indignation.



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However, the moment the priests entered Sennelager we received a respite. Officers and guards turned their savagery and spite from us to visit it upon these unhappy victims by night and by day and at every trick and turn. Clubbing with the rifle was the most popular means of compelling them to obey this, or to do that. More than once I have seen one of the aged religionists fall to the ground beneath a rifle blow which struck him across the back. No indignity conceivable, besides a great many indescribable, was spared those venerable men, and they bowed to their revolting treatment with a meekness which seemed strangely out of place.

After one more than usually ferocious manifestation of attack I questioned our guard to ascertain the reason for this unprecedented treatment and why the priests had been especially singled out for such infamous ferocity.

“Ach!” he hissed with a violent expectoration, “They fired upon our brave comrades in Belgium. They rang the bells of their churches to summon the women to the windows to fire upon our brothers as they passed. The dogs! We’ll show them! We’ll break them before we have finished. They won’t want to murder our brave troops again!”

The words were jerked out with such fearful fury that I refrained from pursuing the subject. Later I had a chat with one of the oldest priests. It was only with difficulty we could understand one another, but it was easy to discover that the charges were absolutely unfounded, and were merely the imagination of the distorted and savage Prussian mind when slipped from the leash to loot, assault and kill for the first time in his life.

A night or two later a few of us were purchasing food at the canteen. Suddenly four soldiers came tumbling in, dragging with them one of the most aged of the Fathers. He must have been on the verge of three-score and ten, and with his long white beard he presented an impressive, proud, and stately figure. But the inflamed Prussian has no respect for age. The old man was bludgeoned against the counter and at his abortive attempts to protect himself the soldiers jeered and laughed boisterously.

One of the soldiers called for a suit of clothes which was served out to prisoners, and for which we were supposed to pay six marks—six shillings. The leader of the party of soldiers grabbed the suit and, pushing the priest roughly, shouted,

“Here! You can’t work in the fields with that garb you are wearing. You’ve got to buy these. Six marks! Hurry up! You’ve got to put them on!”

The priest, who did not understand a word of German, naturally failed to grasp the meaning of the command. He promptly received a clout to knock some sense into him, the soldier meanwhile shaking the prison-like suit to emphasise what he meant.



In mute protest the priest shook his robes to indicate that he was quite content with what he was wearing.

“Come on! If you don’t change we’ll do it for you!”

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At this threat there was a wild outburst of demoniacal mirth, in which the girl behind the counter, a brazen jade, joined uproariously as if in anticipation of some unusual amusement. She reached over the counter, craning her neck to secure a better view of an unexpected spectacle.

As the Reverend Father did not respond to the command, the guard gathered round him. Before we could realise what was happening, his crucifix and rosary had been roughly torn off, and with his watch and chain had been thrown upon a table standing alongside. His robe was roughly whisked away in the twinkling of an eye. But the prisoner did not move or raise a hand in protest, even when he was bared to his under-clothing in front of fraeulein, who signalled her appreciation of the sight by wildly clapping her hands, laughing merrily, and giving expression to ribald jokes.

The proud manner in which the victim surveyed his tormentors only exasperated them still further. By the threat of the bayonet he was compelled to stand up in front of these degenerate members of the human race and the girl behind the counter, whose laughter could now be heard ringing above the frantic shrieks of the soldiers.

We, who were unwilling witnesses of this revolting spectacle, were grinding our teeth in ill-suppressed rage. Never during my sojourn in Sennelager, even when submitted to the greatest torment, have I seen the British prisoners roused to such a pitch of fury. As a rule we effectively maintained a quiet, if not indifferent, and tractable attitude, but this was more than flesh and blood could stand.

But the priest never relaxed his proud composure and self-possession. He looked so penetratingly at the laughing jade that I think it must have penetrated into her very soul. Her wild mirth ended abruptly in a strange semi-hysterical shriek as her eyes met his look of intense scorn. She winced and was effectively cowed into silence.

I may say that the floor of the canteen was of concrete, but upon this was a layer of mud, slime, grease, and other filth brought in from outside upon the boots of those who frequented the establishment. This was now a noisome muddy carpet some two inches in thickness. The Germans, one may happen to recollect, have ever paraded their love of cleanliness before the world, but this floor was the lie direct to their vain boastings.

At the sight of the old man standing there erect before them, the victim of unparalleled humiliation, but his spirit as strong and as unyielding as ever, the fury of the soldiers knew no bounds. One, giving vent to a fearful curse, placed his hand on the table upon which the crucifix, rosary, and watch were lying. He gave a swift, fiendish glance at the priest towering above him, and with a vile oath swept the articles to the floor, where they ploughed through the greasy revolting slime.

It was then that the badgered and baited Father broke down. As he watched his beloved and revered crucifix and rosary suffering defilement and serving as the rude

sport for the iron heels of the uncivilised Huns, the tears coursed down his face copiously. He gave a slight start as he saw the articles flash through the air, but suppressed the cry of horror which sprang inadvertently to his lips.



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But the soldiers were not yet satisfied with the agony which they had created in the Father's heart. One grabbed his rifle and lowering the bayonet in a threatening manner ordered the priest to pick up his sacred treasures. The priest stooped down to obey the instructions, but this was not sufficient for his persecutors. He was driven to his knees and forced to grope among the repulsive mud for his revered religious tokens. With great difficulty he recovered them, battered, crushed, and covered with the filthy accumulation upon the floor. As the Reverend Father drew himself once more to his full height, clasping his treasures desperately, he brought his hands together, and closing his eyes, we saw his lips moving in prayer.

This was the last straw. Grating our teeth, our faces white with passion, and our fingers itching to seize those barbarians round their throats to choke their lives out of them, we nearly threw discretion to the winds. Had one of us made a forward movement we should have sprung upon them with the ferocity of bull-dogs. Those four soldiers never knew how near they were to meeting their deserts upon that day. As it was we merely scraped our feet in impotent rage. It was this fidgeting which aroused their attention. They turned and must have read our innermost intentions written in our faces, for they instantly grabbed their rifles and rounded upon us. With a motion which could not be misunderstood, and uttering fierce curses, they ordered us to get outside. We refused to move, although confronted by ugly pointed bayonets. It was a tense and critical moment. The soldiers undoubtedly saw that we were now thoroughly roused, and, strange to say, they appeared to lose their heads, for they stood stock still, apparently frightened by our determined appearance.

One of our party, although as enraged as any of us, yet had maintained more complete control over his feelings. He saw the utter uselessness of our making a display of physical protest. With a quiet "Come on, boys!" he stepped towards the door. It saved an ugly situation; the movement to the door and the crisis had passed. Fiercely glaring at the soldiers, with our jaws ominously set, and our fists clenched we retreated. Our action revived the courage of the guards. They at once sprang forward to jostle us out, prodding and attempting to club us right and left.

As we hurried through the open door we gave a final glance at the priest. He had turned his head and was looking steadily at us, and if ever conversation were carried out by looks there were volumes in his gaze. His eyes told us how impotent we were in the hands of these brutes who were brave because they had their loaded rifles. They told us of his appreciation of our sympathy in his hour of humiliation and torment. They extended us heartfelt thanks for our willingness to come to his assistance, combined with a mute instruction not to lift a finger on his behalf since the plight of one and all would become infinitely worse. We passed into the street and the door was slammed upon us.

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Once outside we allowed our feelings to have full rein. We point-blank refused to go away and fell to discussing the situation somewhat fiercely. Evidently the tones of our voices persuaded the soldiers within that they had gone far enough, because shortly afterwards the priest re-appeared, and under escort was hurried away to his quarters.

When we next saw him we endeavoured by diplomatic questions to ascertain the reason why he had been subjected to such torture and indignity. To him the greatest humiliation was that his torment had occurred before a woman. But otherwise he refused to refer to the episode. His retort, in a placid, resigned voice, was, "I only trust that God will have mercy upon them!"

The priests were denied all opportunity to move about the camp. There were scores of co-religionists among us, but they were steadfastly refused the comfort which the Fathers could have given them. The priests were not permitted to minister to the spiritual welfare of their flocks. As a matter of fact, by the strict instruction of Major Bach, no religious services of any description were permitted in the camp, at least not while I was under his sway.

To the members of the Roman Catholic persuasion the brow-beating, badgering, baiting and buffeting of the helpless priests acted as a red rag to a bull. But what could they do? Protest was merely so much wasted energy. Communication with anyone outside the camp was absolutely impossible. To have reviled Major Bach for his cruelty and carefully planned barbarity would only have brought down upon us further and more terrible punishment of such ferocity as would have made everyone long for the respite of the grave.

But the priests could not be broken, no matter to what physical and mental suffering they were subjected. Even Major Bach discovered to his chagrin that his devilish ingenuity had encountered an insuperable obstacle. To wreak his revenge he now compelled the Fathers to carry out all the dirtiest and most revolting work in the camp—duties so repulsive as to be beyond description. But the good men never murmured. They did exactly as they were bidden, and even the guards at last appeared to realise the fact that their fertility in torment was of no avail in attempting to infuriate their meek charges.

Major Bach, however, was by no means cast down at his failures. One morning he ordered the twenty-two priests to be paraded. They were then loaded up with a variety of cumbersome and heavy implements—spades, picks, shovels, and such like. Each load would have taxed the strength of a young man in the pink of condition and strength to carry, and yet here were old men, ranging between sixty and seventy years, compelled to shoulder such burdens. But they did it.



An order was rapped out, the guard wheeled, and the tiny party moved off. We discovered afterwards that they were marched three miles along the sandy road in the blazing sun to a point where they were roughly bidden to dig a huge pit.



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Throughout the morning, and without a moment's respite, they were forced to ply their tools, their task-masters standing over them and smartly prodding and threatening them with their rifles if they showed signs of falling from fatigue, or if they failed to maintain the expected rate of progress. To such old men, who probably had never lifted the smallest and lightest tool for many years, if ever, it was a back-breaking task. However, they clung dutifully to their work until the hour of twelve rang out.

Now they were re-marshalled, their tools were re-shouldered, and they were marched back to camp for the mid-day meal. By the time they reached the barracks all the other prisoners had consumed the whole of the available soup. There was nothing for the priests. It was explained that they should have hurried so as to have arrived at an earlier moment. Then they would have received their due proportion. Meals could not be kept waiting for dawdlers, was the brutal explanation of the authorities. The priests must be made to realise the circumstance that they were not staying at an hotel. This, by the way, was a favourite joke among our wardens.

The priests bore visible signs of their six miles' tramp through crumbling scorching sand and under a pitiless sun, as well as of their laborious toil excavating the large pit. But their distressed appearance did not arouse the slightest feeling of pity among their tormentors. Being too late for the meal they were re-lined up, and under a changed guard were marched back again to the scene of their morning's labour.

Naturally, upon reaching the pit, they concluded that they would have to continue the excavation. But to their intense astonishment the officer in charge ordered them to throw all the excavated soil back again into the hole! This was one of the most glaring examples of performing a useless task, merely to satisfy feelings of savagery and revenge, that I encountered in Sennelager, although it was typical of Major Bach and his methods. He took a strange delight in devising such senseless labours. Doubtless the authorities anticipated that the priests would make some demur at being compelled to undo the work which they had done previously with so much effort and pain. But if this was the thought governing the whole incident the officials were doomed to suffer bitter disappointment. The priests, whatever they may have thought, silently accepted the inevitable, and displayed as much diligence in filling the pit as they had shown a few hours before in digging it.

Still the afternoon's shovelling caused them greater physical hardship than the plying of the pick in the morning. They had been denied a mid-day meal, and their age-enfeebled physique proved barely equal to the toil. A basin of black acorn coffee and a small fragment of hard brown bread cannot by any manner of means be construed into strong sustenance for such a full day's work. During the afternoon one or two were on the verge of collapse from hunger and fatigue. But their indomitable spirit kept them up and the pit was duly filled.



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By the time the labour had been completed the evening was advancing. For the fourth time that day they shouldered their burden of tools and set out on the three miles tramp to camp.

We saw them come in and our hearts went out in pity to them. They tottered rather than walked, their heads bowed as if in prayer, and their crosses of tools sinking them nearer to the ground. Seeing that they had walked twelve miles and had put in some eight hours gruelling work it was a marvel that the older members of the party had not fallen by the wayside. Yet, although footsore, weary, worn, and hungry they retained their characteristic composure. In silence they discussed their frugal evening meal of lukewarm black acorn coffee and black bread. Some of us, out of sheer sympathy, secured some "broetchen" for them, but they accepted our expressions of fellow-feeling very sparingly, although with extreme thankfulness.

They refused to say a word about their sufferings or the agonies they had experienced during their labour and long walk. I got the story from one of the guards who had accompanied them. But even these thick-skinned disciples of "kultur" and brutality were not disposed to be communicative. The stoicism, grim determination and placidity of the Reverend Fathers constituted something which their square heads and addled brains failed to understand. They had never experienced the like.

While Major Bach never repeated the senseless pit-digging and refilling programme for the priests, his invention was by no means exhausted. Direct incentive to rebellion proving completely abortive he now resorted to indirect pettifogging and pin-pricking tactics, harassing the unfortunate priests at every turn, depriving them of food or something else, reducing their rations, giving them the most repulsive work he could discover, and so forth. But it was all to no purpose. Those twenty-two priests beat him at every turn. For Major Bach to try to break their proud spirit was like asking a baby to bend a bar of steel!

What ultimately became of these prisoners I cannot say. In fact, I do not think there is any one who can definitely relate their fate. Other prisoners now commenced to arrive in increasing numbers and the breaking-in of these crowds to the tyranny and brutal existence of Sennelager Camp appeared to demand the complete attention of the authorities. Certainly the new arrivals provided Major Bach with all the entertainment he desired.

Some say that the priests were distributed among other camps; others that one or two succumbed to the persistent ill-treatment meted out to them; and still more that they are yet at Sennelager. No one can say precisely. Only one fact remains. For a time they occupied the sole attention of every one in the camp because they constituted the most prominent target for the fiendish devilry of Major Bach. Then they suddenly appeared to slip into oblivion. The probability is that they were swallowed up among the hundreds of French, British, Russians, Poles, Serbians, and various other races who were now

pouring in. Being somewhat retiring in their nature the probability is that the priests were overlooked and forgotten in that troublous maelstrom of outraged humanity known far and wide as Sennelager Camp.



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### CHAPTER X

#### TYING PRISONERS TO THE STAKE—THE FAVOURITE PUNISHMENT

Until the coming of Major Bach at Sennelager confinement to cells constituted the general punishment for misdemeanours, the sentence varying according to the gravity of the offence. But mere solitary confinement in a hole in which perpetual twilight prevailed during the day did not coincide with Major Bach's principles of ruling with a rod of iron. It was too humane; even the most savage sentence of "cells" did not inflict any physical pain upon the luckless prisoner.

Major Bach was a past-master in the grim art of conceiving new and novel methods to worry and punish those who were so unfortunate as to be under his thumb. He was devilishly ingenious and fertile in the evolution of ways and means to make us feel our position as acutely as possible. I really think that he must have lain awake for hours at night thinking out new schemes for inflicting punishment upon us, or else must have been possessed of an excellent and comprehensive encyclopaedic dictionary dealing with the uncanny and fiendish atrocities devised by the Chinese. I do not doubt for a moment that, if he dared, he would have introduced some of the most ferocious tortures which for centuries have been characteristic of the Land of the Dragon. We were absolutely helpless and completely in his hands. He knew this full well and consequently, being a despot, he wielded autocratic power according to his peculiar lights as only a full-blooded Prussian can.

One evening the French military prisoners were being marched into camp at the conclusion of the day's work. Among them was a Zouave. Half-starved from an insufficiency of food he could scarcely drag one foot before the other. At last he dropped out from sheer fatigue. The guard struck him with the butt end of his rifle and roughly ordered him to get up and keep step and pace with his comrades. The Zouave pleaded that he really could not walk another step because he felt so weak and ill. The guard thereupon pulled the wretched prisoner to his feet and gave him a heavy blow across his back.

This unwarranted action stung the Zouave to frenzy. Clenching his teeth he sprung towards his tormentor with his fist raised in the air. But second thoughts prevailing he refrained from delivering the blow which he had premeditated. The menace, however, did not fail to exercise its effect upon the bullying guard who instantly became an arrant coward. The Zouave's action was so unexpected that the soldier was taken completely by surprise. He commenced to yell as if he had been actually struck, and his vociferous curses, reaching the ears of his comrades, brought speedy assistance. They rushed up, secured the Zouave, who was glaring fiercely at his tormentor, pinioned his arms behind him, and then marched him off to the Commanding Officer with all the speed they could command.



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The grave charge of insubordination and attempting to strike the guard was proffered. Major Bach listened closely and when he had heard the story, which needless to say was somewhat freely embroidered, curtly sentenced the Zouave to "four hours at the post!" This was the first occasion upon which we had heard of this punishment and naturally we were somewhat agog with curiosity to discover the character of this latest means of dealing out correction.

Escorted by four guards with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets, the unhappy Zouave was led to a post just outside our barrack. One of the soldiers stood on either side of the prisoner ready to run him through should he make an attempt to escape or to resist. The other two guards, discarding their rifles, uncoiled a length of rope which they were carrying.

The prisoner's hands were forced behind his back and his wrists were tied tightly together, the rope being drawn so taut as to cut deeply into the flesh and to cause the unhappy wretch to shriek. He was now backed against the post round which the rope was passed. His ankles were then tied as tightly as his wrists and also strapped to the post, which action drew another yell of pain from the victim. Finally another length of the rope was passed round the upper part of his body, lashing him firmly to the support to prevent him falling forward.

Trussed and tied the unhappy prisoner was left to undergo his four hours' sentence of this ordeal. The soldiers returned to their quarters, but as a preliminary precaution, as we were undeniably showing signs of resentment against such torturing treatment, we were hustled into our barracks. But we could not rest or sleep. The hapless man at the stake was being racked and torn with pain. His shrieks, moans, and groans, echoing and re-echoing through the still hours of the summer evening, sounded so weird, uncanny, and nerve-racking as to make our blood run cold. At each outburst we shivered and strove hard, though vainly, to shut out the terrible sounds from our ears.

After the Zouave had been strung up for some time I decided to creep out and up to him to ascertain from direct close observation the effects of this treatment upon the victim. Stealing out of the barracks, thereby running the risk of encountering a bullet from the sentry's rifle, I stealthily made my way to the post. By the time I gained the spot the weak wretch was in a fearful plight. The ropes had been drawn so tightly round his wrists and ankles as to cause the circulation of the blood through the hands and feet to cease, while the flesh immediately above the knots was swelling up in a fearful manner. All sense of feeling in the hands and feet having gone, the man was hanging limply, instead of standing against the post. He writhed and twisted in frenzied efforts to secure some relief while in this uncomfortable position, but each movement only caused further pain and the unintentional utterance of piercing shrieks. Upon the exhaustion of this spasm the upper part of his body dropped forward slightly so that his head fell down upon his chest.

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For a few seconds he would stand or rather hang, perfectly still and quiet. Then as he made another attempt to secure a change of position shafts of pain would shoot through him, causing him to shriek again for a few seconds in the most agonising manner, which made me start and shiver. While his shrieks were terrifying it was the long-drawn out wail and moan in which they ended which were more unnerving. They sounded like the agonised howls of an animal caught in a trap and suffering untold torment.

But each successive outburst grew weaker. The body dropped more and more forward until it could fall no farther owing to the retaining rope. His head dropped lower and lower upon his chest, which had the effect of interfering with respiration. The man would throw his head wildly about in frantic efforts to breathe, but to little purpose. His face commenced to assume a ghastly bluish colour; his distended eyes almost started from his head; while his mouth, now wide open, allowed his tongue to loll and roll in a manner vividly reminiscent of a maniac restrained in a strait jacket. The struggles and cries grew fainter until at last his head gave a final jerk to hang limply to one side. He shrieked no more. Insensibility had come to his relief.

During this period the guard never ventured to come to look at him. His piercing shrieks, howls, and long-drawn out moans told them that he was feeling the pinch of his confinement to the post. But when these cries of agony ceased two of the guards came up. Seen to be unconscious, he was immediately released to fall like a log to the ground. Buckets of water were hurriedly fetched and the contents were dashed over the prone figure until consciousness returned. When he had somewhat recovered, although still inert and groaning piteously, he was propped up against the post and re-tied into position.

Every time the man relapsed into insensibility he was released to undergo drastic reviving by the aid of buckets of water, and directly he came to he was again strapped up. The sentence was "four hours," and it was fulfilled strictly to the letter, but only the actual periods of being tied to the post were taken into consideration. It did not matter whether the man fainted three or thirty times during his sentence. It was only the instalments of time against the post which in the aggregate were taken to represent the full term of the punishment.

As may be supposed, owing to the recurring periods of insensibility, the duration of the sentence became prolonged. In about two hours after being strung up for the first time the initial spasm of unconsciousness would occur, although the intervention of insensibility obviously varied according to the strength and physical endurance of the prisoner. But after the first revival, and owing to the man being deprived of the opportunity to regain his normal condition, the lapses into unconsciousness occurred at steadily decreasing intervals of time until at last the man was absolutely unable to battle against his torment and Nature for more than a very short period.



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The first demonstration of this punishment did not fail to exercise a far-reaching influence upon the other prisoners. Major Bach was beside himself with delight. Even he, steeped although he was in brutality, was evidently somewhat surprised by the effectiveness of this penalty, and he laughed loud and long at the shrieks and misery of the unhappy Zouave. Henceforth committal to the cells was no longer to constitute a punishment at Sennelager. Tying to the stake was the most complete means of subjugating and cowing the prisoners.

As might be expected, one and all of us dreaded such a sentence, and we were exceedingly diligent and painstaking in our efforts to keep in the good graces of the Commanding Officer. The dread of being sentenced to a spell at the post, and submission to the untold agony which it precipitated, broke us in to all intents and purposes to a degree which must have exceeded even Major Bach's most sanguine expectations. But now we were faced with another and far more formidable danger. Most of the guards enjoyed as enthusiastically as their lord and master the agony of a luckless wretch who was condemned to this punishment. To them it afforded amusement of the most exhilarating character. But the prisoners, now thoroughly intimidated, took every precaution to deny the guards an opportunity for which they were so much on the alert. Consequently, being deprived of the chance to have any of us strung up on legitimate grounds, they commenced to harass and exasperate us in the hope of provoking some action which would bring us before the Commanding Officer to receive a sentence to the stake. Then, being completely foiled in this nefarious practice they did not hesitate to have us arraigned upon the most flimsy charges. As the prisoner was denied all opportunity to rebut any charge preferred against him, and as his word was never accepted before the studiously prepared complaint of the guard, who was always careful to secure corroborative evidence, the chances of escaping the sentence were extremely slender.

The second victim of this brutal treatment was a Russian Pole, and no man ever deserved it less. The Pole was entering his barrack and the Russian orderly who had just washed and cleaned the floor, upbraided his compatriot for entering the building with muddy boots. There was a breezy altercation between the two men for a few minutes, but they were separated on perfectly friendly terms by one of the soldiers. The incident was closed and dismissed from the thoughts of one and all. At least so thought all those who had witnessed it.

But one of the soldiers who had been a spectator saw the opportunity for which he had long been searching. He hurried to the non-commissioned officer in charge of the guard to report, exaggeratedly, that two Russian prisoners had been fighting. The non-commissioned officer, one of the most brutal and despicable Prussians in the camp, seized his rifle and hurried to the Russian barrack. Here the two suppositious delinquents were pointed out. He went up to the Pole, and grabbing him by the shoulder, roared:

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“You’ve been fighting!”

The Pole protested that he had not been fighting with anyone. He had forgotten all about the spirited argument with the orderly. Certainly the altercation was no more serious than thousands of other such outbreaks which were incidental to the camp. Incidents of this character occurred every few minutes in every barrack, which was not surprising seeing that we were all keyed to a high pitch of fretfulness while tempers were hasty.

“Don’t lie to me,” shouted the non-commissioned officer, who was decidedly infuriated by the Pole’s complacent attitude. “I say you’ve been fighting!”

Again the Pole meekly explained that no such encounter had taken place. At this protest the officer grabbed the inoffensive prisoner and marched him off to the office of the Commandant. While hurrying along the main road through the camp the Prussian, for no reason whatever, raised his rifle by the muzzle, swung it over his head and brought the stock down with fearful force upon the Pole’s back. The man himself fell like an ox before the poleaxe, but the rifle flew into two pieces. Seeing that a rifle is exceedingly strongly made and of hard wood, the fact that it snapped in twain testifies abundantly to the force of the blow.

The attack was witnessed, not only by several of us, but also by two or three officers as well. The latter expostulated with the non-commissioned officer upon his action. As for ourselves our gorge rose at this savage onslaught, and we hurried to the Commandant with the object of being first to narrate the incident. He listened to our story of the outrage but refused to be convinced. We persisted and mentioned that the officers had been present and could support our statements. But the latter, naturally perhaps, declined to confirm our story. They denied having seen the blow struck. Still, we were so emphatic and persevering that Major Bach, in order to settle the matter, sent for the non-commissioned officer to whom he referred the accusation we had made.

This worthy listened with a smile lurking round his mouth. When Major Bach had completed his statement, the non-commissioned officer, with a mocking laugh, denied the charge, and presented his rifle for Major Bach’s inspection. *The rifle was perfectly sound!* At the production of this rebutting evidence Major Bach gave us a queer look, insisted that we had trumped up the charge, and refused to listen to us any further. So we were compelled to go away crestfallen and yet amazed as to how the guilty officer had surmounted his difficulty.



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Subsequently we discovered that the non-commissioned officer, thoroughly alarmed at his rifle snapping in twain, not knowing how he would be able to explain the circumstance of his weapon being broken, and having heard that we had hastened to the Commandant to lodge our complaint, darted into the guard-room, concealed the conclusive evidence of his guilt, and appropriated the sound rifle of a comrade. This was the weapon he had produced before Major Bach so triumphantly. We never heard how the non-commissioned officer ultimately explained away his broken rifle upon parade when the trick was certain to be discovered, but bearing in mind the iron method which prevails in the German army he must have been hard put to it to have advanced a plausible excuse when arraigned. Doubtless there was considerable trouble over the episode but we never heard anything more about it, although we would have dearly loved to have been acquainted with the sequel.

Foiled in our attempt to secure redress for an outraged prisoner we considered the episode closed. But it was not. Directly we had left the office Major Bach sent for the Pole who had been attacked. He related his story which was naturally a confirmation of our charge. But he was set down as an unprincipled liar, and one of whom an example must be made. Forthwith he was condemned to four hours at the post on the charge of fighting and endeavouring to impugn the probity of the German guard, who can do no wrong.

The misery endured by this poor wretch is indescribable. In this instance, in order to secure enhanced effect, according to the lights of Major Bach, the prisoner was forced to stand on tip-toe against the post, while the upper rope was passed around his neck. This rope was left somewhat loose, and as nearly as I can describe, was looped in the form of a double knot. Being on tip-toe the hapless wretch was speedily transferred, by his toes giving way, to a hanging position. His head fell forward, as he gradually lapsed into unconsciousness, until it pressed against the restraining slip-knot. The consequence was that he suffered the agonies of slow strangulation in addition to the searing of his hands and ankles, while the weight of his body dragged his neck more tightly than otherwise would have been the case, against the upper rope. His face presented a terrifying sight, being quite blue, from his inability to breathe, except with the greatest difficulty. His mouth was wide open and his tongue, which protruded, was exceedingly swollen. His eyes were half out of their sockets. But he had to serve the sentence of four hours, and although he became unconscious time after time and had to be released, water always brought him to his senses to undergo a further spell upon the fiendish rack until the sentence had been well and truly served.

On one occasion a poor wretch condemned to this torture, after having become unconscious, was taken down, revived, and incarcerated for the night in the guard-room. The next morning he was marched out again and re-tied up to complete his sentence.



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Major Bach, as if suddenly inspired, conceived a fiendish means of accentuating the agony of a prisoner condemned to this punishment. The man would be tied to the post about the middle of the morning. The summer sun beat fiercely upon the post and the man's hat was removed. Consequently, as the poor wretch's head dropped forward on his chest, its crown became exposed to the fierce heat of the sun. Thus to the pain of the torture inflicted by the tightly tied ropes, and the strangling sensation produced by the throat pressing against the restraining rope, was added the racking torment of intolerable heat playing upon a sensitive part of the human body. The astonishing wonder is that none of the unhappy wretches suffered sun-stroke or went crazy while bound up in this manner, because the sun's heat intensely aggravated the agonies of thirst. But the sun-bath consummated Major Bach's greatest ambition. It caused the victim to writhe and twist more frantically, which in turn forced him to shriek and howl more vociferously and continuously.

When a prisoner was in the height of his torment the eminent Commandant would stroll up, and from a couple of paces away would stand, legs wide apart and hands clasped behind his back, surveying the results of his devilry with the greatest self-satisfaction. As the prisoner groaned and moaned he would fling coarse joke, badinage, and gibe at the helpless wretch, and when the latter struggled and writhed in order to seek some relief, though in vain, he would laugh uproariously, urge the unhappy man to kick more energetically, and then shriek with delight as his advice was apparently taken to heart only to accentuate the torture.

Sunday was the day of days which the tyrant preferred for meting out this punishment. In the first place it was a day of rest, and so a prisoner's time and labour were not lost. Even if he were strung up to the post all day he could be turned out to work on the Monday morning as usual. But the governing reason for the selection of this day was because it offered such a novel entertainment for the gaping German crowds. The public, as already mentioned, were invited to the camp on Sunday mornings to see the prisoners. Young girls and raw recruits considered a trip to Sennelager on the chance of seeing a writhing, tortured prisoner as one of the delights of the times, and a sight which should not be missed on any account.

They clustered on the path on the opposite side of the road facing the stake, laughing and joking among themselves. The recruits, who openly manifested their intense amusement, cheered frantically when the trussed wretch gave an abnormally wild and ear-piercing shriek of pain. At his moans, groans, and desperate abortive attempts to release himself, the girls would laugh as gaily as if witnessing the antics of a clown at a circus, and were quite unrestrained in their jubilant applause. This was the feature of the punishment which grated upon the nerves of the prisoners who were unable to lift a finger or voice a word in protest. That a fellow-prisoner should be condemned to suffer such hellish torture as was inflicted was bad enough, but that it should offer a side-show to exuberant Sunday German holiday crowds we considered to be the height of our humiliation and a crown to our sufferings.



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I shall never forget one prisoner. He was one of our loyal dusky Colonials from the Gold Coast, who had been so unfortunate as to fall into German hands and to be consigned to imprisonment at Sennelager. He was a massive and imposing specimen of his race. He fell foul of authority and incurred Major Bach's displeasure to such a degree as to receive a sentence of eight hours bound to a tree. He was tied up, and his pleadings for mercy, prompted by madness produced by the excruciating pain and semi-consciousness, alternated with loud outbreaks of long-drawn-out, blood-freezing groans, frenzied shrieks, and nerve-racking wails.

As the torture increased with the passing of the hours he gave expression to one solitary cry—"For God's sake shoot me!" The wail, uttered with parrot-like repetition and in a tone which bored into the soul, stirred the prisoners within earshot in a strange manner. They clapped their hands over their ears to shut out the awful sound, and shut their eyes to prevent the revolting spectacle burning into their brains. The man's face was livid: terror such as it is impossible to describe was in his face; the unrelenting clutch of the rope wearing into his throat caused the veins of his neck to stand out like ropes; while streams of perspiration poured down his face. As he became weaker and weaker and the rope ground deeper and deeper into his throat his fights for breath became maniacal in their fury. Indeed, the revolting sight so moved some of the prisoners that the tears welled to their eyes, and it was only by digging their teeth into their lips that they refrained from succumbing to their emotion.

Subsequently, whenever I mentioned a word about the tying-post or tree, this Colonial would look round, with the unfathomable fear of a hunted animal, his nerves would jump and twitch, and the saliva would form like foam around his mouth. He remarked that he was willing to face any punishment. But the tying post! An hour in the bonds of those ropes! He shuddered and entreatingly prayed that if ever again he should be threatened with this punishment one of the guards would shoot him, or run him through with the bayonet. I really believe that, if this penalty had been pronounced on this man a second time, he would have done something so desperate as would have compelled summary and drastic retaliation by force of arms.

Major Bach was methodical in his sentences to the tying-post. He drew up a regular code and the offender was always given a sentence in accordance with this schedule. The slightest offence brought a sentence of two hours. Then in stages of two hours it rose to the maximum of eight hours. I heard that one man had been tied up for twelve hours, but as I did not actually witness the case I cannot vouch for its particulars. The instances I have mentioned came before my notice and can be corroborated by anyone who had the misfortune to be incarcerated at Sennelager after the coming of Major Bach. But knowing as I do Major Bach and his inhuman and ferocious ways, I am quite ready to believe that he did sentence a man to twelve hours at the post. Certainly he would never have hesitated for a moment to exact such a penalty if he had felt so disposed.



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After a time the single post failed to satisfy the implacable Commandant. Trees were requisitioned for the punishment, and I have seen as many as three men undergoing the sentence simultaneously. Their combined shrieks and agonised cries penetrated to every corner of the camp. One could not escape them. On one occasion when Major Bach was standing as usual before one of his victims, laughing and jeering at his futile writhings and agonised appeals for mercy, a number of British prisoners who were standing around in mute sympathy for the hapless comrade could not control their feelings. Suddenly they gave expression to fierce hissing of disapproval. Major Bach turned, but not with the mocking triumph that one would have expected. His face wore the look of the characteristic bully who is suddenly confronted with one who is more than his match. He was taken completely off his guard, so unexpected and vigorous was our outburst. But when he saw that he was merely threatened by a few unarmed and helpless Britishers his *sang froid* returned, although it was with a palpable effort. He glared at us. There was no disguising or possibility of misconstruing the expressions of loathsome disgust and rage upon our faces. One and all wondered afterwards why he did not sentence every man of us to a spell at the post. Possibly anticipating that things might become ugly unless he manifested some semblance of authority, he assumed an anger which we could easily see was far from being real, and ordered us to barracks. We moved away slowly and sullenly, but the guard coming up we were unceremoniously hurried into our domiciles, although it demanded energetic rifle proddings and clubbings from the soldiers who swarmed around us in overwhelming numbers, to enforce the order.

This punishment was by no means confined to the civilian prisoners. It was meted out whenever the opportunity arose to the British soldiers with equal impartiality. But for some reason which we could never fathom, unless it was to cause further pain, torture and humiliation, mentally as well as physically, the revolting task of tying up an unfortunate Tommy was entrusted to one of his own sergeants. He had to perform the repugnant work against his will, but the sergeants eased the poor fellow's plight as much as they dared by tying them up as leniently as possible, while they maintained an ever-watchful, although unostentatious vigilance, over them while suffering the penalty.

By the introduction of this fiendish punishment Major Bach completely subdued the camp into a colony of crushed men. We all went in dire dread of him, the fear of being the victim of such brutality cowing us far more effectively than any other punishment we had encountered. Those who had undergone the torture recited such harrowing stories of their sufferings that we were extremely anxious not to incur the wrath of the devilish Commandant in any way whatever.



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One day three of us experienced a narrow escape, which serves to illustrate how keen were our captors to submit us to this crucial test. We three had been ordered to the field. We packed our few belongings, including our tin pails and other indispensable utensils upon our backs. We were marching abreast and a few paces behind a young German officer, chatting merrily among ourselves, when we met a French soldier approaching. He was unusually gay and as he passed he yelled out the popular enquiry which he had evidently acquired while fraternising with our Tommies in the camp.

“Air ve do’n harted?” he hailed, and he laughed gaily at the loads with which we were struggling. To this we returned an emphatic negative to which one of the party, S——, a schoolmaster who was fluent in French and German, added a joke. Evidently the Frenchman saw the point of the jest because he burst out in a fit of unrestrained merriment which was so infectious as to compel us to participate.

The officer who was ahead of us, whipped round and vehemently declared that we were laughing at him. S—— protested and explained that such would be the very last thing we should ever think of doing. The officer went on ahead quite unconvinced and in high dudgeon. That we should select one of the myrmidons of the All-Highest as a target for our banter was the offence of offences in his estimable conceit. When we reached the entrance to the field we had to pass a small office in which we were registered and we discovered the immature upstart loudly and excitedly dwelling upon the enormous indignity to which he had been submitted by us.

The officer in charge stopped us and repeated the accusation which had been made. S—— gave a full explanation of the whole incident, but the upstart who considered that his pride had been vilely outraged would not listen to it. Then and there he ordered that we should be tied up to the trees for four hours to give us something to laugh about. I can assure you that we trembled in our shoes: our fate hung in the balance. The officer-in-charge of the field, however, was more level-headed and broader-minded, although he could not calm his excited colleague. At last he point blank refused to mete out the desired punishment. He turned to us.

“I accept your explanation. I don’t think you would be guilty of such an offence to German honour and dignity!”

We were more profuse than ever in our humble apologies to the young cock-of-the-walk for any offence we might have committed unwittingly but we assured him that our mirth had been entirely provoked by the gay French soldier’s joke.

“I believe you,” was the officer’s reply, “but be very careful. Don’t do it again. As you see it is likely to be misunderstood!”

With that he dismissed us. We scurried off like startled rabbits, thankful for our narrow escape, but our last glimpse of the affair was the two officers who had resumed wrangling. It was an extremely fortunate circumstance for us that the officer-in-charge of the field was one of the few reasonable Germans attached to the camp.



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The wretches who had to suffer this punishment carried traces of their experiences for weeks. I examined the wrists and ankles of the Russian Pole some hours after his final release. The limbs were highly inflamed, the flesh being puffed out on either side of the deep blue indents which had been cut by the tightened ropes. The slightest movement of the affected limbs produced a sharp spasm of pain and it was only with the greatest difficulty that the poor wretch was able to use his hands and feet for some hours after removal from the post. In the case of the Russian Pole many weeks elapsed before all traces of the terrible weals inflicted by the ropes had disappeared.

When we grasped the depths to which Prussian brutality was ready and willing to descend, we could not refrain from dwelling upon probable future tortures which were likely to be in store for us. We were positive in our own minds that Major Bach would seek other novel and more revolting and agonising methods to wreak his vengeance upon the British. We were not left for very long in this maddening uncertainty. Tying-to-the-stake was but a mild prelude to the "Reign of Terror" which the ferocious Commandant shortly afterwards inaugurated.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE REIGN OF TERROR

Major Bach, in common with the average Prussian officer, who has suddenly become invested with a certain degree of authority, evinced a weird delight in emphasising his power at every opportunity. He was an unbending apostle of steel-bound discipline, such as is practised in Germany.

Until his arrival we were in the habit of parading once a day—at 6 a.m.—with evening parades, twelve hours later, upon occasion. But Major Bach introduced the third mid-day parade. A little later he suddenly thought that a fourth parade was necessary, the respective hours being six, twelve, two, and six. Even this programme did not satisfy his love of power and arrogance, because at frequent intervals he would suddenly summon two additional parades and for no ostensible reason, except to harass us.

Parade was probably the most irksome duty we had to fulfil inasmuch as we were then treated to insults of every description. The Commandant was a martinet of the worst type. We were supposed to trim ourselves up and to look as spick and span as we could under the circumstances. This was more particularly demanded when a notable visitor—visitors were few and far between—came to the camp to perform a perfunctory inspection to satisfy the authorities in Berlin that the prisoners of war were being well and kindly tended. But some of us were not disposed to bow meekly to the tyrant's despotic orders. Instead of parading upon such occasions in the white convict-like suits, which by the way we were supposed and indeed asked to purchase, so that we might present a smart uniform appearance, we preferred to don our own clothes,



although they were now showing sad signs of wear and tear. Naturally the immaculate Major resented our refusal to fulfil his bidding, thus producing vivid blemishes upon the prim appearance of the lines, but we always succeeded in producing an excuse which was so ostensibly reasonable as to escape his wrath and consignment to some punishment.



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The most irritating feature of these parades was the length of time we were kept waiting in the scorching sun upon the convenience of his "Excellency." To him it was nothing that we should be kept standing at attention for an hour or more, while the guards, steeped in discipline as they were, took a fiendish pleasure in keeping us up to the mark. I recall one parade very vividly. The heat was intense: the thermometer must have been at least 110 degrees in the sun. We paraded at two o'clock as usual and were brought to attention. Major Bach was momentarily expected, but he did not come upon the scene until 4.45. For 2-3/4 hours we were kept in the broiling sun, and none of us being in the pink of condition owing to the wretched and inadequate food, we soon commenced to betray signs of fatigue. On this occasion, even the German guards could not adhere to the disciplinary rule. When we abandoned the rigid attention attitude for others more or less comfortable they followed our example, although they maintained a discreet alertness for the coming of the Commandant so that we might be brought to attention before he appeared upon the scene.

One of the prisoners had been a Japanese trapezist and juggler. He was very old. He said, and we agreed, he was about 75 years of age. But the German authorities arbitrarily assessed his age at 54 years, and such it had to be so long as it suited their purpose. He had toured the vaudeville theatres and music halls in Germany for over 20 years, but he was rounded up, and despite all his protestations concerning his age was interned at Sennelager.

The age of the poor old fellow was perfectly obvious. He was very weak, and indeed, quite incapable of performing the most simple duties set by our Lord and Master. K——, the captain of our barrack—the Jap formed one of our party—recognising the old man's incapacity and infirmities, eased his unfortunate position as much as he dared. One man had to be detached from each party when it went out to work, to serve as orderly for the day, and his responsibility was to keep the barrack clean and tidy during our absence. At every available opportunity, especially when confronted with a severe day's work, K—— told off the old man as orderly, the light work pertaining to which was within his capacity.

Upon the day of this particular parade the old man, enfeebled with age, weak from want of food, and debilitated, could not resist the merciless blazing sun. From sheer fatigue he sank to the ground. We in our pity left him there, although we closed around him to shield him from the eagle eyes of the vigilant guard. When Major Bach appeared suddenly we all sprang hurriedly to attention. But our aged Japanese friend was not so quick. The Commandant saw him sitting on the ground at the same moment as the guard, also catching sight of him, rushed forward. The old fellow was unmercifully hustled to his feet, although it was with only an extreme effort that he could rise.

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Then he was treated to an outburst of bullying and cursing from the Commandant such as we had never heard before. He was threatened with this, that, and some other frightful punishment if he dared to disobey any order in future. The old man, his legs bent and quaking beneath him, listened with a pathetically helpless demeanour. The tears coursed down his face as he shivered beneath the string of oaths, curses, and imprecations that were rained upon him. Many of us feared that he would be condemned for four hours to the tying post, so infuriated was the despot of the camp, but he escaped this terrible ordeal.

About four weeks after we had entered Sennelager permission was extended to those who felt so disposed to enjoy the luxury of an open-air bath. Seeing that we never had the chance of more than a wash in the bucket at the pump, and were in urgent need of a dip, we accepted the offer with alacrity. We were escorted under strong guard to a stream some distance from the barracks and were given a quarter of an hour for our pleasure. We hurriedly tore off our clothes and took advantage of every minute to have a roaring joyous time in the water. Thoroughly refreshed we were marched back to camp and told off to our various duties.

By this time every man in the camp had been assigned to some particular task. Major Bach did not encourage idleness; it only fomented brooding and moping over our position, was his argument. But he was also a staunch believer in forced labour, which was quite a different thing. Consequently we found ourselves condemned to some of the most filthy tasks conceivable. Incidentally, however, these duties only served to reveal still more convincingly the hollowness of Germany's preachings concerning the principles of health and hygiene to the whole world while herself practising the diametrically opposite. We were commanded to clean out the military hospital.

Now, if there is one building among others in which one would expect to discover scrupulous cleanliness it is a hospital, but this accommodation provided for the German recruits was in an indescribably filthy condition. The conveniences for the patients were in a deplorable state. They had neither been disinfected nor cleaned for months. Faecal matter and other filth had been left to dry, harden and adhere with the tenacity of glue to the surfaces. Its removal not only taxed our strength to the supreme degree, but our endurance as well. The stench was suffocating and nauseating. Even the foul aroma of the strong cheap German tobacco which we were able to purchase at the canteen and to smoke while at this task, if our sentry were genial, failed to smother the more powerful and penetrating foul vapours which arose directly water was applied.

We were also assigned to the repugnant duty of cleaning out the latrines, which were of the most primitive character, and which coincided with the facilities which one might anticipate among savages but not in such a boasting civilised country as Germany.

Both these duties were loathsome, but I am afraid no one engaged on the tasks would be able to express a conclusive opinion as to which was the worse.



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The duties being so varied, operations often took us a little way from the camp. The chance to get away even for a brief period from our depressing and monotonous surroundings was seized with avidity. Unfortunately, we feared that this system of forced labour would culminate in our being assigned to the work of tending the crops. But we made up our minds irrevocably to do no such thing no matter how we might be punished. The Germans had failed to nourish us in an adequate manner, and we were certainly not going to enable them to secure a sufficiency of food at our expense. Indeed, the one or two attempts which were made to impress us to toil on the land, proved highly disastrous because considerable damage was inflicted from our ignorance of agriculture and gardening.

Some of us were given the garden which belonged to the old General who had been in charge at Sennelager when we first arrived, to keep in condition. This official was an enthusiastic amateur gardener and cherished a great love for flowers. Seeing that during his regime we had received considerate treatment within limitations, we cherished no grudge against him. Again, the fact that his garden was to be kept going led us to hope that the duration of Major Bach's reign over us was merely temporary and that our former guardian would soon be returning. We knew that in such an event our lot would be rendered far easier, so we nursed his little plot of ground with every care and displayed just as much interest in its welfare as if it had been our own. But the old General never came back to Sennelager, at least not during my period of imprisonment there.

There was one party of British prisoners whom Major Bach singled out for especially harsh and brutal treatment. The invincible High Seas Fleet upon one of its sporadic ventures into salt water during the very earliest days of the war, stumbled across a fleet of Grimsby trawlers unconcernedly pursuing their usual peaceful occupation. The whole of the fishermen were made prisoners and were dispatched to Sennelager.

But Major Bach steadfastly refused to believe that they were simple fishermen pursuing their ordinary tasks. To his narrow and distorted mind a man on a trawler was only toiling in the sea for one or both of two purposes. The one was laying mines; the other was mine-sweeping. Consequently he decided to mark these unfortunate hardened sea-salts in a distinguishing manner which was peculiarly his own, thereby rendering them conspicuous and possible of instant recognition, while in the event of an escape being attempted, no difficulty would be experienced in identifying and catching the runaways. Each man was submitted to the indignity of having one half of his head shaved clean, one half of his moustache removed, or one half of his beard cut away. The men branded in this manner presented a strange spectacle, and one which afforded Major Bach endless amusement. In addition a flaming big "Z" was printed

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boldly upon the back of the coat of each man. This letter comprises the initial of the German word “zivil,” and means that the wearer is neither a criminal nor a military prisoner. It will be observed, however, that the Commandant declined to recognise these fishermen as being naval prisoners, which somewhat contradicted his assertion concerning their alleged crime. At a subsequent date, I might mention, every civilian prisoner was branded with the “Z” in a similar manner.

These fishermen were watched very closely, were hunted and harassed at every turn without mercy, and all things considered, experienced an abnormally hard time. Up to the day of my release from Ruhleben on December 6, 1915, but one of those old salts had been released, and had been returned to his country. We were informed at Sennelager that the authorities were determined, at all hazards, to keep these “diabolical fiends” as they were termed, in durance vile, until the termination of the war. However, one of them fell seriously ill after his transference from Sennelager to Ruhleben. His condition became so serious as to bring about his hurried exchange, the authorities dreading that he would die while in their charge, and thus adversely affect the low death-rate reputation of a German prison camp!

Our hair was growing long, owing to the absence of cutting facilities. Mine had almost reached my shoulders, but I was extremely careful to submit it to a thorough wash every morning because I shared the fear of many of my companions that, owing to the congestion of the camp, we should be overrun with vermin. Undoubtedly Major Bach also anticipated such a state of affairs, because one morning he appeared upon parade with a pair of clippers which he had unearthed from somewhere and curtly commanded every man to submit to a hair-cut.

The position of official barber to the camp was assigned to an Englishman named L —, who I think might be accurately described as our official humorist. Armed with this weapon, and although absolutely ignorant of the new calling thrust upon him, delighted to secure some change to the monotonous round of toil, L — entered upon his work with commendable zest. But he construed the duty into a form of amusement, and played sorry tricks with the heads which came into his hands. Some he shaved so clean as to present the appearance of a billiard ball, but others he evidently considered to be worthy of French poodle treatment. He took a humorous delight in executing some of the most fantastic and weird designs it is possible to imagine, much to the discomfort and chagrin of his unwilling clients. Still his quaint expression of craftsmanship and artistry contributed somewhat to the restricted hilarity and mirth of the camp.



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I, myself, sternly refused to entrust my head to L——'s hands. I naturally thought that I should receive a smart punishment for thus flying in the face of the autocratic order which had gone forth, but strange to say I found Major Bach somewhat reasonable on this point. This is about the only redeeming feature I can offer concerning Major Bach's rule over us. I think, however, that he was somewhat more closely observant than was generally supposed to be the case, because those of us who escaped the hair-cutting precaution happened to be the very prisoners who were unremitting in their efforts to preserve unassailable personal cleanliness. No doubt L—— was disappointed to be deprived of a few possible heads upon which to demonstrate his quaint skill, but we succeeded in escaping from his clutches.

Although vermin did overrun the camps, not only of Sennelager, but of other prisons of whose interiors I made the acquaintance, I can assert truthfully that I was never troubled with the unsolicited company of body lice, and only once or twice discovered one or two unwelcome strangers in my hair. The coarse and harsh German soap effectively rendered my hair untenable. But some of the prisoners were overwhelmed and presented terrifying spectacles. It was here that the superiority of the Britisher in matters pertaining to personal hygiene towered over all the varying races by which he was surrounded, not even excepting the Germans. From our own experience and observation it was only too palpable that the Teuton soldiers are quite as careless in this connection as the less enlightened peoples of south-eastern Europe, because they were as severely infested—if not more so—with vermin.

One of the jobs set to us was making hay in an adjoining field and for the purpose of getting away from the camp for a few hours many of us volunteered for this toil. The hay had to be laden upon huge waggons, the load thus easily exceeding that incidental to British hay-making operations, and this had to be hauled to Paderborn for storage in lofts.

Although I was on the sick list at the time I could not resist the chance to secure a glimpse of new surroundings and a few strange faces. It was on this occasion that I made my first, but abortive, attempt to escape. The sentry was dozing in the hot afternoon sun, having found a soft couch on a haycock. I slunk off towards the trees which surround the camp. Presently I spotted a sentry. I passed him safely and still keeping to the trees pushed forward, only to be surprised to discover another sentry standing on watch with his loaded rifle. Him, too, I eluded, and was congratulating myself upon my success when I was disturbed by the clattering of approaching horses. I peered through the trees and saw a squadron of cavalry trotting towards me. I slipped into the undergrowth to throw myself prone under a sheltering bush. The soldiers passed within twelve feet of me. I held



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my breath half-dreading that perhaps one of the horses, scenting something unusual, might give a warning. I kept to my cover until the soldiers had disappeared from sight. Then I stole out to wander stealthily forward. But I speedily discovered that the further I got away from the camp the greater the number of cavalry I encountered. Moreover it was easy to see that manoeuvres and training were proceeding upon an extensive scale.

I realised the hopelessness of attempting to break through such a cordon, so with extreme regret I decided to make my way back to the hayfield. But the return was more difficult than the outward journey. I had to slip the guards, who seemed to be uncannily alert and who, if they had caught the slightest glimpse of me, would have blazed away with their rifles without first yelling a challenge. But I dodged them all and regaining the field sauntered up towards my guard with perfect composure. He had missed me and had been looking round to see if I were at a remote part of the field. As I approached he eyed me quizzically and subjected me to a searching cross-examination to discover where I had been. But he secured no satisfaction, beyond the sly hint that he had not noticed me for the simple reason that he had been stealing a snooze. I know he did not believe the answers I vouchsafed, but I was on safe ground. Had he hauled me before the Commandant for attempting to escape he knew very well that I should have retorted with the countercharge that he had been sleeping at his post, in which assertion I should have been supported by my friends. I held the trump card and he was wise enough to realise the fact. Consequently, beyond telling me to get on with my work he never ventured another word, nor did his attitude towards me change in any way.

Afterwards I congratulated myself upon having responded to second thoughts to return to the camp. I learned that the chances of escaping from Sennelager were most slender. Not only were we interned in the centre of a big military centre, somewhat comparable to our Aldershot, but special precautions had been observed to frustrate escape. Sentries were thrown out at distances of a few hundred yards while the system of overlapping these guardians was of the most elaborate character. Such a gauntlet was far too precarious and tight to be run with any chances of success. The hue and cry would have been raised, and have been transmitted to the outer rings of sentries before one had covered a fourth of the danger zone.

We had to bale the hay on the waggon and when a full load had been stowed aboard it was hauled away to the lofts. But we had no horses or traction engines to drag the vehicles; every available beast and machine had been requisitioned for the army. Still this factor did not perturb our captors. British muscle could be used as a substitute for animals and engines. Accordingly, about 30 of the imprisoned British tourists were harnessed up to tug the weighty and cumbersome load over the heavy three miles of road, badgered and baited by the guards. When we slowed down under the effort,

which was pretty exhausting upon a basin of cabbage soup, we were spurred into the normal pace by the imprecations of the soldiers.



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In addition to the men tugging at the shafts two had to ride on top of the load to keep it in order. The road led through a long avenue, the lower branches of the trees lining which swept the top of the hay. It taxed all our ingenuity and agility to avoid a mishap. Indeed, my companion was swept off and thrown into the road with considerable violence, sustaining severe bruises. It was rather by luck than judgment that I did not share his fate.

When we reached the outskirts of Paderborn the guards called a halt, in order to secure refreshment. We were also permitted, within limits, to purchase eatables from the shops, for which, needless to say, we had to pay exorbitantly.

*[large gap] we were able to secure a highly appreciated relief to our monotonous and insufficient fare.*

While the guards were enjoying themselves my companion and I, perched on the top of the load, became the target for the jokes and gibes of the curious crowd which had collected round the vehicle. One fellow in the crowd was particularly impertinent and offensive with the result that we soon became riled. He came close to the side of the wagon to shout some particularly insulting epithet. With a dexterous movement my friend and I, who had been watching patiently, severed the band holding a bale and as it flew apart we gave the bale a smart push. It toppled over the side to fall upon the head of our tormentor with a crash, felling him to the ground and burying him completely. The guard, whom it missed narrowly, gave a savage curse, but the fall appeared to be so obviously accidental that he never for a moment considered the incident to have been premeditated. The bullying, raw-boned young Prussian was extricated with great difficulty and somewhat battered. His mouth, eyes, nostrils and ears were choked with the hayseeds and he spluttered, coughed and yelled in a terrifying manner. But he who a minute before had been so ready with gibes at our expense was now jeered at by his comrades, in which our guards joined boisterously. We, on the top had to give way to mirth. Although we were compelled to gather the hay, remake the bale, and reload it upon the vehicle we were so satisfied with our complete revenge as to perform the task with a light heart.

Whenever we visited Paderborn, or the village of Sennelager, we never omitted to load ourselves up with whatever food we could purchase. Those who did not accompany us invariably gave us the wherewithal to secure victuals for them.

*[large gap]*

At first the shop-keepers were not disposed to deal with us, no doubt fearing that they would be charged with complicity in these transactions. *[gap]*

As our visits became more frequent all hesitation upon the part of the tradesmen vanished, and they accepted our money without the slightest demur. We speedily



discovered that the most rabid anti-British and wildly patriotic German shopkeeper always succumbs to business. When patriotism is pitted against pounds, shillings and pence, patriotism can go hang.



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[large gap]

One of Major Bach's most diabolical acts of savagery was the closing of the canteens in the camp to prisoners. This was the last straw, because now we were compelled to subsist upon the slender and disgusting fare served from the official cook-house. This doubtless was the express reason which influenced the Commandant in his action. But we were not disposed to allow him to have things all his own way. He promulgated the order but it had to be enforced by his myrmidons. We found that the canteen was still available to the guards, so forthwith we resorted to corruption to evade Major Bach's decree. The guards having us in their mercy, bled us unmercifully, the most trivial articles being procurable only at an extravagant price. I paid a shilling for a loaf which I could always obtain before the closing order came into force for twopence! Other articles were in proportion.

But closing the canteens drew the cordon round our stomachs immeasurably tighter. It was not long before the fiendish decree betrayed its fruits. Gaunt figures with pinched faces and staring wolfish eyes slunk about the camp ready to seize anything in the form of food. Our physique fell away, and those already reduced to weakness suffered still further debilitation. Many failed to muster the strength necessary to fulfil the tasks allotted to them. Gradual, systematic and deliberate starvation of the prisoners was prosecuted in grim earnest.

Yet the British prisoners accepted the inevitable with a far more cheerful resignation than the others. Undoubtedly it is a decided trait of the British character never to be cast down when brought face to face with disaster. Our boys were quite as resourceful as Major Bach, although in the opposite direction—to keep ourselves alive. Whenever any of us went out and came within reach of a field growing vegetable crops we did not hesitate to raid it. Supplies of raw carrots, onions, potatoes, turnips and any other roots in the edible line were smuggled into the barracks. Late at night, after all lights had been extinguished and we were supposed to be asleep, we were sitting up munching quietly away at these spoils of war with as much gusto and enthusiasm as if enjoying a *table d'hote* dinner in the luxury of a crack West End hotel.

One day one of our party came in with a cucumber. Where or how he had got it we never knew, and what is more we did not trouble to enquire. The fact that we had come into possession of a dainty sufficed. We fell upon it with a relish which it is impossible to describe. It was divided among us in accordance with our accepted communal practice, and I do not think any article which we secured in Sennelager was ever eaten with such wholehearted enjoyment as that cucumber. But the incident was not free from its touch of pathos. When we sat down to the cucumber we carefully peeled it and threw the rind away. Two days later two others and myself set out to recover that cucumber rind which had been discarded, the pinch about the waist-belt having become insistent. We found it, soiled and shrivelled, but we ate it ravenously.



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Major Bach may have wondered why the British civil prisoners did not reveal signs of semi-starvation so readily as those of other nationalities. But we had long since discovered that it was useless to go about the camp with long faces and the bearing of the "All-is-Lost Brigade." We were almost entirely dependent upon our own ingenuity to keep ourselves alive, and we succeeded. The methods adopted may be criticised, but in accordance with the inexorable first law of Nature we concluded that the end justified any means.

### CHAPTER XII

#### THE REIGN OF TERROR—CONTINUED

While for the most part we had been compelled to labour upon sundry duties, we were not hard pushed, being somewhat in the position of the workmen toiling by the hour, except that our efforts went unrewarded in a financial sense. But this system did not coincide with the ideas of Major Bach.

He paraded us one morning and assuming his favourite attitude before us treated us to a little homily. It was a characteristic tirade delivered in the conventional Teuton gramophone manner. But it affected us materially.

*Now we were to become slaves in very truth!*

The Commandant informed us point-blank that he was extremely dissatisfied with our manner of working. We were too slow: we nursed our tasks. Did we think we were being kept at Sennelager for the benefit of our health or to make holiday? If so that was a fond delusion. Henceforth he was going to estimate a certain time for each task which would have to be completed within the period allowed, even if we had to work every hour God gave us and, if need be, on Sundays as well.

Major Bach never minced matters: he meant every word he said. So upon being dismissed we returned to our barracks looking decidedly glum. Pressure was being applied at every turn now, and it was becoming a pressure which could be felt.

We were soon notified as to the first task which we were to rush through on "contract" time. A big fence was required to enclose a certain area of the camp, and this was to be erected, together with the necessary gates and other details within fourteen days. If we could complete it within a shorter time no complaint would be raised. But he would not allow another day beyond his limit. Major Bach must have been a masterpiece in this particular phase of human endeavour, inasmuch as his anticipated period, as we learned, could not have been reduced by a single day.

The prisoners were divided into gangs, each of which was allotted to a definite operation. Although the erection of this fence constituted the hardest enterprise which



we had ever taken in hand we did not flinch. Somehow or other we considered that Major Bach had given expression to an unwarrantable reflection upon our abilities. He practically considered us to be no more nor less than slackers. Well! We would show him what we could do, although prisoners, denied every possible comfort, and half-starved into the bargain. Every man undertook to exert himself to the utmost and to do his level best.



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No facilities whatever were extended to us beyond the most primitive of tools. One party was sent into the adjacent woods to fell suitable trees to serve as posts, to trim them of branches, and to the required length of 10 feet. Then they had to be carried by manual effort into the camp where the butt was chamfered and charred in a wood fire as a protection against too rapid decay.

While the posts were being prepared a second party was busily engaged in digging the holes for them. Each hole had to be of a prescribed diameter, by one metre—about 3 feet—in depth, and they were set a certain distance apart. Tree-felling might have been, and undoubtedly was, hard work to inexperienced hands, but hole digging! That was set down as the unassailable limit. Driving the pick and shovel in the rebellious ground was back-breaking in the hot sun and it had to be maintained without pause or slackening.

When the post had been planted the wire-pulling gang came along. The wire used for the purpose was galvanised netting such as is used to enclose chicken runs, game preserves, and tennis grounds, reinforced by one or two equidistantly spaced lines of ordinary wire. It had to be stretched taut by hand and moving the heavy roll by manual effort and uncoiling it as we advanced, demanded not only strength but dexterity. At each post the wire was attached by the aid of a few staples.

Although we laboured zealously the task proved far more formidable than we had anticipated. The fence was 7 feet in height, while I should think that from 600 to 800 yards had to be run. The netting only enclosed three sides of the desired space, the fourth side being fenced in by a belt of trees. In order to get the work done on time and to avoid being compelled to toil on Sundays, we had to labour long and hard. We started shortly after six in the morning, but it was often about half-past six in the evening before we knocked off for the day. We took a strange and inexplicable pride in the enterprise. The fence was not built upon the typical shoddy German lines, but strictly in accordance with substantial British ideas. I may mention that we had good reason to regret this display of zeal and excellent workmanship at a later date.

Seeing that the evening was well advanced before we ceased work we had little time for relaxation. When we stowed our tools for the day we were dog-tired and were hustled into barracks. It was work and sleep in deadly earnest, but we were mighty glad we succeeded in avoiding the threatened Sunday labour, because this was the only day we could devote to our own duties such as mending and washing clothes.



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While we were pushing ahead with this task we discussed its coming purposes very animatedly. But none of the guards appeared to have the slightest inkling of its projected application. However, this was immaterial to us. A loud cheer of triumph went up when we had hung the gates, which we had also fashioned at great effort, and the duty was completed. We were beside ourselves with self-satisfaction and delight because we had shown the implacable Major Bach what we Britishers could do when we made up our minds to tackle anything. I very much doubt whether even an equal number of skilled workmen would have completed the fence within the stipulated time, and we for the most part were quite foreign to the trades involved.

When we first entered the camp we were provided with a tolerably satisfactory area of adjacent space in which to exercise ourselves. But as additional prisoners came in this limb-stretching promenade became gradually reduced until at last it was no more than a suburban chicken run in area, being just as long as our barrack by one-half the space between the two rows of buildings. These cramped quarters rather exasperated us because we were denied the pleasure of a little stroll. The exercise yard was also invariably obstructed by clothes hanging on the lines to dry or to air, the result being that within a very short time the British section of Sennelager Camp became vividly reminiscent of a slum in the densely populated districts off the Mile End Road.

The speedy completion of the “big fence” unfortunately set a bad precedent. Major Bach, flushed with the success of his first speeding-up tactics, grew more and more inexorable in this connection. For every job a rigid time-limit was now set, and he did not hesitate to reduce the period to an almost impossible point. The cause was perfectly obvious. He concluded that by setting us an absolutely impossible, though apparently reasonable, enterprise, he would secure the opportunity for which he was so sedulously waiting—to mete us out some new punishment. But somehow or other we always contrived to cheat him in his nefarious designs.

During this period our guard was changed frequently. Men would be withdrawn to make up the losses incurred upon the battlefield. Thus we were brought into contact with the various types of Germans which constitute the Teutonic Empire. Some were certainly not ill-disposed towards us. They mounted guard over us according to their own interpretation of this essential duty. But others slavishly followed the rigid instructions which were laid down, notably the Prussian guards, who were about the most brutal and despicable blackguards it is possible for the whole of Germany to have produced to mount watch and ward over us. One set of guards was withdrawn to bring a Westphalian regiment to fighting strength and proceeded to the front. Afterwards we learned that every man had been lost—killed, wounded or missing.

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The severe mauling which the German armies were receiving—we knew nothing about it at the time—undoubtedly was partly responsible for the harsh treatment extended to us. Unable to smash the “contemptible little army,” which was certainly proving capable of looking after itself, vengeance was visited upon our defenceless heads.

One day a huge crowd of prisoners was brought in. Whether the Commandant had been advised of their coming or not I am unable to say. But one incontrovertible fact remains—he failed utterly to make any food arrangements to meet the increase in the camp's population. The prisoners reached the camp in the usual famishing condition and were given a small ration. But they were satisfied partially at our expense. The remaining food was only adequate to give us one-half of our usual small dole, and we had to rest content therewith. The canteen being closed we could not make up the deficiency even at our own expense.

My health was now giving way, as a result of my privations in Wesel prison, accentuated by the indifferent and insufficient food and hard work at Sennelager. I was assigned to various light duties. One of these brought me into the cook-house, where I was ordered to cut up the black bread—one brick loaf into five equal pieces, each of which had to last a man through six meals. I was either unfitted for kitchen work or else my presence was resented. At all events I soon realised that my first day in the cook-house would undoubtedly be my last. I had to serve out the bread, and ostensibly, either from lack of experience or nervousness, I bungled my task. The men had to go by the boiler in single file, passing on to the table to receive the bread, where serving was carried out so dexterously that the moving line never paused—until it got to my table. But there was method in my bungling. I was zealously striving to double the bread ration to the British prisoners. Consequently the pieces of bread persisted in tumbling to the ground, thereby hindering and upsetting the steady progress and rhythm of serving. But each man as he stooped to recover a fallen piece received a second hunk surreptitiously, as was my direct intention. However, unfortunately for me, the bread did not go far enough, the outcome being an outburst of further trouble. As I had expected, my room was preferred to my company in that kitchen and I was deposed.

While in Sennelager I had been sedulously keeping an elaborate diary in which I entered details of every incident that befell the camp. I had also recovered my original diary which had played such a prominent part at my trial in Wesel prison.

[gap]

Now diaries were the one thing in Sennelager which were rigorously debarred. To have been caught with such a record of the doings and my opinions of the German authorities would have brought me an exemplary sentence of solitary confinement or penal servitude in a German prison, if not something worse. Consequently I was compelled to post my diary in secrecy. I discovered a hiding-place which would never

have occurred to the guards, even if they had gained an inkling that such a document was in existence.



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One of our party fell a victim to chronic asthma, and was isolated, being given a room under the officer's quarters. Someone was required to accompany him to extend assistance and constant surveillance, and selection fell upon me. Locking myself in this room at night, with my sick companion, I used to while away the time preparing some rough notes which I was keeping for a specific purpose in addition to the diary proper, which, however, I left in its original hiding-place.

By some means or other the guard suspected my engagement in some such task. They made several surprise entrances but failed to catch me in the act of writing. The heavy tread of their coming feet always gave me ample warning so that I could get my notes into safe hiding. But one night they burst open the door suddenly and I was caught red-handed. On my knees was my pad at which I was writing feverishly. But the pad was inscribed with notes which I regarded as of an emergency character. Realising the object of their unexpected entry I clapped the pad on the table, thus covering up the prepared and detailed notes which I desired to keep. The guard sprang forward delirious with joy at having made a capture, snatched the loose sheets from the pad, and went off in high glee to report my heinous offence. But the man in his haste left the proper notes on the table. He was too thick-brained to think for a moment that I should ever trouble to prepare two diaries, one for myself and one for capture if detected, so I still held the treasured original, which I instantly hid away safely.

As luck would have it not a word was included in the captured notes to offer written evidence of my private and candid opinion of my captors, their methods and our life. The fact that I had written nothing detrimental to the authorities apparently appeased the Commandant, notwithstanding the enormity of my delinquency. At all events I received nothing worse than a stern admonition and threats of severe punishment if I were caught infringing the regulations again, to all of which I listened humbly, but with my tongue in my cheek.

My diary was posted up fully in due course, and what is more to the point I got the voluminous and incriminating evidence away from Sennelager. At a later date I became somewhat apprehensive as to its safety, and was anxious to get it to England. For some time I was baffled in my efforts, but at last a friendly neutral offered to take it and to see that it was delivered to my friend who has chronicled this story, to whom I had addressed it. This diary wandered about Germany considerably, the person in question preferring to make haste slowly to disarm all suspicion. At last the neutral, after having been searched several times without yielding anything incriminating, got as far as the frontier. About to pass into the adjacent friendly country the carrier was detained, and by some mischance the diary happened to be unearthed.



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The neutral was arrested upon some trumped-up charge to afford the authorities time to peruse the incriminating document. Cross-examined the go-between protested ignorance of the contents: the parcel was found just as it had been received from the consignor, the seals were all intact, and it was under delivery to the person whose address was written upon the outside. There was nothing attached to associate myself with the document, although my friend at home would have known instantly whence it had come. The upshot was that the diary was confiscated. I was bitterly mortified to learn its fate when within a stone's throw of safety, because it contained incidents of all descriptions set out in regular sequence, and in a plain unvarnished manner. Its perusal must have stung the Germans pretty severely since it was decidedly unpalatable to Teuton pride. It was a comprehensive indictment of the German treatment of the British prisoners, relative more particularly to Sennelager, which the authorities were firmly determined should never become known to the world at large, and to conceal which they used unceasing efforts. Had that diary got home it would have created a tremendous sensation. My vexation was completed by the thought that the diary contained many episodes and incidents which I can now only recall hazily, but I thanked my lucky stars that I had taken the precaution to keep a precis of the contents which I myself brought away with me, and which has proved of valuable assistance in setting forth this narrative.

A few days after having completed the famous "big fence" we were paraded. Major Bach strode up, obviously in a terrible temper—it was the six o'clock parade—and facing us, roared:

"You English dogs! Barracks are too comfortable for you! You should be made to feed from the swine-tub! Bring all your luggage out—everything you've got, and your sacks of straw! I'll give you ten minutes to do it. Then you'll parade again! Hurry up!"

We were thunderstruck at this order. What was in the wind? Major Bach was adept in springing surprises upon us, but this excelled anything to which we had been treated hitherto.

Speculation was idle. We had only ten minutes to do as we were bidden, and we bustled around to be on parade as demanded. The excitement was intense. We collected every stick to which we could lay a claim, and with all our worldly belongings, as well as our sack of straw, on our shoulders, we trotted out and formed up.

As we paraded, the guards made a diligent search of the barracks to see that we had left nothing behind. Also to make sure that no prisoner was lurking in hiding.

We received the order to march. We tramped along under our bulky and ungainly loads, and found we were being escorted to the enclosure which we had fenced in. We swung through the gate, which was closed behind the last man, and a soldier mounted guard over it. In a flash the truth burst upon us.



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*We were clapped into the barbed wire prison which we had built with so much energy and in which we had taken such pride!*

The look of dismay which settled upon the faces of the more lugubrious members of our party at this typical Teutonic illustration of adding insult to injury was perfectly justifiable. Here were we turned into an open field surrounded by netting, as if we were so many cattle, and in which there were no tents or other buildings except a single small shed. Some of us scurried to this little tumbledown shanty to stow our belongings. We had to parade and were curtly commanded to empty the straw from our sacks. We did so though our spirits dropped to zero at this summary deprivation of our beds. We were told to keep the empty sacks and to secure them against loss or theft, which injunction we did not fail to take to heart.

Then we were left. No one appeared to know what to do with us. We were informed that instructions would be given later. We kicked our heels about in the broiling sun, sprawling here, and lolling there. The hours passed but there was no further development. When noon came and we received no summons for the mid-day meal we commenced to grow apprehensive in spite of ourselves. Fortunately the weather was glorious, although the hot sun, which we could not escape, proved distressing.

As the time wore on we spurred our interpreters to exert themselves on our behalf. They constituted our only means of mediating with our superiors, and we urged them to go to the Commandant to enquire about our rations.

The interpreters went off and succeeded in gaining an audience with Major Bach, who was found in his office conferring with his juniors. Directly he espied our interpreters he yelled testily:

“Dolmetscher! Dolmetscher! I cannot attend to any Dolmetscher now!”

“But,” persisted one of the interpreters, “how about the food for—”

“Don’t come worrying me now,” was the savage interruption. “Get out!”

Our intermediaries came back and their doleful faces told us more eloquently than words that their interview had proved barren.

Some of the prisoners were giving way. A basin of acorn coffee and a small piece of black bread was all we had eaten for breakfast, and we were commencing to feel the pangs of hunger disconcertingly.

In an adjacent field were some British Tommies from *Mons*. Some of us, tiring of sprawling about on the grass, and with a queer pain gnawing at our stomach, strolled off towards them to secure some distraction and smother the call of “little Mary.” The



soldiers were hugely delighted to see us and we were soon engrossed in a spirited conversation.

Suddenly our fraternising was observed by some officers who came hurrying up in high dudgeon.



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“Here! None of that,” they bawled. “Military and civilians must not talk together!” saying which they bundled the soldiers away and evidently reported our offence. At least our guards came up shortly afterwards, marshalled us, and led us through a small wood into a low-lying field. It was apparently another fiendish inspiration of Major Bach to confine us here, because the field was nothing but a swamp. It was not so soddened as to allow the feet to sink ankle deep into the mire, but was like a wet sponge. It was impossible to sit down or one would have got wet through.

We were left standing in this uninviting quagmire for four solid hours. The interpreters were pestered unmercifully to secure us something to eat and to drink, but they were as helpless as ourselves. They were well-nigh distracted at the ugly turn which things were taking. Matters were certainly becoming alarming among the weaker prisoners, who were now in a pitiable condition.

It was not until five o'clock in the afternoon that the authorities suddenly remembered us. Then we were lined up to secure some food. But we passed three hours in that queue only to receive a small dole of filthy looking thin cabbage soup. This was all that had passed our lips since the wretched black coffee served fifteen hours before!

Yet we were thankful for such a meagre mouthful. We were all so famished that we took no heed of the noisomeness of the ration. Now we began to grow anxious as to the arrangements for enabling us to pass the night. Our interpreters had been questioning one or two of the younger officers who were mounting guard over us in this field.

“Oh! That'll be all right,” was the retort. “We're going to put you into tents!”

“But where are the tents?” persisted the interpreters, looking around wonderingly.

“Oh,” was the evasive reply, “they have commenced to put them up. But we find we shall not get all the tents for a few days. They haven't come in yet! You'll be a bit crowded at first but it'll soon be straightened out.”

Again our faces fell. We had been turned out of our barracks before our tents had been procured. This was a dismal look-out, but we hoped that, as the officers said they were putting up tents, we should be able to squeeze under cover, if in discomfort.

We were lined up again in the twilight to receive marching orders. We were escorted into the field, which is set upon the side of a hill, and as we swung into this space we could not suppress an exclamation. The field was alive with men. All the other prisoners had been evicted from their barracks, and had been turned into this open enclosure. The hill-side was black, with a sullen, heaving, listless mass of humanity, numbering over 1,500 all told, and of every conceivable enemy (to Germany) nationality. We scanned the field for a glimpse of the tents, but the only signs of canvas

we could see was one large marquee which was lying on the ground ready for erection upon the brow of the hill.



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We stood wondering how we were going to spend the night when orders were bawled out that we were to sleep in the open! This intimation was received with a wailing and groaning which sounded ominous to me. But the guard, which had been strongly reinforced, was in overwhelming array so that all discontent and protest counted for naught. A bewildering string of orders was yelled, the substance of which was that we were to shake ourselves down upon the grass in long regular rows, with a narrow passage between each two. I think this was the first occasion upon which I had ever seen so many prisoners give way, since in the majority of cases the men were devoid of any means of making themselves comfortable for the night in the open air. Some of us, including myself, had taken the precaution to bring our blankets with us: indeed, we considered the blanket such an inestimable boon and companion that we never parted with it even for a moment. We rolled ourselves in these, and although the grumbings and growlings which rose and fell over the field recalled the angry murmuring of the sea and were disturbing, I was so exhausted that I soon fell sound asleep.

So far as I was personally concerned I was not particularly sorry that Major Bach, in his devilish intention to exasperate us, had conceived the idea of compelling us to sleep in the open. The weather was intensely hot and the night became insufferably sultry. It must have been about midnight when I awoke for the first time. For the moment I could not collect my thoughts and sat up somewhat surprised at the unusual brilliancy of the light playing upon my face, which was in striking contrast to the dismal blackness of the barracks. Then I realised that we were in the open and that a glorious full moon was shining upon us from a cloudless sky.

I got on my feet and looked around. It was a strange, albeit extraordinarily impressive sight. Guards were patrolling the lines, their bayonets flashing sharply as they caught the glittering silvery light of the moon. My guard came along and ordered me to lie down, but I refused, and, in fact, walked along between the rows of prostrate forms. The air was uncannily still, broken only by the twitterings of night birds, the hooting of the owls, the subdued clanging of rifles, the footsteps of the guards, and the groans of many of the sleepers who were twisting and turning upon the ground. The hill-side was crowded with the restless forms; they seemed so thick and densely packed as to cover every inch of space.

As I surveyed the scene the loneliness and helplessness of our position did not strike me. All was so quiet and apparently peaceful. Now and again a sleeper would stir, mutter something in his sleep about his poor wife and children at home, and would sit up to ascertain what light was playing upon his face, would turn to the moon and then completely satisfied would lie down and relapse into slumber. As I observed the heavy dew which had dressed the grass and sleeping forms with beads which sparkled like diamonds I could not repress a feeling of thanks that the weather was kind to us. Supposing it had rained! I shuddered at the thought.



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At 4.30 we were all roused, lined up, and ordered to prepare to receive our breakfast. We formed queues as instructed but we had to wait patiently until eight o'clock before we received our rations—the acorn coffee looking more sickly and watery than ever. Only a few basins were available so we had to drink successively out of the self-same vessel, as rapidly as we could swallow the liquid upon the spot. We closed our eyes to the fact that a hundred or more people of all nationalities, from Frenchmen to Poles, German recruits to Slavs, had drunk a few moments previously from these basins which were not even rinsed after use. The thought was revolting, but it was either drink with a blind trust in the Fates or go without.

During that day the erection of the single marquee was hastened. It was the only tent available, and there were sufficient of us on the field to have packed it to suffocation ten times over! We were compelled to go without our mid-day meal, but this did not disconcert us very pronouncedly. Our peace of mind was being racked by another impending aggravation of our predicament. Dark heavy clouds were gathering in the sky. Was the weather which had been merciful to us during the previous night now going to break?

When the marquee was completed a few trusses of straw were thrown in and distributed thinly over the ground. Then ensued a wild stampede to secure a place beneath the canvas, a rabble of several hundreds fighting frantically among themselves to seek a couch in the absurdly inadequate temporary canvas dwelling. The men stowed themselves in so tightly in close serried rows that when lying down they were unable to turn over. Once a position had been seized the tenant never dared to leave it for an instant for fear it would be seized by some one else. The guards demanded and succeeded in maintaining for a time a narrow gangway between the rows, but the crush became so terrible that even this space was soon occupied and the soldiers were prevented from moving within the tent.

The marquee was packed to suffocation, and the fact that the greater part of the seething mass of humanity was filthy dirty and thickly infested with lice and other vermin from causes over which they had no control caused the atmosphere within to become so hot and foetid as to make one's stomach jump into one's throat.

One glance at the packed marquee sufficed to make up my mind for me. Come what might it would never see me within its walls. Were a light carelessly dropped among the loose straw a fearful holocaust must ensue. Few if any could have got out alive. This thought haunted me so persistently that I moved as far away from the tent as I could.



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We received no further rations that day until the evening, when another small dole of watery greasy coffee was handed round as in the morning. But we never glanced at this noisome liquid. The terror which we had been dreading so fearfully had burst upon us. It was raining hard! At first only a gentle refreshing shower, it developed into a torrential downpour, and gave every indication of lasting for an indefinite period. Consider the situation—approximately two thousand human beings stranded upon a bleak exposed field, absolutely devoid of any shelter, except the solitary paltry marquee. Little wonder that our faces blanched at the prospect before us. How should we be able to sleep? What horrors would the dawn reveal? God only knew.

### CHAPTER XIII

#### “THE BLOODY NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 11”

By ten o'clock in the evening the rain was falling in sheets and the water coursing down the slope to collect in the depression speedily formed a shallow lake at the bottom end of “the field.” No one can form the slightest impression of the wretchedness of those who were exposed to the full fury of the elements through the ferocious and brutal inhumanity of Major Bach. The little food which had been served out to us so sparingly failed to keep our bodies warm, let alone fortify us against the visitation by which we were now being overwhelmed.

The wind increased in fury until at last it was blowing with the force of a gale. The trees creaked and bent beneath its onslaughts, and those who had ventured to seek the slight protection afforded by the overhanging branches, trembled with fear lest the trees should be torn up by the roots or heavy limbs be wrenched free and tossed among them.

Those who had secured the shelter offered by the solitary marquee and who, notwithstanding the irrespirable and filthy atmosphere, considered possible suffocation and the danger of fire to be preferable to the drenching rain, were confronted with a new and far more terrifying menace.

The wind catching the broad surface which the tent offered commenced to flap whatever loose ends of the canvas it could pick up, with a wild, nerve racking noise. The whole marquee swung and reeled to and fro, the sport of the boisterous gusts. The main poles creaked as they bent beneath the enormous strains to which they were being put. The guy ropes, now thoroughly saturated and having contracted, groaned fiercely as if about to snap. Hurried efforts were made to slacken the ropes slightly, but the wind, driving rain, and inky blackness of the night, as well as the swollen hemp, hindered this task very effectively. Indeed the tension upon some of the stakes became so acute that they either snapped or else were uprooted.



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As the supports gave way the ungainly marquee commenced to totter and rock far more threateningly. The wind driving into the interior flapped the roof madly. The herded humanity within feared that the whole of the canvas above them would be blown off to be carried away by the gale. The inmates who had fought so desperately among themselves for the shelter it offered were now crouching and shivering with fear. Some highly strung individual raised a cry of danger. The next instant there was a wild panic which lasted a considerable time. There was a wicked combined rush to get outside, the men fighting among themselves fiercely.

Outside, upon "the field," bedlam was let loose. The seething mass of humanity was now soaked to the skin. The men walked up and down, their teeth chattering madly, in a desperate effort to keep warm. Indeed it was necessary for many of them to persist in unwilling exercise since this was the only way to keep alive: to stop was to sink down from sheer fatigue. In the darkness I had discovered and kept company with a South African, Moresby White.[5] But it was almost impossible to converse, since we had to shout with all the force of our lungs to make our voices heard above the roar and rattle of the wind and rain. We were compelled to tread warily, because in the Cimmerian darkness it was impossible to distinguish the groaning forms crouching upon the ground.

[Footnote 5: This gentleman has since been released and at the time of writing is recuperating in Great Britain.]

[Illustration: "THE BLOODY NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 11, 1914."

*From a rough sketch made on "the field," by the author during the night.]*

We linked our arms tightly together to form mutual support and persistently plodded hither and thither. The spectacle was terrifying and tested the nerves of the strongest among us. If ever humanity were cast adrift and left to its own devices, it was that night upon "the field." Some of the prisoners were rushing to and fro frantic with fear. Others huddled together as if to keep one another warm. Some were on their knees praying fervently, while other parties were singing hymns in voices which made the strongest-hearted among us blench. Here and there were men stamping furiously up and down cursing at the top of their voices, hurling fierce imprecations to the wind and consigning the Commandant, his superiors, and all their works to everlasting torment. Some of the most exhausted prisoners had congregated together and crouched with their heads bowed to the storm, shivering with cold, afraid to speak, hungry and terror-stricken, yet completely resigned to the fate which they felt convinced must be theirs and absolutely inevitable. A few, whose nerves were highly strung, were striding up and down laughing demoniacally, waving their arms madly, and gesticulating as if their senses had indeed given way. A few of the rougher spirits were blaspheming, and to such a tune that even the most hardened among us were forced to turn our backs to escape their blood-curdling oaths.



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As midnight approached the wind and rain increased in fury. Even the guard failed to stand against it. The sentries were drenched from head to foot. The conditions became so bad that an order was suddenly circulated to the effect that the guard was to be changed every two hours, instead of at four-hour intervals. The sentries were quite powerless to assist us even if they had been disposed to come to our aid to mitigate our wretched condition in any way. One guard, his compassion evidently aroused by a scene such as he had never witnessed before, secured some thin stakes and thrust them through the wire netting to form a support to a large blanket. With this he thought that perhaps a little shelter might be obtained. We crowded beneath this precarious protection, but the first blast of the gale which swept the field after its improvisation, whisked the blanket and the stakes into the air. They were never seen again.

About twelve o'clock I was on the verge of collapse. My friend supported me, but even he was faint from lack of food and exposure. We decided to roll our soddened bodies in our saturated blankets, to lie down on the ground and to strive to woo sleep. We stretched ourselves on the flat, but the wind and rain beat unmercifully upon us. Although we were dead-beat the angel of sleep refused to come to us. As a matter of fact, when we stretched ourselves in the mud we did not care two straws whether we ever saw the light of day again or not.

After lying about two hours upon the ground I put out my hand to discover that we were lying in two inches of water. But not only this. The floodwater, in its mad rush to escape to the depression at the lower end of the field, had carved a course through the spot where we were lying. The result was that the rushing water was running down our necks, coursing over our bodies beneath our clothes, and rushing wildly from the bottoms of our trousers. We were acting unconsciously as conduits, but we did not serve in this capacity any longer than we could help.

We regained our feet, our clothes now so water-logged as to bear us down with their weight. We tramped laboriously to the top of the field and as the wind bore down upon us it carried upon its bosom a mad madrigal of hymns, prayers, curses, blasphemy, and raucous shouting. Groups of men were now lying about thickly, some half-drowned from immersion in the pools, while others were groaning and moaning in a blood-freezing manner. Small hand-baggage and parcels, the sole belongings of many a prisoner, were drifting hither and thither, the sport of rushing water and wind. At the lower end of the field the water had sprawled farther and farther over the depression, and therein we could descry men lying in huddled heaps too weak to rise to their feet.



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It was a picture of misery and wretchedness such as it would be impossible to parallel. I recalled the unhappy scenes I had witnessed around the railway terminus at Berlin under similar conditions, but that was paradise to the field at Sennelager Camp on the fateful night of September 11. It appeared as if the Almighty Himself had turned upon us at last, and was resolved to blot us from the face of the earth. We were transformed into a condition bordering on frigidty from rain-soaked clothes clinging to bodies reduced to a state of low vitality and empty stomachs. Had we been in good health I doubt whether the storm and exposure would have wreaked such havoc among us.

While my friend and I were standing on a knoll pondering upon the utter helplessness and misery around us, singing and whistling were borne to us upon the wind. We listened to catch fragments of a comic song between the gusts. There was no mistaking those voices. We picked our way slowly to beneath the trees whence the voices proceeded, glad to meet some company which could be merry and bright, even if the mood had to be assumed with a desperate effort.

Beneath the trees we found a small party of our indomitable compatriots. They received us with cheery banter and joke and an emphatic assurance that "it is all right in the summer time." They were quite as wretched and as near exhaustion as anybody upon the field, but they were firmly determined not to show it. A comic song had been started as a distraction, the refrain being bawled for all it was worth as if in defiance of the storm. This was what had struck our ears.

This panacea being pronounced effective a comprehensive programme was rendered. Every popular song that occurred to the mind was turned on and yelled with wild lustiness. Those who did not know the words either whistled the air or improvised an impossible ditty. Whenever there was a pause to recall some new song, the interval was occupied with "Rule, Britannia!" This was a prime favourite, and repetition did not stale its forceful rendition, especial stress being laid upon the words, "Britons never, never, never shall be slaves!" to which was roared the eternal enquiry, "Are we down-hearted?" The welkin-smashing negative, crashing through the night, and not entirely free from embroidery, offered a conclusive answer.

It takes a great deal to destroy a Britisher's spirits, but this terrible night almost supplied the crucial test. We were not only combating Prussian atrocity but Nature's ferocity as well, and the two forces now appeared to be in alliance. The men sang, as they confessed, because it constituted a kind of employment at least to the mind, enabled them to forget their misery somewhat, and proved an excellent antidote to the gnawing pain in the vicinity of the waist-belt. Once a singer started up the strains of "Little Mary," but this was unanimously vetoed as coming too near home. Then from absence of a better inspiration, we commenced to roar "Home, Sweet Home," which I think struck just as responsive a chord, but the sentiment of which made a universal appeal.



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But hymns were resolutely barred. Those boisterous and irrepressible Tapleys absolutely declined to profane their faith on such a night as this. It was either a comic song or nothing. To have sung hymns with the swinish brutal guards lounging around would have conveyed an erroneous impression. They would have chuckled at the thought that at last we had been thoroughly broken in and in our resignation had turned Latter Day Saints or Revivalists. These boys were neither Saints, Revivalists nor Sinners, but merely victims of Prussian brutality in its blackest form and grimly determined not to give in under any circumstances whatever.

When at last a suggestion was made that a move would be advantageous, one shouted "Come on, boys!" Linking arms so as to form a solid human wall, but in truth to hold one another up, we marched across the field, singing "Soldiers of the King," or some other appropriate martial song to keep our spirits at a high level, while we stamped some warmth into our jaded bodies, exercised our stiffening muscles, and demonstrated to our captors that we were by no means "knocked to the wide" as they fondly imagined. Now and again a frantic cheer would ring through the night, or a yell of wild glee burst out as one of the party went floundering through a huge pool to land prostrate in the mud. When it is remembered that some of us had not tasted a bite of food for forty-eight hours, and had drunk nothing but thin and watery acorn coffee, it is possible to gain some measure of the indomitable spirit which was shown upon this desperate occasion. The attitude and persiflage under such depressing conditions did not fail to impress our guards. They looked on with mouths open and scratched their heads in perplexity. Afterwards they admitted that nothing had impressed them so powerfully as the behaviour of the British prisoners that night and conceded that we were truly "wonderful," to which one of the boys retorted that it was not wonderful at all but "merely natural and could not be helped." Personally I think singing was the most effective medium for passing the time which we could have hit on. It drowned the volleys of oaths, curses, wails, groans, sobbings, and piteous appeals which rose to Heaven from all around us. If we had kept dumb our minds must have been depressingly affected if not unhinged by what we could see and hear.

Thus we spent the remaining hours of that terrible night until with the break of day the rain ceased. Then we took a walk round to inspect the wreckage of humanity brought about by Major Bach's atrocious action in turning us out upon an open field, void of shelter, and without food, upon a night when even the most brutal man would willingly have braved a storm to succour a stranded or lost dog. As the daylight increased our gorge rose. The ground was littered with still and exhausted forms, too weak to do aught but groan, and absolutely unable to extricate themselves from the pools, mud, and slush in which they were lying. Some were rocking themselves laboriously to and fro singing and whining, but thankful that day had broken. One man had gone clean mad and was stamping up and down, his long hair waving wildly, hatless and coatless, bringing down the most blood-freezing demoniacal curses upon the authorities and upbraiding the Almighty for having cast us adrift that night.



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The sanitary arrangements upon this field were of the most barbarous character, comprising merely deep wide open ditches which had been excavated by ourselves. Those of us who had not been broken by the experience, although suffering from extreme weakness, pulled ourselves together to make an effort to save what human flotsam and jetsam we could. But we could not repress a fearful curse and a fierce outburst of swearing when we came to the latrine. Six poor fellows, absolutely worn out, had crawled to a narrow ledge under the brink of the bank to seek a little shelter from the pitiless storm. There they had lain, growing weaker and weaker, until unable to cling any longer to their precarious perch they had slipped into the trench to lie among the human excreta, urine and other filth. They knew where they were but were so far gone as to be unable to lift a finger on their own behalf. Their condition, when we fished them out, to place them upon as dry a spot as we could find, I can leave to the imagination. I may say this was the only occasion upon which I remember the British prisoners giving vent to such voluble swearing as they then used, and I consider it was justified.

In an adjacent field our heroes from Mons were camped and a small party of us made our way to the first tent. We were greeted by the R.A.M.C. Water had been playing around their beds, but they acknowledged that they had fared better because they were protected overhead. The soldiers, however, made light of their situation, although we learned that many of the Tommies, from lack of accommodation, had been compelled to spend the night in the open. Still, as they were somewhat more inured to exposure than ourselves, they had accepted the inevitable more stoically, although the ravages of the night and the absence of food among them were clearly revealed by their haggard and pinched faces.

The men in the tents confessed that they had been moved by the sounds which penetrated to their ears from the field in which the civilian prisoners had been turned adrift. They immediately enquired after the condition of our boys. Unfortunately we could not yield much information upon this point, as we were still partially in ignorance of the plight of our compatriots. But there was no mistaking the depth of the feeling of pity which went out for "the poor devils of civvies," while the curses and oaths which were rained down upon the head of Major Bach with true British military emphasis and meaning revealed the innermost feelings of our soldiers very convincingly.

Seeing that we were exhausted and shivering from emptiness the R.A.M.C. made a diligent search for food, but the quest was in vain. Their larder like ours was empty. In fact the Tommies themselves were as hard-pushed for food as we were.



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I witnessed one incident with an English Tommy which provoked tremendous feeling when related to his comrades. He was walking the field soaked to the skin, perishing from cold produced by lack of food, continuously hitching in his belt to keep his "mess-tin" quiet, and on the brink of collapse. He happened to kick something soft. He picked the object up and to his extreme delight found it to be a piece of black bread, soaked with water, and thickly covered with mud. He made his way to the field kitchen where there happened to be a small fire under the cauldron in which the rations were prepared. He slipped the soddened bread beneath the grate to dry it. While he was so doing, the cook, an insignificant little bully, came along. Learning what the soldier was doing, he stooped down, raked out the fire, and buried the bread among the ashes. Then laughing at his achievement he went on his way.

The soldier, without a murmur, recovered his treasure with difficulty. He moved out into the open, succeeded in finding a few dry sticks, lit a small fire, and placed his bread on top of it. Again he was caught. His warder bustled up, saw the little fire, which he scattered with his feet, and then crunched the small hunk of bread to pieces in the mud and water with his iron heel.

The look that came over the soldier's face at this unprovoked demonstration of heartless cruelty was fearful, but he kept his head. "Lor' blime!" he commented to me when I came up and sympathised with him over his loss, "I could have knocked the god-damned head off the swine and I wonder I didn't."

I may say that during the night the guard announced an order which had been issued for the occasion—no one was to light a fire upon the Field. Even the striking of a match was sternly forbidden. The penalty was to be a bullet, the guards having been instructed to shoot upon the detection of an infraction of the order. One man was declared to have been killed for defying the order intentionally or from ignorance, but of this I cannot say anything definitely. Rumour was just as rife and startling among us on the field as among the millions of a humming city. But we understood that two or three men went raving mad, several were picked up unconscious, one Belgian committed suicide by hanging himself with his belt, while another Belgian was found dead, to which I refer elsewhere.

At 5.30 we were lined up. We were going to get something to eat we were told. But when the hungry, half-drowned souls reached the field kitchen after waiting and shivering in their wet clothes for two and a half hours, it was to receive nothing more than a small basin of the eternal lukewarm acorn coffee. We were not even given the usual piece of black bread.

The breakfast, though nauseating, was swallowed greedily. But it did not satisfy "little Mary" by any means. During my sojourn among German prisons I often felt hungry, but this term is capable of considerable qualification. Yet I think on this occasion it must have been the superlative stage of hunger. The night upon the Field had come upon

my illness from which I had never recovered completely. It was a feeling such as I have never experienced before nor since, and I do not think it can ever be approached again.



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It is difficult to describe the sensation. I walked about with a wolfish startled glance, scanning the ground eagerly, as if expecting Mother Earth to relieve me of my torment. The pain within my stomach was excruciating. It was not so much a faint and empty feeling but as if a thousand devils were pulling at my “innards” in as many different ways, and then having stretched the organs to breaking point had suddenly released them to permit them to fly back again like pieces of elastic, to mix up in an inextricable tangle which the imps then proceeded to unravel with more force than method. My head throbbed and buzzed, precipitating a strange dizziness which seemed determined to force me to my knees. I chewed away viciously but although the movement of the jaws apparently gave a certain relief from illusion the reaction merely served to accentuate the agony down below.

As I reeled about like a drunken man, my eyes searching the ground diligently for anything in the eating line, no matter what it might be, I found a piece of bread. As I clutched it in my hands I regarded it with a strange maniacal look of childish delight. But it was a sorry prize. It was saturated until it could not hold another drop of water, and I think there was quite as much mud as bread. I wrung the water out with my hands and then between two of us we devoured it ravenously, swallowing the mud as contentedly as the bread, and not losing a single crumb. It was a sparse mouthful, but it was something, and it certainly stayed the awful feeling in the stomach to a certain degree for a little while.

No man passed through that awful night without carrying traces of his experiences. Its memories are burned ineradicably into one’s brain. Whenever we mentioned the episode it was always whispered as “The Bloody Night of September 11th,” and as such it is known to this day. As we became distributed among other camps the story became noised far and wide, until at last it became known throughout the length and breadth of Germany. Whenever one who spent the night upon the field mentions the incident, he does so in hushed and awed tones.

That night was the culminating horror to a long string of systematic brutalities and barbarities which constituted a veritable reign of terror. It even spurred a section of the German public to action. An enquiry, the first and only one ever authorised by the Germans upon their own initiative, was held to investigate the treatment of prisoners of war at Sennelager. The atrocities were such that no German, steeped though he is in brutality, could credit them. The Commission certainly prosecuted its investigations very diligently, but it is to be feared that it gained little satisfaction. The British prisoners resolutely agreed to relate their experiences to one quarter only—the authorities at home. The result is that very little is known among the British public concerning the treatment we experienced at Sennelager, for the



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simple reason that but a handful of men who were confined to the camp during the term of Major Bach's authority, have been released. The Germans have determined to permit no man to be exchanged who can relate the details until the termination of the war. Their persistent and untiring, as well as elaborate precautions to make trebly certain that I had forgotten all about the period of travail at Sennelager, before I was allowed to come home, were amusing, and offer adequate testimony to the fear with which the German Government dreads the light of publicity being shed upon its Black Hole.

### CHAPTER XIV

#### THE GUARDIAN OF THE CAMP

Although Major Bach wielded his power with all the severity and spirit of a true-blooded Prussian Jack-in-Office, and notwithstanding that we were forbidden all communication with the outside world, yet we were not without our "protector."

Our guardian angel was Dr. Ascher, who was responsible for the clean bill of health among the civilian prisoners. The soldiers were under a military surgeon, as already explained, but owing to the arbitrary manner in which this official displayed his authority, and with which Dr. Ascher did not agree by any means, it was the civilian doctor who ministered for the most part to Tommy's ills. The result was that his services were in almost universal demand, and the strenuous work and long hours which he expended on our behalf were very warmly appreciated.

A short, sturdy, thick-set man, fairly fluent in the English language, and of a cheery disposition, Dr. Ascher was a true and illuminating representative of his profession. His mission being frankly one of mercy he emphatically refused to acknowledge the frontiers of races and tongues, poverty and wealth, education and ignorance. He was sympathetic to an extreme degree, and never once complained or proffered any excuse when called urgently to exert a special effort on behalf of any man.

He became an especial favourite among the British prisoners. The fact that he came among us immediately upon our arrival at the camp, seeking to extend relief to the sore, distressed, and suffering; his cheery and breezy conversation; and his grim though unsuccessful efforts to secure the food which we so urgently needed upon that occasion, were never forgotten. He became endeared to one and all. Indeed he was elevated to such a pedestal of appreciative recognition as to be affectionately christened "The English Doctor," which he accepted as a signal honour. He was no respecter of time, neither did he emulate his military colleague in being a clock-watcher. He informed us that he was at our disposal at any hour of the day or night, and he never



omitted to spend hours among us every day. Seeing that the camp possessed no resident medical attendant, either civilian or military, that Dr. Ascher resided near Paderborn, some three miles away, his readiness to come to our assistance at any moment, his ceaseless efforts on our behalf, and repeated attempts to ameliorate our conditions, it is not surprising that we came to regard him as our one friend in that accursed spot.



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The British prisoners, both civilian and military, never failed to reciprocate whenever an opportunity arose, and this appreciation of his labours made a deep impression upon him. No attempts were ever made to encroach upon his generosity and kindness, and if any man had dared to deceive him he would have been drastically punished by his colleagues. No man ever essayed to mangle or to shirk a duty to which he had been allotted by the doctor. If the doctor desired a task to be done, no matter how repugnant, it was shouldered lightly and cheerfully. Indeed, there was always a manifestation of keen eagerness among us to perform some duty as an expression of our heartfelt thanks for what he was doing among us. It is not an exaggeration to state that had it not been for Dr. Ascher, his perennial bonhomie and camaraderie, his patience, and his intimate association with us, many of the weaker British prisoners and others would certainly have given way and have gone under. But his infectious good spirits, his abundance of jokes, his inexhaustible fount of humour, and his readiness to exchange reminiscences effectively dispelled our gloom and relieved us from brooding over the misery of our position.

Although the medical officer was charged with the express duty of keeping the camp healthy and sanitary, unfortunately Dr. Ascher was not an autocrat in his department. His powers were limited, and he was for the most part completely subservient to military decrees. Time after time he protested energetically and determinedly upon the quantity and quality of the food which was served out to us, and struggled valiantly to secure more nourishing diet for invalid prisoners than the cuisine of the camp afforded. But his labour was always in vain; the food which he laid down as being essential could not be obtained, or else Major Bach firmly refused to move a finger to get it. As the Commandant's position was paramount, and nothing could be done without his authority, Dr. Ascher was denied a court of appeal. At times there were some spirited breezes between Major Bach and the medical representative, but the former invariably had the last word. On one occasion, to which I refer later, Dr. Ascher tackled the Commandant so fiercely upon the sanitary arrangements of the camp, and was so persistent and insistent upon the fulfilment of the orders he expressed, as to compel the inexorable superior to relent.

When a man fell ill and became too weak to perform an exacting task to which he had been deputed by the tyrant, Dr. Ascher did not fail to intervene. He could not be deceived as to the true state of a sick man's health and his physical incapacity. Thereupon he would issue what was described as a "pass," which excused the man completely from the heavy work in hand in favour of some lighter duty. The doctor's "pass" was safe against the Commandant's savagery; even he, with his military authority, dared not over-ride the doctor's decision. However, the British prisoners were not disposed to trade upon the doctor's good nature. They would refuse a "pass" until necessity compelled unequivocal submission.



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Dr. Ascher was also an effective buffer between a prisoner and any soldier who was disposed to assume an unwarrantably tyrannical attitude. If he detected any brow-beating which was undeserved he never hesitated to bring the upstart down to his proper position by severe reprimand, and a candid reminder that a guard was merely a guard and as such was not invested with powers akin to those belonging to the Commandant. The soldier would fume under the castigation, but it was more than he dared to incur the doctor's wrath and hostility, inasmuch as the latter would not have hesitated to make the rebellious soldier's life unbearable. In this manner he undeniably saved us from considerable brutality, which some of the soldiers would dearly have loved to have expended upon us.

One day Major Bach announced that the clothes of the prisoners throughout the camp were to undergo a thorough fumigation. For this purpose a special mechanical disinfecting apparatus had been sent to the camp. I may say that the instructions were not issued before they became downright urgent. Some of the garments—not those worn by the British prisoners—had become infested with vermin to such a degree as to constitute a plague and were now absolutely repulsive. Two of the British prisoners, who happened to be engineers, were selected for this unpleasant task, and it proved to be of such a trying nature that both men narrowly escaped suffocation in the process.

But the disinfecting apparatus was delivered in what we always found to be the typical German manner. The fumigator came to hand but without the engine to drive it. Two or three days later we were informed that there was a traction engine at Paderborn which was to be brought into Sennelager Camp to act as the stationary engine to supply power to the fumigator. But to our dismay we learned that the traction engine in question could not be driven to the camp under its own power because some of the vital parts constituting its internals had broken down, and repairs would be quite out of the question until it reached the camp. This we were told would demand the towage of the engine over the last three miles. We learned, moreover, that as horses were absolutely unobtainable at any price, the prisoners themselves would have to drag it in. Forthwith thirty men were selected and, equipped with thick, heavy ropes, were marched off to Paderborn to salvage the derelict.

Our engineering friends, upon discovering the defective engine, and not appreciating the prospect of the manual haul, set to work feverishly to see if they could not contrive to complete sufficient repairs to coax the engine to run the three miles under her own steam. They probed into, and tinkered with the dark regions of the locomotive, but to no effect. The defective parts demanded replacement. No doubt the authorities had declared the engine unfit for service in the army, hence its appearance at Paderborn for service at Sennelager.



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We were faced with a heavy problem; one which would require every ounce of our combined physical effort, which was low owing to our deplorable condition, while the sun, heat, and dusty roads would be certain to tax our endurance to the utmost.

The guards bustled round, supervising the hitching of the towing ropes, while the men were lined up like oxen with the ropes passed over their shoulders. The order was given and off we went. But that engine was, or at least appeared to be, exceedingly heavy, while the roads seemed to be exasperatingly difficult, the wheels having a magnetic attraction for the sand. Progress was maddeningly slow, and before many minutes had passed every man was puffing and blowing like a spent horse. A cup of acorn coffee and a fragment of brown bread could scarcely be declared ideal fare upon which to pursue such energy-consuming labour. And we had three miles to go!

We had covered about half the distance and were nearly done in. The ponderous, ungainly engine was just moving, and that was about all. The progress had so fallen that the guards were becoming somewhat alarmed and doubtless considered that if they only badgered us sufficiently they would be able to spur us to such a degree as to enable us to reach the camp.

While tugging for all we were worth we descried a horse flying along the road at break-neck pace towards us. As it approached we saw it was carrying Dr. Ascher. When he drew up to us he stopped. The guards were holding forth in their most truculent manner at the moment. The doctor rapped out a few words, and the guards instantly dropped their hostility and arrogance to become as meek as lambs. Turning to us the doctor ordered every man to drop the ropes. We did so and fell into line at once of our own accord.

The doctor surveyed us, and we must have looked miserable specimens of humanity. Our faces were glistening with perspiration which had been pouring out of us freely, and which, mixing with the grimy sand which had been enveloping us, had formed runnels wrought into a wild and weird variety of fantastic designs. One or two of the weaker boys stood half-bent as if upon the verge of dropping.

Within a few seconds the doctor had taken in the whole situation, and saw how completely we were played out. With a voice which cut like a knife he ordered the guard to escort us to a wayside inn. The soldiers, thoroughly cowed, obeyed his instructions silently. He strode along beside us, distracting our thoughts by a dissertation concerning the countryside, which was bathed in the full splendour of its autumn garb, and which certainly presented a peaceful and entrancing aspect.

Reaching the inn we seated ourselves on the balcony. Then the doctor, turning, remarked:



“Order what you like! Don’t stint yourselves and take your time. Now then have anything you wish to drink!”

If our guards had been sufficiently relenting, we would willingly have paid them for permission to have regaled ourselves by the way at our own expense. We all had money. At the doctor’s instructions we dived our hands into our pockets to extract our worldly wealth to ascertain what we could afford. The doctor arrested our action.



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“No!” he called out, raising his hand in protest. “Put your money back. You will have this with me. I extended the invitation and I certainly intend to pay for it!”

If any man had called for cheers for the doctor I think we should have brought the house down about our ears. But we were so dumbfounded at this first expression of a “white man’s” action which we had encountered in Germany, that we could not utter a sound. We merely sat like a party of expectant school-children at a Sunday school treat.

The doctor busied himself seeing that each man received an adequate quantity of refreshment, and that it was according to his fancy. I myself being an abstainer, declined the beverage which was popular and which was being keenly enjoyed. Observing that I was drinking nothing he hurried over.

“Where’s your beer?”

“Sorry, doctor, but I do not take alcohol!”

Without a word he swung on his heel, hailed the landlord, and enquired for some home-made lemonade. Boniface was sorry but he was unable to oblige. But the doctor was not to be put off. He curtly ordered the landlord to prepare some instantly and what is more to the point he followed him to see that it was brewed correctly.

After the meal he insisted that we should take a brief rest to assist its digestion, which, owing to the weakened condition of our organs, was no easy matter. Then, when we all felt fit, we returned to the traction engine. You can imagine how we clustered round the doctor thanking him for his kindness, but he would not listen to our expressions of gratitude. Laughing good-naturedly, he maintained that he had done nothing beyond what he considered to be his duty, and as we shouldered the ropes once more, he gave us a parting cheer.

That meal put new life into us, and we towed the load with such gusto that we covered the second lap of the distance in fine style. When we reached the camp and were dismissed, the incident about the doctor’s munificence flashed through to its four corners like lightning. It became the one topic of spirited conversation. We had always voted the doctor a jolly good fellow, but now he was the hero of the hour. When he next came into the camp he received such a thundering and spontaneous ovation as to startle him, until at last the reason for this outburst dawned upon him. But he turned it off with his characteristic laugh and joke.

The privations which I had been suffering now began to assert their ill effects. I felt I was breaking up rapidly, and in this every one concurred and grew anxious. The doctor took me in hand, placed me on a “pass” and at last ordered me to lie down in the barrack. Two of my companions, Ca——, a breezy Irishman who had been arrested while on his honey-moon, and K——, undertook to look after me. As the night



advanced I rapidly grew worse, until eventually my illness assumed such a turn, so I was informed afterwards, as to cause my two friends the greatest alarm. Ca—— went out to the guard with a message addressed to Dr. Ascher, explaining that Mahoney was very much worse and they feared his condition was critical. By some means or other the message was got through to the doctor, possibly by telephone.



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It was a vile night. A terrific thunderstorm was raging, and the rain was falling in torrents. After dispatching their message my two friends resumed their vigil beside my bed, hoping against hope that Dr. Ascher would call early the following morning.

About midnight the mad galloping of a horse was heard faintly above the wail of the wind and the fusillade of the mad downpour upon our hollow-sounding roof. The sounds drew nearer to stop outside our barrack door. A hurried conversation was heard, and the next moment, to the surprise of my two friends, the door opened to admit Dr. Ascher. The rain was pouring off him in tiny rivulets and he cheerily confessed that he was soaked to the skin. But he pooh-poohed the idea that he had taken too much trouble. A fellow-creature was in peril and he could not, as a doctor, resist the call which had been sent. He stayed with me some time, told my companions exactly what to do, and then went out again into the rainstorm with the parting intimation that he would return within a few hours, and would arrange for my instant transference to the hospital.

At six he was back again. By this time I had recovered from my delirium and felt somewhat better, although exceedingly weak. He chatted with me, told me I was far worse than I either looked or felt, and insisted upon my going into hospital. I demurred, as I preferred to be among my chums. But he was not to be gainsaid, and so I had reluctantly to be carried into bed. He came to see me frequently during the day, and even went so far as to assume the responsibility of telegraphing to Berlin demanding my instant release as my demise seemed very probable. But this request was curtly refused, mainly, so I discovered afterwards, because I was imprisoned upon the charge of espionage. The circumstance that this charge was still hanging over my head came as an ugly eye-opener to me. I thought from my transference from Wesel to Sennelager that I had been acquitted of this accusation. Of course I had never received any official intimation to this effect, but on the other hand I had never received a sentence. This revelation worried me somewhat sorely because I could see possibilities about which I scarcely dared to think, as well as complications untold looming ahead.

I must have been in a very precarious condition the previous night because a member of a well-known British family who had been interned at Sennelager, but who secured his release about this time, very kindly sought out one of my relatives upon his return home, to whom he communicated particulars concerning my illness and serious condition. He hesitated to notify my wife directly, preferring to leave it to my relative to convey the unwelcome news in the manner considered to be the most advisable. For this kindly action, of which I was apprised after my transference from Sennelager, I have ever been extremely thankful, but up to the present I have successfully evaded all the most insidious attempts made by my German captors to secure my premature decease by undermining my health.



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Before leaving me in hospital for the night Dr. Ascher paid me a final visit to make positive that I was comfortable. But that one night's sojourn in the hospital almost completely unnerved me. I could not sleep, and to my alarm I found that no one ever came in to take even a cursory glance at the patients. I got up in the darkness and went to the door. To my astonishment I found it to be locked! I turned to one cot. It contained a French invalid who was jabbering away excitedly to himself, but I could not understand a single word. I turned to the next bed and its occupant was half-delirious. With such depressing company around me I tumbled back into bed and went off to sleep again somehow. In the morning I learned that there were three intercommunicating wards. The two inner ones were reserved for patients, upon whom the key was turned at night, while the third and outer room was occupied by a night warder who turned in and slept the sleep of the just, although he was nominally in charge of critical cases. But this was immaterial. If the patient went under during the night to be found dead in bed in the morning—well! it was merely a case of Nature having had her own way.

I was so alarmed that the instant the hospital was opened I hurried back to my barrack. Dr. Ascher, upon reaching the hospital and noting my absence, wondered what had happened, until at last he found me resting in my bunk. I resolutely told him that under no circumstances would I spend another night in that hospital. I had my own way. The crisis had passed, and if I only took care of myself I would soon be out again, he said.

Having always led an active life, confinement to bed in utter loneliness during the day, except for a call now and again from a sympathetic colleague, soon began to pall. So I dressed and went out to discover Dr. Ascher. He did not upbraid me for so flagrantly disobeying his orders, as I had been anticipating, but exhorted me with all the powers of persuasion he could command, to take the utmost care of myself. In order to give me something to occupy my mind he attached me to a few other invalids, who were also on "pass," to light work in cleaning out the hospitals for the recruits who were evidently coming to Sennelager within the near future.

Cleaning hospitals might be officially described as light work, but it was far from being so, although this was not the fault of the doctor but of our far from amiable Commandant. The tables, beds, chairs and other portable fixtures had to be taken into the open air to receive a thorough scrubbing with water and soft soap. We were given buckets, and were compelled to walk some distance to draw supplies of water from the pump, to which place we also had to repair to throw away the dirty liquid, so that we were assured of an exacting load upon both journeys.



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The guard supervising us in this work was a despicable young cub. He was short and stubby. By the way I must relate that this individual illustrated one of the weird turns of the Wheel of Fortune as revealed by the war. I have already referred to F—— K——, who had accompanied me from Wesel prison to Sennelager. What was F—— K——'s amazement to discover, upon entering the camp, that this man, who formed one of the guards, had been one of his own van-men before the war. It was a remarkable instance of the reversal of positions. The erstwhile van-man was now the top-dog and he did not hesitate to extract endless amusement and delight from ordering the prisoners, among whom was his former employer, to despicable duties and harassing them right and left.

I had one bout with this impertinent little bounder which I do not think he will ever forget. It was the result of exasperation and was precipitated upon the spur of the moment with subsequent disastrous results.

I was carrying a bucket of water back to the pump to throw away and to secure a fresh supply. As I approached the pump, which was near an adjoining field, and over the fence of which some young girls were leaning talking to the sentry, I saw that they were having some fun at my expense. I resented this laughter and merriment, more particularly as I was feeling very seedy.

The guard, to parade his assumed authority before the girls, drew himself to the full height of his fifty-four inches or thereabouts, threw out his chest, and as I was about to empty the bucket, roared in stentorian tones:

"Take that back again!"

"But I am going to fill the bucket with clean water!" I protested.

"Did you hear what I said? I told you to take it back again!" to which he added an afterthought which I did not understand, but which induced the girls to burst out laughing afresh with mad glee.

I ignored his instructions and was about to turn out the dirty contents. My temper somewhat ruffled by illness and now very hasty was rising rapidly. He moved forward and thundered:—

"Cannot you obey orders? Take it back again, I tell you!"

I picked up the bucket as if to comply and stepped back a pace or two. Then lifting it up I shouted back,

"I'll see you damned first!"

With these words I hurled the contents over him. The water was filthy. It caught him full in the face and smothered him from head to foot.



He was so surprised at this unexpected sequel to his arrogant order that he merely stood still, spluttering and cursing. Then he grabbed his rifle. At the same moment I threw the bucket itself at him, catching him a nasty blow on the shoulder. The girls who had been laughing at me now chaffed the discomfited sentry unmercifully. Foaming with rage and swearing terribly he lowered his rifle to run me through with the bayonet.



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It was madness to argue with a bayonet in the hands of an infuriated German sentry. I turned and fled. Being long of leg, thin, and agile, I ran with the swiftness of a hare while my pursuer being short-legged and thick-set came trundling after me like a cart-horse. I tore towards the hospital, vaulted over the chairs and tables, and darted in and out, with the sentry, now beginning to blow hard from his unusual exertion, hot on my trail. In my mad rush I upset some of my companions, but they, instantly guessing something unusual was afoot as they caught sight of my flying coat-tails and the heavy-footed soldier chasing me, at once entered into the spirit of the fun.

L——, our humorist, was one of the party. Jumping on a table he commenced to yell frantically:

“Sennelager Derby! What’s the odds? Twenty to one on Mahoney! Go it, Tubby! Christopher, but you’ll never stay the course!”

The cries were taken up by the other fellows and excitement grew furious, which only served to exasperate my pursuer still more.

I was flying for dear life. I knew very well, if that sentry got within bayonet reach of me, that my days were ended. He was seeing red with a vengeance. Round the hospital, over the tables and chairs, I dashed as if bereft. I was looking for the doctor. I had long since learned that in the event of a disagreement with a sentry it was wise to be first beside the ears of authority and to relate the incident. The first version, whether from guard or prisoner, was almost certain to be believed.

Once as I came tearing round the hospital calling for one of the medical officers, L—— and his companions, now emulating the frenzied language and manners of racecourse frequenters, and forming field glasses with their hands, were bawling at the tops of their voices.

“Tattenham Corner! Hooray! Mahoney wins!”

At that moment I ran full tilt, not into Dr. Ascher as I had hoped, but against a young military doctor. I almost upset him in this spirited desperate obstacle race.

“What’s the matter now?” he asked in surprise.

As this young doctor had always proved to be a decent fellow I stopped and related my story. He listened very attentively.

“You had no business to do that!” he commented. “You should have obeyed the order and then have reported it to me or some other officer to be redressed.”

“Well, he just about maddened me to the limit!”



“No matter! It may be a serious thing for you. You shouldn’t have thrown the dirty water over him. You’ve insulted the uniform!”

By this time my pursuer had arrived. He was puffing heavily and his legs were bent. He could not have run another hundred yards even if a dozen battle-maddened Kilties had been after him. Catching sight of the doctor he pulled himself to “attention” as well as he could. I had to turn away to laugh. He presented the most ludicrous specimen of a German soldier that I have ever witnessed. His face was as red as a beet-root from his exertion, his eyes were wide open, while his mouth was fully agape. He could not utter a word as he had lost his breath, while being soddened from head to foot he was commencing to steam merrily.



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When he had partially recovered his composure he related his version of the story in a meek tone, no doubt hoping to excite pity. But I noticed that the young medical officer had to bite his moustache to maintain a straight face and I think this practically saved the situation.

“Who gave you permission to give orders to prisoners?” asked the officer severely.

The sentry’s dismay at the officer rounding upon him was so complete that he could not venture an answer.

“Don’t let it occur again or I’ll report you!” continued the doctor sternly. “Don’t you know your duty is to obey orders and not to give them!” he thundered with an effort. The sentry dismissed so unceremoniously slunk away miserably and absolutely crestfallen.

When the soldier had gone the officer turned upon me and lectured me severely, though sympathetically, upon the enormity of my offence. While he was speaking, Dr. Ascher sauntered up and the incident was related to him. Turning to me with a gravity which I could see was assumed, he remarked:

“Mahoney, if you get up to such tricks again you’ll get into serious trouble. You must never forget the uniform!”

As I turned to resume work I noticed the two medical men having a hearty silent laugh over the whole affair, the younger man graphically describing the blown sentry and race as he had seen it.

But Dr. Ascher did not let the matter rest there. He reported the sentry for exceeding his orders, which was a serious offence because it affected the doctor’s discipline over prisoners who were under his charge at the hospitals. All the reward and consolation the insolent cub received for his parade of assumed authority before his audience of girls was change to another duty, coupled with severe reprimand. Through Dr. Ascher’s intervention the sentry was deprived of all opportunity to snatch a revenge upon me. Such actions, however, were characteristic of Dr. Ascher. It was his love of fair-play which endeared him to every Britisher in the camp. Whenever one of us left Sennelager there was no man from whom to part was such a wrench as Dr. Ascher. We all grew to like and admire him to such a degree that it seemed to be parting from a very dear and old friend when we shook hands in farewell with him.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE AFTERMATH OF THE ELEVENTH

As the day of the 12th advanced without bringing any signs of official intentions to improve our accommodation upon “the field,” several of us decided to do the only thing



possible—to help ourselves. It was perfectly evident that we were not to be taken back to barracks, even for the time being, while it was equally apparent that no tents were going to be set up for us. Also it was quite possible that we should be exposed to another fearful storm, because the season was advancing. Consequently it was just as well that we should improvise some kind of shelter over our heads. The issue was where to discover the materials, since the authorities were not disposed to extend us any assistance whatever.



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The more energetic among us set to work without delay. My South African friend, Moresby White, and myself unearthed one or two poles lying forlorn and forgotten among the grass and slush. We secured these, set them up, and over them stretched our blankets, the improvised dwelling thus obtained being a crude kind of wigwam. Others built little domiciles somewhat reminiscent of an Eskimo igloo, and in this field of endeavour I may say, striking ingenuity and resourcefulness were displayed.

[Illustration: THE AFTERMATH OF THE "BLOODY NIGHT."]

The prisoners not being provided by the German authorities with any form of shelter rudely fashioned tiny huts with slabs of earth to secure slight protection from the fury of the storm. The hut in the foreground was built by the author and his South African colleague, Moresby White, who has since been released. An extension was hurriedly made to give shelter to three Grimsby fishermen.

*From a rough sketch made on "the field" by the author, September 14, 1914.]*

My friend and I had scarcely finished our dwelling when along came some officials. They saw what we had done, and then declared that we had taken Government material, in the form of the neglected poles, to which we had no manner of right. Forthwith they demolished the shelter. Intensely disgusted at this turn of events we had another look round for further material and obtained some tree branches. We fashioned these to form the skeleton of a hut. The guard hurried up and ordered us to take it down. For a second time our labour was in vain, but we were grimly persevering and so ran up a third shelter. This shared the self-same fate because we had committed a heinous breach of some one or other official regulation of which we knew nothing.

As we surveyed the ruins of our third attempt to raise something over our heads my South African friend became exasperated. It was merely official spite which had provoked the destruction of our little homes. He gritted his teeth and gave full vent to his innermost feelings which were by no means complimentary to our German oppressors.

"I'm damned if we don't build something to which they cannot take exception," blurted my companion. I concurred, but a survey of the field for materials proving abortive we became somewhat glum. Then I suddenly hit on an idea which I explained. We would build a mud or turf hut. It would take a little time but surely they would not knock that to pieces!

We foraged round and happened upon a spade. With this we cut the sods and built a small square-shaped domicile into which we were able to crawl. We made it sufficiently large, not only to accommodate our two selves but for the reception of company if necessary. It was not a masterpiece by any means, while the interior had the rank aroma of newly-turned earth, but it was preferable to facing the elements, should they



decide to be against us once more. Other workers in the camp, who had been foiled similarly in their efforts to fashion a home from poles and sticks, emulated our example. Consequently within a short space of time, diminutive huts, some recalling large beehives, were rising all over the field like mushrooms.



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There was keen rivalry in the embellishment of these crude homes. Upon completing ours I decided upon a "Tradesmen's Entrance" and carved this out, together with a winding approach, the entrance being flanked by two mounds on one of which I planted a small flag improvised from a piece of cardboard which I unearthed. Directly I had set up the little flag I fell foul of authority. The hated emblem was torn up by an officious sentry whom it enraged.

These mud huts were speedily christened with high-falutin names. There were "Sans Souci" villa and the "Haven of Rest" and others equally wildly and inappropriately named. But we considered this an excellent chance "to wax sarcastic," and we let ourselves go, although I do not think that our task-masters, being by nature dense, grasped the purport of our humour. Our residence rejoiced in the unpretentious designation of "Camera Villa,"

*[large gap]*

If the authorities had gleaned an inkling of the circumstance that this mud hut harboured an incriminating eye they would have spared no effort to discover it, while I as the unfortunate owner—well! I do not know what would have happened to me for such a flagrant breach of official regulations.

It also seemed as if the authorities were going to deprive us of food. At all events noon passed without any sign of dinner. In the afternoon, however, we were informed that we were to receive the mid-day meal, but must go to the cook-house to get it. That was a mile away!

At two o'clock we were lined up, the British at the extreme rear as usual, and marched off. Upon reaching the kitchen we were alarmed to learn that there were insufficient basins. Several would have to use the one utensil successively, and, needless to say, without being washed after each use. Apart from this repulsive method of feeding us as if we were dogs, the time occupied in getting one's ration proved maddening. After one had swallowed the thin cabbage soup hastily, one had to advance and join the group comprising those who had been served. The result was that by the time the last of the British prisoners had been supplied some three hours had passed. Yet this was the first meal which some of the men had received for three days! I may say that one felt far from satisfied after swallowing the noisome greasy wash.

In the evening, while working upon our hut to impart the finishing touches speedily, because rain was falling, I stumbled across three of the disgraced and disfigured fishermen. They were alone and forlorn. They had no hut and did not know what would happen if another wet night swept over them. One happened to be the skipper of one of the trawlers which had been sunk and he vehemently denied the charge that they had been guilty of laying or sweeping mines. They were attending to their trawls when they were surprised and captured.



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The skipper was an interesting, typical sea-dog from the waters of the North Sea, and a thorough God-fearing man. He related a story which made our blood boil. He said his two companions and himself were summoned by the guards at mid-day, and instead of receiving the dinner ration had been taken to a covered hand-cart. The guard told them to push it, and at the same time handed them shovels and picks. Under escort they dragged this mysterious load, which was carefully covered with a tarpaulin, for about three miles to a very lonely spot. At last they came to a deep hole. They were compelled to back the cart to the brink of the pit, and were then curtly bidden to tip it sharply.

To the utter amazement of the skipper and his two colleagues the action of tipping the cart shot into the hole, with considerable force, the corpse of a Belgian. He was dumped into the hole in this rough and ready manner, head first, and to the disgust of the Britishers the body was clothed merely in a shirt! They were then commanded to refill the hole. Thus, without the slightest burial ceremony, with a brutality which would not have been shown to a dog, and without the slightest expression of regret, save one of silence from the three Britishers, the unknown Belgian was consigned to an unknown grave. Who the Belgian was, or how he came by his death, no one ever knew, but it is surmised that he died from exposure upon the field during the night of the 11th.

These three fishermen being friendless and homeless, my chum and I decided to see what we could do for them. We proposed to attach a lean-to shelter to our hut. Poles were driven into the ground, and to these horizontal members were attached, the latter having the inner ends sunk into our walls. For the roof we used our blankets. It was a primitive shelter, but it protected the three men from the rain which again broke over us and for this expression of camaraderie they were extremely grateful.

Our transference to the field provoked the most spirited bout we had ever witnessed between the Commandant and Dr. Ascher. The doctor could do nothing towards securing us shelters: that was exclusively a matter for Major Bach to decide. But he had control over the sanitary arrangements, and he condemned these unequivocally. The stench rising from the open latrines which swept over the field was indescribable. Dr. Ascher flew into a fierce temper over the shortcomings and detestable arrangements, which he maintained to be a serious menace to the health of the camp. We strove desperately to escape the horrible effluvium, but it could not be avoided unless we buried our heads. Dr. Ascher, by taking up a firm stand, had his way on this occasion, although the nature of the improvement I think caused him to despair of securing the proper amelioration of the conditions. The military authorities did not appear to know even the rudiments of sanitary science, which, as I found for myself, are ever indescribably crude away from the show towns which are patronised by tourists.



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I had been hoping that I would be able to shake off my illness. But it was not to be. The exposure and thorough soaking which I had on the terrible night of the 11th completely undid all the benefits I had received from Dr. Ascher's attention and treatment. I cracked up suddenly. The doctor, seeing how badly things were going with me, gave me a "pass" excusing me from all work.

But to me it was obvious that to remain on the field was to die from starvation, especially bearing in mind my precarious health. Yet to get out of the field was no easy matter. I pondered fretfully over this issue, and at last resolved to attempt a desperate solution. I marched boldly to the gate, waved an old, long-since expired "pass" and shouted to the sentry that I had to go to the doctor's office immediately. Taken unawares the guard opened the gate without scanning the "pass" and I walked on to the main road leading to the barracks in which we had lived previously. The little extra exertion demanded to pass the sentry without creating any suspicions in his mind now told on me. Once I had passed out of his sight the reaction set in, and I fell into a clockwork pace. I was determined to fulfil my mission at all hazards, so plodded along slowly. I could see nothing, and heeded nothing, being only conscious of the fact that I was going to get something to eat and to bring food back for my stranded companions on the field. Soon everything seemed to grow darker and darker, then came perfect blackness. I remembered no more.

When I came to my senses I found myself being borne carefully by two fellow-prisoners—Ca—— and a chum—to the hospital. I was put to bed, and looking round I saw that I was surrounded by twenty-five other patients. One and all had dropped down from sheer exhaustion upon the field during the "Bloody Night," and had been found by the guard in the morning in an unconscious condition. I heard that there were seventy such cases brought in—all caused by exposure and the rain. I cannot testify to that number, but I can swear to the twenty-five cases because I saw them in the hospital lying in the ward with me. They were then in a terrible plight, not having recovered from the racking ordeal.

Presently a military doctor came in. I had never seen him before. He approached my cot.

"Civilian or military?" he asked.

"Civilian!" I replied.

"Ach!" and there was intense disgust and unveiled hostility in his voice. "Get up! Outside!"

"But he has been brought in unconscious!" persisted Ca——.

"Ach! No matter. Get up. Outside!" he repeated.



“I’ll see you damned first!” exploded Ca——, his Irish temper now roused to bursting point at the inhuman attitude of the military medical official. Fortunately for my friend the individual in question did not understand a word of English, or there would have been trouble.

But feeling somewhat better and realising the uselessness of argument I persuaded Ca—— to obey instructions. Indeed I was bundled out of bed, and hastily assisted in re-dressing, by the doctor’s orders. Passing out of the hospital I paused to lean against the door, feeling downright ill and weak. Ca—— ran off to the barrack to fetch Dr. Ascher.



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A young medical man came out of the hospital, and seeing my wan and haggard face, came up to me. He was certainly sympathetic.

"Heavens, man! You look downright ill!" was his comment.

"I reckon I don't look worse than I feel!" I replied caustically. "I've just been turned out of the hospital. What is going to happen?"

"Oh! You've got to go to Paderborn. You'll go into hospital there. The van will be up in three hours' time!"

At this intelligence I sank on a wooden seat. I felt, and indeed could no longer ward off, the belief that everything for me was rapidly approaching the end. As I sat there a prey to my worst thoughts, a soldier came out of the hospital and sat beside me. I looked up.

"Hullo! old man! From Mons?" I asked.

"Yes! Going to Paderborn. Says I'm sick," nodding towards the hospital. The Tommy certainly looked as if the doctor had diagnosed a case correctly for once in his life.

"What's the matter?"

"Don't know for sure. But I heard the doctor whisper to an assistant that it was typhus!"

Despite my efforts to control myself I could not suppress a low whistle. I looked at the soldier, and although my first inclination was to move away, I felt that, owing to my condition, it really didn't matter, so I spared the Tommy's feelings. In a few minutes another soldier came out. He sat on the other side of me.

"Hullo! You from Mons too? You going to Paderborn?" was my query.

"Sure! Doctor says I've got typhus!"

This was alarming news, and I could not resist a feeling of extreme apprehension. While I was turning things over in my mind a third soldier came out whom I questioned, but he did not reply.

"He was blinded by a shell at Mons," commented one of the soldiers. "Guess he's got it too. 'Strewth, isn't this a hell of a hole? I'd sooner have fifty Mons's for a month than this hell for a day!"

I certainly shared the opinion. But as I sat there I reflected upon the limited carrying capacity of the Paderborn hospital van, and the circumstance that I was likely to be crushed in with a host of typhus cases. I did not like the prospect a little bit. I made up my mind. I would not go to Paderborn at any cost.



Proffering a palpable excuse I sauntered away, finally entering the office in which the files of the registration of the British military prisoners were being prepared. A young German who in pre-war days had been a baker in Battersea, was in charge. I told him I was sick, but enquired, if receiving the requisite permission from the doctor, he would allow me to help him in the office. He agreed. I sought out Dr. Ascher, explained that I had been consigned to Paderborn, but refused to go, and explained that I had the offer to go into the office if he would certify me for such work. After a little deliberation he acquiesced, and I took up the appointment with the result I have explained in a previous chapter. After a good night's rest I felt decidedly better. I returned to the field, only to find that my companions had experienced no improvement in their conditions, and that food was just as scarce as it had been since we were turned out of our barracks. I was successful in getting a little food to them, while another prisoner, now in England, sent up a little.



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Strolling across the field I met a fellow-prisoner, Lord J——'s secretary. He looked so ill that I suggested he should take my place in the office, as I was now feeling much better. He refused at first, but at last I prevailed upon him to go. He would get a well-earned rest at all events, while the work was light and easy. The exchange of clerks was effected and with such success that the German in charge never detected the swop, which proves how imperfectly I had been scrutinised, and the laxity of the arrangements when you have learned how to circumvent the pit-falls and red-tape of Prussian organisation.

I was now back upon the field. One night the officers came round bawling out a request for the names of all prisoners who had friends in Germany. Seeing that this question, together with a host of others, had been asked nearly every day, while sheets of papers were filled up at intervals of every few hours with a bewildering array of particulars, I ignored the interrogation. But one or two fellow-prisoners recalled the fact that K——, upon his release, had invited me to come to his home in Cologne if I ever got the chance. At first I declined to listen to the recommendations, but finally, in response to the incessant pesterings, I consented. Then the matter slipped from my mind.

The following morning my attention was arrested by the guard going round the camp singing at the top of his voice, "Ma-hone-i! Ma-hone-i!"

Surprised, and fearing that trouble was brewing because I had not gone to Paderborn as ordered by the military doctor, I presented myself. I was commanded to attend the office at once.

I sauntered off leisurely, and reaching the building, I supplied the officer in charge with my name and a host of other minute details as requested. Then turning to me, and holding a paper in his hands, he remarked:

"Herr Ma-hone-i! You are a free man!"

"What?" I yapped, scarcely believing I had heard aright, "A free man?" I almost cried with joy at the news. "Free to go home to England?" I asked excitedly.

"Nein! Nein!! Nein!!! But you have friends in Germany?"

My jaw dropped. I thought for a few minutes, and then I replied slowly, "Yes! I'll go provided I do not have to give my parole. That I will never do!"

He glared furiously at me.

"But that is as good as saying you'll try to escape," he went on.

"Exactly!" was my curt retort, and I looked at him defiantly.

The officer informed me that under these circumstances I should be kept back, but at this moment Dr. Ascher, who had been listening to the conversation, intervened, and as a result of his mediation I was told that I was free to go to Cologne, saying which a “pass” permitting me to travel to, and to move about that city, was proffered. I took the “pass.”

“You’ve ten minutes to collect your belongings and to get out of the camp!” was his final abrupt remark. Although I pleaded for a little longer time in which to say farewell to my friends he was inexorable.



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I rushed back to the field to communicate the news to my companions, and the hand-shaking which ensued was extremely fervent. All the boys congratulated me upon my good luck, but the tears were in their eyes. The sympathy moved me, and I felt half-disposed to tear up my "pass" and stay with them to see it through. But they pushed me off. I had a hearty hand-shaking with Dr. Ascher, who wished me the best of luck, and expressed the hope that I would soon get home. Although he never admitted it I found out for a fact that he had been primarily responsible for my release. It certainly was characteristic of him. He cracked a parting joke, which restored the good humour and cheerfulness of the camp, and with my few parcels under my arm I left the ill-famed field.

The boys cheered like mad, but I was stirred more particularly by the roar of cheers which burst from the Tommies, with whom I had fraternised freely, and with whom a curious chumminess had sprung up. We were all companions in misfortune, and when the news of my release reached their field, they clustered along the fence to give me a parting rouser, which they certainly let go for all they were worth.

I regained the office within the stipulated ten minutes and then to my intense disgust learned that I had three hours to wait for a train. I sold my watch to secure a little ready money, and as I moved across the camps to be abruptly challenged by the sentries I was surprised to see them change their demeanour when I showed my "pass." They shook hands heartily and warmly congratulated me upon my good fortune. It was a strange metamorphosis and it affected me strangely.

Before I left the camp I was ushered into the presence of our arch-fiend, Major Bach. He rose from his desk and with a suavity and civility which made my blood surge, he remarked:

"Herr Mahoney, good-bye! I trust you will not think our treatment in the camp has been unduly severe!"

"I shall certainly not speak well of it," I retorted somewhat cynically. "I shall never forget my experiences and I shall not omit to relate it to others. But there! I think my looks are sufficient. I must have lost three stone in weight during the past two months!"

"Well, I trust you will make allowances," he went on unctuously. "You must remember the times; that we are at war, and that our arrangements have not been organised for adequate accommodation!"

He extended his hand.

Shaking my head in a manner which he could not misunderstand I refused to take it.

He shrugged his shoulders and resumed his work. I left his office without another word.



Two minutes later I was striding rapidly towards the station, accompanied by another prisoner, a schoolmaster named E——, who had also been released on a “pass” and whom I have to thank for much assistance subsequently offered.



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At last I was free from the torment and brutality of Sennelager Camp. But as I watched the incoming train on that morning of September 16th, 1914, I could not refrain from dwelling upon the lot of the many hapless friends I had left behind, the agonies, miseries, the hopelessness of their position, and their condemnation to unremitting brutal travail which would doubtless continue until the clash of arms had died away. As Sennelager vanished from sight my companion and I gave deep sighs of relief. We felt that we had left Hell behind.

### PRISON THREE—KLINGELPUTZ

#### CHAPTER XVI

##### FREE ON "PASS" IN COLOGNE

It was two o'clock in the afternoon when I saw the last of Sennelager Camp as the train swung round a curve which blotted the Avernus over which Major Bach reigned supreme from sight if not from memory. The train in which we were travelling, of course, was wholly occupied by Germans. I found it impossible to secure a seat owing to the crowded character of the carriages, and as misfortune would have it I was compelled to stand until I reached my destination.

Naturally being thrown among so many of the enemy I was regarded with a strange interest by my fellow-travellers. They could see I was not a German, and although they did not resort to any provocative word or deed, it would have needed a blind man to have failed to detect their uncompromising hostility towards me. We travelled *via* Soest, and my position was rendered additionally unnerving because train after train labelled with the flaming Red Cross thundered by, bearing their heavy loads of the German battered and maimed from the battlefields. It was easy to see that the number of the train-loads of wounded was exercising a peculiar effect upon the passengers, for was not this heavy toll of war and the crushed and bleeding flower of the German army coming from the front where the British were so severely mauling the invincible military machine of Europe and disputing effectively their locust-like advance over the fair fields of Belgium and Northern France? Is it surprising under the circumstances that they glowered and frowned at me in a disconcerting and menacing manner?

[Illustration: Facsimile of the Pass issued by the German authorities to the author on his leaving Sennelager for Coeln-on-Rhein.]

As the hours rolled by I began to feel fainter and hungrier. I had had nothing since the usual cup of acorn coffee at seven in the morning. Although I became so weak that I felt as if I must drop, I buoyed up my flagging spirits and drooping body by the thought that I should soon meet and enjoy the company of K——. But I was aboard a fourth-class train and it appeared to be grimly determined to set up a new record for slow-

travelling even for Germany. The result was that I did not reach Cologne, or Koeln, as the Germans have it, until one o'clock the following morning, having stood on my feet for eleven hours and without a bite to eat.



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I fell rather than stepped from the train and turned out of the station. Again my spirits sank. The city was wrapped in a darkness which could be felt. There was not a glimmer of light to be seen anywhere. To pick one's way through a strange city in a strange land and without more than a bare smattering of the language under conditions of inky blackness was surely the supreme ordeal. At every few steps I blundered against a soldier with his loaded rifle and fixed bayonet, ready to lunge at anything and everything which, to a highly strung German military mind, appeared to assume a tangible form in the intense blackness. Since my return home I have experienced some striking specimens of British darkened towns, but they do not compare with the complete darkness which prevailed in Cologne that night. Not a single faint gleam of light came from a window. I am confident that if I had dared to strike a match I should have been surprised by a volley of bullets from all directions.

Cologne was indeed a city of darkness and of the dead. Only the footfalls of the guard and the clank of rifles were to be heard. To proceed was impossible. I concluded that before I had gone very far in my wanderings I should be arrested and find myself in the privacy of a prison cell. Moreover I was absolutely exhausted. Sore at heart I returned to the station, and walking up to the first officer I saw, introduced myself as "Mahoney, late of Sennelager Camp."

At this revelation the officer stared as if confronted by an apparition and sternly demanded my authority for being at large. I drew out my "pass," together with the address of K——, for which I was searching so vainly.

Thrusting my "pass" into his pocket the officer gruffly ordered me to follow him. I demanded the return of the small piece of paper which constituted my sole protection, but he rudely declined to accede to my request. I followed him and we turned into a room at the station which happened to be the sleeping quarters of the night guard.

Here I was again interrogated somewhat sharply, but taking the bull by the horns I boldly declared that I was an Englishman and had been arrested and imprisoned upon the charge of being a spy!

My candid statement amazed the officer, who appeared to consider that he had made a most fortunate capture. An interpreter, who understood only a little English, was summoned to my assistance, and we contrived to understand one another. He was visibly impressed by my distressed and sickly appearance and enquired if I were in need of something to eat. I said I was famished and he explained the situation to the officer. The upshot was that a few of those present gave me some bread and cold rice, which I devoured ravenously.

I was handed over to a guard who was instructed to take me—somewhere? We set out through the dark streets, and it was an eerie journey. Sentries were stationed at intervals of a few yards and in crossing the bridge we were frequently stopped and not



permitted to proceed until my guardian, although in uniform and armed, had given the password. In due course we reached a towering building which I discovered to be the Polizei Präsidium. Here I was handed over to the official in charge, my military guard evidently explaining the whole circumstances.



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The official scrutinised me closely. Bidding me to follow him he again plunged into the darkness. After taking me to the address of K——, which I had produced, and finding no one there, he led me to a restaurant. The proprietor was roused and ordered to take me in for the night. When he learned that I was an Englishman on “pass” he commenced to swear and curse in a fearful manner, finally declaring he would not shelter any such swine in his house. The official had a short way with this individual. He drew his sword, drove the awakened and enraged German into his restaurant, and in a tone which could not be misconstrued demanded that accommodation and meals should be found for me. The threatening attitude of the officer completely cowed the proprietor, but I, fearing that the latter would round on me once I was at his mercy, intimated to the guard that I was not going to spend the night in this hotel.

There was a brief altercation, but at last we returned to the Prasidium. Here I intimated that I was perfectly willing to sleep upon the floor of the guard-room, but the official explained that this was a flagrant breach of the rules and the idea could not be entertained for a moment. We haggled for a few minutes and then a solution of the distracting problem occurred to the officer. He would lodge me for the night in a cell! I accepted the suggestion with alacrity and thereupon passed below where I made myself comfortable, the official assisting me as much as he could.

It seemed as if I had only just dropped off to sleep when I was rudely awakened. It was six o'clock when prisoners had to be roused, and although I was not a prisoner, but had slept in the cell from my own choice, I had to conform with the regulations. I was turned out into the street, without a bite of food, needless to say, to kick my heels about for some two hours until the business offices opened. I seized the opportunity to have a shave and hair-cut as well as a thorough wash and brush up.

About 8.30 I presented myself at my friend's office. To my surprise he responded to my ring himself and at once introduced me to his wife, who had come into the city with him that morning. I was warmly greeted but my thin and wan appearance affected them, especially Mrs. K——. I then discovered why I had failed to rouse him in the early hours of the morning when accompanied by the officer from the police station. He did not live in Cologne but in a pretty and quiet little residential village overlooking the Rhine some three miles out.

Taking pity upon me they insisted that I should at once proceed to their home, but before this could be done certain formalities demanded attention. My “pass” was only applicable to the city of Cologne and did not embrace the outlying places. We had to return to the police headquarters, corresponding to our Scotland Yard, for this purpose. Here my papers were turned out and subjected to the usual severe scrutiny, while I myself was riddled with questions. At last, through the good offices of K——, who was well-known to the officials, I received permission to proceed to his residence. This necessitated our being accompanied to his home by two detectives who furthermore were to see that I received the necessary local “pass” for the villa in question.



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Notwithstanding the depressing company of the detectives I thoroughly enjoyed that ride along the banks of the Rhine. It was a glorious morning and the countryside was at the height of its alluring autumnal beauty. Reaching the village I was taken before the Burgermeister, a pompous individual, to undergo another searching cross-questioning, but ultimately the “pass” was granted. At the same time my “pass” for Cologne was withdrawn. I had either to live, move, and have my being in one place or the other—not both—and was not to be permitted to travel between the two places.

I must digress a moment to explain one feature of German administration and the much vaunted Teuton organisation, which is nothing more nor less than a huge joke, although it is unfortunately quite devoid of humour for the luckless victim. In times of war, Germany is subdivided into districts, each of which receives the specific number of an Army Corps. Thus there is Army Corps No. 1, Army Corps No. 2, and so on. It is just as if, under similar exigencies, the names of the counties in Great Britain were abandoned for the time being in favour of a military designation, Middlesex thus becoming Army Corps No. 1, Surrey No. 2, and so on, the counties being numbered consecutively.

Each Army Corps has its commanding officer and he has absolute control over the territory assigned to him, the movement of its inhabitants, strangers and visitors. But the strange and humorous fact about the whole system is that each commanding officer is a little autocrat and extremely jealous of his colleague in the adjacent Army Corps. The commander of Army Corps No. 1 issues a “pass” which entitles you to move about freely in his district.

When Major Bach presented me with my “pass,” he gravely warned me always to have it upon my person, to show it upon demand, but never to allow it out of my possession even for a minute, and if it should be taken for inspection to insist upon its return at once. He assured me that the mere production of the “pass” and the signature would permit me to go wherever I liked, and to move to and fro throughout Germany. I firmly believed his statement until I received my first rude shock to the contrary. As a final warning he stated that if I happened to be stopped by a soldier or anyone else and had not my “pass” with me, I should find myself in an extremely serious position. Naturally I hung on to that little piece of paper as tenaciously as if it had been a million pound bank-note.

The Commanding Officer of an Army Corps always iterates this little speech, I discovered. Naturally you leave the official, completely relieved, thinking yourself virtually free. But the moment you cross the boundary into another Army Corps you are held up. The official demands to know why you are walking about a free man. You flourish the “pass” signed by “A” in triumph, and with a chortle, point to the signature. The official scans the



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“pass,” shakes his head sagely, and with a curt “Come with me!” orders you to follow him. You protest energetically, and point to the signature. He shakes his head emphatically as he growls “No! No!” and continues, referring to the owner of the signature on your “pass,” “we know nothing about him! You must see my Commanding Officer.” Reaching this official, who regards you as a criminal who has escaped, you suddenly learn that the “pass” is not a passport for your movement through Germany, but is valid only for the Army Corps in which it was issued!

Consignment to prison is the inevitable sequel. You may protest until you are black in the face, but it makes no difference. The papers which you signed day after day until you became sick at the sight of them, but which were necessary to secure your first “pass,” commence their lengthy and tedious trip through the German Circumlocution Office, the trip occupying weeks. During this time you are kept in prison and treated as if you were a common felon, until at last, everything being declared to be in order, you receive a new “pass” for the Army Corps in which you have been arrested. The moment you venture into another Army Corps, even if you return into that from which you were first released, arrest follows and the whole exasperating rigmarole has to be repeated. The Army Corps are as arbitrarily defined as anything to be found in tape-tied Germany.

I do not think that such a wildly humorous feature of organisation to compare with this is to be found in any other part of the world. Had it not been for the deliberate misleading, or to term it more accurately, unblushing lying, upon the part of the respective commanding officers of the respective Army Corps, the British tourists who happened to be in Germany when war broke out would have got home safely. Being ignorant of German manners, customs, and military idiosyncrasies, and placing a blind faith in German assertion and scraps of paper, the unfortunate travellers fell into the trap which undoubtedly had been prepared to meet such conditions.

The British tourists who were caught in eastern Germany, after their first arrest and release upon one of these despicable and fraudulent passes, being reassured by the intimation that they were free to go where they pleased, naturally thought they would be able to hurry home, and straightaway moved towards the coast. But directly they entered the adjacent Army Corps they suffered arrest and imprisonment until their papers were declared to be in order to permit another “pass” to be issued. Thus it went on, the tourists being successively held up, delayed, and released. Under these conditions progress to the coast was exasperatingly slow, and finally was summarily prevented by the drastic order of the German Government demanding the internment of every Britisher in the country. It was this senseless and ridiculous manifestation of German scientific organisation gone mad which contributed to the congested nature of the civilian internment camps in the country, and one cannot resist the conclusion that the practice was brought into force with the deliberate intention of hindering the return of Britishers who happened to be in the country when war was declared.



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At the peaceful residence of my friend overlooking the Rhine, of the full beauties of which I still cherish a vivid and warm appreciation, I mended very rapidly. To Mr. and Mrs. K—— I owe a debt of gratitude which I shall never be able to repay. I entered their home half-starved, extremely weak, and practically at death's door, but under the careful nursing and unremitting attention of Mrs. K—— and her husband I speedily recovered. I had been suffering considerable mental worry, having received news that my wife at home was seriously ill, but *[gap] I received a letter, the first since I had left home on August 1st, which communicated the glad tidings that she had completely recovered her health. The receipt of that letter banished all anxiety and fretfulness from my mind. Indeed at the end of a month I felt capable of tempting fate upon my own initiative once more. I felt that I was encroaching upon the generosity and hospitality of my newly-found friends, and this feeling commenced to harass me.*

One morning I expressed to K—— my intention to go into Cologne to look for work. He endeavoured to dissuade me, pointing out that my "pass" would not permit me to move beyond the limits of the little village, but I was not to be gainsaid. I felt I could not show sufficient appreciation for what they had done on my behalf, or discharge the debt of obligation which I owed to them.

I started off one morning, full of hope and energy, determined to get a job at all hazards. But that search for work proved to be the most heart-breaking quest I have ever attempted. I realised that my limited knowledge of German would bowl me out. All that I knew I had picked up colloquially while interned at Sennelager, and although it was adequate to enable me to hold a general conversation, it was hopelessly insufficient for commercial purposes. Consequently I decided to pretend to be deaf and dumb.

I entered every shop in the main thoroughfare of Cologne in succession. I was ready and willing to accept any position, irrespective of its character. I blundered into an undertaker's premises, which I subsequently learned to be the largest firm in this line in the city, and patronised by the rank and fashion of Cologne. I endeavoured to explain the object of my visit to the proprietor by mimicking nail-hammering and pointing to a coffin. He invited me into his inner office where, to my alarm, I descried an officer's uniform hanging behind the door, and evidently belonging to the proprietor who was about to join the colours. I decided to make myself scarce with all speed, but I had to act warily to avoid suspicion.



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The proprietor trotted out an elaborate catalogue. He thought I had come to order a coffin! Being arrayed in a frock coat and somewhat burnished up, I suppose I had the appearance of a possible customer. I had led him to believe that I could not speak, but now I assured him that my real infirmity was very acute stammering. I glanced through the catalogue carefully so as to arouse no suspicions, to alight upon a specimen of the handicraft which cost 1,000 marks—L50—and with apparent effort stuttered that I would consult my brother upon the matter. I left the shop with my heart in my mouth, but gaining the street in safety, I put as great a distance between the shop and myself as I could.

I offered my services indiscriminately to a boot-maker, grocer, confectioner—in fact I can scarcely recall what trade I did not strive to enter, but always in vain. Finally I entered a fashionable hairdresser's establishment. By signs and with considerable labour I finally made my mission known, and at last ascertained that an assistant was required, and I could present myself the following morning. I went off treading on air, absolutely delighted with my success. In fact I was so elated as to omit to notice that this shop was in one of the three streets forming a triangle and an island in a "Y" formed by the two main thoroughfares.

The next morning I returned to the city with my solitary razor in my pocket—I had been instructed to bring my own kit. I entered the shop but was decidedly puzzled at the sight of strange faces. This I attributed to the rush which was prevailing having brought men to the front whom I had not seen the day before. I proffered my razor to explain that I had come to start work as arranged. The assistant took it, and told me it would be ready on the following morning. He thought I wanted it to be ground and set! Not being able to make myself understood I went outside, looked at the facia, and found I had gone to the wrong address. The shop for which I had been engaged was on the other side of the triangle. I hurried in, to be received with a scowl by the proprietor, who pointed significantly to the clock to intimate that I was very late.

However, the proprietor donned his hat and coat and took me to another shop in a distant part of the city. It was one of his branches. I was to be employed here, but I knew no more about hair-dressing than about the fourth dimension. Still I thought I could fulfil the role of lather-boy very effectively.

To my consternation, after lathering one or two customers, I was ordered to complete the shaving operation. My heart thumped because I wondered how the unfortunate German client would fare in my unskilled hands. Bracing myself up I completed the task without a hitch, although I do not think the customer looked any better after I had finished with him than he did before.

But the succeeding customer encountered disaster. The razor made a slip, inflicting a terrible gash in the man's ear.



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Pandemonium was let loose. The blood spurted out, smothering my shirt cuff. The customer raved and swore like a Fury, while the manager, losing his head, dashed up with a handful of powdered alum which he strove to apply to the wound, but made a sorry mess of the effort, because it fell in a shower over the customer's immaculate clothes, causing him to present the appearance which would have ensued had he fouled a bag of flour. I surveyed the scene of the disaster for a few seconds, but observing the customer to be absorbing the complete attention of the manager I unconcernedly invited the next customer to take the chair, which he politely declined.

In the course of a few minutes an unsuspecting individual entered and took the empty seat. I lathered him well, and picked up a razor. But my hand was now exceedingly unsteady. I caught a glimpse of my soiled shirt cuff and decided to incur no further risks. I seized my hat and bolted from the shop.

In my haste I inadvertently infringed another rigid regulation—I boarded a tram-car in motion. For this misdemeanour I was rated severely by the conductor. But as I emphasised my deaf and dumb infirmity he ceased, doubtless feeling that his energy was being wasted. To my consternation a friend of mine boarded this car, which was proceeding toward his home, and he at once commenced a conversation. I was on my guard, and by a surreptitious whisper, I told him of my deaf and dumb subterfuge. When we reached our destination I related my adventure, revealing my soiled and blood-stained shirt cuff as corroboration. As I described the incident he burst into uncontrollable laughter, but then his face became grave. He felt convinced that a complaint would be lodged, and that investigation would follow. If I were detected in the street trouble would ensue, so he urged me to return to my new home and to lie low for a few days to permit things to blow over.

Another day I was alighting from a tram, when I heard a voice calling quietly but firmly, "Mein Herr! Mein Herr!" There was no mistaking the tones. They were so palpably official as not to raise a moment's doubting. I refrained from looking round, proceeding as if I had not heard the hail, although I did not quicken my step. But the "Mein Herr!" continued to ring out persistently, and at last the speaker touched me on the arm. I turned and, as I had anticipated, was confronted by an officer.

He demanded to know why I was walking about Cologne. He saw that I was a Britisher and so responded to the call of his inquisitorial duty. I produced my "pass" without a word of comment. He looked at it and gave me a queer glance, but I never turned a hair, and while he was looking at me I calmly withdrew the "pass" from his hands and slipped it into my pocket.



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At this action there was an excited outburst, but I firmly and resolutely told him that I could not surrender my "pass." I had been told to keep it at all hazards, and I intended to do so. It was my sole protection. Not being able to dispute the truth of my assertions, he merely told me to come with him. I did not like the turn of events but had to obey. He stopped short before a box, possibly a telephone, outside which a sentry was standing. He said something to the sentry, told me to wait outside, and disappeared within the box.

I waited patiently for a few minutes, thinking hard to discover some ruse to get away, but retaining a perfectly calm and collected demeanour. If I moved I feared the sentry would raise the alarm. Yet as I stood there it suddenly occurred to me that perhaps the sentry, with typical Teuton denseness of thought, might consider that I was a friend of the officer, and that I was only waiting for him. I glanced anxiously up and down the street, listened at the box, and fidgeted with papers as if fearing that I should miss an appointment unless my friend soon re-appeared.

The sentry appeared to consider my actions quite natural. Emboldened I withdrew a piece of paper from my pocket and hurriedly scribbled, as if jotting down a hurried note. But I knew little German and far less how to write it. After finishing the note I slipped it into the sentry's hand, telling him to take it to my friend the officer in the box.

He laughed "Ja! Ja!" and I moved off to the tram which was just starting in the direction I desired. I have often wondered what happened when the officer came out and discovered that I had vanished! The sentry must have experienced a rough five minutes, because the officer could not have been mollified by what I had written, which was simply the two words "Guten Tag!" (Good-day!).

I dismissed the incident from my mind but the following night I received a terrible fright. I had promised some friends to accompany them to the Opera. We boarded a car. As I entered the vehicle I nearly sank through the floor. There, sitting on the seat, was the officer whom I had left so abruptly and discourteously the previous day. In a low voice I related my alarming discovery to my companions, but urged them to proceed as if nothing had happened, so they maintained a spirited conversation in German, discreetly monopolising all the talking. The officer was glaring at me fiercely but I saw that he was in a quandary. To him my face was familiar but he was cudgelling his brains as to where he had seen me before. His inability to place me proved my salvation. When we got up, both my companions and myself wished him "Good-night," to which he responded cheerfully. Whatever his thoughts concerning myself might have been, my "Good-night" completely removed all his suspicions.



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About three weeks after my arrival at Cologne, K—— and I were surprised to hear familiar voices in the hall of his home. We came out and to our astonishment there were two fellow-prisoners from Sennelager. They were R——, a British bank manager, and F——, both of whom at the time of writing are still languishing in Ruhleben. They had been granted liberty on a “pass,” having mentioned K——’s name. He was delighted they had accepted his outstanding invitation and gave them a hearty welcome.

[Illustration:

Buergermeisster-Aurt Greis

Polizeiliche Aufforderung im Exekutiv-Verfahren.

Auf Grund des Sek. 20 des Geletes ueber die Polizeiverwaltung vom 11. Maerz 1850 bezw. des Sek. 132 des Geletes ueber die allgemeine Laubesverwaltung vom 30. Jueli 1883 werden Sie hiermit aufgefordert

[Transcriber’s note: portions illegible, struck through and added in handwriting]

und zwar bei Vermeidung einer Greturgstrase von——Mart oder einer—— taegten Haftstrase——Geen diese Aufforderung kann immerhalb awet Wochen nach Aushaendigung bersetbeii Beschwerde bei dem KoenigtichenBerrn Bonbrat zu——- angebracht werden.

——, den 22 September 1914

Die Polizeiverwaltung. Der Buergermeisster.]

But before we could settle down, K—— had to accompany the two new arrivals to the village Burgermeister’s office to secure permission for their residence in his home. K—— and this official were on friendly terms, but I could not restrain a smile when the official, with a slight trace of waspishness in his voice, enquired if it was K——’s intention to establish a British colony in the village? I might mention that within a stone’s throw of K——’s home was a large factory where a number of Germans were employed, which was managed by three Englishmen. It was a highly prosperous and flourishing business and, the three managers living in the village, it certainly did seem as if the little place were to become colonised.

On the night of November 6th, while we were all making merry after the evening meal, there came a peremptory knocking at the door. We looked at one another wonderingly and our hearts fell into our boots as we heard an ominous tramping of feet in the hall. Two police officers entered the room and called out our names. We answered affirmatively.



“Gentlemen! You will accompany us to Cologne!” At the pronouncement we blanched. We knew only too well what the imperative summons conveyed. *We were under arrest!*

## CHAPTER XVII

### RE-IMPRISONED AT KLINGELPUTZ

My friend, being a well-known commercial man of Cologne, was acquainted with the two gendarmes. He recognised the futility of attempting to run against the decree of the Powers-that-Be, together with the fact that these two officers were only doing their duty. He invited them to eat and drink. They accepted the favour, our good spirits revived, and we informally discussed the new situation and its portent.



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The two officers, not wishing to hurt K——'s feelings more than was absolutely necessary, and residing in the vicinity, suggested that they should meet us at a certain point at a given time to escort us into Cologne. The appointment being settled to mutual satisfaction they departed and we at once busied ourselves with preparations for another sojourn in prison, which we considered to be our certain fate. Our hostess packed a huge reserve of dainties of all descriptions sufficient to last us several days, by which time we fondly concluded that any formalities demanded by the authorities would be completed, and we should once more be allowed to go free on "passes."

We kept the appointment with the two officers who, out of respect for our host, had discarded their uniforms for mufti. Consequently, to the casual man in the street, we appeared to be only a little party going into the city for a mild junketing.

We were told that the official fiat had gone forth that all Britishers within the German Empire, both resident and touring, were to be arrested. All sorts of reasons were advanced to explain this action but they were merely speculative. There is one feature about the Teuton Government which is far from being characteristic of the British authorities. The Germans never do things by halves. What they authorise to be done is carried out to the letter. What they say they mean and there is no delay in executing an order once it is issued. The Teuton system may have shortcomings but hesitation and vacillation cannot be numbered among them. Directly the order concerning the re-arrest of the British was issued, extreme activity was displayed in carrying it out. Possibly it was a mere temporary measure, as K—— half hoped, but that was immaterial. Every alien was rounded up within a few hours and placed safely under lock and key.

We were not kept in doubt as to our future for many minutes. We learned at the Polizei Præsidium that we were to be immured in Klingelputz prison. Many of our number were gathered there, having once been released on "pass," and from the circumstance that they were business men in practice and residence in Germany the confident belief prevailed that after re-registration all would be released. But we were speedily disappointed. All of us without the slightest discrimination were placed under restraint.

Directly we entered Klingelputz and had passed into the main building I could not restrain my curiosity. This penitentiary was vastly dissimilar from Wesel. It is a huge building not only covering a considerable tract of ground, but is several floors in height, thus providing cell accommodation for hundreds of prisoners.

But it was the method of securing the prisoners which compelled my instant attention. Ahead of me I saw what I first took to be an iron-railed barrier behind which a number of men were crowding as if to catch a glimpse of us. But to my astonishment I discovered, as I advanced, that this was not an iron barrier keeping back a curiosity-provoked crowd but the cells and their inmates. I was startled to hear frantic hails, "Mahoney! Mahoney! Hooray! Come on!"



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I stepped forward to ascertain that I was being called by two or three compatriots whom I had left behind at Sennelager, but who had afterwards been released on “pass” and re-rounded up as aliens. I returned the greeting hilariously, upon which one of the British prisoners, who was remarkably agile, swarmed the bars, and poised thus above his comrades, was emulating the strange and amusing antics of a monkey at the Zoological Gardens, thereby conveying by his actions that he and his friends were caged after the manner of our simian prizes at home.

The cells were indeed cages, as I discovered upon closer inspection, and recalled nothing so much as parrot cages upon a large scale. All sides were barred in the self-same manner so that from any point one could see every corner of the cell and discover what the inmate or rather inmates were doing, because each cell was really six cells in one. The cage was rectangular in plan, each cell measuring about seven feet in length by three feet in width, and fairly high. But it was the internal arrangement of the cell which struck me. In plan it was set out something like the following:—

[Illustration]

The middle gangway A not only served as the approach to the sub-divisions or cells B on either side, but also constituted the space occupied by the prisoners during the day. Each of the sub-divisions was large enough to receive a bed and nothing else. There was only sufficient space to stand beside the couch. Upon retiring for the night the prisoner was compelled to disrobe in the central space or gangway A, then, picking up his clothes he had to sidle round the door and climb over his bed to get into it. In the morning, upon rising, he either had to stand upon his bed to dress or to come out into the central gangway, the space beside his bed being scarcely sufficient to permit free movement.

Normally, I suppose, each cell or cage is designed to receive six prisoners, one to each sub-division, in which event circulation in the dividing open space would be possible. But the facilities of Klingelputz were so taxed at the time that every morning further prisoners were brought from the masonry cells below and locked in this open space for the day. The result was considerable overcrowding, there being no fewer than twenty-six men in one of the cages including some of our fellow-countrymen from Sennelager upon the day I entered. But the men from the latter camp happened to be some of the most irrepressible spirits among us. They considered it to be huge fun to swing and climb about the bars like monkeys, and their quaint antics and badinage kept their comrades buoyant.



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While I made application to be put in one of these extraordinary cells, merely to experience the novelty, my four comrades expressed their sincere hope that we should meet with superior accommodation. In this we were not disappointed, if the quarters to which we were taken were capable of being called superior. We were escorted down flights of steps which appeared to lead to the very bowels of the State hotel. Finally we were ushered into a long subterranean apartment, which was really a cellar, and was evidently intended to house five prisoners at one time, seeing that there were this number of beds. Except for the fact that it was a cellar and very little light penetrated its walls, little fault could be found with it. Certainly it was scrupulously clean, for which we were devoutly thankful, while on the table an oil-lamp was burning.

Life at Klingelputz would have been tolerable but for one thing—the prison fare. At six o'clock we were served with a basin of acorn coffee and a small piece of black bread for breakfast. At twelve we were treated to a small dole of skilly, the most execrable food I have ever tasted even in a German prison camp. It was skilly in the fullest sense of the word. Whatever entered into its composition must have been used most sparingly; its nutritive value was absolutely negligible. At five in the afternoon we received another basin of the acorn coffee together with a small piece of black bread, and this had to keep us going for the next thirteen hours.

Fortunately the food which we had brought with us served as a valuable supplement to that provided by the State. It not only kept us alive but enabled us to maintain our condition. The old fellow who was our gaoler was tractable; indeed he was somewhat apologetic for having to look after such estimable gentlemen, an attitude which was doubtless due to the fact that he knew we should look after him! We endeavoured to see if he could supply a little more “liberty and fresh air” but the old warder shook his head sorrowfully.

*[large gap]*

Lights had to be extinguished by nine o'clock, and it was the evening which taxed our endurance. We had to while away the hours as best we could. First we improvised an Indian band, using our basins as tom-toms and singing the most weird music. As a variety we dressed up in our blankets to resemble Red Indians and indulged in blood-curdling war-dances. Such measures for passing the time may sound extremely childish to readers, but it must be remembered that there was nothing else for us to do unless we were content to sit down with our chins in our hands, with the corners of our mouths drooping, and our faces wearing the expression of undertakers' mutes. Had we not participated in the admittedly infantile amusements we should have gone mad.

When we had demolished our food reserves and were utterly dependent upon the prison diet, we speedily began to betray signs of our captivity and deprivations. We petitioned for permission to purchase food from outside but this met with a curt refusal. Eventually the prison authorities relented and we were permitted to purchase our mid-

day meal from a restaurant, for which privilege by the way we were mulcted very heavily.



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During the day we were permitted to stretch our limbs in the exercise yard for about fifteen minutes. No steel-bound rules and regulations such as I had experienced at Wesel prevailed here. We were free to intermingle and to converse as we pleased. This relaxation was keenly anticipated and enjoyed because it gave us the opportunity to exchange reminiscences. We learned enough during this brief period to provide material for further topics of conversation. This, however, was the experience of our party. Others fared worse and were shut up in single cells in which, as I had previously done at Wesel, they were compelled to pace.

We only shared the large underground cell together at night because of its sleeping accommodation. We were shut in separate cells during the day, which prevented interchange of conversation and inter-amusement during the day except in the exercise yard. But solitary confinement was rare, and in the majority of cases we learned that the aliens were placed in small parties of four or five in a single cell. After a few days our party was swelled by five new arrivals from different parts of Germany. We were a cosmopolitan crowd, comprising every strata of society, from wealthy men down to stable lads. One boisterous spirit, a Cockney, confessed far and wide that he had once suffered imprisonment at home for horse-stealing, and he did not care a rap for anything or anybody. He was always bubbling over with exuberant merriment and was one of those who can project every situation into its relative humorous perspective. Another prisoner was an Englishman who had been resident in Germany for twenty-five years, and at the time of his arrest occupied a very prominent position in one of the foremost banking institutions.

This man felt his humiliation acutely. He paced his cell from morning to night, peevish and nervous, brooding deeply over what he considered to be an atrocity. He was a well-known man and on intimate terms with many of the foremost members of the Government and of the Services. He wrote to every man whom he thought capable of exerting powerful and irresistible influence upon his behalf, but without any tangible results. The fact that this man, apparently more Teuton, from his long residence and associations in the country, than British, had been thrown into prison brought home to us the thorough manner in which the Germans carried out their task of placing all aliens in safety. It was immaterial how prominent the position of the Britisher, his wealth, or his indispensability to the concern with which he was identified. Into prison he went when the general rounding up of enemies order was promulgated.

The Cockney who had been imprisoned for horse-stealing badgered this superior fellow-prisoner unmercifully. He was incessantly dwelling upon the man's descent from a position of comfort and ease to "quod" as he termed it. He would go up to the prisoner, pacing the exercise yard, and slapping him on the back would yap:



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“Now then, old sport! Don’t get so down in the mouth about it!”

The prisoner would venture some snappy retort.

“All right, Cocky! Crikey, you’d look mighty fine stuck up against a wall with half a dozen bloomin’ Prussian rifles looking at yer. Blime if I don’t believe you’d dodge the bullets by caving-in at the knees!”

A fierce look would be the response to such torment.

“Gawd’s trewth! My fretful bumble-bee, I’d write to old Tight-Whiskers about it if I was you. Get ‘im to come an’ bail yer out!”

At first we wondered who the personality so irreverently described as “Tight-Whiskers” was, but subsequently we were enlightened. He was referring to Von Tirpitz, “Th’ bloke wot looks arter th’ Germin Navy!”

When the Cockney, who appeared to be downright proud of his ability to keep his “pecker up,” found banter to be unproductive, he would assume a tone of extreme sympathetic feeling, but this was so obviously unreal as to be more productive of laughter than his outspoken sallies.

Once a week there was a sight from which, after my first experience, I was always glad to escape. On this day the prisoners were taken into the exercise yard to meet their wives and children. On these occasions when supplies of food were brought in, some very heart-rending scenes were witnessed, the little toddlers clinging to their fathers’ coat-tails and childishly urging them to come home, while the women’s eyes were wet and red.

The sanitary arrangements in Klingelputz were on a level with those of other prisons. Two commodes, with ill-fitting lids, sufficed for ten men, and in the underground apartment to which we were condemned, and of which the ventilation was very indifferent, the conditions became nauseating. To make matters worse the vile prison food precipitated an epidemic of acute diarrhoea and sickness, so that the atmosphere within the limited space became so unbearable as to provoke the facetious Cockney to declare that “e could cut it with a knife,” while he expressed his resolve “to ask th’ gaoler for a nail to drive into it” to serve as a peg for his clothes! But it was no laughing matter, and we all grew apprehensive of being stricken down with some fearful malady brought on simply and purely by the primitive sanitary arrangements. Only once a day were the utensils subjected to a perfunctory cleansing, a job which was carried out by the criminals incarcerated in the prison.

These criminals would do anything for us. The first night they tapped at the door to our cellar, and, peeping through the cracks, we saw a number of these degraded specimens



of German humanity in their night attire. They had heard who we were and begged for a cigarette. We passed two or three through the key-hole. The moment a cigarette got through there was a fearful din in the fight for its possession, culminating in a terrific crashing. The gaoler had appeared upon the scene! Quietness reigned for a few minutes, when they would stealthily return and whisper all sorts of yarns concerning the reasons for their imprisonment in order to wheedle further cigarettes from us.



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We were “clinked” in Klingelputz, as the Cockney expressed it, on November 6, 1914, and were kept in a state of terrible suspense. At last one morning the prison officials entered and called out the name of the three managers of the large works at the village in which K—— resided, who had been imprisoned with us. My friend and I naturally expected that their order for release had arrived, and we waited expectantly for their return to congratulate them, since their release would be a happy augury for us. They returned shortly, laden with bulky parcels of food which had been sent to them, and we all sat down to a Gargantuan spread. But we had scarcely started the meal when the gaoler entered and calling our names, ordered us to follow him to the office. Here we had to answer to our names once more. Then the Governor, in a sonorous voice, went on:

“Gentlemen! You are free men. Passes will be re-issued to you, but you will have to go to the Polizei Präsidium to have the requisite papers prepared.”

At this intelligence we became wildly excited. K—— had been anticipating such a development, but the process of deciding the issue had been protracted from the slow pace and roundabout journey which such matters have to take through the German Circumlocution Office. We started off to the Präsidium, escorted, strange to say, by the two officials who had arrested us at K——’s residence, and with whom my friend was now conversing gaily. As we passed the cages the English boys caught sight of me, and there were frantic yells of congratulation and good wishes upon our good fortune.

Reaching the Präsidium we were ushered into an outer room, the two officials proceeding into an inner room armed with our papers. While we were waiting K—— turned to me and remarked:

“I hope they’ll get us fixed up jolly quickly. Those two officers told me that to-morrow all aliens are to be sent from Klingelputz to the internment camp at Ruhleben. If we get our ‘passes’ we shall dodge that excursion very neatly!”

While we were talking the two officials came out and hurriedly left the building. They did not glance at us, and from their bearing I surmised that something had gone wrong at the last minute. I turned to my friend.

“Did you notice those fellows’ faces? They looked pretty solemn. I’ll bet you something’s in the wind, and it won’t be to our advantage.”

At that moment we were summoned into the inner office. The official called out our names, to which we answered, mine being the last.

“Ach! Ma-hone-i!” he exclaimed, “Englische Spion! Eh?”



I acknowledged the accusation. Although I was fully accustomed to the repetition of these words by now, since they were hurled at me at every turn, they were beginning to become somewhat irksome. Upon each occasion when the interrogation was flung out for the first time by a new official, it was delivered with a strange and jarring jerk.



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“Well, you were to be free on ‘passes,’ but the papers are not in order. They have been sent from the wrong place. They should have come from Coblenz. So they will have to be returned to be dispatched through the correct channel!”

How we cursed that German Circumlocution Office and this latest expression of Teuton organisation. The papers were correct, but because they had happened to come from the wrong office they were to be sent back to be re-dispatched from Coblenz, although they would not suffer the slightest alteration or addition in the process. Prussian red-tape was going crazy with a vengeance.

We were escorted to a cell in the basement of the Prasadium. Were we going to be kept here until the papers came to hand again? However, seeing that the trip would take some days, this was scarcely likely unless something extraordinary supervened. While we were discussing this latest and totally unexpected *denouement* we heard the low rumbling of heavy wheels. K—— cocked his ears with an acute tension.

“Hark!” he blurted out. “Damn it all, Mahoney, that’s the ‘Black Maria!’ We are going back to Klingelputz or somewhere else!”

It was indeed the Teuton “Black Maria,” and we were hurried upstairs to be tumbled into it. It was a dismal vehicle, there being barely sufficient space to accommodate our party, which had been further encumbered by two German demi-mondaines, who had been arrested for some infraction of the German law as it affected their peculiar interests. We were so tightly packed that we had to stand sideways, and I amused myself by working out the allowance of air space per person. It averaged about fourteen cubic inches!

We rumbled into the courtyard at Klingelputz, dejected and somewhat ill of temper at our disappointment. We were worrying because apparently the alien prisoners were to be dispatched to Ruhleben on the morrow. Unless we received our “passes” in time the chances were a thousand to one that we should be doomed to the self-same camp.

As we re-entered the prison we were greeted with a deafening yell. It came from the caged British prisoners.

“Hullo, boys! What cheer, Mahoney!” they shrieked. “Have they dished you again? Thought you were going home? Well, we’re mighty pleased to see you back at the ‘Zoo!’” and there was another wild exhibition of simian acrobatics upon the bars for our especial amusement.

But I had become so inured to the juggling tactics of Prussian officialdom that I was far from showing my inner feelings of chagrin. I entered into their banter as energetically, and with a parting “See you to-morrow, boys!” vanished down the steps with their frantic hails ringing in my ears.



The following morning we were marshalled, and as K—— had been dreading, the worst had happened. We were consigned “British Prisoners of War for internment at Ruhleben!” Home was now farther from me than ever!



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## PRISON FOUR—RUHLEBEN

### CHAPTER XVIII

#### THE CAMP OF ABANDONED HOPE

It was 4.30 in the morning of November 12 when the blare of the bugle echoed through the long, dreary passages of Klingelputz Prison. To the British prisoners—in fact to all the aliens—that crash was of fearful import.

We were commanded to parade at 5 a.m. in one of the long upper corridors flanked on either side by cells. We were formed in a double line, and as our names were called we had to step forward. The roll-call was bawled out, not once, but half a dozen times to make positive it had been read correctly. Then we were counted, also some half-a-dozen times, to assure the totals tallying.

These preliminaries completed, preparations for our transference to Ruhleben were hurried forward. We packed up our belongings, together with all the food upon which we could place our hands, and re-lined up. Under a strong guard we were marched to Cologne station. On the way, several of us, anxious to communicate with our friends and relatives, notifying them of our new address, dropped post-cards into the roadway. The idea was to attract the attention of the guards to them, and then by bribe to induce them to place them in the post. But the officers were too eagle-eyed. They evidently anticipated such a ruse and accordingly kept the soldiers under severe surveillance. One soldier who picked up a post-card, which I had dropped in this manner, was caught in the act and received a terrifying rating on the spot. Thus we who dropped the cards had to rely upon the tender mercies and good-natured feeling of whoever chanced to pick them up to slip them into the post, but I fear very few were dispatched.

We were huddled into the train at Cologne, but it was not until 8.30 that we steamed out of the station. We travelled continuously throughout the day until we reached Hannover at 9 in the evening. During the journey, those who had exercised the forethought to bring food with them had every reason to congratulate themselves, because this was all upon which we had to subsist during the twelve and a half hours' travelling. The authorities did not furnish us with so much as a crust of bread or a spoonful of water. Moreover, if we chanced to pull up at a station where refreshments of any kind might have been procurable, we were not allowed to satisfy our cravings. At one stop, owing to one of our comrades falling ill, we asked the Red Cross for a drop of water. We paid a mark—one shilling—for it, but after taking the money they merely jeered, spat at us, and refused to respond to our request.

At Hannover we were permitted to buy what we could, but I may say that it was very little because the buffet attempted to rob us unmercifully. A tiny sandwich cost



fourpence, while a small basin of thin and unappetising soup, evidently prepared in anticipation of our arrival, was just as expensive. Still the fact remains that throughout the whole railway journey the German authorities never supplied us with a mouthful of food.



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After a wait of three hours at Hannover the train resumed its journey, reaching the station adjacent to the camp at Ruhleben at 6.0 a.m. Thus we had been confined to our carriages for 21-1/2 hours, suffering intense discomfort from the stifling atmosphere and our cramped quarters.

Our first impression of Ruhleben was by no means inspiring. The camp had been started some two or three months previous to our arrival on November 14th, 1914, but it was in a terribly chaotic condition. German method and organisation recorded a dismal and complete failure here.

Having reached the grounds, and registration completed to the satisfaction of the authorities, we were marched off to our quarters. The party to which I was attached was escorted to a stable which was of the ordinary single floor type, characteristic of these islands, with a row of horse-boxes and a loft for the storage of hay and other impedimenta above. The horse-boxes measured ten feet square and had only been cleaned out perfunctorily. The raw manure was still clinging to the walls, while the stalls were wet from the straw which had been recently removed. Indeed in some stalls it had not been cleared out.

The atmosphere had that peculiarly pungent ammonia smell incidental to recently tenanted stables. The prisoners who were allotted to those stalls in which the wet straw still remained were compelled to lie down upon it so that they had a far from inviting or savoury couch. Yet there were many who preferred the unsalubrious and draughty stalls to the loft overhead, and prices for the former ruled high, as much as 100 marks—L5—being freely given for this accommodation. This speculation in the quarters for the prisoners constituted one of the greatest scandals of the camp during its early days, inasmuch as it acted unfairly against those who were “broke.” Who pocketed this money we never learned, but there was a very shrewd suspicion that certain persons were far from being scrupulous and did not hesitate to pursue their usual shark tactics, even under such circumstances.

K—— and myself were compelled to shake ourselves down in the loft. It was reached by a creaking and crazy wooden staircase. Gaining the upper regions we nearly encountered disaster. The loft was practically void of natural illumination, the result being a kind of perpetual dismal gloom, which to us, coming out of the broad daylight, appeared to be darkness until our eyes grew accustomed to it.

The floor was of stone or concrete and in the centre of the space the height from floor to the highest point of the gable roof was about 7 feet, sloping to 4 feet 6 inches at the sides.



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The authorities cannot be credited with being liberal in assigning us space. The roof rafters were spaced 10 feet apart and between each two of these five men had to shake down their beds. Thus each was given a space 2 feet in width by 6 feet in length in which to make himself at home and to stow his belongings. The quarters were so cramped that to dress and undress it was necessary to stand in the centre of the gangway which ran down the middle of the loft. Once in bed it was almost impossible to turn over. To make matters worse the roof was far from being watertight and when a heavy shower swept over us the water would trickle and drip through, while the slits in the wall allowed the wind to whistle and rush into the loft with ear-cutting force.

When we entered into possession the floor was perfectly bare, but we were given a miserable allowance of trusses of straw, each of which was divided up sparingly between so many men. This we threw loosely upon the floor to form a couch, but the allowance was so inadequate that no man could keep himself warm, because the cold from the stone drove through the thin covering, while it was quite out of the question to find comfort.

Only a few blankets were served out. I, myself, made eighteen distinct applications for one, but was denied the luxury, if such it can be called, until eleven months after my arrival at the camp. Had it not been for the generosity of K——, who freely gave me one of his blankets, coupled with one or two overcoats which I secured as a result of my trading operations in the camp, to which I refer later, I should have been compelled to face the bone-piercing, marrow-congealing wintry weather without the slightest covering beyond the clothes in which I stood. Those who, unlike me, were lacking a liberal friend, lay shivering, depending purely upon the warmth radiating from one another's bodies as they laid huddled in rows.

We protested against this lack of blankets to the United States Ambassador, time after time, but it was of little avail. The authorities persisted in their statements that a blanket had been served out to every man. In fact it was asserted in the British papers, as a result of the Ambassador's investigations, that each man had been served with two blankets. But for every man who did possess two blankets there were three prisoners who had not one! The authorities endeavoured to shuffle the responsibility for being without blankets upon the prisoners themselves, unblushingly stating that they had been careless in looking after them, had lost them, or had been so lax as to let them be stolen. If the Ambassador had only gone to the trouble to make a complete and personal canvass he would have probed the matter to the bottom. If a parade with blankets had been called, the German Government would have been fairly trapped in its deliberate lying.



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About ten months after I entered the camp, blankets were purchasable at the camp stores. They cost us nine shillings apiece and they were not our exclusive property. When a prisoner received his release he was not permitted to take his blanket with him. Neither had it any surrender value. It had to be left behind. If the prisoner could find a purchaser for it he was at liberty to do so, but if no sale could be consummated then it had to be presented to a comrade. The blanket was not allowed to leave the camp because it contained a certain amount of wool!

The food supplied by the authorities did not vary very pronouncedly from what I had received in other camps, but if anything it was a trifle better, especially in the early days, when Germany was not feeling the pinch of the British blockade. For breakfast there was the eternal acorn coffee and a hunk of black bread. The mid-day repast comprised a soup contrived from potatoes, cabbage, and carrots with traces of meat. One strange mixture which the authorities were fond of serving out to us was a plate of rice and prunes garnished with a small sausage! I invariably traded the sausage with a comrade for prunes, this so-called German dainty not appealing to my palate in the slightest. After a while, however, this dish vanished from the limited menu. Tea was merely a repetition of the morning meal.

Our first emphatic protest was in connection with our sleeping accommodation in the loft. A representative came from the American Embassy and we introduced him forthwith to our sleeping quarters. We not only voiced our complaints but we demonstrated our inability to get warm at night owing to the cold floor striking through the straw. He agreed with us and ordered the authorities to provide us with sleeping arrangements somewhat more closely allied to civilized practice. The Germans obeyed the letter but not the spirit of the Representative's recommendations. They sent us in a few boards spaced an inch or two apart and nailed to thin cross battens. In this way our bodies were lifted about two inches off the floor!

The straw when served out to us was perfectly clean and fresh, but it did not retain this attractiveness for a very long time. The soil in the vicinity of Ruhleben is friable, the surface being a thick layer of fine sand in dry, and an evil-looking slush in wet, weather. As the prisoners when entering the barracks were unable to clean their boots, the mud was transferred to the straw. Not only did the straw thus become extremely dirty but the mud, upon drying, charged it heavily with dust. When a tired man threw himself down heavily upon his sorry couch he was enveloped for a few seconds in the cloud of dust which he sent from the straw into the air. Whenever we attempted to shake up our beds to make them slightly more comfortable, the darkness of the loft was rendered darker by the dense dust fog which was precipitated. Naturally violent coughing and sneezing attended these operations and the dust, being far from clean in itself, wrought fearful havoc with our lungs. I recall one prisoner who was in perfect health when he entered the camp, but within a few weeks he had contracted tuberculosis. He declined so rapidly as to arouse the apprehensions of the authorities, who hurriedly sent him home to Britain.

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After lying upon this bare straw for three months we were given some coarse sacking and were peremptorily ordered to fill these bags with the straw. This task gave the sand and dust a spirited opportunity to penetrate our systems. Had a stranger outside the building heard our violent coughing he would have been pardoned had he construed our loft to be a hospital for consumptives.

We had been lying for quite six months upon this straw when we were suddenly paraded to receive the order to re-appear a quarter of an hour later with our beds. Re-parading we were commanded to empty the sacks to form a big pile, and it was a repulsive-looking accumulation. But we observed this straw was collected and carted away very carefully, although at the time we paid little attention to the incident.

Naturally we concluded that we were to be given a supply of new straw, and not before it was wanted. But we were not to be treated as milksops. We were marched off to the railway station where there was a quantity of wooden shavings which we were told to pack into our sacks. When we attacked the bundles we recoiled in horror. The material was reeking wet. The authorities might just as well have served us with soddened sponges.

What could be done? Visions of rheumatic fever and various other racking maladies arising from sleeping upon a wet bed haunted us. However, the day being fine we rapidly strewed the bedding material out in the hope that the sun would dry it somewhat. This precaution, however, was only partially successful. Our couches were damp that night.

We thought no more about the straw which we had been compelled to exchange for the shavings until we learned that a German newspaper was shrieking with wild enthusiasm about Teuton resourcefulness and science having scored another scintillating economic triumph. According to this newspaper an illustrious professor had discovered that straw possessed decidedly valuable nourishing qualities essential to human life, and that it was to be ground up and to enter into the constitution of the bread, which accordingly was now to be composed of at least three constituents—wheat-meal, potato flour, and straw. Some of us began to ponder long and hard over the straw which had so suddenly been taken away from us, especially myself, as I had experienced so many of the weird tactics which are pursued by the Germans in their vain efforts to maintain their game of bluff.

I asked every member of our party, in the event of discovering a foreign article in his bread, to hand it over to me because I had decided to become a collecting fiend of an unusual type. Contributions were speedily forthcoming, and they ranged over pieces of dirty straw, three to four inches in length, fragments of coke, pieces of tree-bark, and odds and ends of every description—in fact just the extraneous substances which penetrated into our loft with the mud clinging to our boots and which, of course, became associated with the loose straw. I cherished this collection, which by the time I secured

my release had assumed somewhat impressive proportions. I left these relics in safe keeping near the border, and they will come into my hands upon the conclusion of the war if not before.



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From these strange discoveries I was prompted to make inquisitive enquiries. I discreetly and in apparent idleness cross-questioned the guards and any other sources of information which were likely to prove fruitful. My interrogations were so seemingly innocent as to draw immediate and comprehensive replies. Stringing these fragments of information together, it was impossible to come to any conclusion other than that I had formed in my own mind, namely, that the straw upon which we had been lying for six months had been whisked off to the granary and had re-appeared among us in the guise of the staff of life! It was not conducive to our peace of mind to think we had probably been eating our beds!

*[large gap]*

During the early days, owing to the insufficiency of nutritious food, we were hard-pressed. There were no canteens, but presently these appeared and we were able to purchase further limited supplies of food, at an all but prohibitive price I might mention, because the rascally German speculators had paid heavily for the privilege of being able to fleece the British. When, at a later date, we received a weekly allowance of five shillings, the plight of everyone became eased materially, although, unfortunately, this sum went a very short way owing to the extortionate prices which prevailed.

One particularly atrocious scandal was associated with the arrival of some big crates of comforts sent out to us by one of the philanthropic missions at home. The local stores suddenly blossomed forth with a huge and extremely varied stock of wearing apparel—mufflers, socks, and other articles of which we were in urgent need. I, among others, did not hesitate to renew my wardrobe, which demanded replenishment, particularly as the prices appeared to be attractive. We were ignorant as to the origin of this stock, but it did not trouble our minds until my purchase of a pair of socks. This precipitated an uproar, because within one of the socks I found a small piece of paper on which was written, undoubtedly by the hand which had diligently knitted the article, “With love from ——. To a poor British prisoner of war in Germany,” followed by the name of the Mission to whom the articles had been sent, doubtless in response to an appeal.

This discovery revealed the maddening circumstance that what had been sent out to Ruhleben for free distribution among the prisoners was actually being sold. There was an enquiry which yielded a more or less convincing result according to one’s point of view.

There was also an outcry over the crates in which these articles were sent to us. The party of which I was a member had removed from the loft to a horse-box beneath which had been vacated. When we entered this attractive residence the walls were still covered with manure—they were not given a dressing of whitewash until later—while lying upon the bare floor, with only a thin sack of doubtful shavings between us and the stone, did not heighten our spirits. But as we were becoming reconciled to our captivity, we decided to make our uninviting stall as homely as we could. We decided upon a

wooden bed apiece. The authorities, after persistent worrying, only partially acceded to our demands by providing three primitive single beds for occupation by six men.



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As we could not persuade the authorities to serve us with a bed apiece, we decided to build the three extra beds ourselves. But we were faced with the extreme difficulty of procuring the requisite wood! The authorities had none to give away and very little to sell. When we saw these empty packing cases, which were of huge dimensions, we thought luck had come our way at last, so we approached the proprietor of the stores for permission to break them up. But to our disgust he informed us that he had already parted with them—for a consideration we discovered afterwards. Two had been secured by a German sentry in the camp to be converted into wardrobes, while the others were in the hands of the camp carpenter. We approached this worthy, but he ridiculed the suggestion that he should give some of the wood to us for our intended purpose. We could *buy* the boards if we liked. As there was no alternative source of supply we did so, and the price of purchase showed that the carpenter cleared nine shillings on each crate! With much difficulty we built our three extra beds between us, but the outlay for materials alone was eighteen shillings!

The cold during the winter affected us very severely because the barrack was absolutely devoid of any heating facilities. When the snow was carpeting the ground to a depth of from six to eight inches, and the thermometer was hovering several degrees below zero we lay awake nearly the whole night shivering with cold. Indeed on more than one occasion, I with others, abandoned all attempts to sleep and trudged the loft to keep warm.

We appealed to the American Ambassador in the hope that he would be able to rectify matters. When he came upon the scene there was another outburst of indignation. He ordered the authorities to instal a heating system without further delay. By driving through our sole protector in this manner, we, as usual, received some measure of respite. But the heating was useless to those living in the horse-boxes. The side partitions of the latter were not carried up to the ceiling, but a space of some two feet was left. To protect ourselves from the fierce ear-cutting draught which swept through the stables we blocked these spaces with brown paper. But the means which somewhat combated the onslaughts of the draughts also shut out the heat, so that, in our case, and it was typical of others, we really did not benefit one iota from the “complete heating system” with which, so the German press asserted, Ruhleben Camp was lavishly equipped.

Christmas Day, 1914, was an unholy nightmare. Our fare could not, by any stretch of imagination, be described as Christmassy. We had several pro-Germans among us—they preached this gospel in the hope of being released if only on “passes,” but the thoroughbred Prussian is not to be gulled by patriots made-to-order—and they kept up the spirit of Yule Tide with candles and what not, somewhat after the approved Teuton manner. It was impressive, but so palpably artificial and shallow as merely to court derision and mockery among the Britishers.



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The great meal of the Day of Days was a huge joke! One barrack received what might be excusably described as something like a chop, with potatoes and gravy. The next barrack had a portion of a chop and potatoes, but no gravy. By the time this barrack had been served apparently all supplies had been exhausted, thanks to the wonderful perfection of German method, organisation, and management. The result was that a third barrack had to be content with a raw rasher of bacon, while a further barrack received only potatoes swimming in a liquid which was undoubtedly set down officially as gravy. But barrack six got nothing! This barrack is occupied by members of the Jewish persuasion, but only those who partook of Jewish food received anything to eat that day. The Jews generally fared better, because they were tended by the Rabbi, who indeed exerted himself untiringly upon their behalf. He drove into the camp every day in his motor car, accompanied by his wife, and they went diligently around the members of their flock, ascertaining the requirements of each man, and doing all in their power to satisfy him so far as the rules and regulations of the camp permitted. The Jews who supported their Rabbi had no complaint to offer on the score of food, because they received it in variety and plenty through the munificence of their co-religionists in Berlin.

In the evening we attempted a sing-song to keep up the spirit and atmosphere of the season as far as practicable within our modest limitations, but this was promptly suppressed by our task-masters. We were compelled to spend the evening in miserable silence or to crawl into bed to muse over our unhappy lot. So far as Ruhleben was concerned, the sentiment of "Good-will to all men" had sped by on the main line, and had forgotten all about us poor wretches in the siding.

While in Cologne on "passes" I and my friends frequently learned from the *Berliner Tageblatt* and other leading newspapers that the foremost artistes performing in Berlin paid visits to Ruhleben in the evening to amuse the prisoners. At that time we were somewhat prone to envy the good time our compatriots were evidently having at the internment camp and the bed of roses upon which, according to the press, they were lying. But when we entered the camp and made enquiries, we discovered that the newspaper assertions were not merely gross exaggerations, but unblushing fabrications.

To satisfy ourselves upon this point we went to the corner of the camp where the delightful entertainments were said to be given, but the only artistes we discovered were a dozen hungry prisoners trying to coax a tune out of a rebellious mouth organ! Our belief in German statements received another shattering blow. During my twelve months in this camp I never caught a glimpse of or heard a note from an eminent German impresario or artiste of any description. All the amusements we ever obtained were due to our own



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efforts, and I am glad to say that they evidently were vastly superior to any that the much-vaunted city could offer to its estimable citizens. At least this was the only impression we could gather from the statements of visitors who were occasionally permitted to attend our theatrical and vaudeville performances and concerts. We had nothing for which to thank the Germans in the way of diversion than we had in any other direction.

### CHAPTER XIX

#### ORGANISING THE COMMUNAL CITY OF RUHLEBEN

When I reached the internment camp it was in a wildly chaotic condition. Every semblance of management was conspicuous by its absence, while the German authorities never lifted a finger or uttered a single word towards straightening things out. Some of the enlightened spirits among us maintained that the Germans would not assist us, but it is my firm impression that they could not: it was a problem beyond their capacities. Such a state of affairs seems remarkable when one recalls how persistently the Teuton flaunts his vaunted skill in organisation, scientific management and method before the world at large. As a matter of fact it is only when one secures a position behind the scenes in Germany, to come into close contact with the Hun as he really is, when he has been stripped of the mask and veneer which he assumes for parade and to impress his visitors, that the hollowness of the Teuton pretensions is laid bare in all its ghastly nakedness.

The result in Ruhleben camp was terrible. It was every man for himself and the Devil take the hindmost. If one, in desperation, approached the authorities for a word of suggestion to improve this or that, officialdom merely shrugged its shoulders and candidly admitted impotence to recommend a remedy. So we had to depend essentially upon our own exertions and initiative.

Each barrack elected a captain, whose position was somewhat analogous to that of the Governor of a State, while over the camp as a whole reigned a super-captain. Seeing that there were several thousand prisoners at the time of my arrival on November 12, 1914, accommodated in twelve barracks, which presented a ghastly exhibition of congestion, and that neither law nor order, except as interpreted and maintained by the rifle and the bayonet of the unscrupulous German sentries, prevailed, the necessity to turn the colony inside out and to inaugurate some form of systematic control and operation was only too obvious.

In the early days we were entirely dependent upon the authorities for our food supplies, and they were invariably inadequate, while still more often the victuals were disgustingly



deficient in appetising qualities. There were no facilities whatever for supplementing the official rations by purchases from a canteen such as we had enjoyed for a time at Sennelager. At last a German *frau*, animated by desire to improve the shining hour at the expense



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of the interned civilians, opened a small booth where some extras such as we so urgently desired could be procured. This booth, about as large as the bathing machine common to our seaside resorts, was situate in the centre of the camp. The diminutive dimensions of the "shop" prevented the woman carrying extensive stocks, and, as a rule she was cleared right out before mid-day. Her specialities were sweets, fruit, canned foods, herrings, and such like, but in extremely limited quantities.

This shop became known throughout the colony as the "Pond-side" stores, and the nickname was apt. Why, constitutes a little story in itself. It virtually occupied the centre of the main thoroughfare, and certainly became the busiest corner in the community. But at this point the land made a sudden dip. Consequently, when we were visited by rainstorms, and it *does* rain in Germany, rendering a British torrential downpour a Scotch mist by comparison, the rain water, unable to escape, gathered in this depression, forming a respectable pond, with the booth or stores standing, a dejected island, in the middle.

If the storm were unduly heavy this pond assumed imposing dimensions. One day I decided to measure it, so arming myself with a foot-rule I waded deliberately through its length and width with my crude measuring device to find that it was 133-1/2 feet long by 25 feet wide, and ranged from 6 inches to 2-1/2 feet in depth. While engaged in this occupation I was surprised by an officer, who, catching sight of my rule, sharply demanded what I was doing? I told him frankly, and there was a lively breeze between us.

[large gap]

Naturally one will ask how it was that such a pond could form in the heart of the camp. To the British mind, saturated as it is with blind faith in German superior abilities in every ramification of human endeavour, it may seem incomprehensible, and the formation of the lake may be charitably attributed to the rain-water drainage system becoming choked, thus effectively preventing the escape of the water. But there was no drain to cope with this water, and what is more to the point the nuisance was never overcome until the British prisoners themselves took the matter in hand.

When the water was lying in this depression a trip to the Stores became an adventure. To obviate the necessity of wading through the noisome water we secured a plank gangway upon boxes and barrels. The pathway thus formed was only a few inches in width and precarious. The gangway ran out from one bank to the stores, thence on to the opposite bank, so that it was possible for the men to pass to the shop and to dry land in single file. If one were at the extreme end of the queue one might confidently expect to wait from two to three hours before reaching the shop, only then to be disappointed because it had been cleared out of everything edible.



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When the water was up, the German *frau*, acting as shopkeeper, would perch herself on a box or barrel with the murky fluid swishing and snarling around her, because her stores always suffered inundation at such times. Walking the plank to make a purchase was highly exciting and mildly diverting. No little effort was required to maintain one's balance, while time after time the crazy foundations, as represented by the boxes and barrels, would give way, precipitating a long string of patient customers into the dirty water.

The inadequacy of these stores was felt very severely. At last, after a short and determined deliberation, it was resolved to run the colony upon communal lines. This was the only feasible form of control in order to protect the prisoners against scandalous robbery, extortionate prices, and to ensure a sufficiency of the essentials which were in such urgent demand. A simple, although comprehensive form of civic government was drawn up, involving the formation of educational facilities, a police force, a fire brigade, the establishment and maintenance of shops and canteens, all of which were operated by the community for the benefit of the community, the receipts being pooled in the camp treasury.

Such a system was absolutely imperative. Some of the prisoners were without money and were denied the receipt of contributions from home, their relatives and friends doubtless being too poor to help them. Naturally these luckless prisoners were speedily reduced to extremely straitened circumstances and distress among them became very acute. Furthermore parcels of clothing and other articles were being sent in bulk, addressed merely to the camp as a whole, instead of to individuals, the objects of the senders being the fair and equitable distribution of the articles among the prisoners indiscriminately. The handling of these supplies led to frequent and unblushing abuses, the men who were not in need of such contributions receiving them at the expense of those who sorely wanted them.

After our civic government had been reduced to practical application and was working smoothly, the task of distributing these unaddressed bulk supplies was entrusted to the captains of the barracks. The captain was selected for this responsibility because he knew all the deserving cases in his own party and was able to see they received the alleviation of their distress. When a crate of goods came in the captain compiled a list setting out the names and precise needs of every man in his party. If you were in a position to do so you were expected to pay a small sum for the articles, the price thereof being fixed, although you were at liberty to pay more if you felt disposed. This money was paid into the camp treasury. But if you were "broke," no money was expected. Consequently every man was certain to secure something of what he needed, irrespective of his financial circumstances.



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The camp government also embarked upon trading operations. Shops were erected, one or two at a time, until at last we had a row of emporiums. The requisite material was bought from the Germans or from home with money drawn from the camp treasury. It must not be forgotten that the Teuton authorities resolutely refused to supply us with a single thing, declined to participate in any improvements, and refused to contribute a penny to defray the cost of any enterprise which was considered imperative to ameliorate our conditions. Indeed they robbed us right and left, as I will narrate later. By building shops in this manner we were able to boast a Bond Street, from which in a short time radiated other thoroughfares which were similarly christened after the fashionable streets of London—we had a strange penchant for the West-End when it came to naming our streets. The result is that to-day Ruhleben can point to its Fleet Street, its Trafalgar Square, and so on.

Goods were purchased for the various departments according to the specialities of the shops—boots for the bootshop, clothes for the clothiers and groceries for the provision stores. The communal government selected competent men to take charge of these establishments at a weekly salary of five shillings. Every shop in the camp, with the exception of a very few, such as mine in which I specialised in engraving, the ticket-writers and so forth, belonged to the community and were run by the community for the benefit of the community. No prisoner was permitted to launch out upon his own account as a shopkeeper if he intended to deal in a necessity. Only those trades which involved no stock or might be described as luxuries were permitted to be under individual management for individual profit.

As the inter-trading in the camp developed we were able to purchase large stocks of essentials, and it was astonishing to observe the prosperity with which our trading endeavours flourished. Great Britain has always been contemptuously described by our commercial rivals as a nation of shop-keepers, and in Ruhleben Camp we offered our German authorities, right under their very noses, the most powerful illustration of this national characteristic, and brought home to them very conclusively the fact that our national trait is no empty claim. Thousands of pounds sterling were passed over the counters every week.

While the shops dealt only in what might be termed necessities for our welfare, we were able to procure almost any article we desired. A “Special Order Department” was created to which we took our orders for special articles not stocked in the camp. If the order, upon scrutiny by the authorities, was deemed to be reasonable and did not infringe the prohibited list, the arrival of the goods in due course was certain.



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The value of this system of managing the colony may be illustrated from one example, typical of many, which reflects credit upon the captains and civic organising committee. Butter was a luxury and could not be purchased in the camp for less than 3s. 2d. per pound. Yet this figure was decidedly below that ruling in the shops of Berlin for this article of food. Under these circumstances one might wonder how we were able to sell butter at a cheaper figure than the native tradesmen, and readers might be disposed to entertain the opinion that here, at all events, we did receive a valuable concession from the German authorities. But it was no such thing. The camp treasury secured a quotation for butter and at once realised that the terms were far too high for the prisoners as a whole. Consequently they decided to place this and margarine upon sale at attractive and possible prices. The purchasing department was allotted a certain figure for purchasing, but as this was insufficient the difference in the prime cost was taken from the common fund. Hence we never paid more than 3s. 2d. per pound retail in the camp, although the price was soaring in Berlin, so long as the article was obtainable. This division of the cost between the communal shop and the common fund brought butter within the reach of those who otherwise would have had to be content with dry bread, because very few of us could have afforded the luxury had Berlin prices prevailed in Ruhleben. Incidentally the price of butter serves to convey a tangible idea of the economic conditions reached in Germany and that within nine months of the outbreak of hostilities!

When the prisoners discovered that they could obtain the majority of things which serve to make life bearable even under depressing and oppressive conditions they commenced to launch out in the acquisition of things for improving creature comfort. With the money drawn from the banks and other institutions they purchased beds, cupboards, utensils, electric reading lamps, clothes, and what not to render their living quarters attractive and to improve their personal appearance and conditions. This extra work threw a heavy strain upon the clerical department which, within a short time, demanded organisation. The position of auditor was assumed by J——, who gathered a competent staff, and they worked like Trojans on behalf of the camp. Many times, while on night patrol as a policeman, I found J—— and his assistants burning the midnight oil at 1 a.m., straightening out the accounts and posting the books of the treasury. He and his staff deserve the greatest credit for the high-spirited manner in which and the hours they worked on behalf of their fellow-prisoners.

The shop-keeping industry received a decided impetus when the British Emergency Relief Fund was inaugurated. Under this scheme, five shillings per week were paid regularly through the American Embassy to all prisoners who were in need of financial assistance.



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[large gap]

Notwithstanding the elaborate precautions which had been brought into operation to ensure that this relief should get only into deserving hands, the fact remains that up to the day of my departure it was being paid directly into the pockets of some of our enemies. The scheme had been brought into operation some little while, when one morning, upon parade, the authorities requested all those who sympathised with the German cause to step out. Many, doubtless thinking that here was the opportunity to secure preferential treatment or the golden chance to obtain release from the Prison Camp of Abandoned Hope, answered the call. The numbers were appreciable, but as they advanced from the lines they were assailed by vicious hooting, groaning and hissing from the others who were resolved to maintain their patriotism at all hazards. Still it was an excellent move upon the part of the Germans. It eliminated dangerous enemies from our midst.

But if the pro-Germans, now chuckling merrily and rubbing their hands with childish delight, considered their release to be imminent they received a very rude awakening. The German authorities are not readily gulled. To them a pro-German is every whit as dangerous as an avowed enemy. They merely marched these traitors to another part of the camp where they were forced to re-establish themselves in their own isolated barrack quarters. They received no improvement in treatment or food. The only difference between the two divisions of what is now described as the "split camp" is that whereas the true Britishers are free to sing "Rule, Britannia," "God Save the King," and other patriotic songs, the traitors have to while away their time singing "Die Wacht am Rhein," "Deutschland Uber Alles," and other German jingo melodies.

The position of the traitors became aggravated a little later, when they learned that the German authorities were quite ready to release them upon one simple condition—that they joined the German Army! I am ashamed to say that some of them even took advantage of this infamous avenue of escape. But the majority, after their dropped jaws and long faces resumed their normal positions, thought they might just as well change their national coat once more.

Some of these scoundrels, after openly enlisting under the German banner, did not disavow their pension but coolly continued to draw the five shillings per week. Moreover, in one instance at least, one of these scapegoats after declaring his pro-German proclivities was enabled to return to England as an exchanged prisoner. I could reveal unpalatable truths concerning the laxity of our authorities in dealing with the exchange of prisoners, but the moment is not opportune.

One day one of these renegades came to my booth to have some engraving carried out. He asked me a price and I quoted half a crown. To my surprise he urged me to make it five shillings. Somewhat astonished I suggested that the work was not worth five shillings and that my estimate was perfectly fair.



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“Oh, it doesn’t matter,” he replied, laughing gaily. “I draw five shillings from the British Prisoners’ Relief Fund, which I never spend because I don’t want it, and one week’s draw might just as well pay for this job!”

I was so exasperated by this cool confession from the “P.-G.”—our colloquialism for a pro-German—that I whipped round my bench and confronted the amiable traitor. We commenced to argue, I told him what I thought about him, words grew hot and soon the fur commenced to fly. He landed out at me and then I pitched into him unmercifully. It was useless for him to appeal for help. We knew every “P.-G.” among us and he was now fairly in the hands of the Philistines. My colleagues merely gathered round, jeering and cheering like mad as I got some stinging blows home. The renegade subsequently slunk off rather badly battered, only to act quite up to his traitorous principles. After being thrashed in fair fight he crawled off to one of the German officers to whom he explained in a wheedling, piteous voice that he had been assaulted and went in fear of his life.

The officer came over to me and accused me of fighting. I explained the whole circumstances, emphasising the fact that the sneaking, drivelling humbug was drawing five shillings from the British Pension Fund and yet was parading and voicing his anti-British sentiments far and wide, when there were many admitted and honourable British prisoners walking about and in greater need of the money. The officer was evidently impressed with my point of view and undoubtedly concurred in my contention that my attitude was perfectly justified.

At all events he unostentatiously and unconsciously betrayed his opinion of a pro-German. He never uttered a word of reprimand to me; the discomfited “P.-G.” was advised to make himself scarce; and although I had been guilty of the grave offence of fighting I never heard another word about the incident. It is evident that the officer in his own mind concluded that the less he said about the episode the better. Still I had got satisfaction. I had given one of our enemies a drubbing which he would not forget in a hurry.

Yet the one fact remains. At the time I left the camp there were several of these whimpering, cold-footed, British Judas Iscariots still drawing unblushingly their five shillings per week! I might add that this constituted one of the greatest scandals of the camp, and precipitated a feeling of smouldering rebellion, not against the German authorities, but against the traitors who did not refrain from attempting to fraternise with us after the diabolical repudiation of their nationality. It was fortunate these back-boneless, long-faced and drooping-mouthed Britons were forced to live away from us; otherwise I am afraid there would have been some tragedies and endless fighting.



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Another rule of the camp somewhat grated upon our nerves. We opened several canteens which we stocked with our own goods, and operated upon communal lines so that the prisoners might secure ample food-stuffs. Naturally these articles were sold to the men at the lowest possible prices. But to our dismay we learned afterwards that they might have been sold at a lower figure had the German military not demanded a commission, or perhaps it should be called a “royalty” upon the turnover of 7-1/2 per cent.! This applied equally to the “Special Order Department,” and I am afraid, if the subject were probed to the bottom, it would be found that every article sold in Ruhleben—fully ninety per cent. of which probably would be construed as articles saleable from the canteen if shops were unavailable—contributes its toll of seven-and-a-half per cent. to the German authorities. When one recalls the thousands sterling which pass through the shops and canteens during the course of the week, the German officials must have derived a handsome revenue from this iniquitous practice. If all the camps were mulcted in the manner of Ruhleben, looking after the British prisoners must be an extremely lucrative occupation.

This scandalous impost hit us at every turn. It meant that we had to pay for every article and through the nose at that. For instance, the Camp Committee laid down a house equipped with four large boilers to supply boiling water, which we had to fetch, and with which we were able to brew beverages and soups in the secrecy of our barracks. We purchased this convenience, of which the Germans took a proportion, so that we really paid a prohibitive price for the water which we consumed! *The supply of hot water, no matter for what purpose, was construed by the Germans as coming within the business of the canteen!* Shower baths were also introduced, the cost being defrayed out of the camp treasury. I wonder if the British authorities follow a similar practice among the German internment camps in this country? It is an excellent method of making the prisoner pay for his own board and lodging.

The educational classes proved a complete success. Almost every language under the sun could be heard among the prisoners. The classes were absolutely free, of course, although you could contribute something, if you desired. Individual tuition was given, but in this instance the tutors were free to levy fees. The mastery of languages became one of the most popular occupations to pass the time. I myself had a class of dusky members of the British Empire, drawn from various Colonies, and speaking as many dialects, to whom I undertook to teach English, reading, writing, drawing, and other subjects. At the time the class was formed, they could only muster a few English words, conducting conversation for the most part by signs and indifferent German. But my pupils proved apt and industrious, and by the time I left they had mastered our tongue very effectively, as the many letters they sent me, before leaving Ruhleben, striving to thank me for what I had done, testify.



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Camp life was not without its humour. Around the boiler-house stretched a large wooden hoarding which served as a notice-board. Every day there were posted the names of prisoners, set out in alphabetical order, for whom parcels had arrived. The remaining space was covered with advertisements of a widely varied order. The humour unconsciously displayed upon that board probably has never been equalled in the pages of a humorous journal yet printed. It is impossible to narrate every quaint announcement as they were so prolific, but I have never forgotten some of them. One I recall was an advertisement of a tutor setting forth his terms for teaching English. But only one word in the announcement was spelled correctly! Another, posted by a sailor, ran, "*Talking Parrot for Sale. Guaranteed not to swear!*" It remained up for three days and apparently there was nothing doing. Such an article was evidently a drug upon the Ruhleben market. After the bird prisoner had been in the camp a while the advertisement re-appeared, but the word "not" was blotted out! The advertisement disappeared almost instantly, which led one to surmise that someone had purchased Polly to repeat Ruhleben conversation at a later date, beside the fireside of an Englishman's home, as a reminder of the times and the vernacular of a German prison camp.

The various reports which have been published in the German and British newspapers from time to time, relative to life at Ruhleben, have dwelt at length upon the social amenities of that imposing colony. People at home have read about the tennis courts, our football field, the theatre, and other forms of recreation. Possibly they think that the Germans have been very generous and sympathetic in this direction at least. But have they? For the use of a section of the cinder track to serve as tennis courts the German authorities demanded and received L50! We paid them another L50 for the football field, while for the use of the hall under the Grand Stand which had never been used since the outbreak of war, and which we converted into a theatre, we were forced to hand over a third L50. The camp treasury met these demands, and probably an examination of the books would reveal many other disbursements of a similar character for other facilities. The Germans have never spent a penny on our behalf, and have never given us anything.

When the camp is broken up and the prisoners are released, there will be a pretty problem for some person to unravel. By now Ruhleben has the appearance of a healthy and thriving little town. The prisoners have toiled unceasingly to improve their surroundings. When we entered into occupation of our horse-box, its solitary appointment was the manger. We needed a shelf, and had to pay heavily for the wood. As time went on our ingenuity found expression in many other ways. We made tables, chairs, wardrobes, sideboards, and other furniture. In some instances



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these embellishments were purchased from German firms. The result is that to-day some of the quarters are as attractive and as comfortable as a flat. When the camp is broken up these articles will have to be left behind. Although under the hammer prices will and must rule low, in the aggregate many thousands of pounds will be realised. What is to be done with this money? Who is to have it? Scores of buildings have been erected with money drawn from the common fund. Is any compensation going to be paid by the German authorities for the fruits of our labour and ingenuity which will fall into their hands? We have paid for all the materials used out of our own pockets, and the work carried out upon these lines already represents an expenditure of tens of thousands sterling. Are the prisoners to lose all that?

The community is run upon the most rigid business-like lines. Nothing is given away at Ruhleben. This explains how we have built up such a wealthy camp treasury. The Camp Authorities govern the concerts, theatrical and vaudeville entertainments, troupes, band, newspapers, programmes—in short everything. Individual enterprise has but a negligible scope in Ruhleben. The initial outlays have admittedly been heavy, but the receipts have been still larger, so that there must be a big balance somewhere. It has not all been spent, and the question arises as to what will be done with the accumulated funds.

To convey some idea of the possible and profitable sources of income it is only necessary to explain the system of handling the prisoners' parcels. These are sorted in a large building. I learned that a parcel was waiting for me by perusing the notice-board. I presented myself at the office window to receive a ticket which I exchanged for the parcel, the ticket serving as a receipt for due delivery. But the ticket cost me one penny! Seeing that the average number of parcels cleared every day is 3,000, it will be seen that the sale of the necessary tickets alone yields roughly L12 per day or over L4,000 a year. Recently the price of the ticket has been reduced fifty per cent., but even at one halfpenny the annual income exceeds L2,000. This one branch of business must show a handsome profit, and there are scores of other prosperous money-yielding propositions in practice in the camp.

No matter how spendthrift the treasury may be the accumulated funds must now represent an imposing figure, because, with only one or two exceptions, everything is run at a profit. Will the camp treasury carry the precepts of communal trading to the logical conclusion? Will it distribute the accumulated funds among the prisoners, pro rata according to the term of imprisonment, at the end of the war? If that is done it will serve as some compensation for the break-up of homes in Britain and other countries which has taken place, because those who were left behind were deprived—through no fault of aught but the German authorities and their ridiculous regulations—of their wage-earners.



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As the result of frequent representations the German authorities permitted us to inaugurate our civil police force for the maintenance of law and order throughout the camp. After this force came into being and had proved satisfactory, the military guards were withdrawn, and we were encircled only by the cordon of sentries outside. We suffered no military interference whatever. The force, of which I became a member, numbered forty all told. Our badge of office was an armlet—blue and white bands similar to that worn by the British constabulary, and carried upon the left wrist over our private clothes—together with a button inscribed “Police. Ruhleben Camp.” The selection of the police force was carried out upon extremely rigorous lines to ensure that only the most capable men were secured for this exacting duty. We patrolled the camp night and day, the duty under the former conditions being two hours, at the conclusion of which we reported ourselves to the police station, and then proceeded to our barracks to rest, waking up our successor on the way, who thereupon went on duty.

All things considered the camp was extremely well-behaved, the British naturally being amenable to discipline. One or two thefts occurred, the offenders, when caught, being handed over to the German authorities to receive punishment. At times there were manifestations of rowdiness, but they were speedily and readily quelled. The police required to be unconscionably patient, tactful, and sympathetic, because we were all chafing under restraint, and our nerves were strained, while tempers were hasty. Indeed, the German authorities marvelled at the manner and the ease with which we kept the camp upon its best behaviour, and I think we taught them many valuable lessons concerning the enforcement of law and order without the parade of any force or badgering, judging from the assiduity with which they studied our methods. Even the “drunks”—and they were not strangers to Ruhleben, despite the fact that alcoholic liquor was religiously taboo, the liquor being smuggled in and paid heavily for, a bottle of Red Seal costing fifteen shillings—never gave us the slightest cause for anxiety.

One day there was a serious explosion of discontent. We had been served at our mid-day meal with a basin of evil-looking skilly. We took it back, and protested that we ought not to be served with prison fare.

“Skilly?” repeated the cook. “That isn’t skilly. It’s Quaker Oats.”

“Strewth!” yapped a sailor, “That’s the bloomin’ funniest Quaker Oats I’ve tasted. Quaker Oats will keep you alive, but that bloomin’ muck ’d poison a rat!” saying which he disdainfully emptied the noisome contents of his basin upon the ground.

We were told we should get nothing else, which infuriated us. We gathered round the cook-house, and the discontented, grumbling sailors and fishermen, unable to make any impression by word of mouth, commenced to bombard the kitchen with bricks, stones, and clods of earth. The fusillade grew furious, and the cat-calls vociferous.

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The turmoil had been raging for some time when a mounted officer dashed up. Securing silence he ordered us all into barracks. There was an ominous growl. Then he told us he had brought a battalion of soldiers and a machine gun section from Spandau, and if we did not disperse in five minutes he would fire on us.

We looked round, thinking he was bluffing, but there, sure enough, were the soldiers with their rifles ready, and we discovered afterwards that the machine guns had been brought up to the gates ready for use at a moment's notice. We shuffled for a few minutes, frowning, glowering, mumbling, cursing and swearing, but as the Germans always mean what they say, we sullenly moved off as ordered. Still the protest bore fruit; no further attempts were made to serve us with that fare.

The highways of the camp were in a deplorable condition. They were merely tracks trodden down by our feet and carts, heavily rutted, uneven, and either a slough of mud and water, or a desert of dust, according to the weather. We persistently urged the German authorities to improve these roads, but they turned a deaf ear to all our entreaties.

At last the Camp Authorities decided to carry out the work themselves. There was a call for labourers, who were promised a steady wage of five shillings per week. Although enrolled in the first instance to build roads, this force was afterwards kept on as a working gang to carry out any jobs which became necessary. These men laid out and built an excellent road system, following the well-accepted British lines with a high camber and a hard surface so that the water could run into the gutters.

These roads aroused intense interest among our captors. They used to come in and follow the men at work, studying the method of building up the fabric, and upon its completion they inspected and subjected it to tests. A little later they coolly sent in a request to the road-builders to go outside to continue urgent work of a similar character. However, investigation revealed the disconcerting fact that these men were required to take the places of those Germans generally associated with this task, who had been called up for service at the front. Needless to say the suggestion met with a unanimous and determined refusal.

As time went on our conditions became worse. Bread became unobtainable at almost any price. Pathetic advertisements commenced to steal upon the notice-board, some of which I vividly remember. One in particular revealed a poignant story of silent suffering. It ran "Good Swan Fountain Pen. Will exchange for loaf of bread." Yet it was only typical of scores of others couched in a similar vein. All sorts of things were offered in exchange for food. Our treasury redoubled its efforts, but food could not be got even at famine prices. This was early in March, 1915, so that the country was speedily being compelled to concede the strangling force of the British blockade.



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One morning we were paraded, and every man was ordered to produce any bread he might have in his possession. Some of us had been storing the official rations against the rainy day which we felt must come sooner or later. This had to be surrendered. The guards also carried out a thorough search to assure themselves that none had been left behind or concealed under beds. When the bread had been collected the authorities calmly cut it up and served us with a small piece each—that is they gave us back a portion of what was already our property, and which we had not eaten merely because we had been making ourselves content with purchases from the canteens.

This proceeding brought home to us the vivid prospect of being reduced to a perilous position within a very short time. So in our letters home we emphasised the need to send us bread and other food-stuffs. As about three weeks elapsed before we received a loaf after it had been dispatched, we kept it another week, then soaked it in water and took it to the cook-house to be re-baked, for which we were charged one penny.

Some of the unfortunate members of the party had no bread come from home. But with true camaraderie those prisoners who were in the land of plenty invariably divided their prizes, so that one and all were reduced to a common level. In this way considerable misery and discontent were averted. Of course, when stocks ran out, we had to revert to the official rations. Here and there would be found a few hard-hearted and unsympathetic gluttons. They would never share a single thing with a comrade. A prisoner of this type would sit down to a gorgeous feast upon dainties sent from home, heedless of the envious and wistful glances of his colleagues who were sitting around him at the table with nothing beyond the black bread and the acorn coffee. He would never even proffer a spoonful of jam which would have enabled the revolting black bread to be swallowed with greater relish.

There is one prisoner of this type whom I particularly recall. He had plenty of money in his pockets, and was the lucky recipient of many bulky hampers at regular intervals. Yet he never shared a crust with a less fortunate chum. But this individual did not refuse the opportunity to trade upon the hospitality of a fellow-prisoner when he himself was in a tight place. He became the most detested man in the camp, and to this day, with the rest of his selfish ilk, he suffers a rigid boycott, and at the same time is the target of every practical joke which his colleagues can devise. To quote the vernacular, we had "*Some jokes with him,*" and often stung him to fury, when we would laugh mercilessly at his discomfiture.

At the time I left the camp the outlook had assumed a very black aspect, and now we hear things have reached a climax. Money is worse than useless now because it can purchase nothing. The prisoners are reduced to subsist upon what meagre rations the authorities choose to dole out to them, and essentially upon what they receive from home. Starvation confronts our compatriots suffering durance vile in Ruhleben. The dawn of each succeeding day is coming to be dreaded with a fear which baffles description because it is unfathomable.



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## CHAPTER XX

### HOW I MADE MONEY IN RUHLEBEN CAMP

The aimless life, such as it was generally pursued in Ruhleben Camp, became exceedingly distasteful to me. It conduced to brooding and moping over things at home, to fretting and becoming anxious as to how one's wife and family were faring? While recreation offered a certain amount of distraction, it speedily lost its novelty and began to pall. There were many of us who were by no means sufficiently flush in pocket to indulge wildly in amusements, and yet money was absolutely indispensable, because with the sinews of war we were able to secure supplementary food from the canteen.

Some of the methods which were practised to improve the shining hour were distinctly novel. There was a young Cockney who, upon his return home, will undoubtedly blossom into a money-making genius, that is if his achievements in Ruhleben offer any reliable index to his proclivities. He would gather a party of seventy or eighty prisoners round him. Then, producing a five-mark piece, he would offer to raffle it at ten pfennigs—one penny—apiece. The possibility of picking up five shillings for a penny made an irresistibly fascinating appeal. It struck the traditional sporting chord of the British character and a shower of pennies burst forth. The deal was soon completed, and everyone was content with the result. Someone bought the five-shilling piece for the nimble penny, while the Cockney chuckled with delight because he had raked in some seven shillings or so for his five mark piece!

When I decided to experiment in commerce I was in some doubt as to what would offer the most promising line. After due reflection I decided to start as a launderer, specialising in washing shirts at ten pfennigs, or one penny, apiece. A shirt dresser was certainly in request because the majority of the prisoners, possessing only a severely limited stock, were compelled to wear the one garment continuously for several weeks. At the end of that time it was generally discarded once and for all. But the shirts I found to be extremely soiled, and demanded such hard and prolonged scrubbing, in which operation an unconscionably large amount of soap was consumed, that I found the enterprise to be absolutely unprofitable, while I received little else than a stiff, sore back and soft hands. So this first venture, after bringing in a few hard-earned shillings, was abandoned.

Then I undertook to wash up the table utensils, charging a party twopence per meal. This would have brought me greater reward had I adhered to my original intention. But one day the member of a party genially suggested, "We'll toss for it! Twopence or nothing!" I accepted the offer good-humouredly and—lost! By accepting this sporting recommendation I unfortunately established a ruinous precedent. The practice became general, and I, having a wretched run of bad luck, found that, all things considered, it

would be better for my hands and pocket if I were to look farther afield for some other enterprise.



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My third attempt to woo Fortune was to set myself up as a dealer in cast-off boots and shoes, my idea being to buy, sell and exchange. To my chagrin I speedily discovered that this calling demanded unlimited capital, because it was easier to buy than to sell or to exchange. Seeing that the average price I was prepared to pay was one shilling per pair, and the state of excruciating depression which prevailed in this field, I conjured visions of immense stocks of second-hand boots, representing a heavy investment of capital, which would lie idle for an indefinite period. So I retired discreetly from the second-hand boot and shoe trade to seek more promising pastures.

While pondering over the situation a happy idea struck me. In my younger days I had practised engraving, intending to adopt it as a trade. I devoted some six years to the craft and had achieved a measure of success and dexterity. Thereupon I decided to launch out in this direction. Although I felt that my hand had lost some of its cunning through lack of practice—I had not touched an engraving tool for about thirteen years—I decided to take the risk, feeling sure that it would soon return when I settled down to the fascinating work in grim earnest.

I confided my intention to one or two of my friends, but the majority, except my bosom chum K—, who is a far-seeing business man, with their innate shrewdness, wanted to know where I was going to get any custom in such a place as Ruhleben Camp. I explained that my idea was to engrave watches, coins, studs links, indeed any article which the prisoners possessed, thus converting them into interesting souvenirs of their sojourn in a German prisoners' camp during the Great War. But with the exception of K— they declined to see eye to eye with me. Still I was not to be dissuaded, and consequently decided to commence operations upon my own initiative.

I was in a quandary. I had not sufficient capital to buy the necessary tools. However, K—, as usual, came to my assistance by financing me to the extent of seven-and-sixpence! This money I laid out upon tools, *[gap]* *Now I was confronted with another problem. How was I to keep the tools in the necessary sharpened condition. The only stone I could borrow was quite useless for engraving tools, while cutting plays such havoc with the edges of the tools as to demand frequent recourse to sharpening operations. However this obstacle did not daunt me. I found that with a sufficient expenditure of energy I could get a passably sharp edge for my purpose by grinding the tools on the floor and finishing them off upon a razor strop which I borrowed.*



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Now I had to seek for eligible premises. I sauntered round the camp to alight upon a tiny vacant building. As it appeared to have no owner, and was fulfilling no useful purpose I entered into possession. Directly I had installed myself the authorities came along and unceremoniously ejected me, bag and baggage. As soon as their backs were turned I re-entered into occupation. I was thrown out a second time, but still as resolutely determined as ever to continue my project I cast around and ultimately found an empty kiosk, standing forlorn and neglected, a silent memory of the brisk racing days at Ruhleben in pre-war times. I installed myself therein, not caring two straws whether the authorities endeavoured to turn me out or not. They would have to smash the place over my head before they evicted me this time, but they were scarcely likely to proceed to such extreme measures seeing that they would have had to break up their own property.

Numerous jealous individuals attempted to eject me time after time but I sat tight. I remember one tender and amiable official who endeavoured to convince me that the kiosk and other similar buildings were under his charge, and that he was responsible for them. As he narrated the situation I observed that he kept the open palm of his hand extended before me. When he found this broad hint to be of no avail he ordered me out of the building. Turning to him I suggested, in as suave a voice as I could command, that he should accompany me to the "Wachter" to ascertain the extent of his responsibilities and to have the matter thrashed out once and for all. Needless to say he declined this invitation, protesting that it was unnecessary. He invited me to retain occupation of the kiosk. My bluff completely outwitted the official in question, while I achieved my end for once without recourse to bribery and corruption of the official Teuton mind.

Several subsequent attempts were made to coax me out of my tenancy, but I may say that in sticking to the building I played the Germans at their own game. When the guard came up and authoritatively demanded by what manner of right or permission I had taken possession of the kiosk I politely referred him to a certain officer in the camp. When the latter, upon receiving the complaint, interrogated me in a similar vein, I referred him to another official. When this third individual appeared upon the scene I switched him off to another officer. By playing off the officials one against the other in this manner I precipitated such a tangle among them that no single official could say whether he had or had not given me permission. While these tactics were being pursued I was gaining the valuable time I desired, and took the opportunity to entrench myself firmly in my position. The outcome was that when finally the matter had been trotted through the Ruhleben German Circumlocution Office, and my eviction was officially sealed, I warded off the fate by announcing that I was overwhelmed with engraving orders for the military officers of the camp. It was a desperate bluff, but it succeeded. Officialdom apparently decided that I was better left alone, so I suffered no further molestation.



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The whole of the night before opening my engraving business I sat up writing flaring signs and tickets to advertise my intentions far and wide, and soliciting the favour of orders which under my hand would convert this or that object into a priceless souvenir of our novel experience. I also canvassed the camp to explain my ideas, and, as I expected, orders commenced to flow in. The souvenir idea caught on to such a degree as to compel me to take in two fellow-prisoners, who evinced an aptitude for the work, as apprentices, and they speedily blossomed into craftsmen. My first week told me I had struck the correct money-making line at last. I found I had scooped in 200 marks —L10! This was not bad for the first week's trading and I entertained no apprehensions concerning the future. Out of this sum I was able to repay many little debts I had incurred.

The business developed so rapidly that an extension of premises became urgent. I rigged up an addition to the kiosk, but it had to be of a portable character, so that it could be taken down every evening. As I found my time was so occupied I reluctantly decided to keep only to the kiosk. I dressed its interior with shelves and further improved my premises by contriving show cases for attachment outside.

When I felt my feet I blossomed out in various directions. I bought a small stock of odds and ends in the cheap jewellery line, which were suitably engraved. Button decorations was one line I took up and these sold like wildfire. There was plenty of money in the camp, some of the prisoners being extremely wealthy, and this explains why my trade flourished so amazingly. Indeed, the results exceeded even my most sanguine anticipations.

One branch of my fertility nearly landed me into serious trouble. I fashioned souvenirs out of German coins. I erased the Imperial head and in its place engraved a suitable inscription. When the defacement of the money was discovered there was a fearful uproar, but as usual I contrived to escape the terrible punishment which was threatened.

Naturally one will wonder how it was I secured my supplies, seeing that purchases outside the camp were forbidden except through the officially approved channels. While it is inadvisable for me to relate how I did secure my varied stocks I may state that I never experienced any disappointment or even a hitch in this connection. Time after time I was taxed by military individuals, eager to secure incriminating evidence, but although they cajoled, coaxed and threatened I could not be induced to betray my secret. Indeed, at last, I point-blank refused to furnish any information upon this matter whatever, and with this adamant decision they were forced to remain content. Doubtless they had their suspicions but it was impossible to bring anything home to me and so I was left in peace.



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From cheap jewellery I advanced to more costly articles. I purchased a job lot of silver wrist watches from a Jew who had gone “broke,” and these I cleared out within a very short time. I always paid spot cash and that was an overwhelming factor in my favour. Indeed, my trading operations became so striking that my name and business proceeded far beyond the confines of the camp. Within a few weeks of opening my shop I was receiving calls from men in the camp who were acting as representatives for some of the foremost Jewish wholesale houses in Germany, and they were almost fighting among themselves to secure my patronage. My biggest individual purchasing deal was a single lot of jewellery for which I paid nearly 1,000 marks—L50! From this, bearing in mind the difficulties which I had to overcome in securing delivery, it is possible to gain some idea of the brisk trade I was doing.

Everything and anything capable of being converted into a souvenir by the dexterous use of the engraving tool was handled by me indiscriminately. I bought a large consignment of briar pipes. Upon the bowls of these I cut a suitable inscription and filled the incisions with enamel. These caught the fancy of the smokers and I soon found my stock exhausted. As things developed I became more ambitious, although not reckless, until at last I had articles ranging up to L30 in price upon my shelves, in the disposal of which I experienced very little difficulty.

My shop became my one absorbing hobby although it boasted no pretensions. I contrived attractive show cases, some from egg-boxes, emblazoning the exterior with striking show cards and signs which I executed in the confines of my horse-box in the barracks after my comrades had gone to sleep. Not satisfied with this development I lighted the building brilliantly by means of electric lamps and a large flame acetylene lamp.

I did not confine myself to any one line of goods, but handled any thing capable of being turned into money quickly. In some instances I had to resort to extreme subterfuge to outwit the authorities. On one occasion I purchased a consignment of silk Union Jacks for wearing in the lapel of the coat. I knew full well that if I placed these on sale in my shop the stern hand of authority would swoop down swiftly and confiscate the hated emblem without the slightest compunction. So I evolved a special means of clearing them out and that within a very few minutes.

I went round to each barrack and button-holed a capable man to undertake to sell a certain number of the flags among the prisoners domiciled in his building. On the offer of a good commission the man was ready to incur great risks, although there was no risk in my plan. Each man thus received a territorial right as it were, and was protected against competition. The price was fixed and the arrangements for effecting the sale carefully drawn up. After the morning parade, the custom was to dismiss us to our barracks



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a few minutes before nine o'clock. We were compelled to stay within doors for some twenty minutes or so. This I decided to be the opportune occasion to unload my stock. I enjoined every vendor, when I handed him his stock overnight, to be on the alert in the morning, and as the clock struck nine to pass swiftly from man to man with his flags. The favour was a distinct novelty and I was positive they would sell like hot cakes.

The scheme proved a howling success. Within five minutes after the appointed hour every man had been cleared out. The flags were triumphantly pinned to the lapels of the coats. When the prisoners re-emerged from the barracks the guards were astounded by the brilliant display of Union Jacks. The array was so imposing that the authorities even realised the futility of stopping each prisoner in turn to rob him of his prize. In this manner I got rid of several hundreds of the little trophies in one swoop.

As may be imagined there was an enquiry to ascertain how these flags had been introduced into the camp. The prisoners were interrogated, but no prisoner appeared to know anything about the matter. He invariably retorted that he had purchased it from "some fellow or other" and had stuck it in his button-hole. Never for a moment did the authorities suspect that I had anything to do with the transaction. It was out of my ostensible line, so that I escaped suspicion. The chortling which took place at the complete discomfiture of the authorities and the manner in which they had been outwitted is recalled vividly to this day. It was one of many incidents which served to vary the monotony of camp life.

*[large gap]*

On August Bank Holiday, 1915, the authorities considerately permitted us to have a day's junketting. We were to be at liberty to do exactly as we pleased. Indeed, we were urged to enjoy ourselves thoroughly and we did not require a second urging. The football ground was converted into a fair. No restrictions whatever were imposed upon us. The authorities themselves were so enthused with this concession to us as to give us several days' notice of their intentions to enable us to make any preparations we considered fit, while we were not faced with any obstacles in the rigging up of side-shows, gambling halls and what not.

The concession was particularly attractive to me, as I recalled that it was upon the previous August Bank Holiday I had been arrested on the charge of espionage and consigned to Wesel Prison. The rivalry amongst us was astonishing, while there were many wonderful manifestations of fertility and ingenuity. One prisoner spent 1,000 marks—L50—in rigging up his booth, which was somewhat reminiscent of an Aunt Sally at home. My two friends, K— and F—, contrived a golfing game which proved a huge financial success. I myself rigged up a billiard table on which was played a very unorthodox game of billiards, and which, because of its departure from conventionality,

created a sensation. It was really a revival of a game or wheeze which I had learned many years before.



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The billiard table was contrived from the wooden sides to my bed. I secured them side by side to give a flat surface 6 feet long by 5 feet wide. Over the upper surface I stretched and tacked down a sheet to form the cloth. I bought a broomstick and with the assistance of the camp carpenter shaved it down to form a passable cue, tipping the end with a small piece of leather cut from my boot. The table was rigged up in the open air, boxes and barrels serving as the legs, while it was levelled as far as practicable. There was only one ball. At the opposite end—on the spot—I placed two match-boxes set at an angle to one another and just sufficiently far apart to prevent the ball passing between them. The unusual game was to play the ball at the boxes in such a manner as to knock both of them over together. It seems a simple thing to do, but I would merely advise the reader to try it. Probably he will learn something to his advantage.

I assumed fancy dress. I secured a big top hat, a pair of trousers much too baggy and big for me, a swallow-tail coat with tails formed of white and red strips—a regular Uncle Sam's costume—had a big flaming bow about twelve inches in width and a ridiculous monocle. I think my rig-out transformed me into a hybrid of Brother Jonathan, Charlie Chaplin and an English dude. My dress was completed by a biscuit tin suspended by a band from my shoulder and in which I rattled my money. On the face of the tin I wrote

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Come along! Come along!! Come along!!!  
Always open to make. Always open to lose.  
Come along B'hoys!

I then stood on a box and told the tale characteristic of a man at the fair for the first time in my life.

Seeing that I was the only man attired in fancy dress I became the centre of attraction as I desired and as much among the guards who mixed and joked with us freely on this Great Day, as among my fellow-prisoners. It also served as a striking advertisement for my game of unconventional billiards, which was my intention. My terms were ten pfennigs—one penny—a shot and round my table the fun grew fast and furious. It seemed so absurdly easy to knock the two boxes down at once, but when the billiard experts settled down to the game they found that only about one shot in fifty proved successful. Indeed the ability to knock the two boxes over simultaneously was found to be so difficult as to be exasperatingly fascinating, and as a result of their repeated and abortive efforts I made money quickly. The table was kept going hard the whole day, by the end of which I found I had raked in several pounds in nimble pennies.



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The other side-shows also did excellent business, especially the gambling tables where roulette was in full swing. At the end of the day all the roulette boards and other gambling impedimenta were confiscated. This was the arrangement. But between sunrise and sunset we did not suffer the slightest interference with our enjoyment and merriment. This unexpected spell of free action revived the spirits of the prisoners to a remarkable degree, and we were all warmly grateful to the German authorities for allowing us to do and to enjoy ourselves exactly as we pleased for even one brief day. It was a Bank Holiday according to the British interpretation of the term, and I, in common with all my fellow-prisoners, must certainly admit that it was the jolliest day I remember during the whole period of my incarceration, and the *only* day on which we were allowed to indulge in sport *ad lib.* and according to the dictates of our fancies. I mention this concession because I am anxious to give credit to the Germans where it is due.

[large gap]

I was not only making sufficient money out of my various commercial transactions to keep myself in clover within the camp, but I was successful in finding means to remit some of my income, earned in Ruhleben, to England "To keep the Home Fires Burning." This I considered to be a distinct achievement, especially as I was making it at the expense of my captors.

Only once did I have an acute shock. It was at the time when the Germans were making such frantic efforts to rake in all the gold upon which they could place their hands. In my stock was a certain gold article which had cost me L30, as well as another item also of this metal which I had secured at the low price of L20. An officer swooped down upon my kiosk and went through my stock. I trembled as to what would happen when he alighted upon the two valuable articles. He picked up the first named article, examined the metal critically, and then asked me how much I wanted for it.

"Three marks!" I ventured nonchalantly, with a view to taking him off his guard.

"But it's gold," he persisted, staggered at the idea of being able to buy such an adornment for the trivial sum of three shillings.

My heart thumped as he held the article hesitatingly. If he offered me three shillings for it I should be bound to accept it in which event I should be a heavy loser over the deal. So I went on desperately:

"Well, if you think it's gold why don't you buy it for three marks? I will give no guarantee, so don't come back and say it's only metal!" Then assuming a deprecating tone I continued: "It is got up only for show. It looks very pretty, but you couldn't give it to a lady!"



He appeared to be quite satisfied because he replaced it, while when he picked up the other item I pitched a corresponding yarn. After he had taken his departure I promptly transferred the two articles to a place of safety in case he should take it into his head to make another examination.



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It was on June 1 when I embarked upon my engraving venture, and my two apprentices and myself were kept hard at it the livelong day, the pressure of business being so great. My own working hours, so long as daylight permitted, were from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. About September I concluded the moment to be ripe to consummate my one absorbing idea—to get home. I was now in a position financially to complete the plans I had laid long since. I had to tread warily, but by the end of October I was secure in my position. Still, although confident of success, I did not relax my interest in business, because my plans were just as likely to go wrong as to succeed at the last minute. Moreover at the end of November I had the intense satisfaction of learning that my profit as a result of five months' trading was L150! I considered this to be extremely satisfactory. An average profit of L7 10s. per week exceeded my rosiest anticipations, and it now seems additionally remarkable when I recall the limited confines and the restricted clientele of Ruhleben Camp. But the greatest satisfaction I have is knowing that I completely outwitted my oppressors, because I was not supposed to trade as I did. It was a telling example of stolen fruits being the sweetest.

### CHAPTER XXI

#### HOW THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR WAS DECEIVED

As is well known the British prisoners in Germany have only one person within the Central Empires to whom they can appeal for protection, and through whose good offices alone they are able to secure redress of their grievances. This is Mr. Gerard, the Ambassador of the United States of America to Germany. Mr. Gerard has toiled indefatigably and unremittingly upon our behalf. In his magnanimity and determination to give a square deal all round, he has made the signal error of accrediting the Germans with being a highly-developed, civilised, and cultivated race.

Unfortunately for Mr. Gerard's sense of duty the German does not accept the principles of the precept, "Do unto others as you would others should do unto you," but has evolved a code of his own construction which is peculiarly Teutonic—"Do unto others as you know others will not dare or deign to do unto you!" The American Ambassador has always responded promptly to any calls for his intercession and has ever listened courteously and patiently to tales of woe. Whenever he has considered the complaint to be well-founded he has spared no effort to secure an immediate improvement in conditions. Yet it is to be feared that many of his recommendations have never been, or have only been partially and indifferently, carried into effect.

In his determination to hold the scales of justice evenly Mr. Gerard has been prone to accept the German at his own valuation. Every prisoner in Germany to-day knows from painful experience that the Teuton's word counts for nothing; it is not worth the breath expended upon its utterance, or the paper upon which it is written. The German is an

unprincipled liar and an unmitigated bluffer, in which art, if such it may be called, he has become a super-master.



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The German has always laughed, and still is laughing up his sleeve at the courteous American diplomat. The imperial authorities have never hesitated to throw dust in his eyes and to outwit him when the occasion suited their purpose. Indeed, they scheme deliberately and unceasingly to side-track him and to prevent the true conditions and affairs penetrating to his knowledge.

I had one striking instance of this carefully premeditated and unscrupulous gulling and thwarting of the American Embassy. The accidental discovery of the circumstance that the baseless charge of espionage levelled against me was still hanging over my head somewhat worried me. I ascertained one exceedingly disturbing fact which was communicated to me within the camp. Had I committed any offence, no matter how trivial, while in the camps, I should not have been arraigned upon that particular delinquency, but, in all probability, would have had the original charge re trumped up against me. I learned that this was the German practice. Moreover, the old charge was liable to be trotted out at any odd moment at the caprice of my oppressors. The authorities had never acquitted me of being a spy. On the other hand they had never pronounced me guilty. I was forced to accept the former interpretation from my transference to the internment camps, as if I had been merely a detained civilian. My reasons for believing that I had been acquitted of the grave charge were supported by the fact that in Germany, a person who has been found guilty of espionage, and who escapes the death penalty, is condemned to solitary confinement in a military prison.

The charge of espionage being in a condition of suspended animation as it might be termed, coupled with the fact that no one knew whenever, wherever, and how it might suddenly be revived to my detriment, did not conduce to my peace of mind. On one occasion I received a pretty rude shock. I filled up an application for release upon medical grounds, but upon being summoned before the authorities I was told point-blank that I should be kept a prisoner until the end of the war, exchange or no exchange.

The uncertainty became intolerable. I wrote a lengthy letter to the American Ambassador explaining my unfortunate and doubtful position and expressing the hope that he might be able to bring the matter to a decision. In common with my fellow-prisoners, I had always cherished the belief that a letter addressed to the American Embassy was regarded as confidential and inviolable; at all events was not to be opened, except with the express permission of the prisoner or the Ambassador. But my faith was rudely dispelled. I dispatched my communication only to receive a curt summons to appear before an officer, who bluntly informed me that my letter could not be sent to the Embassy because it was sealed. It was handed back to me with the injunction that the envelope must be left open.



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Now, if letters containing complaints and addressed to our sole Protector are sent unsealed it is only logical to assume that the German officials apprise themselves of the character of the “grouse.” By so doing they become as wise as the Ambassador—if the letter ever reaches him. By having access to all communications, a letter is permitted to go forward if it suits the officials, but not before they have made a note of the grievance in order to be able to take the necessary remedial steps before the Ambassador intervenes.

In my particular instance I prepared a lengthy explanatory communication, requesting an audience if at all possible. The letter was so worded as to compel an acknowledgment, unless the Germans were disposed to suffer exposure of their methods and duplicity. In due course a representative appeared. He seemed to have only a hazy recollection of my communication so I related all the essential details to him. I was more than positive that the German authorities had filed a copy of my letter because their attitude towards me changed suddenly and adversely, and by a strange coincidence this metamorphosis agreed with the date on which I had dispatched my communication to the Embassy.

I urged the representative to ascertain whether I had, or had not, been acquitted of the espionage charge. I particularly desired the official acquittal in writing from Wesel, because it would be of far-reaching value in the event of my being haled before the authorities upon some other flimsy offence. He listened attentively and sympathetically, appreciated the situation as it affected me personally and promised to do everything he could on my behalf. But evidently, subsequent conversation with the Teuton authorities exercised the desired German effect. A few days later I received a curt acknowledgment saying that my affair, which was somewhat unusual, was purely one for military decision. I was also informed that the papers referring to my case were at Wesel fortress, and I was advised to write direct to the Commandant at the military centre for them. With this consolation, if such it can be called, I had to rest content.

The fact that I have never heard another word upon the subject from that day to this proves conclusively that the authorities, although doubtless profuse in their apologies and regrets to the Ambassador over the delay, and unctuous in their promises to settle the issue immediately, never really intended to stir another finger in this direction. No one disturbed the official serenity and forthwith the whole question was permitted to slide and to be forgotten in accordance with German machinations.

Upon the receipt of the ambassadorial letter I was inclined to stir up the whole issue for all I knew how, but upon second thoughts I refrained from pursuing the matter any further. I had thoroughly made up my mind as to the course of action which I would take, and so concluded that it would be far better from my point of view to “let sleeping dogs lie.” I think my attitude must have completely disarmed the Germans. To them I assumed an air of complete resignation, but all the time I was working silently and zealously towards my own salvation.



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At frequent intervals the emissary from the Embassy visited us. He was invariably received graciously by Baron von Taube, whom we facetiously dubbed Baron von Facing-both-ways, and other members of his staff to form an escort through the camp. The representative thus saw and heard exactly as much as the authorities determined should be the case and nothing more. Whenever he was disposed to become uncomfortably inquisitive he was deftly steered clear of the troubled waters. We were told that we were quite at liberty to speak to the Ambassador if we desired, but unofficially we were warned to think twice before we took such a step, the hint being thrown out that it would be better for us to refrain from talking to him unless first questioned. The shallowness of the official decree was vividly brought home to us when we were forcibly confined to barracks, and this frequently occurred while the ambassadorial visitor was in the camp.

On one occasion complaints concerning the living quarters were made. The representative came and explained the object of his mission to the Commanding Officer. Ostensibly this worthy was overwhelmed with surprise at any such grievance having been formulated, although, as a matter of fact he knew full well why the representative had called, owing to the rule concerning all letters being posted unsealed.

The Commanding Officer protestingly laughed at the suggestion that the living quarters were untenable. But there! The representative could see for himself. With every semblance of complete complaisance the representative was escorted into the camp. With unassumed unconcern, but with deliberate intention, he was accompanied to Barracks 1 or 2, to see with his own eyes a typical illustration of the living quarters provided within the camp.

The situation was exceedingly ludicrous, although it was of considerable moment to us who had lodged the complaint. The representative could not have been taken to more convenient buildings from the German point of view. They are the show-barracks of Ruhleben, and certainly are excellent specimens of the prisoners' quarters. They indubitably served as a powerful illustration of how prisoners could make themselves comfortable. They were held up far and wide throughout Ruhleben as a pattern for all others to copy. One and all of us would willingly have emulated this attractive model—*if we had possessed the money to spend upon luxuries!* Barrack No. 2 is the domicile of the *elite* and wealthy of Ruhleben. The prisoners, flush of funds, have been permitted to gratify every whim and fancy. They have expended large sums of money upon the purchase of furniture and knick-knacks, the result being favourably comparable with a smart and fashionable flat, that is if a flat can be squeezed into a horse-box ten feet square!

The representative was solemnly assured that these barracks were only typical of the other buildings in the camp. But had the American visitor walked a few dozen yards upon his own initiative, to enter Barrack 3 or 5, he would have received a convincing

demonstration of unprincipled German lying. There the inmates were compelled, willy-nilly, to lie upon the floor. At that time beds had not been served to more than one-half of the prisoners.



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During one of these visits the prisoners of Barrack 6 defied authority. They had petitioned the officials incessantly to improve their quarters but to no purpose. The cause for the greatest discontent was the absolute lack of light. The loft was nothing more nor less than a "Black Hole." On this occasion the tenants had been sent to barracks with the strict injunction that they were not to come out again until the ambassadorial inspection had been completed. But the prisoners were not disposed to permit this deliberate hoodwinking of our protector to continue indefinitely. The representative had been taken to a typical [*sic*] barrack to observe the appointments and to satisfy himself concerning the German efforts which had been made to render the tenants comfortable. As usual he found no apparent justification for the complaints which had been made.

He was being escorted to inspect some new latrines which had recently been completed. To reach the latter point he had to pass Barrack 6, in which the boys were on the alert to seize the opportunity for which they had been waiting quietly. When the representative was but a few yards distant up went the shout in unison, "Come and see our barrack! Come and see our barrack!"

The guards endeavoured to smother the hail, but for once they were too slow. The representative heard the cry, stopped, and doubtless impressed by the vehemence of the invitation, expressed his intention to make an investigation. I mention this incident to emphasise the point that the Embassy was always ready to deal fairly with the prisoners, and to prove that a great deal more would have been done on our behalf had the visitors been given a freer hand.

The chagrin of the German entourage escorting the ambassadorial deputy was amusing to observe. Behind his back they frowned, glowered, and glared fiercely, shook their fists, and muttered stifled incoherent curses, but when he turned to them they assumed a meekness and pleasantry which quite disarmed suspicion. Still, their anger, as they followed him into the building, was so intense as to defy being masked and afforded us, who were witnessing the episode, the most complete satisfaction and ill-disguised delight.

The expected happened. The representative entered Barrack 6. He climbed the rickety staircase leading to the loft with difficulty to dive into the "Black Hole." He condemned it in unmeasured terms. Apparently he realised how neatly he had been hoodwinked, he became furious, and in tones which brooked no argument or discussion, ordered the instant removal of the prisoners to more congenial surroundings. The officials were beside themselves with rage at the turn which events had taken, but they hesitated to give offence. They were profuse in lame excuses and pleaded that the accommodation in this loft was only temporary. The German interpretation of the word "temporary" may be gathered from the fact that this particular loft had been occupied for nearly six months. But the representative gained the day. The loft was forthwith vacated and

subsequently, when certain improvements had been carried out, was used only as a schoolroom.



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About March, 1915, as previously narrated, we commenced to experience a severe shortage of bread. We were not receiving sufficient of the staff of life to keep us alive. The representative drove into the camp one day to investigate some other matter. When he had departed upon his mission, accompanied by the inevitable entourage, some of us gathered around his motor-car which was covered with dust. While one or two were chatting with the chauffeur one of the party slipped a letter, pointing out our dire straits and describing how famished we were, beneath the ambassador's seat, and in such a manner as to compel his attention upon re-entering the automobile. Another prisoner, with his finger, scrawled in the dust upon the rear of the tonneau, "We want bread!" while other notices were chalked up in commanding positions, so as to arrest instant attention, "For God's sake, give us bread!"

When the German guards spotted the flaming appeal upon the rear of the car they fussed up in indignant rage. One advanced to obliterate the damning words, but the chauffeur whipped round the car. He caught sight of the mute request, and intercepting the officious sentry remarked:—

"You mustn't touch this car! It's the property of the United States Government!"

The guard pulled himself up sharply, glaring fiercely and evidently contemplating defiance of the warning. The chauffeur was a white man. He eyed us quizzically for a moment or two. Realising from our faces that we were not playing a joke, but ventilating a serious grievance, he stood between the officious sentry and the vehicle until the representative returned. The Embassy car drove out of the camp with the letters still staring out in a gaunt appeal from the thick dust. Evidently the chauffeur drew the representative's attention to our cry, while it is only reasonable to suppose that the emissary from the Embassy discovered the letter which we had secreted beneath his seat, because an improvement in the allowance of bread immediately ensued.

And so it went on. No trick was too knavish or too despicable to prevent our guardian learning the truth concerning our plight. He very rarely walked about unaccompanied. Tongue in cheek, the Germans, who always were cognisant of the object of his visit, and who had always taken temporary measures to prove the grievance to be ill-founded, strode hither and thither with him, throwing knowing glances and winks among themselves behind the representative's back. Doubtless it was the successful prosecution of these tactics which persuaded the Embassy to believe that the majority of our complaints were imaginary and arose from the circumstance that the inhabitants of Ruhleben would persist in ignoring the fact that they were the victims of war and not pampered pets.



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One of the most glaring instances of the effective manner in which the Germans sought to disarm and to outwit an official visitor was narrated to me by a fellow-prisoner who had been transferred from Sennelager to Ruhleben. I conclude that the incident must have happened, during the interregnum when I was “free on Pass” in Cologne. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the statement, but I do not think there is the slightest reason to doubt the word of our compatriot, because he was in Sennelager at the time and actually passed through the experience. Furthermore it is typical of Teuton methods in matters pertaining to the treatment of prisoners.

X—— stated that, despite the havoc wrought during the “Bloody Night” of September 11, all the prisoners were still herded on the field at Sennelager until long after my departure. They were exposed to the heavy rains and were all reduced to a miserable condition. Suddenly an order came up commanding all prisoners to return instantly to their old barracks. This sudden manifestation of a humane feeling upon the part of the Commandant provoked widespread amazement. What had happened?

The surprise of the prisoners became accentuated when they regained the permanent buildings which had formerly comprised our home. They were hurried into their quarters and shaken down with incredible speed. Fires were set going and the unhappy prisoners made themselves comfortable confident that their trials now were over, and that they were destined to prolonged residence under weathertight roofs.

The following day an august visitor arrived at the camp. Whether he was an emissary from the American Embassy or not my informant was unable to say, for the simple reason that no one knew his identity, and every precaution was observed to prevent any information upon this matter from becoming known among the prisoners. Be that as it may he made a detailed tour of the camp, investigating the arrangements and accommodation provided for the hapless inhabitants' welfare. Under no circumstances whatever were the British prisoners permitted to speak to the mysterious stranger. Any attempt in this direction was sternly and forcibly suppressed by the guards who swarmed everywhere. Evidently, judging from his demeanour, the stranger was deeply impressed—and satisfied—with what he saw with his own eyes.

But the moment he had left the camp the prisoners were paraded and re-transferred to the field. This story, if accurate, and I see no reason to doubt its veracity, is interesting from one circumstance. When we were summarily turned out upon the field by the inhuman Major Bach, he advanced as his reason for such action that vast numbers of German recruits were momentarily expected, and that the buildings were required to house them. But according to the foregoing incident the barracks were still empty. The lying Commandant of Sennelager Camp was thus condemned out of his own mouth, while the minute precautions he observed to prevent the mysterious stranger from learning a word about our experiences on the field proves that he merely turned us out into the open, herded like animals in a corral, to satisfy his own personal cravings for dealing out brutality and torture.



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But the most glaring example of German duplicity and astuteness in throwing our protector off the track provoked Ruhleben to hilarious merriment, despite the seriousness of our position. Leastways, although the Teutons may have regarded the movement as one of serious intention, we regarded it as a deliberate piece of hoodwinking. One morning we were solemnly informed that the authorities had completed arrangements whereby every prisoner was to receive a good substantial meat meal once a week. It was to comprise a chop, potatoes, some other vegetable, and gravy. It sounded so extraordinarily luxurious and appetising as to provoke incredulity and caustic comment. Those who, like myself, had suffered internment in other camps and who had become thoroughly grounded in Teuton shiftiness and trickery divined that something unusually crafty and cunning was afoot.

I might mention that by this time Ruhleben comprised a small town of twenty-three barracks housing a round 4,000 prisoners. This represented an average of 174 men to a barrack, although, as a matter of fact, some of the buildings accommodated over 200 men. The culinary arrangements were fulfilled by only two kitchens. Now, the problem which presented itself to the minds of the more sophisticated and suspicious prisoners was this—How would the authorities grapple with the preparation and serving of 4,000 chops in one day with the cooking facilities available? Were we to be treated to another staggering example of Germany's wonderful powers of organisation and management?

The glamour of the proposition suddenly disappeared. We learned that the “tuck-in” was not to be general throughout the camp on a certain day. The delight was to be dealt out in instalments, and in such a manner that so many men would be able to partake of the gorgeous feast upon each successive day of the week.

So far so good. We in Barrack 5 were among the first to receive the promised meat meal, which we had been anticipating with ill-disguised relish. It reached us on the Tuesday. The meal was swallowed greedily and keenly enjoyed, although the meat was of inferior quality. But I never saw another chop in our barrack for a month! Crash went another alluring Teuton promise.

We became inquisitive and to our amusement learned what the more shrewd and doubting among us had suspected. Sufficient chops were being cooked every day to ensure so many men regularly receiving the meat meal. Every man received his chop as promised although he was perhaps compelled to wait an inordinate time for his turn. As there were twenty-three barracks with two kitchens to fulfil their demands meat dinners were being prepared every day. Indeed, the Germans appeared to be always cooking chops!



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It was a masterpiece of German cunning. Whenever a visitor, animated by desires to ascertain how the prisoners were being treated, visited the camp he was piloted to the kitchen. There could be seen an imposing array of chops sizzling and spitting gaily, and emitting an appetizing aroma. Were prisoners of war ever treated so sumptuously as those at Ruhleben? The visitor was gravely assured that the chops he saw represented but a portion of what were being prepared for the prisoners, in which statement the Germans were perfectly correct, but they artfully refrained from saying that only a certain number of men received the dainty dish each day, the idea being to convey the impression that this was merely the daily routine for the whole of the camp.

It did not matter when the American representative or any other visitor came into the camp—chops were being cooked. The visitors naturally concluded that we were being treated in a right royal manner, and one quite in accordance with the most noble traditions of the German nation. It never occurred to these visitors, apparently, to make enquiries among the prisoners to ascertain how they enjoyed their *daily* meat meal? Had they done so they would have been surprised.

The German explanations were so verbose and ostensibly so sincere as to be received without the slightest cavil. Naturally our task-masters studiously declined to extend any enlightenment upon the matter, preferring to lull the visitors into a false haven of credibility. Unfortunately we discovered that we had to pay indirectly for the delectable dainty and Teuton liberality—the dinners upon the other days steadily grew worse in quantity, quality, and variety!

We all admire the unceasing efforts which the American Ambassador has, and still is exerting upon our behalf, and we are extremely thankful for the many and far-reaching improvements he has wrought. His work is one of extreme difficulty, demanding unremitting patience, tact, and impartiality. It must be remembered that he was submitted to an unceasing bombardment of complaints from 4,000 prisoners, overwrought from their incarceration, and ready to magnify the slightest inconvenience into a grievance.

Unfortunately his task is aggravated by the unprincipled lying, bluffing, and crafty tactics of the German authorities. They have no more compunction in fooling the American Ambassador than they have in depriving the prisoners of sufficient food to keep body and soul together. The task of Mr. Gerard in the immediate future is certain to become more perplexing, intricate, and delicate, but we hope that he will prove equal to the occasion.

\* \* \* \* \*

Early in November, 1915, my arrangements for leaving Ruhleben were so far advanced that I could scarcely restrain my excitement. On December 6 I disposed of my

business. It was of no further use to me. The day for which I had been waiting so patiently and longingly had dawned at last and—



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*I got home safely!*

Although arrested and tried upon the false, frivolous, trumped-up charge of being a British spy, I have never been acquitted of that indictment. It still hangs over my head.

Shortly after reaching home I received a letter from a friend with whom I had been interned. He secured his release some months before I shook the dust—and mud—of Ruhleben from my feet. On the day we parted he sympathised deeply with me at the prospect of being condemned to languish in the hands of the enemy until the clash of arms had died down. I did not seek to disillusion him, although, even at that time, I had made up my mind to get away by hook or by crook.

This former fellow-prisoner had heard of my safe return to my own fireside. The envelope contained nothing beyond his visiting card, across the back of which he had scrawled, "How the devil did you get out?"

But that is another story.

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