

"My Three Years in a German Prison"

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CHAPTER XVII.

Meals in a Cart. The most common mode of prisoners and interned civilians were fed and treated in Germany gave rise, as we all know, to bitter complaints and more bitter controversies in the newspaper press of the Allied countries. The repeated complaints of the prisoners themselves, their letters to friends in Great Britain, and through the United States Embassy is a matter of record. Let me relate an incident which is not lacking in interest: Among the Englishmen who were interned at the Stadtvoetel was a Mr. F. T. Moore, civil engineer, who was in Luxembourg when war was declared. He was captured when that principality was overrun by the German troops, and subsequently sent to Treve. After several months' solitary confinement he was court-martialed on a charge of espionage. He was condemned to the prison at Berlin, and here we met and became friends. At the outset Mr. Moore wrote a post-card to his wife in England telling her the condition of his health, and incidentally referring to the kind of food that was supplied to us in Luxembourg when war was declared, and here we met and became friends. At the outset Mr. Moore wrote a post-card to his wife in England telling her the condition of his health, and incidentally referring to the kind of food that was supplied to us in Luxembourg when war was declared, and here we met and became friends.

It required, one may readily imagine, a certain courage to send such a statement through the mail. On the following day the censor himself called at the jail, and carried the card in question direct to Mr. Moore's cell. It was represented that Mr. Moore had committed a grave imprudence in writing to England in this manner, and when Mr. Moore submitted that there was no exaggeration, that it was the truth and nothing but the truth, the censor retorted that if Germany did not provide more substantial and better food for her prisoners it was due solely to the British blockade.

The jail's menu as I knew it during the three years I was interned varied very little. It consisted of one piece of black bread weighing eight ounces distributed each morning at eight o'clock. At eleven a.m. we were served with what was ridiculously termed the "mittag esson," that is to say, "the mid-day meal." It consisted of what they were pleased to call porridge or soup. At five o'clock in the afternoon the acting-officer would return, this time accompanied by two Poles, who would distribute another variety of soup. There is soup "and" soup. The liquid which they served to us did not belong to the category of real soup. The ingredients were varied, generally they consisted of turnips, cabbage, and sometimes a few beans. It was never good, but sometimes it was worse than others. Generally it was had in the morning and always worse at the afternoon serving. Apparently the Poles suffered more than we did. On many an occasion one of these unfortunate men has come and begged a biscuit or a piece of bread from me.

"The soup we get," he would say, "is nothing but colored water."

I myself never ventured to taste the afternoon soup. The color and odor were alike too repulsive. I believe it was rejected by all the Englishmen interned here.

In 1915 the economic conditions of Germany continued relatively favorable. There was, apparently, nothing alarming in the situation. Prisoners were permitted to give orders once each day for provisions of all kinds, and the orders would be filled to the extent the prisoner had money

to pay for the same. But early in 1916 a significant change took place. Some citizens were placed upon strict rations, and in March notices were posted in the corridors of the jail to the effect that efforts to obtain victuals from outside were forbidden. The menu I have described thenceforward became inevitable for each and every one of us. At the end of three months communicated with the authorities in England—more particularly with Sir George Perley, Canadian High Commissioner in London, telling them of the situation to which we were reduced as regarded food. But we were rejected. It was impossible to represent the situation as it actually existed—the situation, that is to say, of relative famine. Exceeding care had to be taken, or our letters would never have passed the censor. We each adopted what seemed to be the best measure in the circumstances to obtain relief from the painfully meagre prison fare. The postal service was, not unnaturally, very uncertain and irregular between the two countries. We entertained the hope, however, that the end of three months at the latest, foodstuffs would reach us from England. But it was three months after the welcome parcels containing the much needed provisions were delivered at the jail. During that period of waiting we were able to realize something of the hunger the poor Poles suffered at all times, for with very few exceptions they were deprived of outside relief. It would require many volumes to faithfully relate the tortures of hunger these interned Poles went through. Many times I saw one of their number delve into a garbage can and extract therefrom potato peelings that had been cast there. The Poles would put salt upon the peelings and devour them with avidity.

Then, at about this time, a notice was posted on the wall in the little triangular yard notifying all whom it might concern that henceforth potato peelings must be deposited in a receptacle placed at the end of the corridor. The peelings, we were informed, now had a special value, and they were to be guarded as food for the cattle, more particularly the cows. On the day this notice appeared, five or six of us—all British prisoners—were engaged in the kitchen cell preparing a stew. Suddenly the sergeant-major appeared in our midst. He was a quick-moving, nervous man; he invariably talked in a loud voice and gesticulated vehemently.

"Have you read the notice that has just been posted up?" he demanded. "From now on you will not be allowed to throw away the potato peelings as you have been in the habit of doing. Feeder for the cattle has become very scarce and you must guard the potato peelings, all of you, and deposit them in the receptacle you will find placed for that purpose at the end of the corridor."

The sergeant-major waited for a reply, or a comment upon the new order, but we kept our interest concentrated on the dishes in front of us and remained mute. He glared at the group and said: "Understand me, gentlemen; understand me well, for I hope you will not force me to inflict punishment upon you through disobedience of the new rule."

Another period of silence followed, and then one of the company stepped forward. He certainly had a keen sense of humor, and was not devoid of courage. "Mr. Sergeant-Major," he said, "I beg your pardon, but I eat the peelings from all the potatoes I receive."

We choked back the laughter the

incident provoked, and the sergeant-major, at a loss to interpret the man's observation, looked first at one and then another. But we maintained our gravity, and, apparently undecided whether to laugh himself at the joke or to give vent to wrath, the sergeant-major turned on his heel and walked from the cell. I wonder—did he understand?

From June, 1916, to the date of my liberation, I received, in quantities just sufficient, provisions which were regularly forwarded to me from England, and sometimes from Canada. I have frequently been asked if the parcels which were directed to me from time to time arrived at their destination? To this I am able to reply, "Yes, in a general way." It has been proved that the postal employees of Germany committed fewer thefts than were committed on the railways. I would sometimes receive a parcel which had been opened, whilst in which some of the contents had been extracted. Some parcels that I know were sent never reached me. It was easy for us to check the delivery of parcels as each contained a number.

Individual prisoners sometimes received parcels that had been sent express by railway. As a rule they were larger than could be sent through the postal service, and only very rarely did these parcels reach their destination whole. Almost every time they had been broken open and four, five, or six pounds of the contents were missing. Invariably it was a case of theft. It may not be inopportune to state here that in 1917 some of the German newspapers reported that claims against the German express companies for loss aggregated thirty-five million marks, whilst in the preceding year these claims amounted to only four or five million marks. This is evidence that there was an enormous increase in the number and extent of the robberies in 1917.

In 1916 we obtained permission from the inspector of prisons to place a gas stove in one of the cells, and here between eleven o'clock and noon one might see the prisoners of British nationality gather for the purpose of cooking their midday meal. The management of this kitchen was confided to one man of our choice, and each prisoner making use of the stove contributed a small sum of money towards the cost of the gas. There was an overseer named to guard against the waste of gas. He kept a quantity of hot water constantly on hand for the use of the prisoners. The water was sold at the rate of one pfennig per quart. The Polish prisoners, in the winter months especially, would frequently come to buy hot water. The poor fellows had to resort to drinking hot water to stimulate circulation in their empty stomachs. Every British prisoner was beset by beggars. The Poles in turn besought bread to eat. I was a witness every day of the never-failing generosity of British captives, and there must be to-day thousands of Poles who, after passing through this jail, retain an imperishable memory of the charity and compassion of men who, fortunate in receiving victuals from outside, cheerfully shared them with fellow prisoners less fortunate.

These Poles, especially, now that they are free to return to their own devastated country, must have nothing but words of praise for those who did all they possibly could in very dire circumstances to alleviate their sufferings and hardships.

Naturally, it was impossible to attend to more than the most urgent needs of any one. There were, on an average, from ten to fifteen British subjects confined at one time in this cell, while at no time were there ever fewer than one hundred and fifty Poles. The British authorities at Ruhleben camp deserve a special word of praise for the never-failing interest they showed towards not only the prisoners of British nationality in Stadtvoetel jail, but also towards the Poles, and the deported Belgians particularly. During the time I was at the head of the relief committee of the jail I received on many an occasion very large cases of biscuits and other provisions for distribution

amongst the most needy of all subjects under confinement. I had as an assistant in this work Mr. Histerman, a Swiss, to whom I shall have occasion to refer subsequently.

WITH THE RETURNED MEN

The G.W.V.A. To Send a Representative Overseas. The Great War Veterans' Association have definitely decided to send overseas a representative whose duties will be to disseminate the aims and objects of the association, with a view to securing added membership, and in order that the returning soldiers may become thoroughly conversant with the work of the organization as it affects them and their interests.

The date of the next Dominion Convention of the Great War Veterans' Association has been set for Monday, June 9th. The convention will be held in Vancouver, B.C.

Representatives of the G.W.V.A. have been appointed to an advisory committee to work in co-operation with the repatriation and employment committee. Five field secretaries, returned soldiers, will form a connecting link between the various veterans' organizations throughout Canada and the central committee in Ottawa. This advisory committee will deal with matters affecting the welfare of the returned men, and should be of considerable assistance in helping to bring about satisfactory solutions to the many great questions which centre in repatriation and employment.

Ninety-three deaths and a loss to shipping of from \$6,000,000 to \$8,000,000 is the disaster toll of the 1918 shipping season on the Great Lakes, according to figures compiled.

Jewelry, furs and valuables totaling \$40,000, have been stolen from the winter residence of Lady Kemp, wife of Sir Edward Kemp, overseas Canadian minister of militia, at Aiken, South Carolina. There will likely be a provincial election in Quebec next May.



You Hold the Key

Will You Keep The Door Open?

WHERE will our men in uniform—Over There and Over Here—go in their spare time, if the doors of the Salvation Army Hostels are closed for lack of funds? WHERE?

This week decides. Consider carefully, for if THOSE doors slam in the faces of our soldiers, the echo will go ringing through the years to come. Canada will regret. You hold the KEY!

Let us state the case quite plainly. The next twelve months are critical ones in the careers of our citizen soldiers. They will have a great deal of time on their hands and it is for you to make it helpful and enjoyable. They have come to know the Salvation Army over there, and realize what it means. Give him a chance, and the soldier will turn to the Hostel, and all will be well!

"FIRST TO SERVE"  "LAST TO APPEAL"

Soldiers Home  Coming Campaign

for the

Salvation Army Million Dollar Fund

THIS WEEK

The Salvation Army has rendered service to millions of fighters for the Allies. It started work in the war twelve days after Germany invaded Belgium. It has 197 Huts at Soldiers' Camps; thousands of Beds in Hostels close to the stations and landings used by the soldiers; it has distributed tens of thousands of parcels of food and clothing among the forces and it has carried tens of thousands of wounded in its ambulances. The need is still great for Hostels over there, and for Hostels and other forms of help OVER HERE, to take care of our soldiers during demobilization.

The Salvation Army serves hot coffee, cocoa and sandwiches to soldiers; cooks, mends, furnishes music and entertainment, safeguards the home ties, and labors for the Master.

Its services are endorsed by public and military authorities, and, best of all, by the men themselves! Ask any returned man what he thinks of the Salvation Army.

Shall the doors be kept open, and the good work continue as long as there is need? The KEY is in your pocket!

"God Loveth a Cheerful Giver"

Help Her to Help Them

19 THE SALVATION ARMY MILLION DOLLAR FUND COMMITTEE

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WAR PUZZLES

PEACE STRIKE



PEACE STRIKE IN AUSTRIA. 100,000 workers walked out, one year ago today, January 20, 1918. Find a worker.

SATURDAY'S ANSWER. Left side down in clothes.

The admission of Germany to the league of nations is the subject of considerable discussion in peace conference.

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