

# "Englander Schwein"

By George Eustace Pearson in the Saturday Evening Post  
Continued from Last Week.

### Slow Starvation at Giessen

One day we shovelers decided to add to the gaiety of nations. While one attracted the guard's attention elsewhere we slipped a chunk of steel into the mess. There was a grinding clash, and in a moment the air was full of cog wheels and German words. It was a proper wreck. The guards ran round like chickens, with their heads off, tearing their hair and threatening us, while we endeavored to look surprised. It is reasonable to suppose that we were unsuccessful, for we were hustled back to camp and drew five days' cells each from the Commandant. There was no trial. He merely sentenced us.

United States Ambassador Gerard only came to Giessen once in my time there, and that was while I was off at one of the detached camps, so I had no opportunity of observing the result.

We knew very little of what was going on in the outside world. The guards were not allowed to converse with us, and if one was known to speak English he was removed. However, they were more or less curious about us, so that a certain amount of clandestine conversation occurred. Some were certain that they were going to win the war. Others said: "England has too much money. Germany will never win." They used frequently to gather the Russians, Belgians and French together and lecture them on England's sins. They said that England was letting them do all the fighting, bleeding them white of their men and treasure so as to come out at the end of the war with the balance of power necessary for her plan of retaining Constantinople and the Cinque Ports of France. Many were convinced, and this did not add to the pleasantness of our lot.

The notorious Continental Times was circulated among us freely in both French and English editions. It regularly gave us a most appalling list of German victories and it specialized in abuse of the English. We counted up in one month a total of two million prisoners captured by the Germans on all fronts.

The first three months of our stay at Giessen were probably the worst of all, including as they did the transition period to this life. It seemed then a hell on earth. The slow starvation was the worst. Since, in desperation, I gave a Frenchman my good boots for his old ones and two and a half marks, and then gave 60 pfennigs of this to the French cook for a bread ration. Again, in going down the hut one day I espied a flat French loaf cut into four pieces drying on the window sill. Seizing one piece I tucked it under my tunic and passed on before the loss was discovered. Some of the British could be seen at times peering over the sour refuse in the barrels. This annoyed the Germans very much. We endeavored to get cookhouse jobs for the pickings to be had, but could not do so. At a later date, when the Canadian Red Cross, Lady Farquhar, Mrs. Hamilton Gault and our families were sending us packages regularly, we made out all right.

As I have said, Giessen was the best camp of all during the starvation. But the discipline there was merciless. The larger was inclosed by a high wire fence which we were forbidden to approach within four feet. A Russian sergeant overstepped that mark one day to shout something to a friend in an adjoining larger. The sentry shouted at him. He either failed to hear or did not understand. The sentry killed him without hesitation.

A Belgian started over one day with some left over soup which he purposed giving to the Russians. The sentry would not let him pass. He went back and told his mate. The latter, a kindly little fellow, thinking that the sentry had not understood the nature of the mission, decided to try himself. The sentry stopped him. He attempted to argue. The sentry pushed him roughly back. He struck the German. The latter dropped him with a blow on the head, and while he lay unconscious shoved the bayonet into him. It was done quite coolly and methodically, without heat. He was promoted for it. We were told that he had done a good thing and that we would get the same if we did not behave.

A Canadian who was forced to work in a munitions plant and whose task included the replacing of waste in the wheel boxes of cars enjoyed himself for a while lifting the greasy waste out and replacing it with sand. He got ten years for that. The German in charge of our larger hated the

verdammt Englander and lost no opportunity of bulldozing and threatening us. One of the Canadians who had been in the American navy was unusually truculent. The German purposely bunted him one day. "Don't do that again!" The German repeated the act. The sailor jolted him in the jaw so that he went to dreamland for 15 minutes. The sailor was taken to the guardroom.

We never heard his ultimate fate, but at the ruling rate he was lucky if he got off with ten years.

Some 400 Russians came to us after the fall of Warsaw. They were mostly wounded and all rotten. On the three months' march to Giessen the wounded had received absolutely no attention other than their own. Here we had a crazy German doctor, a mediocre French one and Canadian orderlies. If an Englishman went to the hospital for treatment it was "Vick!"—Get out. These Russians were treated similarly. The French fared better. One big, fine looking Russian, with a filthy mass of rage wound round his arm, reported for attention. They unwound the rag and his arm dropped off. He died, with five others, that afternoon, and God only knows how many more on the trip they had just finished. They were all thoroughly cowed, as dogs that have been ill-treated are. And they jumped to it when a German spoke—excepting two of their officers, who refused to take down their epaulettes when ordered to do so. We did not learn how they fared. These were the only captured officers of any nationality that we saw.

The authorities were not satisfied with our recognition—or lack of it—of their officers and took



At the Convalescent Soldiers' Home, Old Agricultural College, Winnipeg, New spring and useful instruction is being given in many different phases of farm work. This soldier was born in Australia, and was with the Princess Patricia in this war and in a South African Veterans.

us out to practice saluting drill—a thing always detested by soldiers, especially veterans. The idea was to have us salute visiting German officers properly, in the German fashion and not in our own. Theirs consisted of saluting with the right hand only, with the left held stiffly straight at the side, while our way was to salute with the hand farthest from the officer, giving eyes left or eyes right as the case might be, and with the free hand swinging loosely with the stride.

So a school of us were led out to this. The very atmosphere was tense with sullen rebellion, and the guards eyed us askance. The officer stood at the left awaiting us; beyond him and on the other side of the road a post.

An unteroffizier ordered us to march by, one by one, to give the Herr Offizier Augen Links in the German fashion, and the post, which represented another officer, an Augen Rechts when we should come to it.

"I'll see him in hell first," I muttered to the man next me. I was in the lead of the party. I shook with excitement and fear of I knew not what.

As the command rang out I stepped out with a swing, and decision came to me with action. As I approached the officer he drew up slightly and looked at me expectantly.

I gave him a stony stare and passed on.

A few more steps and I reached the post. I pulled back my shoulders with a smart jerk, got my arms to swinging freely, snapped my head round so that my eyes caught the post squarely and swung my left hand in a clean-cut parabola to Augen Rechts in good old regimental order.

A half dozen shocked sentries came up on the double. It was they who were excited now. I was master of myself and the situation. The unteroffizier ordered me to repeat and salute. I did so—literally. The officer to all outward appearances was the only other person there who remained unmoved. My ardor had cooled by this time, and his very silence seemed worse than the threats of the guard. Nor was I exactly in love with my self-appointed task. Nevertheless I saw my mates watching me and inwardly applauding. I was ashamed to quit. I did it again. That won me another five days' cells.

The night of January 22 our guards were reinforced by 30 more. Simonds, Brumley and another Britisher and I had determined to make a break for it. And although not quite ready for it at this time the addition to the guards forced our decision. We had a scanty supply of biscuits saved up and I had wheedled a file from a friendly Russian; Simonds got a bit of a map from a Frenchman; and we secured a watch from a Belgian. With this international outfit we were ready, except that we lacked a sufficient store of food. However, there was no help for that.

### A Bold Stroke

The larger was a 12-foot high barbed wire enclosure, 80 feet wide by 300 long, with the hut occupying the greater part of the central space. There was sufficient room below the bottom wire to permit the camp dogs to get in and out. At each corner of the larger there hung an are light. The sphere of light from those at the end did not quite meet and so left a small shadow in the centre.

As soon as night came we arranged with six other men to walk rapidly to and fro from the end of the hut to the shadow at the wire as though for exercise. Others clustered round the end of the hut, ourselves included. I watched my chance, and when the moment seemed favorable I fell into step beside them. As we reached the shadow I fell prone and went to filing wire. By the time they were back again I had cut through three strands and was crawling cautiously toward my objective, a pile of peat 200 yards distant, which seemed to offer cover as a breathing spot and starting point. Simonds followed on the signal from the promenade and I was through the wire, and after him Brumley. The other man got cold feet and refused at the last moment.

With 25 guards all about and some only 30 feet away the very impudence of the plan offered our only hope of success. I still lacked 50 yards of the peat heap when I heard three shots, next the dogs, and then the general cry which followed the detection of Brumley.

I rose to my feet and ran. We had already mapped out our course in advance by daylight for just such a contingency, so I struck boldly out. I was still in the swamp to my knees, and under those conditions even the short start we had might prove sufficient, since our pursuers would also bog down. The swamp was intersected by a series of small ditches and scattered bushes, which added to the difficulty of the passage. Once I heard Brumley bounding and swearing behind and went back to pull him out of a bottomless ditch. Simonds joined us while I was still struggling with him. In another hour Brumley's legs played out. We could still make out the lights of the larger. It was vitally necessary to push on, so we encouraged him as best we could and managed somehow to reach the edge of the swamp by daylight. We put ourselves on the meagre rations our store allowed, one biscuit for breakfast and another for supper with a bit of chocolate on the side. We had apparently outdistanced the pursuit. We prayed that our friends might not be too severely punished for their part in our escape.

We lay in the heather all day. We were soaked to the skin with the brackish water of the swamp, the odor of which still hung to our clothes. It was January and very cold. Sleep was impossible under such conditions. We nibbled our tiny rations and struck out as soon as darkness came. Our plan was to go straight across country. Unfortunately Brumley could not navigate the rough going of the fields, although on the level sands he made out fairly well. So we changed it on the latter. Later on in the night our road led us directly into a village. We hesitated as to what we should do. Brumley was for pushing through. The alternative

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