My Experiences as a German Prisoner

L. J. Austin, F.R.C.S.

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yours truly

L. H. Sherrington

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By
L. J. AUSTIN, F.R.C.S.
Member of the British Red Cross Society

LONDON: ANDREW MELROSE, LTD.
3 YORK ST., COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

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PREFACE

AT the outbreak of war I took the opportunity to offer my services to the British Red Cross Society. At that time I wished to see something of surgery in war and to assist as far as possible in dealing with wounded and sick. I had no idea that the sanctity of the Red Cross would be found to be an ideal of the past, and that a surgeon might be subjected to hitherto unknown insults. I had no intention of rushing into print, but after an interview which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, the inevitable publisher, in the shape of Mr. Melrose, appeared on the scene, and the short work which follows is the result.

The illustrations originally appeared in the *Illustrated London News*, and naturally are concerned with the later months of my imprisonment. This accounts for them all appearing in the later chapters.

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THE ARREST

CHAPTER I

THE ARREST

THE first Belgian unit of the British Red Cross Society was organized on August 13, and left for the Continent on Sunday, August 16. It consisted of ten surgeons, ten dressers, and twenty nurses, with medical and surgical panniers and large crates of dressings and chloroform. The medical units were dressed in khaki, the surgeons wearing small black tabs on the neck, while the dressers had no tabs. The nurses were in the Red Cross uniform.

Early on Sunday, the 16th, we left Charing Cross for Folkestone, and after a rather rough passage landed safely at Ostend, and went that same evening to Brussels. We were received with great enthusiasm by the population at Brussels, and were put in the Astorias Hotel. Nearly

the whole of Brussels was covered with Belgian flags; very large numbers of the Municipal Guard were under arms in the street, and on the eastern border one noticed that barricades of tramcars and entrenchments were made ready for an attack. We were informed by the Belgian Red Cross upon our arrival that there was nothing for us to do; that they had some 30,000 beds and only two or three thousand wounded men to look after. Consequently we had an opportunity of wandering round Brussels, seeing the cathedral and other interesting buildings, and had no immediate prospect of any medical or surgical work.

On Monday, the 17th, again we found nothing to do; but about four or five in the afternoon an urgent message was sent round to our party from the headquarters of the Belgian Red Cross for two surgeons to accompany agents of the Belgian Red Cross to assist in establishing a hospital close to Namur. Dr. Elliott, a colleague of mine, and I were detached from the rest of our party and handed over to the

Belgian Red Cross. We hurriedly packed our sacks, took a share of the surgical instruments and departed in a motor-car with a Belgian Count and a chauffeur.

The Count had papers to show that he was commissioner of the Red Cross for the south-eastern district of Belgium. The chauffeur was a Luxemburger. In addition to the Count and the chauffeur there was a second chauffeur, named Basil, who also carried his necessary papers of identification. We English doctors were provided with a passport for France and a passport for Belgium, and an identification paper containing details of height, colour of eyes, etc., and our contract note from the British Red Cross Society.

We drove out of Brussels on the Wavre Road, and after passing through large tracts of forest we saw the monuments of Waterloo far on our right. We met several regiments of Belgian infantry and some batteries of artillery passing northwards. About half-way to Namur we came across the first signs of war at a village named Gembloux, where we found the telegraph

wires cut and the railway lines uprooted; and were shown two dead Uhlans, who had been killed that morning in an affair of outposts with the Belgian cavalry. We also went and saw a large hospital which had been put up in a big school, and found a Belgian officer and several of his men severely wounded. Realizing that we were now practically between two armies, we hoisted a large Red Cross flag on the front of the motor and proceeded on the way to Namur.

When we were within ten miles of Namur we found a picket of French dragoons, who had blocked the road with wagons and cross wires. They inquired of us what we had seen, and especially asked about the position of the British Army. We were of course unable to inform them, because at that time no one in England had any information of the position of the British forces. We then came to Namur, and found the town in a state of great excitement. It was crowded with Belgian troops, and great enthusiasm was roused by the marching past of the Congo

Volunteers. We were also shown a large hole in the roof of the railway station where an aeroplane had dropped a bomb that day. During our short stay in Namur we saw no French troops.

After a very short night's sleep the party started at five o'clock on Tuesday, the 18th, and travelled through Namur out to the south-east; but owing to dense fog the progress was slow, and it was impossible to see any of the forts. We were continually being held up on the road by barbed wire entanglements, trenches, and trees dropped across the road. We saw only a few Belgian troops occupying these trenches, and they seemed to have very vague ideas as to how far away the German Army was. There had, of course, been no attempt on the part of the Belgian Army to hold any of the territory east of Namur. As we were proceeding, and when we were about ten miles from Namur, we suddenly ran into the outposts of the German Army, consisting of a picket of about twenty Uhlans, who examined our papers, obligingly re-

moved the tree from across the road and allowed us to proceed. Shortly afterwards we were again held up, this time by an officer, who re-examined us all, and again we were allowed to proceed.

At about 9.30 we reached Havelange and halted at Château St. Fontaine, the residence of the grandfather of our Belgian Count. This building was to be the main hospital. After an excellent breakfast, we settled the arrangements and found that the outbuildings had already been fixed up very efficiently as a temporary hospital, but that there were no arrangements made for any operating. I must confess that we were rather disappointed to find that the only occupant of this hospital was a German Uhlan who had fallen off his horse and broken his leg.

After breakfast and after placing our luggage in the château, we drove out again to see several other châteaux in the immediate neighbourhood which were to form subsidiary hospitals round the main one. We called upon several Belgian doctors, and discussed with them

the question of further supply of instruments, chloroform, etc., and found them willing to co-operate with us in every respect. All the time we were moving about German cavalry and German motor-cars were on all the roads, but they never stopped us or asked us a single question.

Near midday we came to a small village called Maffe, and here we had the misfortune to run straight into the head of the main German Army marching upon Namur. Before we had started on this tour the man Basil had been left at the château. The car was immediately surrounded; we were compelled to dismount, and the inside of the car was thoroughly searched for arms; naturally none were discovered. We were placed in a room of a little house, which in peace time served the double purpose of grocery shop and post office, but which was unoccupied at that time.

After waiting a few minutes a German officer arrived and demanded our papers. These were given to him; he examined them thoroughly, asked us whether we

had any weapons, and went away. Officer after officer came and looked at us, and one in high command said, "Well, gentlemen, I don't know what I am going to do with you, but as you are doctors you had better march with my sanitary staff, and do any work that is necessary." Nothing happened, however, and we remained for several hours in the hut.

By and by an officer who spoke excellent English, and who introduced himself as official interpreter, examined us thoroughly as to how we had got there, and why we had come anywhere near the German Army. All four of us were then taken in German Staff motor-cars for about a mile up one of the roads, and after dismounting we were led into a field where the Staff of the first Army were examining maps. We were placed in a row and waited a few minutes. Suddenly the senior officer, who I was afterwards told was in command of the first German Army Corps, turned on us and looked at us for some considerable time. He selected me and said in English, "Obviously a spy," and cast

his eyes round the field for a suitable tree. However, after a short conversation with several of the other officers and after examination of our brassards we were carried back again in the motor-cars to the little house.

We were then all four placed in separate rooms and each man guarded by two soldiers. My friend Dr. Elliott was first examined, and afterwards I was taken before the Court. The Court consisted of the Commander-in-Chief, the official interpreter, and another officer who was introduced to me as the military judge. The three officers sat round a small table, and I was placed opposite the Commander-in-Chief, and guarded by two soldiers with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets. Immediately on entering the room the interpreter said to me: "I wish you to understand clearly that you are on trial suspected of espionage, the penalty for which you doubtless know."

I was then stripped naked, and my clothes were thoroughly examined for any secret pockets, plans, maps, or weapons. At the close of the search they were

returned to me and I was allowed to dress. I was examined altogether for about an hour. During the first part I was questioned about how I had managed to reach Maffe, and all about what I had seen on the road, the dispositions of troops, and more especially about the question of French troops in Namur. I was able truthfully to reply that I had seen no French troops in Namur.

During the second part of the examination I was closely cross-questioned about the position of the British Fleet, the sailing of the Expeditionary Force, its destination and strength. As I knew nothing about the Expeditionary Force, and as the only ship I had seen was a cruiser in the Channel on the way across, I was unable to supply them with any information. Their manner towards me, however, clearly indicated that they thought I was refusing to tell them all I knew. All my papers were arranged in front of the Court, and were again thoroughly examined.

After the examination I was put back in my little room and had to sit and wait for

another two hours while the Belgians also were examined. This was a period of very great anxiety, and it is not now difficult for me to understand the sensations of a man waiting for a sentence of death. My only clear recollection of this period, however, is that I tried to make up my mind what I should say to them before they shot me, and hoped that I should be able to die like a man. The German guards, who were drawn from the 66th Regiment, were quite kind and friendly, and supplied me with a little hot soup.

When the Court had finished its examination, and had deliberated on its findings, a German officer whom I had not seen before, entered and spoke to me in very fast and fluent French. As I was not able to understand exactly what he meant, the interpreter came in. The interpreter said, "You know you've been incredibly foolish to come anywhere near our forces; you will not be able to return after seeing our army, but will have to be sent back into Germany. I do not know what will become of you, but you will be treated

as gentlemen." All the time after we had been caught, and all the time during the trial the German Army had been marching unceasingly past the house, mainly infantry and artillery, but I noticed every now and again large pontoon sections or a series of Red Cross wagons and motor-cars. A very large number of motor-cars containing officers were continually passing and re-passing.

I noticed that the infantry were marching very rapidly, and that practically no man ever fell out. The few soldiers who were placed upon the wagons were generally easing their horses. The horses were large and thick; mostly of a light brown colour, and of Flemish type. The guns passed by in batteries of eighteen or thirty-six, and there were many light, two-wheeled machine guns, drawn by one or two horses. Most of the stores in the army that I saw were in horse-drawn wagons, but a large number of the ambulances were motors. Altogether I stayed two and a half days in the little house, and during that time the army never

ceased passing by—by day and by night. Occasionally at night one would hear some enormous motor-wagons passing at great speed, and our guards informed us that these were the big siege guns being hurried up to attack the forts at Namur.

After the first trial we were allowed to sit together again, but unfortunately the officers who conducted the trial had taken our papers away with them, and this fact caused us very great trouble afterwards. Everywhere we went we were always asked for our papers and had to explain that they had gone on with the army. Our personal effects—watches, money, pipes, etc.—were all returned to us. We were not permitted to leave the house, and were always under guard; but we were allowed to purchase food and wine from a little inn that stood opposite. Such food as we purchased was cooked by our guards, and we sat down and ate with them. A large quantity of straw was brought into the house, and this formed the bed for the four of us and three guards. Lights were kept burning all night to prevent any chance of escape. Imme-

diately opposite the house was a very large barn, and in that were quartered officers and their horses. In the yard of the barn the animals that were requisitioned by the Germans were slain and cut up for the troops. We saw many of the villagers driving up their pigs, and heard the last protests of the victims.

During the afternoon of the first day an officer of the Motor Cycle Corps who spoke excellent English came in and had a friendly talk with us, and seemed to be inclined to laugh at the position he found us in. We were struck with the familiarity between the privates and some of the officers. For instance, in this particular case some of the soldiers had practice rides on their officers' motor-bicycles. This officer treated us with great respect, and among other things informed us that the English Expeditionary Force was making for Antwerp. As an unpleasant contrast, every now and again an officer would come in, look at us, and become almost inarticulate with rage, as he described the horrid end that was ready for us.

Nobody, however, touched us, and these incidents became so commonplace that after a time we took no further notice of them at all.

After a somewhat unpleasant night we awoke to another day in the hut. We were permitted to wash, but were not allowed out of the building. And time dragged heavily all the morning. Suddenly however, a tall, good-looking Prussian officer, aged about twenty-six, who we afterwards found out was Prince Heinrich the 33rd of Reuss, came into our room and started to re-examine us all over again. After questioning the Belgians he examined me for a long time, and seemed to be exceedingly suspicious. In fact he told me that he thought that Elliott and myself were not doctors at all, but British officers in disguise, attempting to discover the secrets of the German Army under cover of the Red Cross.

Of course we had no papers to show him, and he could not understand why it was that as doctors we had not got our State papers showing that we had qualified in

medicine and surgery. It was with great difficulty that we got him to understand that there is no State examination for medicine and surgery in England; and then he wanted to know how it was possible for anyone to get qualified.

He examined me at length about the Navy and Army of England. He wished to know the strength of the Army in England, India, and South Africa; and the percentage of black troops among the various forces. He then wanted to know where the Expeditionary Force was, and indeed seemed to cast some doubt as to whether there was an English Army at all, and if there was an army whether it would dare to come to the Continent. I informed him that no one outside the official circles knew anything about the Expeditionary Force, and that no information could be obtained from the papers in London as to its existence or its destination, but that I had heard several rumours. He asked, "What are the rumours?" I said: "The most circumstantial rumour I had heard was, that the British

Expeditionary Force is going to Antwerp."

I did not tell him that I had only heard that the day before from a German officer.

His Royal Highness said that he had many associations with England and had lived there part of his life, and that he was intensely surprised and disgusted at England coming into the war against Germany, and that after all the English and German races were cousins and should not fight one another. I explained to him that for a long time England had been suspicious about the growth of the German Navy, and that there was a feeling in England that if Germany was allowed to overwhelm France it would be England's turn next. He said he had never heard such remarkable nonsense in his life. And he also said that the whole of the war was the fault of the Englishmen, and that Germany was fighting on the defensive—a conviction that I have seen expressed many times in the German newspapers since.

His Royal Highness finally said, " You say that you are doctors ? It will be necessary for you to prove yourself, sir ; and

as I have some injured men coming along presently you will have to examine them under the eye of my medical staff." This, however, was never carried out, and finally His Royal Highness shook hands with us and said, "I do not know what will become of you, gentlemen, but probably you'll be sent back to Germany to assist in looking after wounded soldiers of France and Belgium, and possibly English, if they are foolish enough to cross the Channel."

During our interview with the Prince there was a disturbance in the street outside, and the Curé was arrested for some derogatory remark concerning the German Army. He was brought in in a state of great excitement, and after saying a few words it was perfectly obvious that the poor man was not quite sane and not responsible for his actions. A German officer instructed the soldiers to take him back to his house, put him to bed and see that he stopped there.

Again we spent the night on the straw in the hut, but by this time we had become quite friendly with the guards who

were posted over us, and they did all they could to prevent the soldiers outside from staring and mocking at us. Every now and again a soldier who spoke English would come in to air his knowledge; but during the remainder of that second day we saw little more of the officers, except of course the army which was passing by all the time as before. We were informed that the last forts of Liêge had fallen and that the attack on Namur was proceeding so successfully that the surrender of the position was hourly expected. This information was naturally very depressing, because every one expected that Namur would put up a good resistance.

JOURNEY TO COLOGNE

CHAPTER II

JOURNEY TO COLOGNE

VERY early next morning, Thursday, August 20, we were wakened up and thrust, literally at the point of the bayonet, into a motor-lorry, in which we proceeded against the stream of the German Army to the Belgian border. This was altogether about a distance of 40 kilometres, and the dust of the army and of the numerous motor-cars made the journey very unpleasant. In the motor there were a large number of very old guns which had been seized from the peasants, and to add to this discomfort we were not allowed to smoke because of the presence of tins of petrol. The wagon was covered and the guards occupied the entrance at the back; consequently we were able to see

very little of our surroundings. And every now and again the guards would point out a house from which shots had been fired by the peasants, and which had as a result been burned to the ground. This method of retribution was invariably taken, and the perpetrators immediately shot if caught without uniform.

Apart from these evidences of war everything seemed very quiet, and the harvest was standing cut but not gathered in the fields. In some places it looked as if the corn were rotting on the ground. Eventually we reached a small place called Malmedy and were placed in a train, which took us to Bouvigny, the frontier station. Here we passed three or four very unpleasant hours in a waiting-room. We had had nothing to eat that day, and our request for food was answered by a very stale loaf of bread and some water in a jug being served to us.

At this place we first met with the attentions of the Red Cross ladies. At every station in Germany we found Red Cross establishments for feeding the sol-

diers and the wounded, but their attitude towards the English was always extremely unpleasant. At this particular station quite little girls of sixteen and seventeen wearing the Red Cross would come and mock us through the window, and with unmistakable gestures indicate that we should be hanged.

A somewhat offensive non-commissioned officer suddenly arrived and proceeded to search us. He removed all knives that we had, and was greatly excited at the presence of the large jack-knife which had been issued to us before we left. These knives carried a long spike for punching leather and opening tins; and the story has been circulated in Germany that these knives were issued to the troops for the express purpose of gouging out the eyes of the German wounded. Dr. Elliott had his morphia and syringe with him, and this was also confiscated, apparently under the impression that he might use the morphia to overcome the guard or possibly as a method of suicide.

Our other personal effects, including our

money, were returned to us. We were then placed in a horse-box which had been only recently vacated by the horses, and in which were four more unfortunates who had been arrested at some time or another by the Germans. They were mostly Belgian peasants, and we never discovered exactly why they had been taken; but we understood it had something to do with interference with the telegraph lines. Four guards were placed in the horse-box over these eight prisoners, and we bumped slowly and painfully to a small town called Ulflingen. Here we were detrained, and some of the Belgians were permitted to go under escort to get some food which they purchased and shared among the prisoners.

We were then marched four or five miles along country roads and were exhibited to a large number of German troops which appeared to be in reserve. At first they were inclined to crowd upon us, but were soon driven back by their officers, and practically they took very little notice of us. A young officer stopped

us and said to Dr. Elliott and me, " What are you doing here ? " We said that we were English doctors and explained shortly how it was we had arrived. He said, " Oh, that will be all right as soon as your papers are returned from the army ; after a period of a week or two you will be sent over the border into Holland and be able to return home." He went on to say that we should have to stay some time because we had seen so much of the position of the German Army. This gentleman was the last who ever suggested to us the possibility of release.

After another march we joined the railway line again and travelled for about four hours in another horse-box to Gerolstein. This journey was comparatively comfortable ; we were permitted to lie down on the floor of the box, and we had the food and wine purchased before. The guards, who stood up the whole time, were apparently suspicious of our attempts at friendliness, and refused to take any refreshments from us. At Gerolstein we were

marched into a large waiting-room at the station to see the officer in charge, and here for the first time we heard the phrase, "Wot you want?" We were to hear it many and many a time again, it being apparently a curious idea in the German mind that the prisoners have come to a particular place to find out something all of their own freewill.

We spent the night at Gerolstein in a watch-house, a recently constructed shanty of wood, and slept on a straw-covered shelf of wood very similar to the arrangements in an Alpine club hut. There was just room for the eight of us to fit on the slope by squeezing tight together, and the night was a very unpleasant one, because the light was kept on brightly the whole time and some eight or nine guards talked loudly and played cards all the time.

The next morning, Friday, the 21st, we rose very early, were given some hot soldier coffee and some rather stale brown bread, and were transported in a fourth-class carriage by an exceedingly slow train to

the city of Cologne. Our guards were rather unpleasant, and told the Belgians that there was no doubt as to what would happen to us when we got to Cologne, and they seemed to take a delight in allowing the populace to climb up on to the end of the carriage to mock and jeer the prisoners. At first the guards occupied the few available seats and the prisoners stood up, but afterwards they took turns at sitting down on the seats or on the floor. It was a small compartment and very crowded. On the outskirts of Cologne the troops were very active, getting up vast barbed wire entanglements and digging large trenches, evidently with a view to a possible attack: trees also were being cut down for miles around. During the whole of the journey in the train we had suffered intensely with the heat, and it was not always easy to get even water.

On arrival at Cologne station we were placed for about an hour in an underground waiting-room. Eventually an officer arrived who counted us carefully and seemed very excited at the presence of a

Uhlan who had in fact been one of our guards, but whom the officer suspected of being a Belgian spy who had been arrested with the others of the party. The Uhlan, however, did not take long to explain his position.

We were then formed up again and proceeded to march through Cologne for a distance of 2½ to 3 miles to the prison in which we were destined to be confined. We had not gone more than a few yards from the station, and were passing through the great open space that faces the main entrance to Cologne Cathedral, when a large and threatening crowd began to collect round us. At first we had one soldier a-piece on our flanks and several in front and behind, but very shortly it was necessary to put a ring of police outside that and finally a squadron of mounted police. Every insulting and abusive epithet in the German language was hurled at us, and the crowd had to be kept back by the police with swords used on the flat.

No stones, bottles, or other implements

were thrown at us, but once or twice we had to take refuge down a side street while the mounted police cut the crowd off from entering there. About half-way along we spent a few minutes in one of the police stations, but I think this interval was for official purposes and not for protection. As we marched out from the police station the crowd grew larger and larger, and expressions of hatred and contempt for Englishmen and England grew more and more virulent, but by this time we were adequately guarded. The weather was intensely hot, a thunderstorm was just coming up, and I was thankful that I had lost all my luggage and had nothing to carry beyond an overcoat.

At the end of our march we turned abruptly through a great iron gate and heard the last yell of derision from the crowd, as we entered the prison in which we were to be held for the next seventeen days. I look upon the march across Cologne as one of the most depressing incidents that ever occurred to me, and I suffered from a great desire to stop and tell

the crowd exactly what I felt about it I wondered whether those people who went to execution in the French Revolution felt the same way.

PRISON

CHAPTER III

PRISON

THE prison in which we spent nearly three weeks is situated near the fortifications in the extreme south of Cologne. Immediately on entering the main gate we came to the large central parade ground, and were confronted by a curious round tower with a large moat about it, in which the convicts worked. On the right there is a four-storeyed rectangular building of old dirty brickwork containing the cells. I was taken upstairs on to the first floor and shut up in cell No. 73, my friend Dr. Elliott being in cell No. 69. The other prisoners were distributed above us.

The prison is a military one, and is mainly occupied by deserters from the

German Army and Navy. Most of them had sentences of about eight or nine months, but a few of better education were in there for eighteen months. Most of the prisoners were pardoned at the outbreak of the war and were drafted off to their ships or regiments, but a large number still remained.

The cell in which I was destined to spend fifteen days' solitary confinement was 6½ feet across, 12 feet long, and about 10 feet high. The window was placed about 7 feet from the ground, but it was possible to obtain a view of the parade ground by climbing on hot-water pipes that ran across under the window. As the window had a north aspect, no sun penetrated the cell until five o'clock in the afternoon; but this was little disadvantage as the weather was very hot.

The floor of the cell was made of small blocks of wood, a very large number of which were broken and loose, which made the cleaning a difficult business. The bed consisted of an iron and wooden structure which was looped up to a catch on the wall,

and it was forbidden to lower this except at night. There was a thin mattress of straw, two blankets and a bag in which the blankets were supposed to be kept, but which I personally found more convenient when used as a sleeping bag with the blankets on top. The pillow was of great antiquity, very thin, and very hard.

The furniture in the cell consisted of a table and a stool, with several buckets and other utensils in the corners of the cell. Near the window was a corner cupboard, on the top shelf of which was a tin basin and a large stone ewer of water; on the lower shelf a tin mug and a bowl of bright metal in which the prisoner took all his food. In another small cupboard passing near the bed there were boot brushes and cleaning material for the cell. On the side of this there were suspended a small salt cellar and a little soap dish. The walls of the cell were covered with whitewash, but there were many crevices and cracks in it, and the whole appearance showed considerable neglect.

The door, which was of stout wood, reinforced with iron, contained a window with a flap which was let down by the jailer when food was given to the prisoner, and immediately above this flap a little spy-hole, which commanded the whole of the cell. Close to the door there is a little push-knob, which in the daytime dropped a pointer into the passage and at night-time rang an electric bell, so that the prisoners could communicate with the jailer in circumstances of urgency. As I spent fifteen days' solitary confinement in my cell I got to know every detail perfectly; and it is impossible to forget its shape, size, and the nature of the contents.

Very soon after we were admitted I was instructed by the jailer to wash myself; after which I was taken out to the Commandant's office, and examined by an officer attached to the staff of the Commandant of Cologne. He spoke good English and seemed to find himself very amused at the position of the Englishmen. He told us that he had been sent down in great urgency from Headquarters to

investigate the important question of the capture of spies, who had been taken in some unknown uniform, and was surprised to find only two English doctors. He seemed also to think that it was our fault that we had no papers, and could not understand why we had permitted the officers who first captured us to take away our papers. We wrote out a full statement once more about how we fell into the hands of the German Army ; after which we were put back to the cell again. About seven o'clock that night a quarter of a loaf of black bread was introduced through the hole in the door ; and shortly afterwards our feeding pot was filled up with some sort of starch paste of a glutinous consistency and a peculiarly unpleasant taste. This mixture we used to have practically every night, but I never got really used to it, and generally had to leave more than half. On the other hand the black bread was excellent, especially on those occasions when we managed to get it reasonably fresh.

On the first evening we were instructed

to go to bed at eight o'clock, and in spite of the hardness of the planks I was soon asleep. I woke up very shortly afterwards to find myself thoroughly bitten by swarms of bugs, which came out of the bed and of the plaster cracks in the wall. The illumination provided was from a lamp in the passage which shone through a small hole over the top of the door, but this was so dim that I was not able to deal effectively with my enemies. My friend Dr. Elliott told me afterwards that on the first night he had killed no less than sixty of the creatures as they advanced up the wall to attack. The Commandant of the prison informed me later that the building was a very ancient one, and consequently nothing effective could be done to keep down the pest. He did not seem to look upon it as anything very bad, and the prisoners had apparently got quite used to it—as indeed we did ourselves after four or five nights.

Next day, Saturday, August 22, I was violently awakened by the jailer at five o'clock and instructed by signs to get up

and make my bed. At half-past five breakfast arrived; my dish was passed out through the hole and filled up with about a pint and a half of coffee, or I should say coffee substitute, without milk or sugar. The only solid food that I had for breakfast was the bread that I had left over from the day before. I was then compelled to clean up the cell, empty the various utensils, place everything in its own little situation, and again was shut in by myself.

The business of the day was completed by six o'clock, and for the rest there was absolutely nothing to do; in fact, the next incident on that first morning was the arrival of the bread through the hole in the door at eleven o'clock. All our personal effects—watches, pipes, keys, money, in fact everything except our pocket-handkerchiefs—had been removed within the first hour of our arrival, and we had been stripped and searched once more. Looking back on it, it is extremely difficult to remember how one did pass these hours, but, as can be imagined, it was

productive of very considerable depression, especially in the earlier days before one had got more or less used to it.

On the afternoon of the second day I was again summoned to the office, and was introduced to an officer who said that he was the Chief Medical Officer of the Army Corps stationed at Cologne, and that it would be necessary for me to prove myself a doctor. With the aid of an interpreter he examined me first of all upon the signs, symptoms, pathology, and bacteriology of acute pneumonia, and secondly he placed his hand on a particular part of my body and said, " If a bayonet was struck straight through there, what anatomical structure would be involved ? "

My friend Dr. Elliott was asked about the signs and symptoms of typhoid fever, and more especially about the culture reactions of the typhoid bacillus; and in addition to this the anatomical details of a special operation on the thigh. The questions as put to us would have been entirely impossible for anyone to answer

who had not had a medical training, and we were graciously informed that we had passed our examination. Unfortunately it made no difference to the treatment imposed upon us during the next fortnight.

That afternoon we were first permitted to take fresh air and exercise. The Belgians and the English were taken under guard into a small courtyard at the back of the rectangular building with very high walls and a few mangy trees in the centre: the only structure that could be seen was a church tower in the distance. We were strongly guarded, and not allowed to speak to one another, and had to remain fifteen paces apart, while we walked slowly round and round the trees in the middle. We were also told that to turn our heads from side to side was forbidden under a penalty of being put in the punishment cells—a situation which I am glad to say I avoided, as they were entirely dark.

The duration of our exercise was exactly half an hour by the clock, and as some of the Belgians were very old, the pace set was very slow and every one had to

walk at the pace set by the slowest. The consequence of this was, that although one did get some fresh air the exercise itself was not exactly strenuous. Most days we were permitted two recreation periods of one half-hour each, one in the morning and one in the late afternoon, but it seemed to be somewhat arbitrary and depended upon the goodwill of one of the senior jailers. I can remember every detail of that courtyard, and I shall never be able to forget that the exact distance round the walk was 157 paces. I used to welcome the half-hour's exercise as a break in the monotony of sitting alone in the cell, but the exercise itself was nearly as monotonous as the solitude of the cell.

The next day was Sunday, and a peculiarly depressing one. We felt sure that the German authorities would take no further steps to deal with us on Sunday, and it was one of the troubles of Sunday that we were only allowed out once. In the middle of the morning I heard a sound of singing, and on looking out of my window

which commanded a partial view of the parade ground I saw the prisoners drawn up for a field service, which was conducted by a parson with a curious black-topped hat, not unlike that worn by a Uhlan. A few minutes after this service was over, my cell door opened and the parson and a few of his friends had a look at me, rather in the way that one looks at some strange wild beast at the Zoo. After about half a minute the parson said " Engländer ! " and the door was shut, and I am thankful to say that I never saw him again. Services were conducted on Sunday in various parts of the prison, but in spite of our request we were not allowed to attend them, and requests to see an English-speaking clergyman were refused.

On Monday the morning passed in the same hopeless way. But in the afternoon I was again examined by an entirely fresh group of officers, none of whom spoke English well. They introduced themselves as part of the Court which had to deal with our case, the Chief of the Court being the Commandant of Cologne, whom we

never actually saw. This examination, which was the last I had to undergo, was comparatively short, and I only made a few additional statements at the end of the previous report and signed the whole of the document. I asked one of the officers when we might expect the result of the findings of the Court, and he said: "Perhaps to-morrow, but you never can be sure"; as a matter of absolute fact we heard nothing more of the findings of this Court for twelve days. During the whole of that time the solitary confinement continued, and I spoke to no one except the jailers and one or two of the prisoners who in the course of a seafaring life had picked up a little English.

During the whole of my stay I continually asked to be allowed to have English books, but apart from one small, rather sloppy novel I was only permitted a German-English grammar. As I did not know even the shape of the German letters this book was of very little use to me, but the small dictionary at the end was useful in making up conversation with the jailers.

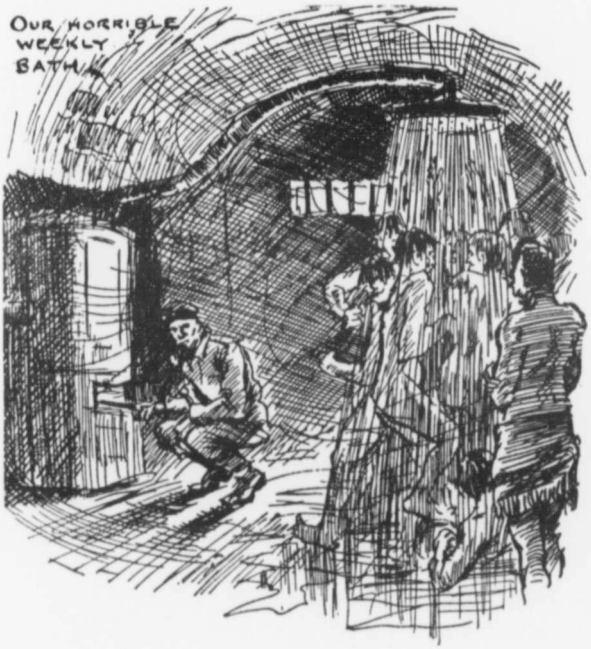
After about three or four days I began to know the actual Commandant of the prison, Freiherr von B——, who knew a few words of English and liked to come and practise it. He was in every way exceedingly kind to me, but had no power of his own to alter the regime of the prison, or to provide books or extra food.

On the fifth day he allowed me to purchase cigarettes. The money was deducted from what had been taken out of my pockets and the cigarettes were purchased by the jailer from the prison canteen. Having been nearly a week without tobacco, the arrival of the cigarettes was a luxury of which only smokers can understand the value. The sailormen prisoners would go to any length and risk the punishment cells to get a stray cigarette from us. The boys who managed the lamps and who nailed the boots were the only ones that we came into close contact with, and consequently the only ones who managed to get a cigarette or two. I suppose that both they and we risked severe punishment for dealing

in cigarettes; but it was one of the relaxations of the prison life to watch these lads manœuvring round the jailers to get into a favourable position near our doors and at a time when the hole in the door was open for food.

One day I protested violently to the Commandant about the swarms of bugs. He said that he was sorry; that they had tried everything; that owing to the antiquity of the building it was impossible to get rid of them. Next day, however, a funny little old bearded man arrived with many bottles of benzine and a squirting machine, and proceeded to soak the bed and all the cracks in the walls with benzine spray. The effect was marvellous, the bugs came out of their holes in scores, and I stood by and killed them with a small piece of wood. Owing to the reek of the benzine it was impossible to stay in the cell, and I spent most of my time that day sitting in the passage and watching the prisoners at work, stitching and marking mail bags. Altogether it was the most interesting day that I spent in the prison.

After we had been about one week in the prison we were allowed to have a large



hot bath, and as up to now it had been impossible to get anything but a small

basin of cold water, this was an immense boon. After the bath I was shaved by the prison barber, one of the sailormen who was serving his time. As every one knows, to be clean-shaved again really gives one a much more hopeful outlook on life.

The whole of this period was extremely depressing, chiefly because it was impossible to know from one day to the next whether one might not be taken out and shot at any moment. But as time went on, and as the Commandant became more and more friendly, I began to feel pretty certain that our adventure would not have a fatal termination. But still, one could never be sure.

At the end of the first week, our Belgian companions, who had been undergoing exactly the same treatment in neighbouring cells, disappeared; and I was informed that they had been tried and had been sentenced to be kept as officers and prisoners of war for the rest of the war. This was a great relief to my mind, because I felt sure that if the Belgians were not going

to be shot, it was highly improbable that I should be less fortunate ; but still we sat and waited. I asked the Commandant one day whether it was not true that the Belgians had had their case decided. He admitted that they had, but said that the papers relating to Dr. Elliott and myself had unfortunately been mislaid at Headquarters owing to a change of personnel in the Headquarters Staff, and that we should have to stay in prison until they were discovered. Meantime, he promised that he would do all that he could to try and push the matter through.

Nothing, however, happened, and we spent day after day and night after night in precisely the same manner, with no apparent prospects of any alteration at all, till both of us became thoroughly gloomy and very jumpy. At this stage it is impossible to recollect the exact attitude one took, but I can remember that periods of great depression were followed by others of quiet and complete confidence. But whatever was my state of mind I flatter myself that I never allowed the

jailers or the Commandant to see that I was depressed.

The routine of every day was precisely the same, but I learnt one or two little things to assist me through the long hours. We were wakened at five, and the coffee for breakfast was provided at half-past. At first I used to get up and dress before breakfast, but I soon learnt it was much easier to have my little bowl ready the night before to take in my coffee hurriedly, and then go back again to bed to drink it. After dressing, and performing the menial duties of the day, there came the most trying part, waiting for the long hours of the morning to pass by. I used to attempt to learn German words out of a dictionary, and to draw anatomical diagrams from memory, for after a few days we were permitted some paper and pencil. Generally in the morning we had half an hour's exercise and then returned for lunch, which consisted of a vegetable soup, in which on special days a square inch or two of fat pork might be discovered. After lunch—in flat disobedience to the orders of the prison—I let down

my bed and slept for one or two hours. Every now and again the jailer used to come and turn me out and address strong language to me in German. It did not move me, for I entirely failed to understand it. He used to get absolutely wild with rage if I stayed in bed after two o'clock, because about this time a visiting officer was generally expected.

In the afternoon I generally had my "tea." This consisted of a slice of dry brown bread and a cup of water, but it seemed to recall civilization to have something to eat in the middle of the afternoon. Then came our second half-hour's exercise, and after that I used to sit down again and watch the sun peep slowly into my cell. Like the prisoner in the novels, I kept a record on the wall of the extreme position reached by the sunbeams on every afternoon, and watched the days close in slowly by the diminution in distance and in time. My friend Dr. Elliott attempted to adopt a mouse, but his efforts were early cut short by the mouse inadvertently dropping into a bowl of water and

being drowned in the middle of the night.

The great attack on the bugs was partially successful for about three or four days, but after that they returned and started to worry us again. But by this time I had become so completely used to their attentions that I did not even take the trouble to kill them. Every now and again I was permitted to wash my clothes, and for this purpose a large bucket of hot water and soft soap were provided. During the process of drying, for which there were no adequate arrangements, I lived in German prison clothes. Whenever we had hot water for boiling our clothes we were also compelled to scrub and clean the cell thoroughly with small hand brushes and rags which were served out for the purpose.

The very first opportunity that I had of saying a few words to my friend Dr. Elliott occurred during one of our walks when the attention of the guard was distracted by the passage of one of Germany's largest Zeppelins close over the

fort. We got a very good view of the airship, which passed with a crab-like motion over the prison, and during the excitement the prisoners who were marching round the courtyard were able to break their formation for a few minutes.

By the fifteenth day all the Belgian prisoners had disappeared. I do not know what became of them, but on the afternoon of the same day the first real relaxation of discipline occurred and I was permitted to walk round the courtyard with and to talk to Dr. Elliott. We were not, however, permitted to sit together.

Next day, Sunday, September 6, we were allowed to sit together and talk everything over, and were informed that we were shortly going to leave the prison.

On Monday, the 7th, the Commandant told us that we were leaving next day to join the British officers at Torgau, where we would be treated as officers and as prisoners of war. He informed us that we were still more or less suspected of espionage, and could not expect to be released until the end of the war. Our money

and goods were returned to us, and we were permitted to walk up and down in the passages of the prison instead of being confined to our cells. We were also permitted to write home, and I wrote a short note to my relations and to the British Red Cross Society. Neither of these letters was ever delivered.

On that last day we met two Belgians, also prisoners. They had come from a part of Belgium which had not seen actual fighting, and had in their own motor-car conveyed a German officer to Cologne on urgent business. On arriving there the car had been seized and they had been thrown into prison with us. They were naturally particularly disgusted at this treatment, but understood that in a few days' time their car was going to be restored to them and that they were to be permitted to return to their home. This we heard they eventually did, and were able to communicate with the remains of our party in Brussels.

The members of our party in Brussels had in the meanwhile been captured by

the Germans, and had done a certain amount of Red Cross work and were later returned home through Copenhagen. One morning a tiny slip of paper was passed into the hand of one of our doctors by a woman as she walked by, and on it was written "Austin and Elliott quite well, imprisoned at Torgau." I am inclined to think that this communication was made through these two Belgian gentlemen, and not, as was supposed by our party, by the man Basil who had avoided capture in the early stages. This man had in fact found his way back to Brussels, having walked many miles north and passed into Holland; but I cannot see that he could have possibly known that we were going to Torgau, and believe that the communication was almost certainly made by our fellow-prisoners.

While in prison we obtained some news of the victorious advance of the German Army on Paris, and were informed that forty-five British guns had been captured, that the British Army was in twos and threes, completely disorganized, and the remnants were in full flight. About the

same time an official notice was published concerning the capture of nearly 100,000 Russians, and the jailers were inclined to gloat over us with this information. They also told of a desperate state of affairs in England; of the entire cessation of business; the huge rising in Ireland; and a great Zeppelin raid which had practically destroyed London. They also appeared to show a childish ignorance about the relative position of London and Calais; they knew that England was separated by a narrow band of water from the coast of France, but seemed perfectly confident that invasion would be easy and that their large guns, if once planted on the coast, would be able to carry to London.

The Commandant assured me that the fall of Paris was imminent, and that when Paris had fallen France would ask for peace; that the first term of peace would be immediate surrender of the whole of the French Fleet, which would then be manned by the Germans in order that they might have a large enough Navy to over-

whelm the English easily. A sailor prisoner also told me something about the action in the Bay of Heligoland, and said that we had had a naval victory there; but although three German vessels had been sunk, the damage to the English Fleet was so great that they dared not publish the figures at home. Every one that I spoke to on the subject of the war seemed to be perfectly confident that the German Army would entirely overwhelm France in not more than two months, and would then be able to return and throw their whole weight against the Russians. They all appeared confident of an entirely successful ending on both flanks within a comparatively short period of three or four months.

Looking back on this period of my captivity, I can only say that the solitary confinement and the uncertainty of one's fate were exceedingly trying. The discipline was very severe and the food distinctly unpleasant, but yet with the aid of a certain amount of philosophy it was not impossible even at that time to

get a certain amount of humour out of it. The jailers were never actually brutal, but they had, of course, to obey their orders and preserve the strict regime of the prison. Certain of them were much more easy to deal with than others; and whereas my chief jailer was very particular about my not holding conversation with the other prisoners, the second jailer, a sailorman himself, would sometimes permit me as much as ten or fifteen minutes' conversation with the English-speaking prisoners of German nationality. Except for that slight incident referred to above, when the Zeppelin passed over, I had never exchanged more than a salutation with Dr. Elliott or the Belgian prisoners.

The rigour of treatment seems to have been entirely unnecessary, because, if the first group of officers who had captured us and examined us, had decided that we were not liable to the death penalty, it was impossible for any others, without our papers and without the other evidence, to be able to come to a proper decision. To this day I cannot imagine

what purpose was served by our imprisonment and our repeated examinations. However, everything has an end, and on Tuesday, September 8, we started from Cologne to join the captured British and French officers interned at Torgau.

TORGAU

CHAPTER IV

TORGAU

ON Tuesday, September 8, Dr. Elliott and I were roused early and marched again to the main station in Cologne. Our passage through the streets was in marked contrast to our previous experience. We had only one non-commissioned officer and one private as an escort, and nobody seemed to take any notice, except a few little children.

On arrival at the station we were permitted to purchase what food we liked and obtained a few English books. Here I met a German-American Boy Scout, who told me of all the interesting events of the past fortnight, and asked whether I knew anything about the great revolution in India, the risings in Egypt and the progress of the war in Ireland.

We then travelled in comparative comfort and in a fast train to Magdeburg, where we met a party of seven officers of the R.A.M.C., who had been captured at Mons and had been employed in the Field Hospitals round about tending the British and the German wounded. They had had an exceedingly unpleasant journey, which had lasted already for about seventy hours, and during the whole time they had had only one respectable meal. They told me that they had all been packed close together in a third-class carriage, and had taken turns about, sleeping on the floor and even in the racks, and that they had continually been refused even water by the German Red Cross. At one station an excited man had threatened them with a loaded revolver, but did not actually pull it off. After a very good meal in the restaurant at Magdeburg, the British officers, together with a few French, journeyed in a captured Belgian carriage to Halle and there were given a meal of soup. Here we met a German officer who treated us with the most profound contempt.

When asked by one of our party whether he spoke English, he turned to a companion and said: "Nothing so common."

Eventually we arrived at Torgau at about four in the morning, and were marched to the prison. As the medical officers had managed to preserve most of their personal outfit, including several field panniers, and as there were no facilities for transport, we were compelled to carry all the luggage. The total distance was about a mile, and the weight was so great that we could not advance more than about one hundred yards at a time without a rest. Many of us became so exhausted with the strain of carrying these panniers that we do not remember arriving at the fort at all. This arrival, occurring as it did in the early hours of the morning, had one great advantage: it saved us from the attentions of the mob, which at that time was very hostile to the captured British officers. After entering the gates of the fort, we were conducted to some rooms, and there found straw palliasses and blankets waiting for us. It was not

the utmost luxury, but it was very welcome to many of the party who had not lain down in comfort for four or five days.

The particular fort in which we were interned is that known as the Brückenkopf. It was originally constructed by Napoleon the Great to protect the bridgehead over the Elbe, for his great expedition into Russia, and on some of the masonry the date 1812 can still be seen. The fort consists of a large square bounded by a high earthwork with circular bastions at each of the angles. Outside the earthwork is a large moat which can be flooded from the Elbe; during our stay it was dry and protected by barbed wire entanglements. Immediately inside the great earthwork are placed a large number of mobilization and wagon sheds, in which eventually the French officers were quartered. Opposite the entrance is a semicircular two-storeyed building of stone, which was designed to be a sort of keep and last resort for the garrison. Internally this semicircular building was cut up into about forty or fifty rooms;

and for a time all the British officers were in this part of the building living in these rooms each of which contained from twelve to twenty men. On the external surface of the circular fort were passages in which rude tables of wood and trestles were put up. Here the officers messed, generally in parties of about twenty.

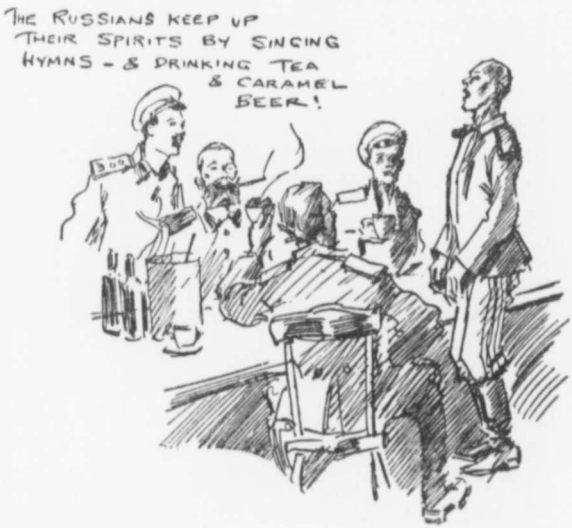
During the first week of our stay only a small courtyard enclosed by this semi-circular fort could be used for exercise, but shortly some 800 French officers were drafted in who had all of them been captured at Maubeuge, and it was necessary to use the wagon sheds at the back, and a large internal parade ground was thrown open. All the large wagon sheds were employed for housing officers and orderlies, except a very large one on the north aspect, which was used by the authorities as a shell factory. Every day about two or three hundred women were conducted under escort to this shed and employed in packing the shells, which were continually being carried out in agricultural wagons and sent away.

The longer we stayed the more active the shell factory became, and before we left it was working in shifts both night and day. Evidently only the packing was done here, for we could see the empty cases being brought into the place.

Shortly after the arrival of the French it was found that the housing accommodation was not large enough, and several wooden and asbestos sheds were put up with amazing rapidity. In these some eighty of the junior British officers were housed; but being of recent construction they were exceedingly cold, and for a long time only one small stove was employed in each. Later, several other stoves were inserted, but always the supply of coal was somewhat inadequate to keep all the stoves alight. Others of these wooden sheds were made into large dining-rooms for the French officers; and this arrangement greatly relieved the pressure on the mess tables in the circular fort, which were now given over entirely to the use of the British officers.

After the main part of the fort was thrown

open, it was possible to obtain much more exercise. Instead of being in a very hot and dusty courtyard about one hundred yards long, we had a field which was at



least half a mile in circumference. The centre of this field was covered with patchy grass, and very soon a football ground was put up and every afternoon there

was a football match of sorts. The International matches between the French and English always drew good gates, and generally resulted in a win for the English. As the ground was very hard and rough, no attempt was made to play Rugby football, but only Association. One day an attempt was made to play the Eton Field game, but as there were not quite enough Etonians to make two complete sides, others, who had never even seen the game played, indulged for the first time in it. The French were highly delighted at the formation and manœuvres of the "ram."

While at Torgau the British officers were under the direct command of the senior officer present, and this duty devolved first upon Colonel Gordon, of the Gordon Highlanders, and later upon Colonel Jackson, of the Hampshires. At eleven o'clock every day the officers were paraded in the small courtyard and counted, and the orders for the day were read out by the senior officer of each section. The medical men, of whom there were about

thirty-five, formed a special little group by themselves at the extreme left of the line. There were about twenty-five orderlies who had been fetched from the men's camps; these were distributed as servants to the various messes.

When we first arrived, the sanitary arrangements were feeling the strain of the large number pretty severely, but very shortly afterwards they were handed over to the mixed control of the British and French medical officers. A sanitary squad was formed which dealt exceedingly efficiently with the latrines, and with the heaps of refuse that were the breeding grounds of thousands of flies. The uniform good health of the camp was a striking testimony to the admirable way in which these duties were carried out, especially as the sanitary systems provided precluded the possibility of the immediate removal of water.

As another sanitary precaution, every officer, both French and English, was vaccinated against smallpox by the German authorities, because they had had

such a terrible lesson in Torgau itself during the war of '70, when many thousands of prisoners died in the camp there, owing to an outbreak of that disease. Lists were also prepared of officers who had not been inoculated against typhoid, and steps were being taken to carry out the necessary inoculation, but these had not become effective before we left Torgau.

The hospital at Torgau consisted of one of the larger rooms in the circular fort, and there only the more severe cases of illness and the more severely wounded men were placed. There were very few British officers whom it was necessary to place in the hospital itself, but as there were a large number of wounds that had not yet healed, there was a sick parade every morning between nine and ten, when the wounds were dressed and drugs issued. The charge of the wounded officers was undertaken by the British medical officers and the French medical officers respectively; the German doctors only paid spasmodic and rather hurried visits of inspection. Such cases as required ela-

borate apparatus or special instruments for particular operations were transferred to Halle, where they were placed under the control of the University Hospital. Such small operations as it was possible to do at Torgau were performed on the table in the middle of the room, in full

sight of all the other patients, and of the guard, who used to assemble before the window and take a genuine delight in the proceedings.

The instruments, apparatus, and chloroform came out of the British medical panniers, an arrangement which saved a great deal of trouble to the medical officers in

charge and was of course readily accepted by the German authorities. Many of the drugs required by the officers also came out of the panniers. It was possible to have medicine made up in the town, but they were exceedingly cautious about permitting mixtures containing poisonous alkaloids such as strychnine entering the camp in any quantity. We never found out whether they thought that these might be used for suicidal purposes, or for poisoning the food of the guard.

One day orders came from the Germans to prepare a list of those officers who were so severely wounded that they would be unable to serve in the campaign again, with a view to exchange of such cases. The necessary list was prepared and sent in to the Germans, but up to the time we were released no steps had been taken to send any of the officers back.

In the circular fort an excellent bath-room was provided. The water was partially heated, and then distributed by a large number of shower-bath jets in the ceiling. Although it was sometimes densely

crowded, it was possible to get an adequate bath every day by timing one's arrival, a privilege of which the British officers availed themselves with great thankfulness. Indeed, the old bath attendant, who was always known by the name of "Mossy-face," was heard to remark one day that if the British officers went on in this reckless fashion none of them would survive the winter. The daily bath was one of the things that made us regret our subsequent removal from Torgau.

In the circular fort there was also placed the main canteen, where for some time it was possible to purchase white bread and cakes, chocolate, jam, apples, sausages, and even beer. But gradually various articles were cut off, until eventually it was impossible to get true beer, chocolates, white bread and cakes. Up to the end, however, it was always possible to supplement the mess with such articles as jam, sardines, sausages and ham. In this canteen, and in another smaller one, which was situated in the field, one could buy all articles required for toilet purposes,

and whatever underclothing was necessary.

On certain stated days in the week, tradesmen from the town attended in the Commandant's office and took orders for such things as clothes, boots, watches, etc. It was not permitted for any officer to obtain mufti clothing; if trousers were required they were made of a rather rough khaki-coloured corduroy, with a narrow red band placed down the outer seam. These precautions were of course taken to prevent any chance of escape.

It would have been a matter of extreme difficulty to effect an escape from the fort, and one gentleman who made the attempt paid for it with his life. We were not allowed on the battlements of the earthwork, and if one was incautious enough to peep over the top, the sentry in charge of that particular section would bring his rifle to his shoulder with the obvious intention of preventing any further attempt. The moat, as I have said, was occupied by barbed wire entanglements, and we were told that among these there was a high-

power live wire. In various prominent places inside and outside the fort, large arc lamps were employed to prevent escape under cover of darkness.

Considering the very large number of officers present, the guard employed was comparatively small; but only a few men were really necessary, because of these other precautions. They were of course always armed with loaded rifles, but it was not considered necessary at Torgau to carry fixed bayonets. The guard-house was placed next the entrance, exactly facing the centre of the semicircular fort. For a short time we were guarded by some boys, aged about fifteen or sixteen; and it was always wise to keep well away from these youngsters, because you never knew which way they were going to point the rifle next.

For the first three or four weeks the officers were not permitted to communicate with their friends and relations in England in any way whatsoever; and this naturally gave rise to a good deal of ill-feeling, because it was felt that the restriction

was unnecessary, and could only give rise to grave anxiety at home. The first method by which we were enabled to communicate home was a little peculiar. The Commandant suggested one day that it would be a tactful act on the part of the British officers to subscribe to the German Red Cross Society, but the suggestion was at first received distinctly coldly, owing to the experience that many of them had received at the hands of the Red Cross workers on the railway.

However, some one suggested that if we gave cheques for sums ranging about £1 the Germans might take the trouble, in order to get the money, to send these cheques to England, and it would thereby be possible to let our relations know that we were alive. This manœuvre was carried out by practically every officer; and as it was illegal to pay money to the Germans directly, the cheques were drawn on an Amsterdam bank, with requests to notify our families written across the cheques.

The method was entirely successful, and

in many cases these cheques were not only the first intimation that certain officers were alive, but also of a few cases in which they had actually been reported as officially dead. The address which we wrote on the top of the cheque was cut out. The German Red Cross Society benefited to the extent of nearly £100 by this scheme, but it was well worth the money. Two or three weeks after this we were permitted to write on post cards which we purchased for a half-penny apiece, the proceeds of the sale being employed for the benefit of the Red Cross Society in Torgau. A little later again we were allowed to write letters, but never more than one letter or two post cards each week.

During our stay at Torgau, all officers of the rank of captain and upwards were paid one hundred marks by the German Government, while the junior officers received sixty. All the medical officers, irrespective of their rank, were paid one hundred. Of this one hundred marks, between forty-five and fifty was at once absorbed in paying for the messing, while

the junior officers had to contribute about thirty-five. The money that was left over came in useful for purchasing extra food, tobacco, clothes, etc., but was never quite sufficient for everything one required; consequently most officers took steps to obtain money from home, through their bank by money orders, or by International arrangement with the American Consul, or Embassy.

A considerable proportion of the money that left England never reached its destination, but such money as arrived at Torgau was credited to the officers in the books of the Commandant's office, and they were permitted to draw certain limited sums every week, or to indent upon their account for more important purchases such as boots. Some of the junior officers, having only twenty-five marks pocket-money for a whole month, soon got seriously embarrassed, and for a time the senior officers instituted a sort of loan office to assist them. In contrast to the English officers, the French officers had a considerable quantity of private

money, which they had brought with them from Maubeuge.

When we first arrived at Torgau the messing arrangements were in the hands of the Germans, but very shortly afterwards the French took entire charge of the kitchen and supplied all the messes, the British officers merely paying for their share. The goods were obtained by contract from outside, and often in very large quantities. Breakfast was served at eight o'clock, consisting of coffee, bread, and a ration of butter, which we always supplemented with such delicacies as German sausage, sardines, jam, etc.

The main meal of the day, at half-past twelve, consisted generally of a piece of boiled pork, and occasionally mutton, floating in a vegetable soup; potatoes were plentiful, and officers had to take turns in the early morning at peeling the potatoes necessary for the day. After a time this was found to work very unsatisfactorily, and the orderlies were made to peel the potatoes or else the potatoes were boiled in their skins, a method that

everybody seemed to prefer. The evening meal, served about seven, consisted of a vegetable soup and a ration of herb beer. This particular form of drink was peculiarly nasty, and a large number of us used to make our own tea or purchase a cup of coffee in the canteen. After a time we became almost luxurious in the number of extras that we purchased, and with the help of frying-pans and spirit stoves were enabled to put up excellent little suppers of broiled ham or fried sardines.

The amount of exercise that one was able to take was never sufficient to keep the men quite fit, in spite of football, gymnastic classes and some tennis courts that were erected by the French upon a dry patch. There was a general tendency to grow distinctly stouter, but this was partially counteracted by an order forbidding the consumption of chocolate. Taking the food as a whole it was very monotonous and rather greasy, but there was generally plenty of it. The meat ration sometimes ran short, and it was well not to be late for luncheon. With a

certain knowledge of German, and if one happened to be blessed with the necessary money it was possible to get chops and steaks and other delicacies brought in by the workers in the canteen. Alcohol was strictly forbidden, but every now and again a few bottles of rum would find their way into the camp, never however in sufficient quantity to constitute a danger.

The British officers formed a circulating library, and it was always possible to get any number of the Tauchnitz books in English and in French. There was no lack of reading material, but there was a tendency for other people to borrow your book before you had finished with it, and if anyone lost a volume that he had brought out, he had nothing to exchange for another. But in spite of certain irregularities the system worked well; many books also were sent to officers from home, and generally arrived safely.

We were always allowed to take in the German newspapers, and for a short time by the courtesy of a highly placed gentleman, a few copies of *The Times* and some

illustrated English papers drifted into the camp. Thus we were enabled to read Sir John French's dispatches up to the end of the first battle of the Aisne, but at the other camps where we have been to it has always been impossible to obtain English newspapers. The German newspapers on the whole contained very little information, and whenever there was anything approaching a German reverse it was published two or three days later as an unconfirmed report from London, Rome, or elsewhere. Most of the papers consisted of articles aimed at England, and were in many of their facts and in their expressions of hate somewhat grotesque and amusing reading. There was never, however, any attempt to disguise the loss of German ships, and we obtained fairly good accounts of the Heligoland fight and of the Battle of the Falkland Islands.

The medical officers, both French and English, united to protest against their captivity. It was pointed out that it was illegal according to the laws of war to

retain medical officers unless they were put to do some special work; in spite of which there were a large number in the camps who were being treated precisely as combatants.

These protests were accepted by the Commandant, but we were never able to ascertain whether they ever went any further. The only answer that was ever given was that the medical officers were not prisoners of war, but that it was necessary to keep them in the fort because the authorities could not guarantee adequate guards if the medical men wished to walk outside. In the early stages, at all events, the attitude of the populace at Torgau was so distinctly unpleasant that I never met anyone who wished to go for a stroll in the town.

While at Torgau we had a series of Commandants; some were gentlemen, others were not, and every now and again the British officers were compelled to listen to communications from the authorities that could only be described as grossly offensive. There was, however, one particular German

officer who had been Colonel of the Torgau Regiment No. 72, and had himself been wounded at the Battle of Le Cateau, who used to come in during his convalescence and discuss the tactical movements and the results of their action in a perfectly friendly way with officers who had been captured there. He afterwards went with the remains of his regiment to Poland and there disappeared. We never heard whether he was killed or taken prisoner, but his loss was genuinely felt among his friends in the camp.

We were enabled to obtain playing cards, chessmen, or any other recognized game, and a positively vast amount of bridge was played, especially in the evening. It was generally impossible to play for ready money, and in most cases rather complicated books of loss and gain were kept, to be settled after the war. The French put up an extremely elaborate race-course, and every day there was a meeting, and it was possible to back your favourite on the pari-mutuel system. The horses were given handicaps according to

their previous record, and the race was worked by dice throwing. This became an extremely popular method of passing the afternoon, but unless one happened to be early it was difficult to get a view of the race.

It was always necessary to be in one's room at nine o'clock at night, when the lights were put out. For the first six weeks we slept on palliasses of straw on the floor; but after the new sheds had been erected, and there was more accommodation, every officer was provided with a small iron bedstead. Some of these were mere frameworks, and some had a plank base, on which we placed our straw mattresses. Two blankets and the old familiar sack, one sheet, and an exceedingly hard, small and uncomfortable straw-stuffed pillow, completed the outfit. The sheets, the bag, and the pillow-case were changed once a month, together with a towel which was also provided. We had to be particularly careful to have the exact number of these articles ready for the non-commissioned officers on the day of the change,

otherwise we were liable to pay for any deficiency.

Looking back on Torgau, I consider it much the most comfortable of the camps that I lived in. I myself had a small room which I shared with three other officers only, and it was possible to obtain periods of peace and quiet—boons that we never enjoyed after leaving Torgau. We had an orderly attached to us who lived in a little crack outside the door of our room, and was consequently always handy for anything that was required; in fact he used to get up and make us tea before breakfast in bed as long as we were able to obtain tea at the canteen. I spent my time partly in the hospital, partly in walking round and round for exercise, and largely in playing bridge. There was of course a perpetual sense of restriction, and we often used to wish that we could go for a walk along the banks of the Elbe when the weather was fine; but after a time most of us became perfectly indifferent and just led the trivial life from day to day. It is extraordinary how busy it is

possible to be day after day when you have absolutely nothing to do.

There was always at Torgau a persistent optimism among the British officers as to the successful termination of the war, and for a long time a general impression that the war would be over soon. The impression is still persistent among the prisoners, although I am afraid they have but little to base their idea upon. When the order at length came on November 24 that the British officers were to be shifted, I left Torgau with a genuine regret, largely a selfish one, because I felt sure that I could never again, while a prisoner, be so comfortable as I was in the small room at Torgau. Unfortunately my foreboding turned out to be correct.

At Torgau in the top rooms of one of the wagon-sheds which were not occupied by officers, the French had constructed a very large and fine church, with the most elaborate altar. Next door to this, by the unremitting energy of Padre O'Rorke, an Army Chaplain, who had also been captured, an English church was erected.

The altar was draped with dark hangings and lighted with two candles, and made a simple but very effective picture. We used to have services twice a day on Sunday and choir practices nearly every day.

BURG

CHAPTER V

BURG

TOWARDS the end of November we were suddenly informed that it had been decided to remove all the British prisoners to another camp situated at Burg, a few miles north of Magdeburg. We never clearly understood why this change took place, but were under the impression that it was part of a scheme to mix up the officers of the various nationalities, in order that no one country could claim that their officers were in any way worse treated than the others.

We departed for Burg in two parties, the first on November 25 and the second the day after. By the time we had packed, we discovered that we had collected a gigantic amount of luggage, mainly con-

sisting of the necessary outfits of plates, cups, etc., belonging to each of the messes, and this luggage was a perpetual source of trouble during our various transits. We formed up on the parade ground at Torgau, said good-bye to our many French friends, and marched to the station, carrying a considerable quantity of the luggage, while the rest came on in a large wagon.

Only a very short time was permitted for us to arrange ourselves in the train which we found waiting at the station, and a large quantity of the heavier luggage had therefore to be abandoned. This eventually came through to Burg ten or twelve days later; but as we had no mess system, and all utensils, etc., were provided by the German authorities, most of the material was quite useless.

After a very slow journey we reached Burg about eleven o'clock at night, and were marched rather hurriedly along a half-frozen road, followed by a gently mocking crowd, who had in fact been informed that we were a fresh lot of

prisoners, just taken in the fighting on the Ypres Canal. Some of the rear ranks had rather a rough time, and any officer who happened to fall out was liable to be assisted along the road by a not too gentle push with the butt end of a rifle.

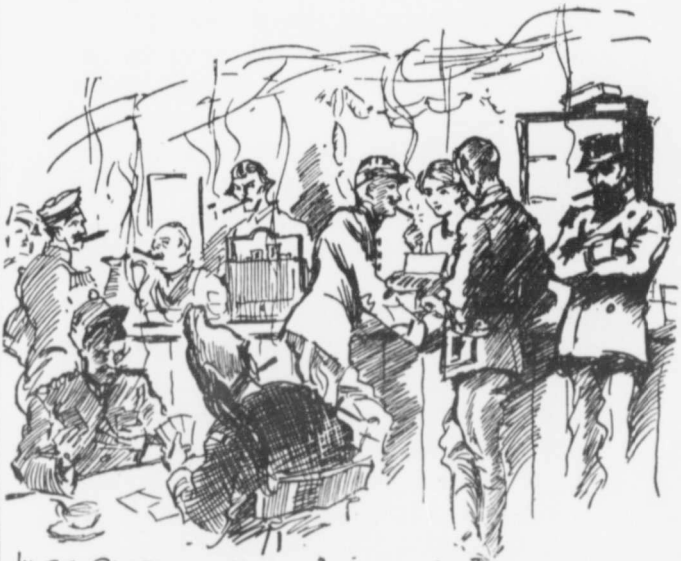
Eventually we turned into a narrow courtyard between two rows of wagon-houses and were drawn up in fours awaiting distribution to the various rooms. The first order from the Germans that came down the line was " Irish Roman Catholics fall out," and such officers as answered to this description left the ranks and disappeared. The rest of us were then broken up into groups of about ten or more and distributed to the various rooms on the ground floor and on the first floor of the wagon-houses. There we found that we were to share the rooms with Russian officers who had already been there for several months. Most of the Russian officers were in bed by the time we arrived and showed some apprehension at the arrival of the English. They had been

told by the Germans that the English officers were savage and dirty, and would beat them, and break the windows to get fresh air.

The prison at Burg consists of about five large wagon- and ammunition-sheds arranged in pairs facing one another across a rather narrow and very damp parade ground. The total length of this parade ground is about 160 yards and the breadth about thirty. In the middle of the parade ground is a small brick and wooden shanty with accommodation for about thirty men at its extreme limit. This was made into a canteen and run by several ladies from the town, and it was possible to obtain here really nice food by ordering it the day before and booking a place at the table. It was quite impossible for everybody to have a meal here every day; but when one was fortunate enough to get a place, an excellently cooked beefsteak, fried potatoes, and genuine coffee were obtainable at a quite cheap rate.

In addition to this canteen there was another and larger one placed next the

guard-house, which was situated between two of the wagon-sheds on the right-hand side of the parade ground. There was much



IN THE CANTEEN WE ARE LOOKED AFTER BY A RUSSIAN - A GERMAN - AND GLADYS ! —

more room in this canteen, but the supplies were not of such good quality as in the small one; but still it was generally possible

to get a cup of coffee or chocolate at any time of the day. The waiter who looked after this canteen was a lad of about sixteen, who spoke English. Just before the outbreak of the war he had been a messenger boy in the Savoy Hotel, London, and was firmly determined to apply there again for his situation after the war was over, although he was informed by the Englishmen that his chances of employment were somewhat slight.

The outside wall round the wagon-sheds consisted mostly of wooden barricades with barbed wire protections, and of such a height that it was impossible to see over them ; but from the second-storey windows of the sheds one could get a comprehensive view of an exceedingly dreary stretch of country, and of the outskirts of the city of Burg. Over the palisade at the entrance to the prison, the inhabitants used to mount on carts and trees to stare at the prisoners, but if they made any noise they were hustled away by the sentries in charge of the gate.

Most of the rooms in which we slept

were large and contained about twelve British officers and eight or nine Russians. At first the two nationalities slept on the opposite sides of the room; but later an order was given out that they were to arrange the beds so as to mix up the nationalities alternately, Russian, English—Russian, English. This was in the main carried out, and led to a little grumbling, but more laughter. The Irishmen who had been selected from the ranks were placed in a larger and more airy room than the others, and were not mixed with the Allied officers. On the day after their arrival they were each of them examined by German officers and were asked whether they would care to serve with the German Army against England!

In spite of the indignant refusals of the "rebel" officers they were still given certain minor privileges and were not required to be mixed with the Russians. We understood that the same trick had been attempted upon the Russians, when certain officers from the Caucasus who happened to be Mohammedans were asked whether

they would take their liberty and act as emissaries for the Holy War. These Russian gentlemen were particularly indignant at the idea that they would be willing to act against the Tsar. The German officers told us that in one of the battles a certain Irish regiment had turned upon the Scottish Borderers and had shot down the "notorious Major Haig," who was responsible for the order to fire on the innocent citizens of Dublin in the riots before the war. The humour of this statement was immediately perceived by all the officers, because as a matter of fact the gallant major was one of the prisoners of Burg. The attempt to undermine the loyalty of the Irish officers was immediately abandoned by the Germans, but they still kept them separate and unmixed in their special room.

The feeding arrangements at Burg were entirely in the hands of the Germans, and we ate in the rooms in which we lived. For breakfast there was the usual German coffee, two little white rolls, and a ration of butter. For luncheon we had a plate

of soup, and then after an interval, often of an hour, we had pork and potatoes in some form or another; very often the pork consisted of roast chops, which were among the best articles of diet that I met in the various places that I visited in Germany. For supper we used to have cheese, a slice of sausage, or an underdone fish, and it was not infrequently necessary to supplement this evening meal.

We slept on the same sort of little iron bedsteads as were provided at Torgau and were served out with the same quantity of bedclothes; but the bag was white instead of blue, and consequently much more difficult to keep clean. There was a very strenuous command forbidding us to sit or lie down upon the beds during the day, or even to put any articles of clothing on the bed.

The courtyard, as I have said, was unpleasantly narrow, and very wet in the middle, so that it was only possible to get the necessary exercise by wandering up and down the edges, where paths of

cinder and gravel were on a slightly higher level than the general swamp.

Gymnastic classes still continued for those of the officers who felt inclined to use them, and were a source of considerable interest, not only to the Russians, but to the various German officers and officials who visited the camp.

As a contrast to Torgau, the British senior officers no longer held parades or issued the orders for the British, but every day, on the ringing of a large cracked bell, it was necessary for the officers to sort themselves out and take up their position in their own room, to await the rounds of the Commandant or his substitute for the purpose of counting. We used to find that this process was rather a nuisance, because it often meant staying in one's room for an hour or more before the official arrived, and one never knew at what time of day the summons would come.

The hospital at first was in the charge of a German surgeon who came up from the town, but after a day or two he appar-

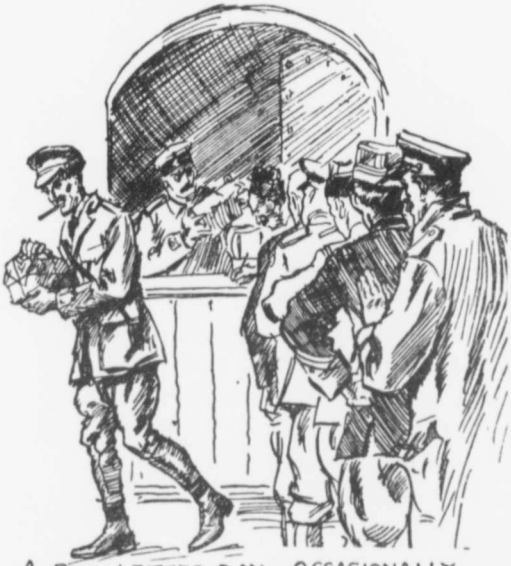
ently got tired of seeing the same cases, and it was again handed over to the British medical officers, who were able to do such dressings and minor operations as were required without any interference on the part of the German medical authorities.

The bathing arrangements were inadequate for the large number of officers present, consisting as they did of four lie-down baths supplied with hot water from two geysers. One had to limit oneself to one bath a week, and it was not always easy to get even that much, but by choosing one's time carefully it was possible to get a very hot bath.

An officers' library was re-formed; an attempt to reconstruct a church was also made, and the ordinary incidents of prison life, the walk, the meals, and the bridge, continued day by day in the same old monotonous round.

The change from Torgau to Burg immediately upset all our correspondence, and many of us did not get our letters till nearly a month after; but on a certain day at Burg there was a gigantic distribu-

tion of parcels, which must have been the accumulation of many weeks at Torgau. These parcels were opened by their owners in the presence of German non-com-



A RED LETTER DAY— OCCASIONALLY PARCELS FOR PRISONERS FILTER THROUGH TO THEM.

missioned officers ; and chocolate and other things that they felt that they would like had to be surrendered.

One day we were called upon to deliver up our money, and this when surrendered was entered in a large account book, kept in the special office. It was possible to draw on this to the extent of ten shillings a day. During our stay the same rate of pay as we had received at Torgau was continued.

We were much more heavily guarded at Burg than at Torgau. The guards always carried fixed bayonets, and would interfere with any officers who walked or talked in groups after dark. Eventually a definite order was made that if officers wished to pass from room to room after dark they must go rapidly and singly. We were generally shut into our rooms about nine o'clock at night, and it was necessary to have the lights out by ten o'clock; but by a little judicious arrangement with the Russians, most of us were able to manage to get one window open during the night for the purposes of ventilation. We had always heard that the Russians liked to have the interior of the rooms very hot, especially at night.

But although at first there was some slight opposition to the fresh air, we soon found that they were willing to meet us with a compromise of one open window.

A BREEZE BETWEEN THE ALLIES!
FRESH AIR v. 'ATMOSPHERE'.

Every now and again at Burg we were visited by the General, who used to come and inspect the canteens and the living-room. He required all officers to stand

to attention on his arrival, and was always most indignant if he found any disorder in the rooms, and especially if the beds were not scrupulously tidy and entirely free from clothes, papers, etc., which we were apt to throw upon them.

As in all the prisons we were confined in, the actual Commandant was always frightened of the officers above him, and treated them with almost servile respect. Occasionally also we noticed that after the departure of the General, the Commandant would himself do a tour and find fault with something, apparently just to show that he really had some authority.

On December 5 we were suddenly informed that we were again on the move, and the officers were divided into five roughly equal parties, of which one was to stay at Burg, one was to go to Halle, and the other three to different camps at Magdeburg. We were paraded early on December 6 and marched in pouring rain to the Burg station, where we stood in the open for well over an hour. When, thoroughly soaked, we were at last admitted into the

shelter of the station, we took train to our various destinations.

Some of the officers seemed to prefer Burg to the original situation at Torgau, but the general opinion was that we had changed for the worse, except that the food supplied was rather more tasty. The bath especially was badly missed, and the exercise ground was inadequate to the number of officers.

MAGDEBURG

CHAPTER VI

MAGDEBURG

WE reached Magdeburg at about midday on December 6, and were paraded in the large station, and divided up into four groups.

The first remained in the station, and eventually reached Halle ; the second were marched off to the citadel ; while the rest, together with about one hundred Russians, marched for several miles along the fortifications on the south side of the city, and eventually reached two camps known as the Cavalier Scharnhorst and the Wagonhaus 9 respectively.

The Cavalier Scharnhorst is an almost circular barracks with earthworks and positions for guns on the roof of the building, and forms part of the outer defences of Magdeburg. Wagonhaus 9 is a large

rectangular building of three storeys and built to hold mobilization wagons and harness. These two buildings face one another somewhat obliquely across a large parade ground, but the prisoners could not communicate with each other, because only comparatively small portions of the parade ground were cut off by barbed wire entanglements, so as to limit the exercise ground for each group of the prisoners. However, the prisoners were able to communicate in several ways, because the sick from the Scharnhorst had to attend the hospital which was situated in the Wagonhaus, and once a week the inhabitants of the Wagonhaus were taken across the parade ground in little groups by a non-commissioned officer to indulge in the luxury of a bath which was placed in one of the outworks in the moat of the Scharnhorst. And although one was not supposed to stay long in the other barrack, it was not impossible to meet one's friends and talk to them for an hour or so and wait for the next batch that returned under the usual escort.

In the Wagonhaus 9, in which I found myself, there were some 360 officers, of whom, roughly, half were Belgian, and the rest equal numbers of Russian, French and English. They were all mixed up and uniformly distributed in the rooms, the senior officers having comparatively small rooms, containing only eight or nine occupants, while the main number of officers were in large rooms with twenty to forty occupants.

The parade ground available for this large number of officers was only 100 yards by 40, with a small rectangular offshoot in which the necessary sanitary arrangements had been erected. The ground floor of the building, which at one time had obviously been used for stables and was roughly paved with large cobbles, was entirely empty and unused, but the whole of the rest of the building was tightly packed.

The rooms were constructed by dividing up the wagon-shed with thin plank partitions, leaving a long passage at the back, with doors communicating to each room,

a method which made the obtaining of anything like decent ventilation through the rooms exceedingly difficult, because when the door was shut the back of the room was absolutely closed, and contained no windows. In the particular room in which I lived there were some twenty-five officers; the beds were arranged down each side of the room and were placed in couples, close against one another, with narrow intervals between each pair, to enable the owners to get into them. The centre of the room was occupied by two stoves, one at each end, and the necessary wash-basin, etc., in between. Four tables were placed across the front of the room near the windows, and the different nationalities were allotted a particular table each for their meals. Every officer was provided with one chair, and in addition there was a four-legged stool between two.

The beds were precisely the same as we had been familiar with before, and in addition to the usual bedclothes a rough towel and a hand basin were served out to each officer.

The heavy work and the necessary cleaning up of the room were done by captive orderlies. The usual arrangement was to have one French, one Russian, and one English soldier attached to each of the large rooms. Their duties began about six o'clock in the morning, when they arrived to make up the stoves, after which they brought up the breakfast about eight o'clock, and immediately began the somewhat arduous business of cleaning up. The beds were all drawn out into the middle of the room, and the floor thoroughly swept behind the beds every day, except on one particular day in the week, on which, by the aid of a certain number of captured civilian Russian Poles, the whole place was thoroughly washed.

After the room had been tidied up and the beds made, we settled down to the ordinary routine, with which we were now so familiar. The walk round the parade ground, the game of chess, the struggle to learn the languages, and almost incessant bridge, made up the usual routine.

Immediately after our arrival at Magde-

burg we were told that it was necessary for us to give up all our money, and on the next day we were drawn up and gave in such German money as we happened to have left, for which we received a receipt. We were informed at the same time that it was not possible for prisoners to have any money, but that we would be paid in tokens, representing a penny, instead of actual cash. The rate of wages was calculated on the old basis of 100 marks a month for senior officers. By the time the messing was paid for, the senior officers received eighteen tokens for each day, and the junior officers five tokens.

The medical officers, who up till now had been on the higher rate of pay, suddenly found themselves reduced to the lower, entirely irrespective of rank or position; and in spite of protests no explanation of this sudden fall in our fortunes was given to us. Personally, I found that the fivepence a day was not sufficient to buy such extras as I required, and it was necessary to borrow numbers of these

tokens from senior officers, who always had a sufficiency of them. In addition we used occasionally to play poker with these tokens, and many a day I would lose the whole of the issue for the next five or six days; on the other hand, I occasionally would win enough to make me quite solvent.

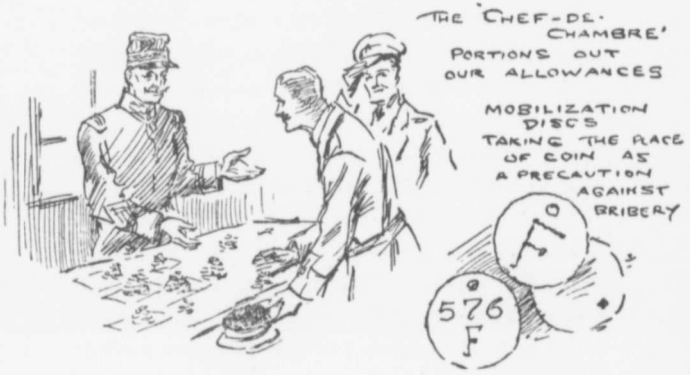
Shortly after we had delivered up our money, an officer was rash enough to change a high value note in the canteen, and this was the origin of a proceeding which was greatly resented by the officers.

One evening we were informed that the whole of the officers were going to leave Magdeburg next day for a destination unknown, and many wild rumours ran through the camp to try and discover a reason for this sudden shift. We packed up our goods and took down the little shelves and nails which had been erected by each of the officers above their respective beds, and after a hurried cup of coffee about five o'clock in the morning were paraded by nationalities in the courtyard. The heavy luggage had all been packed up, and

was placed on a wagon and wheeled out into the middle of the courtyard by a group of the Russian Poles. No horses were supplied, and the wagon was almost immediately unpacked again and the luggage distributed according to which group of officers it happened to belong.

After this there was a full roll call, and then we were marched off into various sheds in the immediate neighbourhood, where we sat down and patiently waited for a considerable time for developments. Suddenly a large number of tables were placed across the sheds and German officers and German guards arrived in considerable number. We were then informed that it was necessary for all the officers to yield up their private valuables, such as rings, watches, cigarette cases, field-glasses, and English gold, if they happened to have any. The senior officers were investigated first, and made to declare upon their word of honour that they had no further valuables upon them. All the articles yielded up were sealed by the officers themselves in envelopes, and the word of honour of

a German officer was given that those envelopes would remain sealed and be returned to the officer at the termination of the war. In spite of this "word of honour" we know that the packets were opened quite shortly afterwards, the Eng-



lish sovereigns extracted and German paper put in instead. Such officers who refused their word of honour with regard to the valuables were searched personally, and their baggage was ransacked.

The medical officers, of whom there were ten among this group of English

officers, protested against the whole proceeding, declaring that they were not prisoners of war, and that the Germans had no right to personal belongings, however valuable. The medical officers were then searched, but the investigation was by no means thorough, and the German non-commissioned officer who examined us apologized for his action, and excused himself by saying that he was only obeying orders. After this somewhat undignified proceeding, which had altogether occupied about five hours, we marched back again to our old rooms and proceeded somewhat savagely to unpack, and to reconstruct the shelves and put up the hooks which we had taken down that morning.

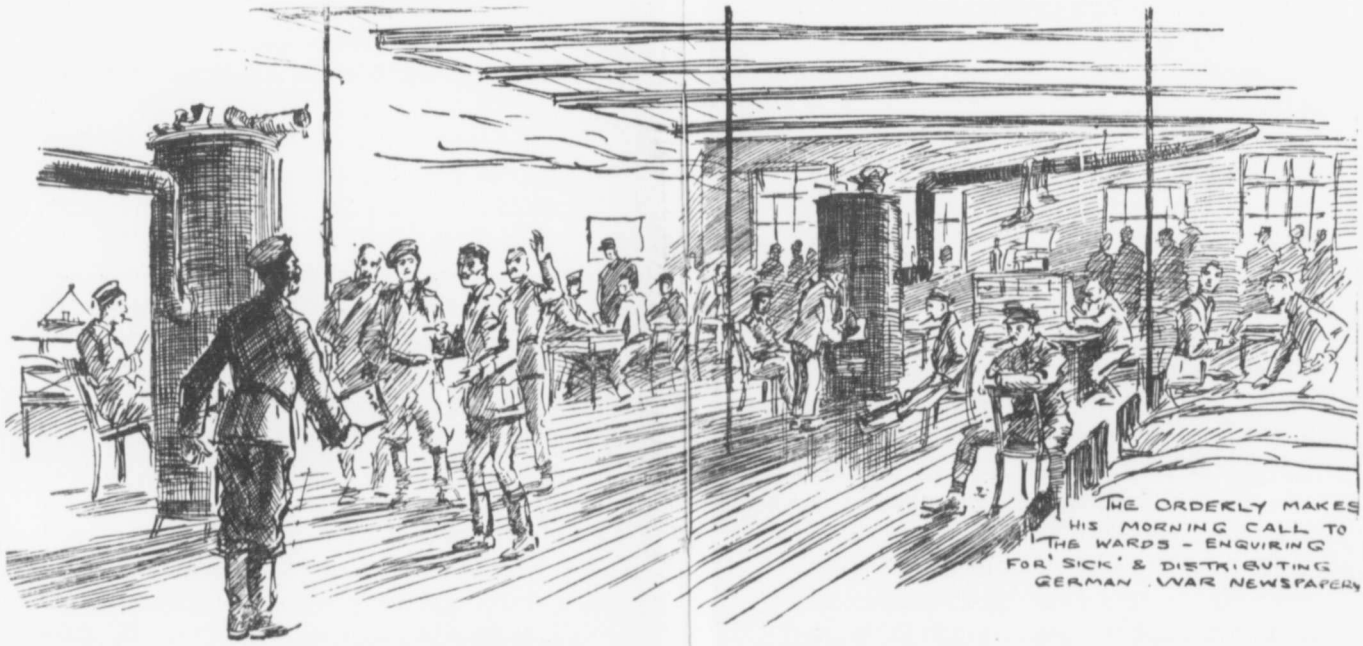
A few days after this, owing to vigorous protest by the senior officers of the various nations, wedding rings were restored to the officers, but it was not possible for them to get their watches back. They were, however, permitted to purchase cheap watches from the merchants who came in, if they felt inclined to.

About a week later some officer, appar-

ently a Russian, again betrayed the fact that he still had some money, and so the whole process was repeated, but this time in an even more undignified manner. The doors of our rooms were suddenly locked about eight o'clock in the morning; sentries were posted, and every officer was searched personally and had his baggage thoroughly examined by experts provided by the police. A few more valuables were obtained by this means, but the Germans seemed to be distinctly disappointed at the comparatively small haul made. After that there were continual rumours that we were going to be searched again, and preparations were being made to avoid the discovery of what little was left to us, but when I left, the process had not been repeated.

No reasonable explanation was ever given to us for the removal of our private property. The Germans stated that it was necessary for them to take charge of it in case we lost it, but we always had a suspicion that they attempted to remove all the valuables to

prevent the possible bribing of sentries or other agents who might for a sufficient consideration organize an escape. It was



suggested that the Government wished to get hold of every piece of gold in the country to strengthen their war fund, and

that there was a chance of the watches and rings, etc., being melted down into coinage. Just before I left, however, de-

tailed receipts of the articles yielded were given to each of the officers, and they were informed again that the

packets would be kept until the end of the war. Whatever the motive may have been, the whole proceeding gave rise to very great indignation, because it is recognized by The Hague Convention that the private property of a captured officer is his own, and that the captors have no right to remove such property. From the beginning of the war, both in this sort of way and in the treatment of the medical officers, we did not always find that the Germans closely adhered to the rules to which they themselves were of the contracting parties.

The food supplied at Magdeburg was very similar to that which we had at Burg, and largely consisted of pork and potatoes for luncheon, and herrings or slices of sausage and ham for the evening meal. The bread was that which is known as the "war bread," which is made half of potato flour, and is of a light brown colour and a rather stodgy consistency. It is not exactly unpleasant, but it is dull, especially as we had nothing to put on it except some rather tasteless margarine and some

coarse jam, whenever the canteen people took sufficient trouble to get in supplies of the same.

For a time here again we were allowed to have white rolls for breakfast, but owing to an indiscreet and unsuccessful attempt by three Belgian officers to escape from the camps, the privilege of white bread was officially cut off from all the other prisoners.

The canteen was small and rather dirty, and the supply of eatables capable of being used to supplement our diet was very small, and rather expensive.

It was possible to purchase tea and coffee at various times during the day, but the quality of these was not very high. The only form of food that we found in greater profusion at Magdeburg than at the other camps was eggs, and generally we managed to get a, not always quite fresh, egg for breakfast. Here, as in other camps, there was always enough food, and apparently an unlimited supply of pork and potatoes. Every now and again we had some tough-looking meat

which we were pretty certain was horse, but even this came as a pleasant change from the almost constant pork.

The exercise ground at the Wagonhaus 9 was about 100 yards by 40, with an additional small square about 20 yards

each way, in which the somewhat inadequate sanitary arrangements were placed. The officers of all the nationalities used to walk round and round and round this small yard, and on fine days it was almost impossible to avoid falling over one another. We were paraded twice a day and drawn

up in this courtyard according to the number of the room which we happened to occupy, and counted by a non-commissioned officer; any special instructions from the German authorities were given out by a senior French officer in French. Occasionally the Commandant would attend on these parades and issue separate orders to the various nationalities who were grouped together for the purpose of receiving them.

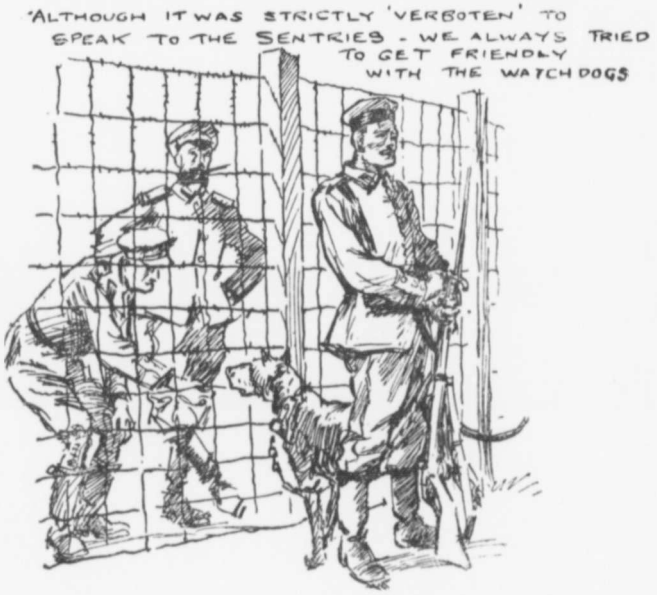
For a long time previous to our arrival at Magdeburg, we had been informed that large and savage dogs were to be provided to aid the sentries. When at last they arrived, they turned out to be of that type of dog that the police of Paris use for hunting down criminals. They were certainly savage enough, but were always led by a sentry, or chained in their den, and were never let loose on us. We were told that they were highly trained, and although if let loose they would knock down a man with ease and pin him to the ground, they would not bite. But we mistrusted this assurance, as they often appeared very

keen to get at something. The employment of these dogs was said by the Germans to be for the protection of their sentries, but it is much more probable that by the use of them they were enabled to cut down still further the already small guard.

When the prisoners originally arrived at this place, they were permitted to walk over the whole of the courtyard between the Scharnhorst and the Wagonhaus, and the narrow barbed wire enclosures were only put up later because they had not enough men to guard the larger one. We noticed also that the sentries were distinctly short of rifles, and when the guard was relieved, the rifle was passed on to the next man, and in some few cases captured French rifles were in use instead of German.

A system of punishments for petty offences was instituted here, and as far as we could hear was mainly aimed at the English. One officer who did not salute the German General because he, the British officer, had not got his hat on, was called

out at parade next day, and in spite of explanations that it was not the custom in England to salute without the hat, he was given two days' solitary confinement in the



town gaol. Later a large number of officers were given eight days' cell because they had had a game of Rugby football with a

loaf of bread. Of the various prisons that I was confined in, I think the Wagonhaus 9 was the most uncomfortable; the thing that particularly struck me was the entire impossibility of getting away from one's fellow creatures for even a minute, and the perpetual noise in the rooms.

RELEASE

CHAPTER VII

RELEASE

ON Friday, January 8, the ten British medical officers in the Wagonhaus were suddenly summoned to the Commandant's office, lined up in a row, and informed by the Commandant that five of them were to be returned to England. A large document was produced, and from it Dr. Elliott's name and my own were read out, and we were placed on the other side of the room. Looking at the rest, the Commandant said, "Are any of you gentlemen married?" Capt. Hamilton, a Special Reserve officer, having answered in the affirmative, was told he might return, and it remained for two more to be selected from the remaining seven. A suggestion that seniority should count was immediately

vetoed by the Commandant, who insisted that the selection should be made by lot, which was done by drawing matches from between the Commandant's fingers, two of which matches were short. The lucky recipients of these short matches were Captain Edmunds, R.A.M.C., and Mr. Danks, Civil Servant attached.

Next day we fortunate five were again summoned to the office, and all the money that we had deposited or that had been sent out to us was paid over to us in German paper, and a certain sum granted to us for expenses. Finally we were made to sign a paper written in German, somewhat in the following terms: "The German Government advises the English Government that unless all Red Cross Units at present in England are immediately returned no further exchange of British medical officers can be contemplated." An unsigned and unofficial copy of this document was the only piece of paper with which we were furnished for the journey. We spent the rest of the day in taking down messages and addresses

for wives and relations of the officers whom we were leaving, and in saying good-bye to the very many friends of all nations we had made.

On Sunday, the 10th, the five of us departed in two taxi-cabs with a sergeant and four guards, and were driven to Magdeburg station. We travelled that day to a place called Rheine, where we passed a somewhat uncomfortable night on a heap of blankets in the station watch-house.

Very early next day we went to the actual frontier station between Germany and Holland called Bentheim, and there stayed for several hours to await the arrival of the officer in charge of this important post. Our luggage was searched by the Customs House, but the whole investigation was by no means thorough; the only things that caused any excitement were some fragments of German shells, which one of the officers was taking back with him as paper-weights.

After the examination we were replaced in the restaurant, and informed that the officer would come in time to see us off by

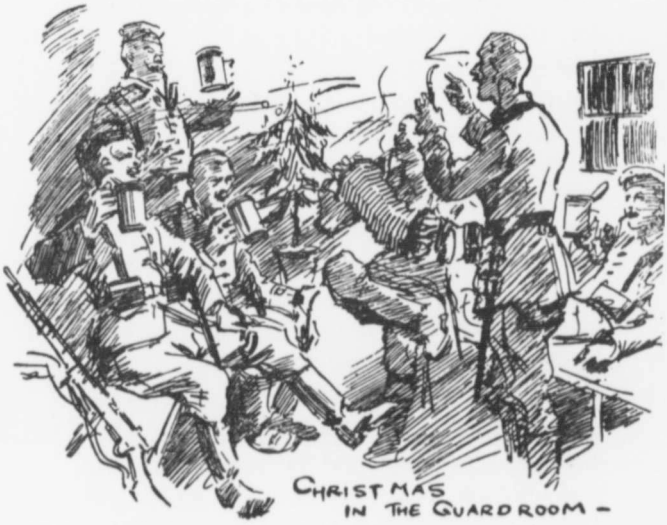
the train that left for Holland at 10.30. The gentleman in question suddenly appeared a few minutes before the train was due to leave, and seemed to be exceedingly astonished at our arrival. He informed us that he had received no instructions whatsoever, and the only piece of paper that the sergeant had with him relating to the matter was a telephone message taken down by himself on the back of an envelope the day before in Magdeburg. The officer explained that it would be necessary for us to wait for the next train, which departed at 2.30, while he himself must make the necessary investigations to establish our identity, and afterwards return to see us off by that train.

We sat down, played cards, and had a good luncheon to fill up the time, after which we said good-bye to the sergeant and the guards, who were returning again to the interior of Germany. A few old Landsturm soldiers and another sergeant were placed in charge of us. When the Holland train drew in, the officer had not returned, but one of our

party, who spoke German well, informed the sergeant that the officer had told us that we were to go by this train, and he very obligingly placed us in it after we had taken tickets to the nearest Dutch station, Ozendaal.

We do not know to this day whether we were really intended to depart by that train, or whether it was the intention of the Germans to hand us over to the Dutch without passports or papers of any sort, but we did not mind at the time, and were only too pleased to be in a carriage without a guard and to pass across to freedom. We celebrated our arrival at Ozendaal by having a glass of beer, the first for many months, and by buying an English paper on the bookstall. We then took tickets to Flushing, and with many changes and not a few considerable waits, we eventually arrived at Flushing about eleven o'clock that night. As we passed through we were received in a most friendly manner by the Dutch people, and the officers in charge of the various stations were exceedingly courteous and helped us to

find a carriage to ourselves, and make sure we were in the right train. We found the whole of the Dutch railways in charge of the mobilized Army. On making



CHRISTMAS IN THE GUARDROOM –

inquiries as to whether they thought that they would fight, all the officers seemed to think that they would avoid that, but if they were forced into it they would be more likely to be found on the

side of the Allies than with the Germans. If the contingency occurred, however, they intended to retire behind their great flood area and not to attempt any offensive movement.

On arriving at Flushing we were not permitted to pass the barrier to the boat, and because we had no papers we were arrested and put in the watch-house belonging to the officer on night duty. Presently a Dutch officer arrived, who seemed very suspicious of us, and as good as accused us of having come from the interned camps at Groningen where the English garrison of Antwerp are being kept. He said that certain English officers had broken their parole, but we discovered on questioning him that they had not broken their parole, but that they had given it back, and immediately afterwards a considerable number had successfully escaped. This officer expressed considerable surprise that none of us had any visiting cards, for, as he assured us, every gentleman has a card. He was eventually satisfied by the production from our luggage of a large number of

letters that we had brought back with us which we had received during our stay in Germany. We told him that he had no right to stop us, and demanded to see the British Consul at once. He replied to this by casting doubts upon the authenticity of the brassards we were wearing, and finally left, saying that it was a matter for the General to decide, and that we should not be able to see him until ten o'clock in the morning.

We were left in charge that night of a very young but very nice Dutch officer, who did everything in his power to make us comfortable, and tried to get us on to the ship, the authorities of which absolutely refused to take us without the necessary papers. We tried to get into a hotel, but it was quite full; finally we slept on the benches and the floor of the officers' quarters.

Very early next morning the young Dutch officer got into communication with Ozendaal, the frontier station, and having received a telegram which stated that five British medical officers had crossed

the border and given up tickets from Bentheim, and had been treated as ordinary travellers, he said to us, "On the strength of this I will put you on the boat and interview the General myself at ten o'clock." This time we were permitted to take tickets on the boat. We left at seven o'clock the next morning, and had an exceedingly rough passage to Folkestone, where we fell into the hands of the English police because we had no passports, and were handed over to the kind care of the Embarkation Officer, who gave us passes to London and instructed us to report at the War Office.

* * * * *

During my stay in Germany I never saw any of the camps at which the private soldiers are interned, but I was informed by a soldier who was brought to Magdeburg to act as orderly, that they had had a very rough time at a camp called Alten Grabow. He told me that he never had a proper bath from the time he had been captured in September, and that no fresh underclothes had been issued. As

a consequence all the men were verminous and dirty. I am certain that he was correct as far as he himself was concerned, for he had to be isolated several days at Magdeburg before he was allowed to take up his servant's duty. He told me also that most of the camps contained large numbers of Russian and French captive soldiers, and that the English were distributed up in small parties throughout these camps and made to perform the heaviest and the dirtiest duties. He had not seen any of the alleged tying up of prisoners to posts and other barbarities, reports of which appeared from time to time in the English papers. He said that at first the amount of food provided was exceedingly small, but that later there had been quite enough, although the quality was distinctly indifferent. The few soldiers that came were exceedingly pleased to escape from the camps and to undertake orderly duties, although their quarters were very tight in these camps at Magdeburg.

Taken generally, the health of all the

camps I was in was excellent, and I can only recall one case of scarlet fever. And apart from sore throats and infectious colds everybody seemed very well, but of course it must be remembered that we had the advantage of only being in prison during the colder months of the year. It is possible that there may be trouble in the health line if the prisoners have to remain all through the hot weather.

Since my return I have been continually asked about the feeling in Germany and the condition of the country, but it is exceedingly difficult for any one who has been shut up in these camps to get any clear idea on this subject. That the Germans are mainly driven onwards by a hate of England and by a continual hope of damaging England, is perfectly obvious, both from their newspapers and from the attitude of the people in railway stations and towns when they happen to see any English officer.

About the internal state of Germany it was impossible to find out anything. Most of the towns we passed through

seemed rather short of men, and few, if any, of the tall chimneys were active; and practically every person whom one saw in the street was dressed in mourning. The officers and sentries with whom we came in contact would, naturally, not discuss the war, but if ever the matter was referred to, they always said, "It is only just begun."

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