

ESCAPED!

**Adventures in
German Captivity**

WALLACE ELLISON





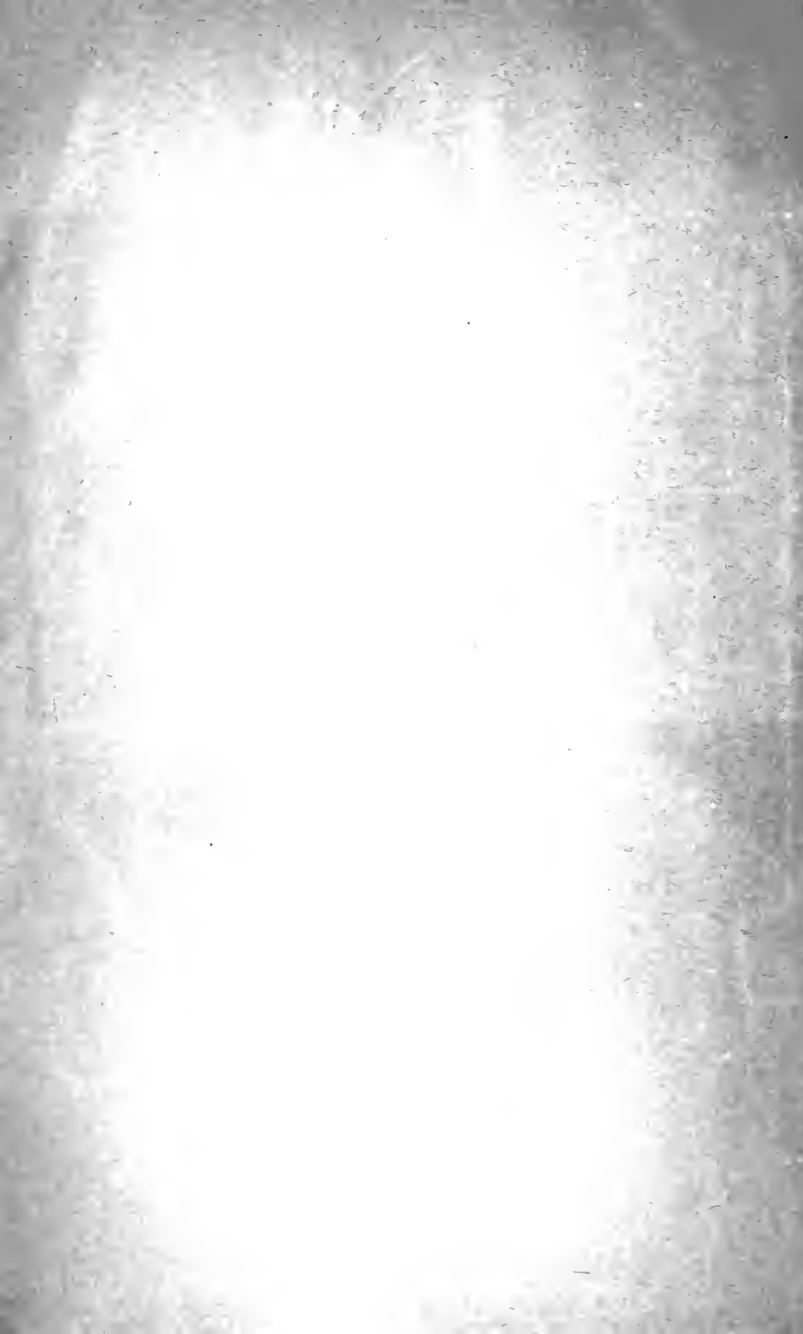
CLIVEDEN LIBRARY

Shelf *B.4. var. Libry*

Number.....

Date.....*1922*.....

Waldorf ASTOR *Nancy*



ESCAPED!

Adventures in
German Captivity

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

<http://www.archive.org/details/escapede00elli>

ESCAPED!

Adventures in
German Captivity

BY

WALLACE ELLISON

William Blackwood and Sons
Edinburgh and London
1918



TO
MY FATHER,
WHO DIED AUGUST 4, 1918.

"All these designs are but to prove
Ourselves more worthy of your love."

—CHARLES SACKVILLE, EARL
OF DORSET, 1665.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. WAR—FIRST ATTEMPT TO REACH ENGLAND	1
II. LIFE IN A MILITARY CAMP—SENNELAGER	20
III. INTERNED AGAIN!—ON THE WAY TO RUHLEBEN	31
IV. LIFE IN RUHLEBEN CAMP	38
V. RUHLEBEN HUMOUR	46
VI. THE DARKIES IN RUHLEBEN	56
VII. FIRST ESCAPE FROM RUHLEBEN	74
VIII. FAILURE—TEN MINUTES' WALK FROM HOLLAND	83
IX. OFF TO PRISON	91
X. TEN DAYS IN THE MILITARY PRISON, WESEL	97
XI. JAIL AGAIN!	110
XII. IN A HOSPITAL FOR PRISONERS OF WAR, BERLIN	117
XIII. MY FELLOW-PRISONERS	122
XIV. AN ATTEMPT TO BREAK OUT OF PRISON	149
XV. FURTHER SCHEMES	163
XVI. OUR ESCAPE FROM A BERLIN JAIL	173
XVII. ONCE MORE AT LARGE IN BERLIN	181
XVIII. OUR DASH FOR THE FRONTIER	191

XIX. FAILURE AGAIN!	197
XX. IN HALTERN JAIL	212
XXI. BACK TO OUR BERLIN PRISON	218
XXII. MORE SOLITARY CONFINEMENT	220
XXIII. LEFT BEHIND!—DEPARTURE OF FRIENDS TO RUHLEBEN	227
XXIV. RUHLEBEN AFTER TWO YEARS' ABSENCE	235
XXV. THREE MORE UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS TO ESCAPE	241
XXVI. I ESCAPE ALONE FROM RUHLEBEN CAMP	249
XXVII. AT LARGE IN BERLIN	259
XXVIII. I FIND A FRIEND	274
XXIX. I LEAVE BERLIN	286
XXX. FOUR WEEKS AT LARGE IN GERMANY	291
XXXI. FREEDOM—AT LAST!	299

ESCAPED!

Adventures in German Captivity.

CHAPTER I.

WAR—FIRST ATTEMPT TO REACH ENGLAND.

"IMPOSSIBLE!" I exclaimed.

My friend shrugged his shoulders.

"Read for yourself," he replied, and handed me a copy of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of August 5, 1914. Yes, it was true, Great Britain had declared war on Germany.

The news came as an overwhelming surprise. I had been among the many who thought that human foresight in the twentieth century would find some way of settling international disputes other than by the arbitrament of the hellish devices of modern warfare. I was wrong. Racial rivalries had interested me, but I did not see in them the germs

of a world war. The Pan-German amused me, the Chauvinist exasperated me, and the Jingo bored me; but I took none of them seriously.

Then came war.

When I learned that Austria-Hungary and Serbia, and then Germany, Russia, and France, were involved, I became very much alive to the terrible significance of the preparations I saw going on around me, but I was merely an interested spectator, grateful in a sense to fate that I had the privilege of witnessing the beginnings of war. The occasion was historic. The entry of my own country into the war, however, changed the aspect of everything. The word of an ambassador transformed me from an interested neutral observer into an alien enemy. No longer could I look on at events from my detached point of view. I was a participator. Things were to happen which would change the face of Europe, and, incidentally, jerk my insignificant self out of the monotony of my old life and plunge me into a whirl of queer and bewildering adventure.

On the outbreak of war I saw scenes of wild enthusiasm in Frankfort city. The big cafés which I visited in turn were crowded; orchestras played patriotic songs until the early hours of the morning, and noisy crowds of beer-drinkers joined

FIRST ATTEMPT TO REACH ENGLAND 3

in singing them. One evening a Frenchman, more bold than wise, stood up in a café and shouted "Vive la France! À bas l'Allemagne!" and then, rushing from the café, ran down the Kaiser Strasse pursued by an angry mob. He escaped from his pursuers by darting into a cinema theatre at one entrance and out at the other. The mob, baffled in their pursuit, caught sight of the film placard for the previous week, which showed a picture of Bonaparte. That was sufficient. In ten minutes they had smashed every window and every article of furniture in the place. It is only fair to add that the police took every precaution against a recurrence of such outrages.

In a night every foreign name on shop signs and hotels was either removed or obliterated and German names substituted. I heard of a German being flung from a tram-car because he had said "*Pardon!*" instead of "*Verzeihen!*" after treading on some one's foot, but I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the story.

There was a great hue-and-cry or Russian, French, and Servian spies, with which Germany was said to be overrun. On one occasion I saw a poor Russian being dragged to the police station, his head bleeding profusely, surrounded by a mob of people crying "*Russischer Spion!*" and striking

at him with fists, umbrellas, and sticks. I was watching the scene from the front of a tram-car, and the driver, ignorant of the fact that I was an Englishman, turning to me, said—

“There are too many of these d—d foreigners about. I’ve been watching that old fellow in the car for some time and I don’t like the looks of him. I’ve half a mind to denounce him.”

I agreed, of course, that there were far too many foreigners about, and could hardly repress a smile when I saw that the man to whom he was referring was a much-respected German professor at the University of Frankfort!

At Neuss, near Düsseldorf, a German flying-machine was brought down by German anti-aircraft guns, two German officers being killed. It is to be feared, too, that many innocent people were shot as suspected spies in the early days of war.

The day before the entry of Great Britain into the war, I was about to leave Frankfort station when I found to my consternation that a special barrier had been erected during the night, and police and military officials were demanding legitimation papers from all who passed through into the town. When asked to show mine I could produce none. Just as I was about to be handed over to a German corporal and a couple of soldiers, a

German friend appeared, coming from the train, made the necessary declaration for me, and got me through. Once outside, it occurred to me to search my pockets in order to see if I was carrying anything which might possibly have helped me. To my horror the first paper I pulled out was a business document typed in Russian characters—absolutely harmless, it is true, but a document which might have been fraught with extremely unpleasant consequences had I been dragged before a stupid official in those days of spy fever.

Strange stories were abroad, too, at that time of French motor-cars on their way through Germany to Russia, laden with fabulous millions of francs in gold. I heard over and over again of army officers of high rank who were stopped a dozen times by zealous villagers on a motor-car journey of twenty miles. Long after midnight one night, I was aroused from sleep by the sound of the village fire-horn, and shortly afterwards a village youth rang the house-bell and shouted excitedly to my landlord that his help was wanted to waylay a number of French motor-cars laden with gold for Russia, which were expected to pass through our village on their way. The news was *amtlich* (official), he said. My landlord hurriedly dressed, and in spite of my ridicule sallied forth to help.

“If the news is *amtlich*,” he said with solemn emphasis, “it must be true,” which speaks volumes for the belief of the average German in the infallibility of anything in uniform. The villagers laid huge tree-trunks as pitfalls across the roads leading to the village, concealed themselves in ambush near them, armed for the most part with sporting rifles, and waited; but no cars came, and they crept to bed an hour or two later, cold, sleepy, and crestfallen.

The mobilisation of troops seemed to take place with marvellous precision and smoothness. Everything spoke of a people prepared in the fullest sense of the word for war. Armed guards were immediately placed on bridges, railway stations, and other places of importance, and one saw for the first time the field-grey uniform which has since become famous. The men and officers seemed remarkably fit.

My home was in a little village situated between Frankfort-on-Maine and Darmstadt, and day after day I saw an apparently endless procession of troop trains carrying men, guns, horses, and stores to the south and west. “*Die Wacht am Rhein*,” “*Ich hat’ einen Kamerade*,” and “*Deutschland über alles*,” sung by sonorous voices as the trains went west, were heard night and day until one grew weary

of the sound of them. There was a marked absence of songs of the lighter sort. All the troop trains I saw were labelled "*Nach Paris!*" "*Nach Petersburg!*" or "*Nach London!*" Many of them were decorated with clever chalk drawings and adorned from end to end with foliage cut from the trees on the railway side.

There seemed to be no shadow of doubt in the mind of any ordinary German I met in those days that the German people were setting out upon a war of defence. The Germans were an easy people to trick. Amazingly ignorant as their rulers may be of the psychology of other nations, they have made few mistakes in their judgment of their own people. As far as I could learn, the average German firmly believed that the war had been thrust upon Germany by the ruthless despotism of Russia and by the mad chauvinism of France. Later on all this was forgotten, and England became and remained the arch-enemy who, by her devilish diplomacy, had drawn France and Russia into her net and cleverly tricked them into war with Germany for her own base ends. King Edward was dragged from his tomb and became the butt of every cartoonist who thought he could wield a pencil. He became, for the German mind, the embodiment of everything that was pernicious in English

foreign policy. His was the masterly intelligence which had planned and brought about the political isolation of Germany, and heaven itself was invaded in order that the German might smile when he saw how unhappy the illustrious monarch felt, even in heaven, at the spectacle of all the sorrow and suffering he had brought upon Europe. The improbability of meeting naughty kings in heaven never seems to have occurred to the German mind. Sir Edward Grey achieved a like notoriety.

While being shaved in a small barber's shop in Frankfort the morning after the British declaration of war, a labourer sitting next to me said to the barber—

“You've heard, I suppose, of the English declaration of war?”

“Yes,” replied the barber.

“*Ist das nicht gemein?*” (“Isn't it dirty?”) was the labourer's comment. Such seemed to be the general opinion. It was *gemein*. We had played Germany a dirty trick, upset calculations, and spoiled her game. I refrained from comment lest the razor should slip. It was not a suitable moment, I felt, for heroics.

At that time, even the most respectable German newspapers were full of scurrilous abuse of the English people, the English army, the English

national character, and English policy. We had become a decadent race—decadent in physique, mentality, and morals. As soon, however, as the Germans had recovered from their first overwhelming surprise, they discovered that the ruling hand of the Almighty was behind it all, that Great Britain had given Germany a glorious opportunity. The disruption of the British Empire would naturally follow the entry of Great Britain into the war. India would rise and shake off the hated English yoke. Ireland would declare her independence, and the self-governing colonies would, one by one, claim complete autonomy. “The very foxes running along our walls were to bring them down,” and on the ruins of the once glorious British Empire a new empire was to rise—the German World Empire, bestowing the blessings of its *Kultur* on the benighted peoples of the earth. If my readers think that this savours of picturesque exaggeration, I recommend them to turn to German newspapers and pamphlets published during the first few months of war. It would be interesting to speculate how much blood and tears and treasure Europe might have been spared, had the German people only been gifted with a finer sense of humour.

English people are at a loss to understand how

it came to pass that the Social Democratic Party in Germany failed at the last moment to make a solid stand against war. We shall not understand all until the German press is unmuzzled after the war, though there are a few incidents leading up to war to which insufficient attention has been paid in this country. In the first place, it must be borne in mind that the German people, including the German Socialists, were tricked with consummate skill into the belief that the war which menaced them was to be, in the fullest sense of the word, a war of defence and not of aggression. The leaders of the Social Democratic Party in the Reichstag ought to have known better. Some did not know, and others who knew or suspected the truth were afraid to take a firm stand against the overwhelming forces which confronted them. There were reports of much more than a vague character, that the Government had decided on the immediate arrest of all the Socialist members of the Reichstag who showed signs of the least hostility to the Government policy, and, traitors to the revolutionary principles they avowed, the greater part of them followed the Government lead. A few courageous ones—now members of the *Arbeitergemeinschaft* (the Minority Socialists) spoke out, and, one by one, found their way for the most

part to prison. I met many of them there in the summer of 1915. They were, however, powerless to stem the tide of fanatic patriotism which swept across Germany and carried everything before it. They lacked a great leader of the calibre of Bebel or Singer. Harassed, misunderstood, and vilified, constantly faced with the prospect of imprisonment at any moment, these brave men still carry on their work of enlightenment. They are men of noble ideals and indomitable purpose, and only those who have themselves felt the Prussian iron heel can measure the praise which is their due. They are constantly in opposition in the Reichstag, though we seldom learn what they have said, and, in some mysterious way, leaflets which have *not* been sanctioned by the Imperial Censor find their way into the hands of thousands of Germans at home and at the front. These leaflets tell the truth, and though they will not end the war, they "do their bit."

It is known to very few in Germany, though even during the war courageous publicists, like Theodore Wolff of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, have referred to the matter in carefully veiled language, that the British Government in 1914 had come to terms with the German Government regarding many important questions of colonial policy.

Concessions of an important nature, conceived in a generous spirit of conciliation, had been made by the British Government, and the draft treaty had received the assent of both parties to it. I learned, while in Germany, that the fear of this treaty heralding a new spirit in Anglo-German foreign policy brought matters to a head, and impelled the Pan-German leaders to decide upon immediate war.¹ While the crowned heads of those countries likely to be involved in war were exchanging telegrams, a special edition of a semi-official Berlin newspaper, the *Lokal Anzeiger*, appeared, and was sold in the streets of Berlin on July 28. The newspaper stated that the Kaiser had signed the order for the mobilisation of two army corps against Russia. At that time the Russian armies had been mobilised only against Austria-Hungary. The issue was suppressed a few hours later, a few subordinate officials were, I believe, cashiered, and an official *dementi* was published—but not before the special edition had done its work. People, whom I am justified in regarding as men speaking with authority, held the view that the Kaiser had actually signed the mobilisation order and then

¹ This has since been substantially confirmed by the recent revelations of Prince Lichnowsky, the German Ambassador in London prior to the outbreak of war.

cancelled it. The leaders of the war party secured publication of the statement in the *Lokal Anzeiger*, a few thousand read it, including the Russian Ambassador in Berlin, the Russian Government learned of it, and their reply was the mobilisation of Russian troops on the German frontier. The sinister scheme had done its work. Few people in Germany knew what had taken place. They found themselves face to face with a *fait accompli*. "What! the Cossack hordes in our homes? Never!" That was the cry which united Germany.

If there were any Germans in those days who were ashamed of the violation of the neutrality of Belgium, I never met them. Every one seemed to look upon it as quite the right thing to do. Of course, we heard nothing of the atrocities perpetrated by German troops in Belgium. On the other hand, we heard very much indeed of unspeakable barbarities practised by Belgian civilians on the German troops. We heard nothing of retreats or of defeats; the newspapers reported only victories. It was months before one learned of the Battle of the Marne, and one had to learn of the invasion of Eastern Prussia by the Russian armies, through Hindenburg's victories at Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes. If Hindenburg had

had to drive the Russians out of Germany, they must have forced a way into Germany for such a necessity to arise.

Apparently no one dreamed that the war could possibly last longer than six months. Lord Kitchener's view, that the war would last at least three years, was laughed to scorn. "*Kitchener propose; les Allemands disposent!*" Many Germans to whom I spoke on my last escape from Germany had moved to the other extreme, and believed that the war would never end. This miscalculation of the probable duration of the war is one of the biggest mistakes Germany made.

During the first few days of mobilisation no trains were available for those who wished to leave Germany. On the 4th and 5th of August there were no long-distance trains, other than troop trains, leaving Frankfort-on-Maine. On the evening of the 6th I left by a train which I hoped would carry me through to Holland, my idea being to get back to England as quickly as possible and volunteer. It took me three years and four months to get there. In Niederlahnstein, a small station not very far from Cologne, we were ordered to leave the train, and about a hundred and fifty English people — men, women, boys, girls, and

babies in arms—were crowded into a bare waiting-room, and kept there under guard until about ten o'clock the following morning, when we were again entrained for Cologne. At Cologne-Kalk we were ordered to leave the train, our passports were carefully examined, and then, escorted by a strong guard of German soldiers with fixed bayonets, we marched into the centre of the city. Before we were allowed to cross the Hohenzollern Bridge over the Rhine, our personal effects were carefully searched by German soldiers. Our guards then left us standing for several hours in drizzling rain, women and children along with the rest, in front of the railway station in Cologne. One or two Germans came up while we were standing there, and expressed regret that we were in so unfortunate a situation. In answer to an inquiry as to how long we should be kept waiting, some of us were informed—

“You have come into a fortress, and now that you are in a fortress you will not be allowed to leave!”

Late in the afternoon hotels were assigned to us, and after a stay of about five days, Mr Gardner and Mr Thelwall, the British Vice-Consul and junior Vice-Consul in Frankfort-on-Maine, succeeded in inducing the police and military auth-

orities to permit us to continue our journey to Holland.

Early one morning we embarked on a Rhine steamer which was to carry us all to Rotterdam. We were in high spirits. Each passenger was furnished with a special permit, authorising him to travel through to Rotterdam, stamped and signed by the governor of the fortress and the president of police. In addition, two detectives had been placed in charge of us to help us through any difficulties on the way. What could go wrong?

We were stopped for examination at Düsseldorf, at Duisburg we were sent back to Düsseldorf for re-examination; we were stopped again at Crefeld, and finally at Wesel. The repeated examinations were irksome, we thought; but then it was war-time, and they were only formalities, with no real significance after all. It was about four in the afternoon when we arrived at Wesel, and more than one party of men and women—for the boat was crowded—had ordered wine to drink to the land whose soil we were so eager to tread. The Dutch frontier was very near. Surely nothing could go wrong.

German officers came on board. There was a long parley between the officers, the detectives,

and our consuls. Then the men were separated from the women, and each man had to pass in front of an officer, produce his papers, and state his age. Men between the ages of seventeen and forty-five were sent on land and placed under military guard. Ten minutes later we were allowed to return on board for our hand-luggage and say "Good-bye!" to our relatives and friends, and were told that we were to be kept as hostages for the German civilians detained in England.

"Not a hair of their heads will be injured," said the German captain who was responsible for our arrest. "The ladies may rest assured that their men will be treated in accordance with the best traditions of German hospitality. It is only a question of a few days' detention—a fortnight or three weeks at the most—and then they will be exchanged."

It was harrowing to witness the partings that took place. Mothers were separated from their sons, wives from their husbands, children from their fathers, and girls from their lovers. One young Englishman, with whom I was long in captivity, was spending his honeymoon in Germany when war broke out, and we were arrested together in Wesel. He has not seen his young wife since. An aristocratic Russian lady, the sister of a Rus-

sian prince, who was with us, threw herself prostrate at the feet of the German officer who arrested us, and, sobbing, implored him to let her brother go free. We were drawn up four deep on land, under guard, the steamer cast off from the quay, turned slowly round, and steamed on out of sight to the land which was the object of our yearning, to the liberty from which the mailed fist held us back.

On our way to the citadel of the fortress, which was our first objective, we raised smiles from somewhere, to cheer those whose lot was harder than our own, and not many minutes had passed before we were laughing and joking at the queer situation in which we found ourselves.

Around the quadrangle to which we were taken, in the citadel itself, were the heavily-barred windows of cells occupied by German military prisoners. These appeared at the windows, when the backs of the officers were turned, and made desperate efforts to cheer us up by sticking out tongues and drawing a forefinger across their throats as an earnest of what was to come.

Late that night the sixty of us were crowded into third-class railway carriages at the station, a sentry with fixed bayonet was placed in each compartment, and we began a miserable fourteen-hour journey to the military camp—Sennelager in West-

phalia. Each compartment was packed full, and, in spite of the hot weather which prevailed in early August 1914, we were not allowed to open the windows. We had nothing to complain of as regards brutal treatment on the way. Our guard—I speak of my own compartment—was a genial fellow, and assured us that, if we were going to prison, it was not so bad after all: he had just done two years of it himself! When we were not trying to snatch a few moments' sleep, we were singing English songs at the top of our voices, to the huge delight of our jail-bird guard.

CHAPTER II.

LIFE IN A MILITARY CAMP—SENNELAGER.

SENNELAGER (Senne Camp), when we arrived there in August, was not unlike any other military camp except for the presence of several thousand Belgian, and a few French, prisoners of war. There were very few German soldiers, due, probably, to the fact that they had almost all been sent off to the front. Close to where we were kept standing for several hours after our arrival was a most impressive group of French soldier prisoners. They lay there in those picturesque attitudes which a Frenchman naturally assumes, whatever his posture, clad in their red breeches and blue overcoats, guarded by tall, stalwart Westphalian soldiers. I am haunted still by the feeling of sadness which came over me at the sight of the luckless few, captured so early in the war, with the certainty of long captivity before them. We had no opportunity of speaking to them at the time.

For a while it was apparent that the camp authorities had received no intimation of our probable arrival, and after discussing the matter with a few friends I decided to take advantage of the situation and endeavour to procure our release. At the request of my friends, I went up to the General in charge of the camp, who had come round on a visit of inspection, and requested permission to lay our case before him. Permission was readily granted, and I informed him that, as far as we could see, our presence in the camp was due to some official error, that we had been furnished in Cologne with a safe-conduct, signed by the highest military and police authorities there, authorising us to travel by Rhine steamer to Rotterdam; we were all civilians, many of us were domiciled in the country prior to the outbreak of war, and the rest were tourists. As far as we could learn, some misunderstanding had arisen, and we had been arrested the previous day at Wesel; could he procure our speedy release? While I was trying to convince him that we were at a loss to understand why we had been arrested at all, one of my friends, with more zeal than tact, suggested to the General that it was doubtless because we were all of military age! Just before my friend made this unfortunate remark, the General, evidently

puzzled, murmured something about sending a commission to Paderborn, the nearest town, in order to inquire into the matter. 'I had only very slender hope of something useful being accomplished, but I thought it wise, seeing that our liberty was at stake, to leave no stone unturned. The "bluff" failed. The interview served one useful purpose, however. It called attention to our case, and it became no longer possible to treat us as an entirely negligible element in the camp.

Later in the day we were quartered in barracks. From the litter of rubbish in them, we judged that German soldiers had probably left the barracks that day, and it was not long before we set to work with water and scrubbing-brushes to make our new quarters habitable. That day, the men got together and did me the honour of choosing me as their representative or spokesman. My stay in Sennelager was not a long one, but while I was there the men gave me a splendid backing in all that I attempted to accomplish on their behalf. They numbered sixty when we arrived, but at the end of the first week twenty other unfortunates were sent to join us. All sorts and conditions of men were to be found in our midst. We had a cousin of an English peer, whose name would be quite familiar to all if I were to mention it. He

was taking a cure at Homburg when the war broke out. A Manchester city councillor, well known in the North of England, was another. He had been spending a holiday listening to the Wagner music at Bayreuth, and though well above military age had been separated from his wife and family at the frontier, simply because a German officer, who caught sight of him at the last moment, thought he "looked fresh and fit enough!" We had also a Russian prince, who was subsequently released through the intercession of the Queen of Holland. Others were stable-boys, jockeys, tourists (who are still "holidaying" in Ruhleben Camp), school-boys, a negro whom we straightaway dubbed "Snowball," two Japs, one of whom was a university professor, and a frail, old Japanese conjurer and juggler.

Thinking that class distinctions of any kind would be regrettable in so small a body of unfortunates, I instituted a democratic *régime* which proved to be quite a success. We took orderly duty in turns. His Highness Prince L—— swept out the barracks and fetched water from the pump, and did it remarkably well. There was a spirit of good-fellowship among us, in spite of occasional fits of depression, which went far to make our life as enjoyable as such a life ever could be.

During the first few days we were not compelled to do any definite work. One day the staff doctor asked for volunteers to clean one of the camp hospitals, and we all turned out and worked until our hands were blistered. The following day he sent a corporal to order us to go again. I remonstrated, pointing out that if the staff doctor cared to ask again for volunteers, volunteers would cheerfully go; an order, however, was a different matter. The corporal came back later and asked for volunteers.

The camp was hopelessly disorganised at first, and insufficiently manned. We had to wait five days, for example, before we received blankets; but this constituted no great hardship, as the nights were warm. The food was of very poor quality—inexcusable in those days when Germany had an abundant supply of foodstuffs—but we were able to supplement camp fare by odds and ends which we could purchase at the canteen.

The morning of the third day I was called out of the barrack to speak to the Adjutant—a captain who, next to the General, was responsible for the administration of the camp. I found him seated on his horse in front of the entrance to our barrack. The open square was filled with a big crowd of Belgian and French military prisoners, about a

hundred Russian Poles, and the English civilians. German soldiers were sprinkled here and there among the crowd. The Adjutant then began a speech, in which he stated that, from the following morning onwards, the prisoners of war in the camp would rise at six o'clock, appear on parade at seven, and work until noon. There would be a short pause for lunch, after which work would be resumed until 5 P.M. There would be three roll-calls a day—at seven, half-past one, and half-past five. When he paused, I said—

“I take it, sir, that this has no reference to the English civilians.”

“What I have said applies to all,” he answered, with a wave of the hand.

“Then, in the name of the English civilians, I lodge an emphatic protest.”

“On what grounds?”

“We were informed by the German officer who was responsible for our arrest at Wesel that we should be treated in accordance with the best traditions of German hospitality, and such will certainly not be the case if you insist on our working in this camp.”

He then lost command of his temper, rose in his stirrups, and delivered a fiery speech to all and sundry in a hoarse loud voice, dwelling

mainly on the atrocities perpetrated on German women and children *in dem Auslande* (in foreign countries).

“Excuse me, Adjutant,” I said, “but what you say is not true of England.”

This occasioned a fresh outburst, and a German orderly standing by came under the horse’s head and, clenching his fist, muttered—

“Keep your mouth shut or I’ll knock you down,” so I kept my mouth shut.

The Adjutant ended his speech by shouting passionately—

“*Ist das nicht wahr, Soldaten?*” (“Is that not true, soldiers?”)

“Hurra! Hurra! Hurra!” shouted the soldiers, and the Adjutant rode away. In those days we were not yet cowed by discipline and bullying. The protest served a useful purpose, in that we were given no very arduous work to perform, beyond the erection of a barbed-wire fence around certain portions of the camp towards the end of the first fortnight. One or two men helped the camp doctor, others were sent to work in the garden, while three engineers were told off to repair an old traction-engine. The day after the incident related above, the Adjutant rode up to where we were working, and explained to me in quite a

friendly manner, that it was the intention of the authorities simply to give us work which would keep us out of mischief.

The fourth or fifth day after our arrival, I was given an opportunity of speaking to General von Bissing (later Governor-General of Belgium), who was, at the time, the General at the head of the army corps whose headquarters were in Munster, Westphalia. Our camp came under his control, and when I saw him he was passing through the camp, accompanied by his staff, on a visit of inspection. I remember him as an exceedingly handsome, soldierly-looking officer, with that stiffness and haughtiness of bearing which we have come to regard as peculiarly Prussian. I argued the case for the release of the English civilians, and his answer was—

“You have only your own Government to blame. We did not want war with England. It was England who wanted war with us.”

Finally, he consented to consider petitions for the release from camp of men who had been domiciled in Germany prior to the outbreak of war.

For a number of days I had to appear regularly before the General in command of the camp, along with the French and Belgian non-commissioned officers, to receive orders for the following day. A

smart little Belgian sergeant acted as interpreter for his comrades. One day the General bellowed at him from his horse—

“We are going to try and make soldiers of your men. They are not soldiers yet.”

The Belgian sergeant clicked his heels together, saluted, and, looking the General square in the eyes, retorted—

“*Zu spät, Herr General!*” (“Too late, General.”)

Bullying was tried on several occasions by individual German soldiers, but I never allowed a single occasion to pass without reporting it, usually with satisfactory results. On parade, the Englishmen drew up in soldierly fashion, four deep, and marched well. There were some well-built men among us, and I more than once saw a look of admiration in the eyes of the officers who inspected us.

A Major Bach, a Prussian officer of the harshest type, became camp commander at the end of the first week. On his first appearance he condemned one of our men to three days' cells for daring to address him on parade, but he became more reasonable towards the end of the second week, and I had nothing to complain of in my dealings with him. I must admit, however, that I did not see him at his worst, and if he is responsible for

the abominable treatment meted out to the civilian and military prisoners later on, he has very much to answer for. I left at the end of a two weeks' stay in Sennelager, just before the first batches of British soldiers arrived, and am consequently unable to write with authority on what took place after that date. Much was related to me by friends of mine who were released later, and I was alternately moved to tears and fury at what I heard. As this, however, is only a record of experiences through which I myself passed, I leave it to others who saw and suffered to write of those incidents at a later date.

One favourite joke of the Major's was to read out, and insist upon the translation of, news of big German victories when we were lined up on parade. A blow on the mouth would have been kinder to the poor French soldiers, who, after having fought bravely for France, were compelled to submit to such indignities as these.

Sennelager is situated on a plateau which forms part of the Paderborn Heath in Westphalia. Even in times of peace it is notorious among German soldiers on account of the hard life they lead there, though its redeeming feature is its healthy situation. Good cover is plentiful, and, had one thought seriously of escape in those days, it would

probably have been an easier undertaking than it proved to be at a later date. We all, without exception, however, firmly believed that we should be exchanged for the German civilians interned in England, as soon as the British and German Governments found time to think of us.

At last came the day of our release. Twenty-nine of us left to travel, not to England, alas ! but back to our domiciles in Germany. Captain von Schenk, the Adjutant to whom I have previously referred, treated us to a parting speech, in which he assured us that Great Britain would soon learn what the might of Germany meant. I left, with several other Englishmen, for Frankfort-on-Maine, where I lived under close police supervision, but otherwise comparatively undisturbed, until Nov. 6, when I was re-arrested, along with all other Englishmen living in Germany. From then onwards I spent three years in captivity, in camps, military prisons, and village jails, enjoying only such brief spells of freedom as my own efforts to escape procured for me.

CHAPTER III.

INTERNED AGAIN!—ON THE WAY TO RUHLEBEN.

THE spell of "liberty" we enjoyed after our release from Sennelager was a very short one. It was not long before reports of the internment of German civilians in England appeared in the German press, and representations were made from all quarters for the internment of all civilian Englishmen living in Germany. For a long time we hoped against hope that an exchange would be effected upon some basis or other, but nothing came of it, and when we saw the inevitable we resigned ourselves to it with a good grace.

On the 6th and 7th of November, arrests took place all over Germany, and by the end of the month all British subjects resident in Germany, between the ages of 17 and 55, had been rounded up and interned in Ruhleben. While thousands of Germans in the British Isles were left entirely free,

no Englishman in Germany escaped internment if he was what the authorities called *transportfähig* (fit to be moved). This was the only test applied. Long residence in Germany, even lifelong residence, counted for nothing. Ill-health, provided the man could bear the railway journey, made no difference. "Paper Englishmen," who were rabidly pro-German in their sympathies, shared the same fate as the *Stockengländer* (thoroughbred Britishers). The case of a prominent merchant in Frankfort-on-Maine, who was recovering from a very serious surgical operation, and who had lived for twenty-five years in Germany, is quite a typical one. When I was arrested in my little village and taken to the nearest police station, I met there a fellow-countryman of mine who had forgotten that he was English. He was a gardener, about forty-five years of age, had never seen England, and spoke only German. He remained for over three years in captivity.

The manner of my arrest was characteristically German and amused me immensely. I had ordered a taxi-cab to take me and my luggage to the police station in the next village, and when I came out of the house two policemen were waiting for me, who forbade me to use it.

"*Sie sind jetzt Gefangener, Herr Ellison, und Sie*

dürfen nicht mit einem Auto fahren," they said to me. ("You are now a prisoner, Mr Ellison, and you are not allowed to ride in a taxi.")

However, I got in, and, accompanied by the *Herr Gemeindediener* (Mr Parish Servant or Beadle) drove off, leaving the two astonished policemen behind, to follow on foot. Before we left the police station, the gendarme who accompanied us took out a huge revolver, showed us that it was loaded, and told us that he would not hesitate to use it if either of us attempted to escape. We then had a wearisome tramp of about two hours, carrying our heavy luggage, picked up two other Englishmen in another village on the way, and then, to my disgust, came back to the village from which I had started! Late that night we arrived at Giessen Military Camp on our way to Ruhleben, and there met many friends. Most of the men who had been released from Sennelager with me were there, and the reunion was a most happy one.

We were quartered in new, well-built wooden barracks, about one hundred and fifty in each barrack, and slept side by side on straw-sacks, which were ranged in long rows reaching from one end of the building to the other.

The Englishman on the palliasse next to mine

was a Captain H——, who had fought in the Boer War. Repeatedly, as I was falling to sleep, he would give me a vigorous dig with his elbow. I groaned.

“Ellison, sit up!”

“Oh, go to sleep, I’m tired!”

“To hell with the Pope! I haven’t spoken to an Englishman for three solid months. Sit up, and I’ll tell you your fortune with cards.”

This went on until about two in the morning.

The following morning we spent walking about our part of the camp. There were several hundred British soldier prisoners there, who, under the supervision of our own non-commissioned officers, were engaged on the construction of new wooden barracks. We had no opportunity of conversing with them openly, but a few of us made a practice of paying very frequent visits to a certain convenience in the camp, and, in this way, managed to smuggle to them a certain amount of bread and money. The food we received was much better than that supplied to us in Ruhleben later on.

During the afternoon two of our men were sitting reading outside our barrack, when an old German carpenter came up and tried to enter into conversation with them. They were interested in their books, and when the carpenter

persisted in discussing the war and Germany's glorious prospects, one of them told him in English to "go to h—l!" This had, of course, no effect, as the carpenter's education had been somewhat neglected. Finally one of the two informed him in German that "there would be no Germany inside six months." The carpenter, horrified and blazing with indignation, went round the camp, reporting what had been said, and shortly afterwards a sergeant, purple with fury, marched up, leading four German soldiers with fixed bayonets, with the intention of placing the men under immediate arrest.

The situation looked very serious for the men. Fortunately for them, he first felt it necessary to deliver himself of a fiery speech. A large crowd gathered round, and the fat sergeant raved and stormed and splashed and shouted, shook his fist and trembled, until we all expected him to have an apoplectic seizure on the spot. It was an amazing display. Even the German soldiers smiled behind his back. Feeling convinced that nothing could make matters worse, and that there was perhaps a very slight prospect of saving my friends, I ventured to offer my services as interpreter; but it was a long time before I could induce the sergeant to listen. One of the men

had a much better command of German than I had, but I maintained that my friends knew practically no German, that the carpenter must have misunderstood, that it was impossible for either of the men to have phrased such a statement as the one they were supposed to have made, and so forth. For a long time my words made no impression, but at length he calmed down a little, and, to our immense relief, marched his four bayonets away. We left the camp about an hour later.

The guard in our compartment of the train from Giessen to Ruhleben was a young fellow, eighteen years of age, who had volunteered for service in the army—a *Kriegsfreiwilliger*. He was full of patriotic zeal, and eyed us for a time with great mistrust. Our jollity, however, was irresistible. We sang English songs by the dozen, and presently Fritz junior pulled out a mouth-organ and began to play German folk-songs. He played shyly for a time. Then, as some of us joined lustily in singing them, he warmed up and played a few music-hall songs in which we could all join. As the night wore on he began to nod, pulled himself together, gripped his rifle tighter, and—began to nod again. Finally, his head sank on to my shoulder, and he fell soundly asleep. Poor Fritz!

Had any one of the men you were guarding met you as a soldier in No Man's Land, he would have killed you, or you would have killed him, and passed on, seeing red. As it was, when your rifle slipped and might have wakened you, one of those chums of mine quietly removed it and placed it in a corner where it could not fall. You, for your own part, when Red Cross girls in the stations refused to give food or drink to civilians, procured it for us and shared what you received with us. When we weigh up our war-time experiences, Fritz, we remember you.

After a wearisome all-night journey we arrived in Spandau, detrained, and marched to Ruhleben Camp. We were kept standing in drizzling rain for a time in the centre of the camp, our personal effects were examined, and then, as the barracks in which we should have been quartered were still being used as stables, we were marched back to the Emigrant Station, facing the camp, and quartered there. More dismal quarters could not have been found, and yet I have no recollections pleasanter than the memory of the gay and light-hearted manner in which our men faced the hardships of life there.

CHAPTER IV.

LIFE IN RUHLEBEN CAMP.

MANY of us remained in the Emigrant Station for about ten days before quarters were assigned to us in Ruhleben Camp. Six of us had to share a horse-box in Barrack 7. There were no beds at the time, and we had to sleep on straw spread over the cold concrete floor. I was suffering from a severe cold, which I had contracted from one of my fellow-unfortunates who slept next to me in the Emigrant Station; and as the stable in which we slept was without heating apparatus of any kind whatsoever, in a particularly cold November, the chances are that I should not have recovered had not two of my friends taken me in hand. They were two men who had been with me in Sennelager, and, on seeing my condition, put me by force into one of their bunks in Barrack 4. For three days they slept two in

a bed, and nursed me with the utmost kindness and care back to health. Their names were Cole and Davy Jones. One does not forget such acts.

It was not long before something like an ordered life began to appear out of the chaos of the early days. The Camp Captains have been the target of much criticism. But what is there, and who is there, that an Englishman will not criticise? In those days criticism—grousing—was our only diversion. As I was myself for a time a so-called Barrack Captain, and sat on the Captains' Council, it is perhaps not my place to speak of their work. The results might have been better, but they most decidedly might have been worse; and the various amenities which, one by one, found their way into the life of the camp were mostly due to their efforts. Whether they worked on right lines or on wrong lines, they certainly *did* work.

It was interesting to note how differently the camp life affected different men. The first winter was, of course, exceedingly trying for every one, and those who bore its hardships most lightly were the young fellows who could indulge in sport and so keep physically fit. We had several men among us like Steve Bloomer,

Pentland, Brearley, and Cameron, who, as professionals, had played first - class football in England; and, in addition to these men, we had quite a large number of very good amateurs. Football became quite a popular game, and provided diversion not only for those who played, but also for the huge crowds who watched. Before long, barrack teams were started, and League football was in full swing.

It was also not long before we discovered that the camp contained men of all types and of all sorts of abilities. For a time the men who could teach taught groups of old and young men who were eager to learn, in all sorts of out-of-the-way places in camp. At a later date these teachers were organised into a recognised teaching staff, and thus we had the beginnings of a most excellent school; Bishop Bury called it, not without some reason, "The Ruhleben University." Men were found to teach almost every foreign language; and it was not long before handicraft classes in leather-work, engineering, woodwork, bookbinding, carpet-weaving, and so on, were formed. Hundreds of men will emerge from Ruhleben Camp, at or before the end of the war, having added most useful knowledge and acquirements to the assets they possessed when they entered upon

camp life. Many there were, of course, who did nothing at all, and who seemed to expend as much energy and vigour in avoiding work as would have enabled them to attain heights of culture undreamed of.

As we had in camp quite a number of professional actors, and an astonishingly large number of others who showed great talent which only required to be developed, we soon had a Ruhleben Dramatic Society, and most excellent were some of the productions they staged. Music, too, had a large place in the camp life, and the Ruhleben Camp Orchestra and various madrigal societies and choirs presented most ambitious programmes with astounding success. Other public-spirited men worked as officials in various departments in the camp, and contributed in no small degree to making life there as tolerable as camp life could be. It soon became bad form to talk of one's troubles, because the men who were most engrossed in their own losses and worries had not far to go before they found some one whose situation was far worse than their own.

Mr Gerard, in his book, 'My Four Years in Germany,' writing of Ruhleben Camp, says:—

“Establishment of clubs seems inherent to the

Anglo-Saxon nature. Ten or more persons would combine together and erect a sort of wooden shed against the brick walls of a barrack, hire some poorer person to put on a white jacket and be addressed as "steward," put in the shed a few deck-chairs and table, and enjoy the sensation of exclusiveness and club life thereby given."

I myself belonged to a group of men who shared a "sort of wooden shed against the brick walls of a barrack," and was very glad indeed of the opportunity it afforded me of meeting interesting men. We called it "The Corner House Club," and its members were mainly actors, artists, literary men, and musicians.

Most of us had been pitchforked together in the most indiscriminate fashion on our arrival in Ruhleben, and lived in groups of six in our tiny horse-boxes. The most marked incompatibility of temperament was not regarded by the Camp authorities as a sufficient reason for the grant of a separation order, and one soon began to long for the unattainable—privacy. Privacy being out of the question, congenial spirits got together and formed clubs. The men sought not so much exclusiveness as quiet, and society and conversation of the right kind.

The Corner House was quite a cosy place

when I last saw it in the autumn of 1917. It was barely five paces wide, and certainly not more than twenty paces long, but it had been fitted with a bay window and a wooden floor, small tables, cane chairs, and a piano. The wall at the far end was covered with a large canvas, painted by one of the members, Wintser, depicting the front of the Café de la Paix. The members sat alone or in groups, reading or talking, and occasionally one of the musicians—Keel, Bonhote, Pauer, Weber, “Mac,” or Bainton—would stroll to the piano and play. The utmost good-fellowship reigned, and I have many pleasant memories of the hours I spent in that “wooden shed against the brick walls of a barrack.”

But, numerous as were opportunities of work and diversion in the camp, the sense of imprisonment was always there. The longest walk in camp eventually brought one face to face with barbed wire, and a sentry behind the barbed wire, to remind one that the mailed fist held us back from the Homeland and those who were near and dear to us. What most of us felt most keenly was the fact that we had been denied the opportunity of serving our country in an active sense in the time of her great need.

Those who chafed were usually reminded by

the quieter spirits that "they also serve who only stand and wait"; but such a philosophy affords slight comfort when addressed to an eager youth who knows quite well that, had he not been held back, he would at that very moment have been doing his bit and bearing his share of the burden in an active and not a passive sense. That, I believe, apart from sheer love of adventure, is the motive which animated most of those men who attempted, again and again, to escape.

We watched the progress of the seasons from bare winter to the freshness of spring, the luxuriance of summer, and the decay of autumn, with a new interest, and yearned for the freedom and quiet of an English country lane with its sweet-briar, hawthorn blossom, blackbirds, and bees. There was a beautiful wood just outside the confines of the camp, and we used to watch its seasonal changes, which filled us with a painful longing for freedom.

Our life there taught us at least one useful lesson—that freedom in a slum is priceless compared with imprisonment in a palace, and Ruhleben Camp was no palace. A few broke down, mentally or physically, under the strain; but the majority, gay and light-hearted, endured

with splendid fortitude their undreamed-of trials. We discovered, too, that the most valuable thing to have learned was the liveableness of life; and priceless, as companions and friends, were those men in the camp whom no reverses could embitter, and who had always a cheery smile, a joke, or an encouraging word to lighten the drear darkness of our captivity.

CHAPTER V.

RUHLEBEN HUMOUR.

THE men interned in Ruhleben had reason to be grateful for what I believe is a characteristic of our race—a saying sense of humour. Even in the darkest days of the first winter, a defiant gaiety—entirely different in its nature from a cheerful resignation—characterised the attitude of the greater part of the men in camp. On the most dismal nights it was no uncommon thing to see a small crowd of thirty or forty English fellows, congregated in front of one of the barrack entrances, singing to the tune of

“Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear!
It is not night if Thou be near,”

an adaptation of their own, running as follows—

“Are we downhea-a-a-rted, o-oh, no, no ;
Are we downhea-a-a-rted, o-oh, no, no ;
Are we downhea-a-a-rted, o-oh, no, no ;”

and so on *ad infinitum*.

About three days after my arrival in the camp, I saw half a dozen young Irishmen link hands and dance a war-dance round an indignant "paper Englishman"—a typical German, with beard, flowing moustaches, a German cloak, and a Tyrol-ese hat, with an article like a shaving-brush stuck in it behind.

On another occasion, General von Kessel and his staff were due to visit camp on a round of inspection, and, to our great glee, they arrived on a very rainy morning, when the camp was one horrid mess of black mud and pools of water. In front of Barrack 8 a large pool had been formed by the rain, and as General von Kessel and his immaculately attired staff picked their way gingerly through the mud, and in and out of the pools of water, they saw one of the sailor-men sitting on an island in the middle of the pond, excitedly and triumphantly angling, with a bloater at the end of his line. General von Kessel was heard by some one to remark: "*Die Engländer haben wenigstens Humor*" ("The English have at least a sense of humour")—and one or two other qualities, General von Kessel, as you have since learned to your cost.

Two comedians who lived in the loft of one of the barracks were gifted with sparkling wit. We had in the camp a perfect caricature of a German

soldier, about 5 ft. high. One day he was passing below the loft window at which one of these brothers sat. Peering through the window, he called out to the soldier—

“Hello! Hindenburg!”

Even the soldier could not refrain from laughing.

From the loft window, the same witty fellow noticed a German workman perched at the top of a telegraph pole, on the opposite side of the road, repairing one of the wires.

“I sigh, Bill,” he sang out, with a rich Cockney accent, to a friend of his sitting opposite, “arsk that bloke if 'e can give me change for a Mark!”

Shortly before I left camp, in the autumn of 1917, the prisoners had hit upon a most amusing measure of retaliation whenever the camp authorities resorted to unjustifiable and inconvenient wholesale punishments, such as extra roll-calls for the whole camp when one or two men had attempted to escape. Owing to the fact that English food parcels came in regularly, food was drawn from the German supplies only about twice a week, when potatoes boiled in their jackets and other luxuries of a similar kind were supplied by the German authorities. The German bread also was very seldom applied for, partly because of its inferior quality, and partly because biscuits and

bread were sent to us from England, Switzerland, and Denmark. When a punitive measure was resorted to by the camp officials, the word was passed round that the men should go up to the camp kitchens and to the camp bread stores, each man applying for his portion of bread and soup until the punitive measure was cancelled. On at least one occasion, the camp officers issued a type-written notice to the effect that the measures which had been resorted to by them were not to be regarded as punitive measures, and that the decision had been arrived at to cancel them at once. No wonder, considering that one day, when the prisoners resorted to retaliatory measures of this kind, they cleared the stores and the kitchens of food supplies, which, under normal conditions, would have sufficed for a fortnight.

One night two Irish sailors became merrily drunk from liquor which they had obtained in some way or other, and, late at night, climbed over one of the barbed-wire fences which separate the camp from the race-course. They wandered about the course, singing, until they were challenged by a sentry. One of them ran, under the impression that his friend was following, but when he glanced round, he found that his chum had flung himself on to the ground, and was lying flat

on his back, laughing uproariously, with the sentry standing over him. The soldier managed to get him into his sentry-box, and mounted guard over him with his rifle until assistance came, during which time the Irishman sang at the top of his voice—

“Love me and the world is mine.”

Practical jokes and horse-play were, as one would expect, much in evidence in such a high-spirited crowd. Two young stable-boys made a butt of an old jockey by allowing condensed milk to trickle on to his head while he lay asleep in his bunk at night. When this had gone on for several nights, the old man began to think that something was seriously wrong, and even went to the length of visiting the camp doctor, to the huge delight of the two young scoundrels.

Friends of mine who lived in a certain barrack were much troubled by a hypochondriac young gentleman, who imagined that he was at death's door, when he was only suffering from a slight cold on the chest. One of them came to me with a queer mixture in a glass jar, which he said consisted, among other things, of treacle and condensed milk, a little mustard, and other sticky substances. They had told their hypochondriac friend that I had an excellent prescription for a

chest plaster, which they felt certain would cure his cold. I was asked to visit the patient within half an hour and bring the jar with me, advising him, with a serious face, to spread the sticky mess over brown paper, lay it on his chest, and keep it there for twenty-four hours. I turned up later, the hypochondriac gentleman bubbled over with gratitude, applied the plaster, and swore afterwards that it had cured his complaint.

The 'Ruhleben Camp Magazine' was very ably conducted, and was rich in humorous sketches of all the different phases of camp life. Much of its humour people who had not actually lived in the camp might find it difficult to understand and appreciate, but it was humour of a high standard, and the magazine ought to live as a delightful record of that famous camp.

In the editorial notes one day I noticed a paragraph to the effect that "At Home" cards had been received from Messrs Kaufmann and Armstrong. Kaufmann and Armstrong were two friends of mine who had made a futile attempt to escape from camp, had been recaptured, and were at the time in the camp cells. Were the magazines accessible at the time of writing, I could quote a hundred other witticisms illustrative of its humour.

After a time, boys under a certain age were segregated in a separate barrack under the charge of an officer of the mercantile marine. The lads gave him a lively time, and were always in mischief. On one occasion they hoisted the "Blue Peter," the flag which is hoisted at the masthead when a ship is about to sail. Baron von Taube, *Kommandant* of the camp, happened to pass by, and, ignorant of its significance, drew his sword and, with a dramatic stroke, severed the lanyard to which the flag was attached.

One day the youngsters dug pits close to the barrack, and carefully concealed them with a light covering of sticks and earth. Rumour had it that at least one German soldier disappeared ignominiously for a few seconds in that way.

The debates held in the grand stand were a source of more merriment than edification, and the speakers usually found an appreciative and sympathetic audience in the large crowds of seafaring men who flocked to the meetings.

Many successful *revues* were held in the camp, but I was unfortunately in prison when the best of them were given. Apart from serious plays of all kinds, light comedy was acted on the *Ruhleben* stage with pronounced success. The make-up of many of the "girls," whose parts were taken by

good-looking fellows in the camp, was astonishingly well done.

Sad, though amusing, were the antics of a steeplechase jockey, whose mind had given way under the strain of his long captivity. He used to dress as a jockey and run round the course, leaping over imaginary obstacles, under the impression that he was a race-horse.

Another inmate of the camp, who had become insane, used to get inside a Gladstone bag, take hold of both handles, and endeavour to carry himself away. His room companions had on one occasion to complain to him that he did not wash as often as they thought he should. He glared at them, and shouted with indignation—

“Lice! You speak to me of lice! I shall speak to you of po-lice!”

In the autumn of 1917, the question of the internment in Holland of a considerable number of prisoners in Rubleben had been decided upon between British and German delegates at The Hague, and most of the men in camp were examined by the medical authorities. The interned were invited to state in writing the complaints from which they were suffering, and an Irish wit wrote down a most voluminous statement, embodying most of the diseases under the sun.

The camp doctor examined him for symptoms of most of these complaints, and then, turning to him and tapping his forehead, said in English—

“ I think there is something wrong with you here.”

“ Begorra, doctor, I'd forgotten that. You are right,” said the Irishman, “ put that down too !”

Many of the seafaring men in Ruhleben Camp were full of a dry and often unconscious humour. As I was strolling along the alley-way of my barrack one day, I noticed an old sailor sitting on his stool at the entrance to his box, mending an old pair of pants. He looked up as I neared him and said very seriously—

“ Yes, sir, when this is over, and I get back to the old country, me and the missus 'll be drunk for a fortnight. Yes, for a fortnight.”

As one lay awake at night, along with the five others who shared his horse-box, he often overheard scraps of conversation in the adjacent boxes. One night an old captain was heard to roll over in his bunk, and groaning, say—

“ How do we know that we are not dead and in hell already ? ”

The kitchens were called “ the galleys ” by the seafaring men, from the first day of camp life onwards, and the sailors often compared their stay

in Ruhleben Camp to a ship becalmed in the Doldrums—a ship whose engines were out of gear, or one that was making b—— few knots an hour.

“What’s the use of worrying about *why* we are here?” said an imperturbable Irish ship’s mate to me one day. “We have dared to exist, and that’s about all there is to it.”

I often felt that he was not far wrong.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DARKIES IN RUHLEBEN.

DURING the first six months of life in Ruhleben Camp I had charge of a barrack containing about two hundred coloured men, chiefly ships' firemen, who had been taken from British ships, trapped in German harbours on the outbreak of war.

The first batch of about one hundred arrived late one night at short notice, from the hulks in Hamburg, where the poor fellows had had a rough time, and my Vice-Captain (Mr Harold Redmayne of Manchester) and I, helped by a number of others, had a busy couple of hours housing them. The German authorities insisted on our taking full particulars of each man for their records before food was given to them, the darkies, with their sea kit on their shoulders, filing past the table at which we worked.

"What's your name?" I asked one man—a West African.

"Sham Toby, sah."

"All right, Sam."

"And your age?"

"No savvy what you mean, sah," replied Sam with a puzzled look.

A more intelligent nigger behind gave him a hefty dig with his elbow.

"Ah, de boss want to know how many yeahs old you get."

"Twenty-foah, boss."

"And what month were you born?"

"De boss want to know what month you get born," prompted my new-found friend.

"I no savvy, boss."

"Hum, you don't know? Was it May?"

"Yes, I tink 'e was May, boss," replied Sam.

"Or June?" I ventured.

"Yes, I tink 'e was June too, boss."

"Suppose we say April?"

"Ah, dat do very well, sah!" was the answer.

When the barrack, a long wooden shed where the men slept on straw-sacks side by side, was full, we found that we had representatives of about ten different races. We had Arabs, Hindoos, West Indians, men from Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast,

Liberia, the Straits Settlements, South Africa, and other places I no longer remember. Apart from the firemen, we had a few variety stage artists, a cinematograph actor, tradesmen who had lived for years in Germany, a professional boxer, a Hindoo valet, and a circus rider. There was a distinct cleavage between the West Indians, who were, for the most part, well-educated men, and the West Africans, many of whom were little more than savages, and it was no easy task to find a uniform method of treatment which would be fair to each section, and equally firm to both. Of the two classes of men, taken as a whole, I preferred the Africans. They were less suspicious, capable of greater devotion, and decidedly more reliable.

To solve the problem of treatment to some extent, we picked out two men from each section, who seemed to be able to command a lead, and appointed each as our assistant, with fairly full powers over his men. The scheme worked very satisfactorily.

As soon as the novelty of camp life had worn off, time began to hang heavily on their hands, and we set about to discover ways and means of finding them something to do. Each man took orderly duty in turn, but there was very little to do beyond keeping the barrack clean and tidy. The rest of

the day the orderlies were entirely free to do as they liked. As very few of the Africans could read or write, I got together a number of my friends who had had experience of teaching, among them three university lecturers, and asked them to help me to form a school in reading, writing, and arithmetic. They very willingly co-operated with me; a blackboard, copy books, pencils, and reading books were obtained through the Camp Education Committee, and before long the school was in full swing. The men sat on their straw-sack beds and used the long benches as desks. For the more advanced men we formed classes to meet their requirements.

One day I came across an old West African fireman, named Sam Davies, who had patiently been copying for a fortnight the sentence—

“It is very hard to write well.”

“It is pretty hard, isn’t it, Sam?” I said, by way of encouragement.

“Yesh, sah!”

“Spell this word, Sam,” I said, pointing to the word *HARD*.

After several efforts, he managed, and then I said—

“Now what does that spell?”

“*VERY*, sah!” he answered proudly.

I gave him up.

As an experiment, I started a series of simple lectures on various subjects, securing the help of a number of very good men in camp, who quite enjoyed lecturing to so interesting an audience.

The following are some of the lectures which were given, the one on astronomy arousing the keenest interest:—

“A talk about the stars,” by a London B.Sc.

“How an English city is governed,” by a Manchester City Councillor.

“Mountain climbing,” by a Mountaineer.

“Football,” by an International Footballer.

“Why men write books,” by an Author.

“Tales from Shakespeare,” } by a University

“Tales from English history,” } Lecturer.

“The Government of England,” by the Writer, and many others.

The funny questions they put to the lecturer at the close were ample recompense for any trouble involved.

Redmayne and I were responsible, too, for the distribution of relief in money and in kind from the British Government, and kept a careful record of all that each man received. A circus-rider named Thomas came up one day and asked for a ticket for a shirt at the Relief Stores. As we handed him

the ticket, after making the usual investigation into his case, he grinned and, scratching his head, said—

“An’ I say, boss, will you give me ticket for one of de smooth cotton shirts?”

“A cotton shirt in winter, Thomas?”

“Yes, sah! You see de trubbul is dis. I no get de louse from the woolly shirt. ’E stick to ’im, but I get ’im off de smooth cotton one all right.”

Once, when one of the bath-houses had been condemned for repairs, an Englishman, ignorant of this fact, was taking a cold douche there, in the dark, when he was caught by a German corporal, who took down his name and barrack number for the purpose of punishment later. When the corporal had gone, the Englishman, who had thought himself alone, was astonished to hear a chuckle in the farthest corner of the room. He peered into the darkness and saw simply a row of shining ivories and two gleaming eyes. It was one of our darkies.

“Dis de first time I glad I be a blaack man!” roared Sambo with great glee.

On another occasion, one nigger accused a West Indian of stealing food from one of his parcels. Usually we are able to settle such matters at once,

by hearing both sides, and calling witnesses when necessary. This case, however, came to the notice of the authorities, and I was told to bring the men before Count von Bismarck, who was then one of the camp officers. The case was gone into with great solemnity. The Count questioned and cross-questioned, I interpreted, and a secretary took down a voluminous statement. At the end of a two-hours' sitting, the Count asked how much was missing from the parcel?

“One herring and 'bout two teaspoonsful of tea, Cap'n,” was the reply.

A West African named Toby Robert became of unsound mind, but for a long time I thought he was simply ill and depressed. Meeting him one day in camp I spoke to him, and asked him if he was feeling better. He snarled, and a strange look came into his eyes. He gave me strange answers, and when I took out my handkerchief to wipe my nose, he flew into a terrible passion.

“Dat very bad ting. Dat very bad ting what you do, sah!”

He went away, muttering angrily. I turned into my barrack and thought no more of the incident.

From that moment on, for a whole fortnight, he dogged me wherever I went in camp, turning up most unexpectedly at odd moments, and swear-

ing the most solemn oaths that he would murder me. When I went into the barrack at night, he would leap up from bed and follow me, snarling and repeating his threats.

"You very good man, Cap'n, but you try grammophone me, and 'cause you try grammophone me, I'll kill you. 'Fore God an' Jesus Christ, I will."

I could get no light on what he meant by "grammophonng," until I asked my West African orderly. He laughed.

"Oh, Cap'n, he thinks you try to *chloroform* him. Dat's what he means by 'grammophone.'"

The camp doctor, after seeing him, promised to have him removed at once, but did nothing. As there was no improvement in Toby's condition, I again besought the doctor to remove him. His reply was that he had come to the conclusion that he was "simply eccentric"! All that I cared about was that the lad should not plunge a knife between my shoulder-blades in one of his "eccentric" moods.

One man came to me with a very much swollen face, due to toothache. I told him that the camp dentist would be coming the following day, and instructed him to take along with him some one who spoke German. The following day he came

into my room, his face wreathed with a most happy smile.

“Well, what’s the matter with you?”

“Oh, sah, dat very funny ting. I go along to de dentist with Sam Roberts, who say he speak German. He no speak German at all, Cap’n. De dentist, ’e put Sam in de chair an’ yank out ’is tooth. Sam yell like ’ell and *I* run. I never have no more toothache, Cap’n.”

A few of them played cricket remarkably well, but their efforts to learn football were ludicrous in the extreme.

Many had a shrewd business instinct, and, as soon as they could get together a little capital, set up in business as shoeblocks in our shopping centre, Bond Street, as cobblers, vendors of peanuts—anything whereby they could earn money.

Gambling for heavy stakes was a vice I tried in vain to crush. At one time I thought I had succeeded, but it broke out again, the men meeting in out-of-the-way places in camp and posting sentries at strategical points for the purpose of giving them warning. One Arab who had been cheated of a large part of his savings secreted a stone in his pocket, and sitting down quietly beside the man he suspected, suddenly burst into a frenzy of rage, and tried to smash in the skull

of the other man with the stone. He was dragged into my room, screaming, foaming at the mouth, and shaking in every limb.

The scene at night, in the dimly-lighted barrack, is one I shall never forget. Here were a few men sleeping; there a group playing a strange, rapid game on a draught-board; at one end, a dozen sitting in a circle, chanting the weirdest song to the accompaniment of furious beating on pans and empty biscuit-tins. I would pass on and thread my way through another group who were discussing religion with much heat. In the last corner, sitting on their beds, were a few Arabs poring over the Koran.

Now that I am back in England, my mind often travels in quiet moments to Ruhleben Camp, where my chum is still captaining the handful of coloured men who are left. I wish them well.

.

In April 1915 I got into trouble with the German camp officers and found my way to prison for the first time. The events which led to my removal from Ruhleben Camp are worth placing on record, mainly because they illustrate the working of the German mind, under certain conditions, better than anything else I know.

One day, about the beginning of April, one of

my men—a West Indian named Allen, who had been twenty-five years in Germany—went to the Ruhleben Camp officers and produced a list of thirty-eight coloured men, who, he said, were in a pitiable condition, unable to obtain relief in the way of clothing either from the British Government or from this barrack captain. He had been trying for a long time to undermine my influence among the men because I had, on one occasion, punished him with forty-eight hours' cells for an offence against barrack discipline. This he had never forgotten.

His charge of neglect was absolutely false. From the first I had realised that nothing would please the German authorities better than to be able to lay hold upon such information for propaganda purposes, and not only had I insisted that the coloured men should be treated, if anything, a little better than the rest of the interned, but we had also kept careful statistics of all that the men had received. Allen's statements, however, were believed at once, and the German officers handed him M. 190, to be distributed by him at the rate of M. 5 per man, among the thirty-eight men.

When I learned of this I was furious at the imputation that we had not been doing our duty by the men, and I determined to oppose the camp

officers in the matter. Further, I had a shrewd suspicion that the money was *not German money at all*. Never had I known the actions of these particular officers to savour of such reckless generosity. I learned later that they were getting a reputation for liberality to the *armen Neger* by presenting them with M. 190 *from the bank interest earned on the deposits of British prisoners in the camp!* There is no doubt whatever that if the matter had been allowed to rest there, and their unwarranted interference in a matter which solely concerned the British authorities allowed to pass unchallenged, the incident would have had far-reaching consequences, and much would have been made of it for propaganda purposes.

The day before the distribution of British relief money at the rate of M. 5 a week to destitutes, we called the men together and I explained to them that we should be compelled to regard those men who accepted the M. 5 from the German officers as no longer destitute, and therefore not entitled to M. 5 from the British Government.

"In other words," I added, "if you care to look at it in that light, you can't have it, men, both ways. You must make your choice. Either the German officers or the British Government. One or the other, but not both."

In the meantime, Allen had been trying hard to get rid of the money, but with very little success. He reported the state of affairs faithfully to the German officers, as was his wont, and they were furious. Twice he was ordered to distribute the money, and twice he failed. We refrained from advising the men in any way, though they knew quite well how we felt about the matter and behaved splendidly.

Several came to me and said indignantly—

“I no want de German man money, boss. De German man no good for de black man. Only de English man good for de black man. I’m Britisher.”

Finally a peremptory order came that the money had to be distributed within an hour, without fail, and with the help of the German corporals in charge of the barrack, it *was* distributed—metaphorically speaking, at the point of the bayonet.

I retaliated by stopping the British relief money of the men who had accepted it.

The following afternoon I was called up before two of the camp officers, Oberleutnant von Amelunxen and Captain Müller. I had to remain standing throughout the inquiry.

The case against me was based upon a written statement made by Allen, and there were two

definite charges. One was that I had "commanded the men to refuse the money from the German officers." The second was that I had told Allen that he had "lowered himself as a British subject by accepting money from German officers in time of war." I denied both charges. They gave me clearly to understand that they believed the "coloured gentleman."

"Then what *have* you done and said?" they demanded with much bluster.

Using a word they used on every possible occasion, I told them that I had acted strictly in accordance with regulations (*Vorschriftsgemäss*). When they wanted to know which regulations, I told them "British regulations," and they were annoyed.

What had I said? I told them that I had certainly not said anything like that to Allen, but that I had simply spoken for myself. I would certainly not dream of accepting gifts from German officers in time of war. That annoyed them too.

"*Ach*," snarled Müller. "When I come to one of your camp concerts, I put a M. 20 note on the plate. You accept that."

I replied that there it was simply a matter of courtesy. Here an important principle was in-

volved—that British subjects should seek support from their own Government in time of war.

“But the British Government has neglected these poor niggers,” he retorted.

“That is not true,” I answered with some heat, and told him how we could have proved the contrary in the clearest possible manner from carefully kept statistics, if we had been consulted as to the truth of this man’s charges. They were at a deadlock, and decided that the coloured gentleman should be called in. When I quite politely requested that one of my fellow-captains should be allowed to be present, Amelunxen lost his temper and shouted—

“You are a prisoner. You have no right to demand anything at all.”

Very quietly I pointed out that I demanded nothing, but simply urgently requested to be allowed something which was my right. I was determined not to spoil a sound case by losing control of my temper, however great the provocation might be.

Meanwhile Allen had arrived.

They proceeded to question him, and so great was my disgust at the whole character of the proceedings, that I refused to speak for a time or to take any further part in the inquiry. Then,

realising that my silence might be interpreted as tacit assent to all that he said, I swung round on him, and cross-questioning him rapidly, succeeded in "tying him up" to an extent far beyond my expectations. I insisted on a literal translation into German of the most vital points in his admissions, and their case against me collapsed completely.

They were furious beyond words.

Banging his fist on the table, and running his fingers through his hair, Amelunxen shouted, almost screamed—

"*Sie sind deutschfeindlich!*" ("You are an enemy of ours," or "of Germany.")

I looked at him in amazement.

"Most certainly I am *deutschfeindlich!* What else can you expect? I am an Englishman. I had many friends in Germany prior to the outbreak of war, and regretted as much as any one that war should break out between these two countries. But with the declaration of war I became your enemy, and shall remain your enemy until the declaration of peace."

"*Unerhört! Der Mensch soll in Einzelhaft in Berlin sitzen,*" he screamed. ("Unheard of! The fellow should be in solitary confinement in Berlin.")

"All right," I said hotly; "if I have deserved

solitary confinement in Berlin, by all means put me there. I am not afraid of you or your threats. I have been guilty not even of discourtesy towards you. I have simply given a straight answer to your charge."

"*Ach*, it is not a question of discourtesy at all," snarled Müller. "It is that you are so pronounced in your enmity towards us that you are thereby not well fitted for the position of captain in this camp."

"If *that* is what you are driving at, gentlemen," I answered, "then the sooner I am rid of the position the better I shall be pleased. Any moment you care to ask for my resignation, it is in your hands."

Amelunxen stormed out of the room with his notes in his hand. Müller would have followed, but I thought, seeing that they had been so determined to down me, that I had better get from him some definite statement as to the result of the inquiry.

Had I, I asked, succeeded in proving my innocence of the charges preferred against me? At first he gave me no answer, but when I got between him and the door and repeated my question, he shrugged his shoulders and answered—

"Yes, yes. The nigger admits that he was

wrong. The whole matter is finished with.”
(“*Die ganze Sache ist erledigt.*”)

In the meantime no fresh evidence was brought up against me. Twenty-four hours later the camp was cleared. I was placed under arrest and marched off to the guard-room. My guards then took me to the Stadt Vogtei Prison in Berlin, where I remained for five weeks in strict solitary confinement, never once informed why I was there, and never once given the semblance of a trial.

CHAPTER VII.

FIRST ESCAPE FROM RUHLEBEN.

SCENE—*Quarantine Camp in Holland in November 1917.*

Austrian Deserter. "I vas against ze English at ze Vest front, vith a pattery of—ach!—how do you call him?—howitzers, nicht?"

Myself. "Yes, howitzers."

Austrian Deserter. "And zere stood a fery pig English attack pefore—oh, a fery pig one. And I tink to myself, 'It is not fery akreable!' So I tesert!"

I FIRST thought seriously of escaping from Germany when I found myself in the Stadt Vogtei Prison, Berlin, in the spring of 1915. I had played with the idea before, but the difficulties in the way seemed at first almost insuperable. I was interned, along with other Englishmen living in Germany, in Ruhleben Camp, which is situated between Berlin and Spandau, more than three hundred miles, as the crow flies, from the Dutch frontier. I knew from life in Germany in times of peace how wonderfully organised the whole of Germany was, and

I realised that peace organisation would undoubtedly have been perfected to meet the exigencies of war. It was evident that if one were to come to the decision to escape, at such a distance from the frontier, the most trivial detail of one's plans would have to be very carefully thought out. This rendered necessary a fairly thorough knowledge of conditions in Germany, which could only be arrived at by very patient and very cautious inquiry.

Had I taken advantage of the few little privileges granted me as barrack captain, I should doubtless have found it easier to escape from Ruhleben Camp than I could as an ordinary interned prisoner. Feeling, however, that it would not be playing the game to make a wrong use of these privileges, I decided to abandon my intention to escape as long as I remained in that position.

In April 1915, when I ventured to oppose the German camp officers on what I regarded—and still regard—as an important matter of principle, I was informed by Baron von Taube, the Commandant of the camp, that I was being taken to prison for the purpose of trial. Two corporals, armed with rifles, escorted me to Berlin, and handed me over to the warders of the Stadt Vogtei Prison. The prison authorities were informed later that I had been sent "*for the purpose of punishment*"—not

for trial—and that I had to be kept in the strictest form of solitary confinement for an indefinite period. All my letters of inquiry and of protest remained unanswered.

While in the yard one day for exercise, I met a Scotsman who had made a very plucky escape from Ruhleben a fortnight before. Although fifty-two years of age, he had been the first to attempt to get out of Germany from Ruhleben, and, after a very adventurous fourteen days' tramp, had been seen and arrested by a *gendarme* about thirty miles from the Dutch frontier. A lasting friendship grew up between us, and I learned much from him of conditions in Berlin and Germany.

I determined to escape at the first opportunity.

At the end of five weeks I bade farewell to my friend. The American Embassy had succeeded in procuring my release from prison, and I was sent back to camp.

Two of my friends in camp were Mr E. Falk and Mr Geoffrey Pyke, whose plucky escape from Ruhleben Camp has been recorded in 'Blackwood's Magazine,'¹ and in Mr Pyke's book, 'To Ruhleben and Back.' For a time we were practically pledged to each other to escape together.

¹ "My Experiences as a Prisoner of War in Germany, and How I Escaped." By E. M. F., 'Maga,' January 1916.

We met at all hours of the day, and in all sorts of places in camp, for the purpose of discussing plans and consulting maps and newspapers.

For a long time the question of greatest importance was that of choosing the most suitable route. We ruled the Swiss frontier, both in Austria and Germany, out of the question, partly on account of the great distance which would have to be covered in order to get there, and partly because we had very little information concerning either of these two frontiers. The two others which remained were the routes to Denmark and to Holland. The route to Denmark by land, had we chosen it, would have meant that we should have had to cover almost as much distance as that from Berlin to the Dutch frontier, and, further, presented two definite objections. The first was the difficulty we should have to face in crossing the Kiel Canal, and the second was the presence in Schleswig-Holstein, at that time, of a very considerable number of German troops. The frontier was, moreover, only a short one, and comparatively easy to guard. The prospect, on the other hand, of escaping by boat across the Baltic to Denmark appealed very strongly to us, and it was long before we decided to abandon this idea and centre all our thoughts on plans for reaching the Dutch frontier.

Our idea, had we chosen the northern route, was to have tramped the whole distance to the Baltic coast, lying up during the day and walking only by night. On arrival there, we should have endeavoured to evade the vigilance of the coastguards, steal a fishing-boat, and row or sail across the narrow straits which separate Denmark from Germany, to the north of the small peninsula known as The Zingst. The danger of arriving on the coast, however, and finding it impossible, when there, to procure a boat of any kind, led us to rule the Danish route out of our reckoning.

When the date of our departure was drawing near, I had a strong presentiment—I can give it no more definite name—that three were one too many for such an enterprise, and I decided to drop out. My two friends escaped, spent about a fortnight *en route*, and succeeded in crossing the Dutch frontier on July 24, 1915. When I look back on their success and on my failure at the time, I do not regret my decision, for, after all, it was infinitely better that two out of three should escape rather than that three should be captured.

As soon as they had gone, I set to work on fresh plans along with another man, who, until quite recently, was still a prisoner in Ruhleben—a British subject by naturalisation, who spoke perfect Ger-

man, and had a thorough knowledge of the country and of the ways of the German people. His skill in conducting the most delicate negotiations drew from me unstinted admiration. In describing this attempt to escape, I shall, for obvious reasons, deal only with such facts as became known to the German authorities after our capture.

There was much to recommend the policy of attempting to reach the Dutch frontier by means of a short railway journey and a long tramp; but eventually we decided to make a quick dash for Holland, and had we not been captured on the Dutch frontier, we should have succeeded in reaching Holland and freedom within less than thirty-six hours. As a matter of fact, the day Falk and Pyke, who had been a fortnight on the way, succeeded in crossing the frontier, we, after a journey of less than twenty-four hours, were captured there. This would surely have been a record escape, in point of view of time!

In those days it was usual for volunteer working gangs to go out of Ruhleben Camp with carts, accompanied by a German soldier, for the purpose of bringing into the camp, manure, gravel, and soil for the gardens. As it was desirable for us to escape from camp in the early afternoon, so as to be able to leave Berlin that night, we were glad to

be able to avail ourselves of the opportunity of escaping with the help of one of these gangs. A pretext was found for taking a cart out of the camp to get gravel for the camp gardens, and if there were any observant people close to the main gates about four o'clock on the afternoon of the 23rd July 1915, they were probably astonished to see E—— and myself strenuously helping, for the first time, to drag a cart through the open gates into the road which ran past the front of the camp.

Our first trip with the cart was to an open field, which lay between the railway and the road running from Berlin to Spandau. Escape there proved to be entirely out of the question. The sentry was vigilant, and the presence of so many Englishmen close to the main road attracted the attention of a considerable number of passers-by, including several German officers. Our movements, too, may have aroused some suspicion, for I saw a railway official dodge from tree to tree on the railway embankment and watch us very closely.

We started a complaint that the sort of soil we were getting was quite unsuitable for our purpose, and begged the sentry to allow us to load up with fresh soil in a field much more quietly situated on the other side of the camp. The whole time,

E— and I kept as much in the background as possible, in order that the sentry should not notice our absence on the return of the rest of the party to camp. The road to the other field led along the fringe of a wood at one end of the camp, and then, taking a sharp turn to the left, passed over a small wooden bridge. When we reached the bridge, my companion and I moved to the tail-end of the party, and as the men turned to the left to go over the bridge into the field, we stopped, slipped behind a small bush, and crouching there, were effectively concealed from the soldier who had gone ahead. As soon as the cart was out of sight, we rose and walked away at an easy pace in the opposite direction, towards the electricity works, and so on to the main road leading to Berlin. When we had gone about a hundred yards, I removed my eye-glasses, put on a pair of round, horn-rimmed spectacles, turned the white collar of a German shirt which I was wearing—a so-called Schiller shirt—and for the rest of the journey wore it outside my jacket. I then altered the shape of my hat so as to make it look as German as possible. In addition to this, I had had my hair shorn off by the camp barber, and looked exactly like a young German university student on holiday. We were enjoying the first

snatch of freedom we had known for many months. The experience had all the glory and the freshness of a dream. Free!

We were walking along the main road leading to Berlin, still fairly close to the camp, when my friend whispered "Look out!" and I saw, to my dismay, that the carriage which conveyed the German officers to and from the camp was approaching along the highroad. It passed us within a yard, but was fortunately empty, save for the driver, who eyed us very closely, but nevertheless drove on. We jumped on to a tram at the Spandauer Bock, and while we were sitting at the back of the tram, passed a German corporal from the camp, who, to our amusement, saluted my companion, doubtless in the belief that E— was going to Berlin on leave. A pretty girl had to stand while we were sitting, and I had sternly to repress a desire to offer her my seat. "Remember, you are now a German," I kept repeating to myself. On the way to the city we left the tram, caught a taxi, and drove to the centre of Berlin.

CHAPTER VIII.

FAILURE—TEN MINUTES' WALK FROM HOLLAND.

IT was some time before we could accustom ourselves to the feeling of being free. As I became more experienced in the art of escaping, the hunted feeling which haunts an escaped prisoner wore off somewhat, though it never entirely disappeared. On this first occasion, it was an ordeal to pass a soldier or policeman, and by no means easy to meet, with a steady eye, the glance of people who appeared to be eyeing us with suspicion. At such moments, even though one may be able to control the movement of the eyes, and stare the other man out of countenance, it is not so easy to control one's mouth. After staring for a while at the other man, an awkward lump makes itself felt in the throat, and one has an overpowering desire to swallow something which is not there. To combat this tendency we

smoked innumerable cigars, and found them a very great help.

We left that night by an express train from one of the main stations in Berlin—the *Friedrichstrasse Bahnhof*—and had managed to secure two tickets for sleeping-berths. Our idea in doing so was not to travel in as great luxury as possible, but to avoid any possible control by detectives on the way; and we thought it much more likely that we should be able to do so, and, at the same time, avoid embarrassing questions from fellow-passengers, if we travelled by sleeper rather than second- or third-class. We were right in our conjecture. My friend, to whom I left all the talking on account of his perfect command of the language, left me in our compartment, and shortly afterwards came back and assured me that he had arranged everything satisfactorily with the guard. We travelled from Berlin, along the line which runs within about fifty yards of Ruhleben Camp, and laughed quietly to ourselves as we pictured the astonishment and chagrin of the authorities on their discovery of our escape the following day. The journey to Duisburg was uneventful. There we changed, travelled third-class to Crefeld, spent a little time in the town, and then bought tickets

for Geldern, a small village which lies within an hour's walk of the Dutch frontier.

We had to run in order to catch our train, and arrived on the platform just as it was moving out. It was thus impossible for us to select a suitable compartment, and we were bundled into a third-class compartment, which, much to our dismay, contained a Prussian railway official and, among other passengers, a German soldier returning on leave from the Eastern front.

In Duisburg we had each bought a copy of the *Kölnische Zeitung*. My companion was very much afraid that my unsatisfactory German would betray me if I were drawn into conversation. He immediately opened his newspaper, glanced at the head-lines, read on for a few moments, and then, leaning over to me, said to me in German—

“The Italians are getting it hot again!”

I nodded and went on reading my paper. He then fell to discussing the war and Germany's prospects with the Germans in the compartment.

Since May 1, 1917, a broad belt of territory on the German side of the Dutch frontier has been declared *Sperrgebiet* (barred territory), and special passports are issued to persons authorised to travel there. German soldiers are on sentry duty night and day at all railway stations in this area, their

duty being to examine the papers of all who pass through. In July 1915, however, there was no military guard on the station at Geldern, and all that we had to fear was the vigilance of the railway officials and the prying eyes of German civilians.

It was about ten in the morning when we arrived at Geldern, and we set out to walk along the high-road in the direction of the village of Walbeck, which lies on the frontier itself. We passed quite a lot of soldiers, some on bicycles, some driving, and some on foot, greeted them cheerily when they eyed us with suspicion, and passed on. In the audacity of our plan lay our salvation. It evidently occurred to no one whom we met that any escaped prisoner would be so mad as to walk along a high-road leading to a frontier village, unabashed, in broad daylight. We skirted the village of Walbeck, and, after walking about a quarter of an hour through the fields in a direction running parallel to the frontier, we found fairly good cover in a wood, alongside of which ran a deep country lane or cutting.

There we lay among the tall fronds of bracken and dreamed of our home-coming. The silence of the countryside was unbroken save for the singing of the birds, the occasional bark of a dog in some

farmyard near, and the shrill voices of children at play. I was very happy, and felt absolutely certain of success. According to my calculations we were about half an hour's walk from Holland and freedom, and I was looking eagerly forward to the final stretch, when we should break cover and start out on the interesting work of dodging the armed guards who patrolled the frontier.

We were not satisfied with our cover, as it was not sufficiently dense to conceal us from any one passing by. About one o'clock, therefore, we went deeper into the wood prospecting for better cover, and eventually found what we sought in a clump of bushes close to one edge of the wood, on the side farthest from where we had hidden in the morning. There we lay, listening and waiting. Sometimes we slept peacefully, only to be wakened by the rain which fell from time to time on to our upturned faces.

After we had been in hiding for some time, my companion's genius for negotiation began to assert itself. He became restless, and did not agree with me that to take the last stretch as a pure adventure offered the best chances of success. It was simply a difference of opinion on a question of policy. He felt convinced that he was right, and I felt convinced, and still do, that I was right. At any

other stage of the adventure, the consequences of a conflict of opinion might not have been so serious; but at this critical stage, perfect unanimity between us was essential. Each man had equal interests at stake, and each realised that neither had a right to dictate any course of action to the other. His desire was, that we should both return to the village we had skirted that morning, and see what we could accomplish by negotiation. I protested, on the ground that the game already lay in our hands—that we had only to wait until nightfall, and then cautiously crawl across the belt of open country which lay between us and our goal, that we should be courting disaster if we entered a frontier village crowded with soldiers, and that we had tempted Providence sufficiently with our audacity up to that point. Our views were irreconcilable. He generously suggested that we should each go our own way. The offer was tempting in the extreme, but I recognised that it was largely due to his guidance, and his knowledge of the country and the language, that we had been able to get so far in so short a time, and I felt I should not be playing the game if I deserted him at that point. He left alone for the village about four in the afternoon, and, at his request, I returned to our former hiding-place

in the wood, in order that he might more easily be able to find me on his return.

While he was away the rain came down steadily, and I spent most of my time cutting long fronds of bracken with which I endeavoured to construct a better hiding-place in a dry ditch. My feeling of absolute certainty that all would go well had given place to a sense of vague apprehension, and when E—— returned, looking breathless and very agitated, about three-quarters of an hour later, I felt convinced that the game was up. We learned later that we had been seen by some peasant women, while we were walking through the wood back to our first hiding-place, and the information they gave to the military authorities in the village led to our capture. A last remnant of hope lingered in my heart that all would still go well with us, but, before many minutes had passed, the rude awakening came. A hefty German soldier dashed, apparently unarmed, through the hedge which separated us from the deep cutting, and came towards us. When about a dozen paces from us, caution got the upper hand, and he turned, dashed back through the hedge, and leaped on to the high bank on the other side of the road. There he joined a young fellow, whom we had not noticed before, and, unleashing a police-dog, urged it to attack us. I

got behind a tree with the intention of climbing it, when I noticed that the dog, instead of attacking us, was running round in search of rabbits, and there was apparently nothing to fear from that source. The soldier then called out to us—

“Who are you? Have you identification papers?” We shouted “Yes!” in order to gain time, and told him we would produce them as soon as he had put the dog again on leash. Eventually he did so, and we joined him in the lane, where my friend produced several German letters, but nothing that was able to satisfy the soldier. He said that we should have to go to the Army Headquarters in the village of Walbeck. We had not gone many yards before we discovered that we were practically surrounded by German soldiers armed with rifles, some of whom had rushed up on foot, others on bicycles.

It was clear that the game was up, and we informed them that we were civilian Englishmen who had escaped the day before from Ruhleben Camp. We were then marched into the village.

CHAPTER IX.

OFF TO PRISON.

THE news of our capture had evidently aroused a tremendous amount of interest. Every one had turned out, and we had to pass through hundreds of old men, women, and children before we arrived at the village inn, where our first examination was to take place.

One of the soldiers called out to a little girl of five as we were entering the village—

“*Na! was habt Ihr in der Schule gelernt?*” (What have you learnt at school?)

“*Gott strafe England!*” the little one piped, much to our amusement.

A large crowd had gathered round the principal inn in the centre of the village, a picturesque old hostelry nestling in the shade of a large chestnut-tree which grew in front of the main door. We were taken into a side-room, where we found one or two German officers and a man in sporting costume,

who was seated at a table ready to take down our statement. The room rapidly filled with German soldiers, and little children flattened their noses against the outside window-panes in order to get a glimpse of the two Englishmen.

Our cross-examiner was Baron von X., who lived in the neighbourhood, and had just returned from shooting when he was informed of our capture. He received us courteously, and proceeded to ask us innumerable questions concerning the details of our escape, taking down our statement in writing as he went along. When we shrugged our shoulders and told him that we should probably have to face a stiff punishment, he laughed, and assured us that the whole idea was absurd in the extreme. He said—

“Dismiss that idea from your minds, gentlemen. You cannot be punished; you are interned civilians, and have a perfect right to escape if you see a possibility of doing so. I myself took part in the Boer War against the English, was captured, and sent to the island of Ceylon. There I attempted to escape with five others in an open boat, was recaptured by a British destroyer, and taken back. I was not only not punished, but, if possible, treated a little better than before, except for the fact that a stricter guard was kept upon me.”

- We told him that we should certainly have to face a long term of imprisonment in Berlin, but he laughed the idea to scorn.

The old landlady of the inn, who was allowed to serve us with beer and food, came in several times and gazed at us most interestedly.

At last she could restrain herself no longer, and, nervously fingering her apron, said—

“Well, I have heard a lot about the English, but this is the first time that I have ever set eyes on any!”

It was evident that we interested her quite as much as though we were aborigines from Central Africa. She was a dear old soul, and in course of conversation told us much of her soldier son who was fighting on the Western front.

We were taken in a trap from the village of Walbeck to the village of Straelen, a distance of about five miles. I sat on the back of the trap with a big German cavalryman, who was certainly one of the best fellows I have ever met in Germany. He seemed sincerely to regret that we had not succeeded in escaping, and detested the part he was compelled to play as one of our captors. He it was who informed me that when captured we were in hiding at a point only ten minutes' walk from Holland and freedom.

As we were being driven along the quiet high-road, we passed an isolated farmhouse, and a big lout of a fellow came out into the centre of the road as we drove past, with a girl on each arm. When he saw the two of us under escort, he shook his fist and flung curses after us. At first my guard noticed nothing of this, but as soon as he saw and heard, he flung one arm round my neck and holding up his other hand called out to the man at the top of his voice—

“Leave him alone, he is a good fellow!”

The village of Straelen was crowded with soldiers, and we were taken immediately to the *Kommandantur*, where most of our money was taken from us. That money we never saw again, notwithstanding innumerable efforts we made in writing and otherwise to procure from the Berlin military authorities some acknowledgment of our ownership to it. A fat German lieutenant in the *Kommandantur* at Straelen was very abusive, and turning to me said—

“You are a German!”

I assured him that this was not the case, that I was a thoroughbred Englishman, and that I had not a drop of German blood in my veins.

“I don't believe it,” he retorted, and turning to a German private standing near, who, judging from

his appearance, had probably been a waiter in England in times of peace, he commanded him to talk to me in English, and only when I spoke to him so rapidly in English as to carry him off his feet, did he believe that he might be wrong in his assumption after all. My disguise must have been a pretty good one, particularly when one bears in mind that I was repeatedly assured in camp by my friends that I looked far too English ever to be able to pass as a German.

From Straelen we were taken by train to the fortress of Wesel on the Rhine, where I had been stopped almost exactly twelve months before on my first attempt to get out of Germany after the declaration of war.

We were first taken by our guards to the citadel of the fortress, and thence to the military prison in the centre of the town. There was a touch of what the Germans call, appropriately enough, *Galgenhumor* (gallows humour), in a remnant of the Christmas decorations in the prison office. Over a door through which we had to pass in order to get to our cells was a greeting framed in withered holly-leaves, bearing in large letters the word "*Willkommen!*" (Welcome). After a few formalities we bade farewell to our guards and were led by a warder and soldier up dismal dungeon

stairs to our cells. The lighting arrangements would not work.

“Oh, never mind! Shove them in in the dark!”

Bang! Click! Click!

The door was banged to, doubly locked and barred. The footsteps of the warder died away in the distance on the stone-flagged corridor, and I was left in the inky darkness of my prison cell, with only my melancholy thoughts for company.

Ten minutes' walk from freedom! Ten minutes' walk!

CHAPTER X.

TEN DAYS IN THE MILITARY PRISON, WESEL.

“ When, in disgrace with Fortune and men’s eyes,
I all alone bewEEP my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my brother’s cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate. . . .”

I HAD resolved to keep a smiling face and appear to take my disappointment light-heartedly as long as I remained in the presence of my captors, and this determination helped me even in solitude. Smiling had become a habit, and I was too weary, mentally and physically, to dwell long upon all that failure meant. Like a blind man, I fumbled about in my cell, found my straw-sack bed, and, flinging myself upon it, was fast asleep in a few minutes. I was roused from sleep by the noise of heavy keys turned in cell doors, the clank of ponderous boots on the stone corridor, and by the raucous voice of some one shouting at me from the doorway of my cell. An evil-looking warder was glare-

ing at me, and cursing me in German with amazing volubility. As soon as I could open my sleepy eyes, I tumbled out of bed and reeled to the open door, only to be met by another volley of abuse—

“*Donnerwetter noch einmal! Der Kerl ist noch nicht angezogen. Ziehen Sie sich sofort an, Sie englischer Schweinehund, Sie.*” (*Donnerwetter* once again! The fellow is not dressed yet. Go and dress at once, you English pig-dog!)

I drew on the garments I had forgotten, in my hurry to oblige, and returned to my friend the enemy, to receive my morning coffee and a chunk of dry black bread. The “coffee” was hot. Owing to the fact that the same enamelled bowl was used for each meal, for the soup as well as for the coffee, a film of grease floated on its surface. It contained neither milk nor sugar, but I cared nothing for such luxuries, and quite enjoyed my first breakfast. The door was again doubly locked and barred, and after I had washed in the enamelled bowl provided for the purpose, I began to take stock of my new home.

My cell was five paces long and two and a half wide. A wooden camp bed, straw-sack, a stool and rickety wooden shelf, were the only articles of furniture. A tiny peep-hole in the door—called by German prisoners the “Judas hole”—

enabled the warder to observe the prisoner without being seen himself. The window was high and heavily barred, and so designed that the occupant of the cell should be unable to see anything of the outside world. Sloping boards ran upwards and outwards from the stone window-ledge, other boards joined them at the sides, and close-mesh iron netting on top completed the box-like arrangement. The only touch of nature left to bring comfort to the soul of the unhappy prisoner was a strip of blue sky seen through the iron netting. If the man who designed that cell could have lighted it and ventilated it by means of a crooked pipe which shut out the sky as well, I am certain he would have done so.

After breakfast a brush was handed in to me, and five minutes allowed for cleaning the cell. Then I was called out, told to take my spittoon, washing-bowl, water-jug, and eating-bowl, and come out into the corridor. An attempt at conversation with my friend met with a stern rebuke. We lined up with about a dozen German soldier prisoners in field-grey uniform, and were marched down to the yard on what I henceforward called "The Spittoon Parade." Each man had to wash his things at the pump in the centre of the yard, line up until all were ready, and then march back

to his dismal cell, to remain there until the following morning. Each second day we had half an hour's exercise in the prison yard. That was the deadly routine. The first day, twenty-four hours in the cell; the second, twenty-three and a half; the third, twenty-four, and so on.

Some of the German prisoners were as pale and haggard as corpses. One looked insane, and frequently grinned, stupidly and vacantly, as he walked alone in the yard. I began to wonder what offences had led to their incarceration in this Hell, and found myself speculating as to whether I, too, might . . . No! the prospect was too terrible for words, and I resolved that if a defiant cheerfulness could keep me mentally fresh, I would become, and remain, as defiantly cheerful as even my best friends could wish. I have seen many men lose grip and go under, but I have seen no one go under who has accepted captivity on these terms. It is, after all, a question of simple arithmetic, applicable not only to the miseries of life in captivity, but to reverses in any walk of life. If you worry about misfortunes, you have to bear your misfortunes plus your worry. Ergo, stop worrying, and find some way of forgetting your misfortunes. Subtraction instead of addition. It is a very simple philosophy, but a very

valuable one, as I, who have tried to live in accordance with it, know. I derived a grim sort of satisfaction from the thought that "under the bludgeonings of fate, my head was bloody but unbowed." Egotistical? Perhaps, but a man may be pardoned being a little self-centred when his only company, month after month, is himself.

The food we received was soldiers' rations, and better than anything else I have had during my imprisonment.

Twenty-four hours alone in a cell is a very long time. Try it for several days in a small bathroom, and see how you enjoy it. Inseparable, of course, from my imprisonment, was the sense of bitter disappointment at our failure.

Ten minutes' walk from freedom!

Somehow or other, the daytime was bearable; the torturing thoughts came always at twilight, and try as I would to forget them, they returned again and again. I thought of the mad joy of an unexpected home-coming, of my mother's happy smile and my father's quiet, firm grip of the hand; and then I pictured to myself their disappointment—keener even than my own.

Ten minutes' walk!

I thought of escape from the prison, but saw no means of accomplishing it.

In one pocket I found a stump of pencil, and in another a few scraps of toilet paper, and, setting to work, wrote down all the verse and prose I had committed to memory in the past. Before long my supply ran out, and I regretted that I had not memorised more. Over and over again I said to myself—

“I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there of clay and wattles made.”

It mattered nothing that I could not arise and go. One day I should find my Innisfree, and that sufficed for me. I tried to remember Kipling’s “If,” and “Gunga Din,” Browning’s “One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,” Tennyson’s “Revenge,” and a score of others, finding tremendous consolation in them all.

Frequently, at a later date, after long months of imprisonment, I would repeat to myself Sterne’s beautiful invocation to the Spirit of Humour.

“Gentle Spirit of sweetest humour, who erst did sit upon the easy pen of my beloved Cervantes! Thou who glidedst daily through his lattice, and turnedst the twilight of his prison into noonday brightness by thy presence—tingedst his little urn of water with Heaven-sent nectar, and all the time

he wrote of Sancho and his master, didst cast thy mystic mantle o'er his withered stump, and wide extendedst it to all the evils of his life,—

Turn in hither, I beseech thee!"

A sense of humour is indeed an invaluable asset to a man in solitary confinement. A mirror is an astonishingly companionable thing. I bought a small pocket-mirror as soon as I was allowed to make purchases. For minutes on end I used to gaze at the funny face my dusty cell window revealed to me, laughed at its unshaven cheeks and very much shaven head, asked it whether it was downhearted or not, and was immensely cheered when it said with decision, "No!"

At times I made fiery political speeches to interested bugs in my cell—and their number was legion—at other times I sang quietly to myself as I paced up and down. My life in times of peace had been a fairly full one, and I was grateful for a plenitude of happy memories on which I could dwell in placid contemplation. The future was uncertain and gloomy; the present was vile; only the past was worth a thought.

The third day, after considerable hesitation, I resolved to approach the warder and ask for something to read. He came in answer to my ring, accompanied by a tall sentry, who stood behind

him in the corridor, his loaded rifle with fixed bayonet slung over his shoulder.

“What do you want?” he bellowed.

As politely as I could I told him that I should like something to read. He glared at me in amazement.

“Read! what do you mean?”

“Oh, a newspaper or a book—anything. You have no right to treat me in this fashion. At the very worst, we are in remand arrest. We have had no trial, nor has sentence been passed upon us.”

Reaching out, he tapped with his hand on the whitewashed wall of my cell, and putting his ugly face uncomfortably close to mine, shouted in a hoarse voice, charged with all the hatred it could hold—

“Here are the four walls of your cell. You are a prisoner. Read those!”

Bang! I heard the key turn twice in the lock, and found myself alone again. To my astonishment he returned a quarter of an hour later, and brought me a German “blood-and-thunder,” which I read with great glee. He began, at first very sheepishly, to make amends for his brutality. He had been brutal and coarse to us in ways that I cannot describe.

Our exercise was taken each second day in the prison yard with the German military prisoners. The yard was of irregular shape, about ten paces wide and thirty paces long, shut in on one side by a twenty-foot brick wall, and on the other by the high wall of the prison. We marched round and round at a funereal pace, for the most part with funereal faces, six paces from the man in front, and six paces from the man behind. Talking was strictly forbidden, but, after a little practice, I managed to carry on short conversations with the German soldier-prisoners without moving my lips.

While we were tramping slowly round and round, a German private, who had learned that I was an Englishman, said to me in a low voice—

“*Warum wollen Sie uns kleinmachen?*” (“Why do you want to humiliate us?”)

I knew, of course, that by *Sie* he meant Great Britain, but there was no opportunity for a long polemic, and I caused him to smile by assuming that the pronoun *Sie* had specific reference to me.

“What, *I* humiliate you?” I whispered.

He sniggered at my little joke as loudly as he dared, and answered—

“No. The British people.”

When the German people realised that we

meant business they became imbued with the belief that we were out to humiliate them—literally, “to make them small.” The question put to me by this simple German soldier was quite characteristic of the attitude of mind of many Germans at that period of the war.

One morning I noticed that a part of the yard was in the sun, while we were tramping round and round in the shade. How glorious it would be, I was saying to myself, if only one could walk in the sun, when the sergeant in charge of the jail came into the yard and shouted to the warder—

“*Lassen Sie sie in der Sonne gehen!*” (Let them walk in the sun!)

“Thank God,” I murmured, “here’s a man with a heart at last.”

The warder, however, understood better, and, going up to a number of ducks and geese, which were waddling about in the shade, chased *them* into the sun! Ducks and geese were thought of—not men!

“ I never saw sad men who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And on every fleecy cloud which passed
In happy freedom by.”

At times, particularly at night, one had a feeling of waking up in a coffin to find one's self buried alive.

After the first five days the prison life became easier. The sergeant interested himself in us, whether because of our money or out of sheer kindness of heart, I do not know. We were allowed to purchase things from outside, and allowed to read and smoke. When the day came for our removal to the prison in Berlin, we would gladly have remained, preferring the hardships we knew to the uncertainty of the future.

In all, we spent ten days in the Military Prison in Wesel—ten unforgettable days.

The evening before our departure, the sergeant took us into the yard for a little exercise, and said to us, with a smile—

“There's no getting out of this place.”

As he spoke, he glanced at the smooth twenty-foot brick wall which stood as a barrier between us and the fair outside world.

“I don't know,” I said, by way of reply, and pointed to a narrow passage at one side of the prison, where the high wall ran parallel to the prison wall. I knew, as a practised crag-climber, that I could easily have got out there by the well-known process of “backing-up,” and jokingly

suggested that he should allow me to try. He suddenly grew serious, and very soon afterwards found a pretext for bringing our walk to an abrupt close.

The guards who took us back to Berlin were a corporal and a *Gendarmeriewachtmeister*—a sort of military police-sergeant. The corporal was in ordinary field-grey uniform, but the *gendarme* was gorgeously attired in top-boots, fitted with jingling spurs, blue breeches, light-green tunic, sabre, service revolver, brass buttons, and a green cap. Each official wore suspended round his neck a heavy brass chain, from which hung a large brass plate with a number stamped upon it. The *Gendarmeriewachtmeister* showed us that he and his comrade carried heavy service revolvers, and said in a loud voice—

“There’s no fooling with me, remember. I shall shoot without the least hesitation.”

The brass plates worn by our guards attracted a good deal of curious attention, but otherwise our long journey to Berlin and to prison was not very eventful.

One incident made an irresistible appeal to my sense of humour. As the train drew up at the Zoological Gardens Station in Berlin, we caught a glimpse of the Zoo itself, and facing our compart-

ment was the cage which contained the elephants. *Frau Gendarmeriewachtmeister* was with her husband, *Herr Gendarmeriewachtmeister*, and had evidently not visited Berlin before. She caught sight of an elephant and screamed. The elephant immediately turned round, wagged his tail and that part of an elephant's anatomy to which the tail is usually attached, and rolled out of sight round a corner. *Frau Gendarmeriewachtmeister* cackled more shrilly than ever, and *Herr Gendarmeriewachtmeister* tried to look as dignified as ever.

Frau Gendarmeriewachtmeister: "And is this Berlin?"

Herr Gendarmeriewachtmeister: "Jawohl!"

Frau Gendarmeriewachtmeister: "Na! das ist ein schöner Gruss wenn ich zum ersten Mal nach Berlin komme!" (Na! That's a nice sort of greeting when I come to Berlin for the first time!)

I roared with laughter. I can only excuse Jumbo's ungentlemanly behaviour by assuming that he hailed from some part of the British Empire, and that his feelings of patriotism overcame his good manners.

CHAPTER XI.

JAIL AGAIN!

THE Stadt Vogtei Prison is in the heart of the city of Berlin, in the same enormous block of buildings as the Chief Police Station. In times of peace it is both a remand and punishment prison for prisoners serving sentences of not more than six weeks. It is entirely unsuitable in structure for long sentences. There are three different sections of the prison during war-time. One contains criminals undergoing punishment, who are in the custody of civilian warders; the central portion contains German military prisoners, guarded and bullied by German corporals; and the part of the prison where I was confined during the greater part of my stay there is partly a punishment prison and partly a place of internment. We were in the custody of German corporals, each corporal acting as warder of a floor.

In the office of the prison we were handed over

by our guards to the prison warders, who conducted us to single cells on the fourth floor and locked us in. *We remained in our tiny cells in solitary confinement for four months and ten days.* We were never informed of the duration, or probable duration, of our sentence—in fact, no sentence was ever pronounced upon us—and we feared that it was the intention of the authorities to keep us in solitary confinement until the end of the war.

During the first few weeks we were subjected to a great deal of bullying. Our floor warden was a vicious brute, and the non-commissioned officer in charge of our part of the prison, *Feldwebel-Leutnant Götte*, was a notorious bully. I shall never forget the morning after my arrival. Götte took charge of the prison shortly after I was sent there from camp in April 1915, and I was quite looking forward to his usual visit of inspection at 9 A.M. I heard the key turn in the lock, and rose to my feet. He was there, fat and smug and florid as ever, accompanied by the floor warden.

“Na,” he said, “it’s you, is it?” And then he began to abuse me at the top of his voice, until the whole prison reverberated with his bellowing.

“You have done the most idiotic thing you could possibly have done. You might have known that you couldn’t get far.”

I could not refrain from interjecting that I did get pretty far nevertheless. That did it.

“The most idiotic thing you could possibly have done,” he shouted, purple with rage. “You will be kept permanently in strict solitary confinement: you will not be allowed to see any one or to speak to a single soul.”

Bang!

I was again alone, and walked up and down my cell, clenching and unclenching my fists in my helpless rage.

The same sort of bullying went on day after day, until I began to suspect that it was all part of a deliberate scheme to wear us down for the searching cross-examination which would inevitably come later. One day he threatened me with black cells and bread and water—the worst punishment in the German prison system—and with the withdrawal of every privilege for an offence which existed only in his imagination. As I was enjoying no privileges whatsoever, I was puzzled to know which privileges he intended to withdraw. We were allowed nothing but the abominable prison fare—no food parcels from home—and at times I was so hungry that I wondered whether it would be possible to eat the soap in my cell. Occasionally, one or two of the Englishmen in the prison who

were not in solitary confinement—that is, had the run of the building from 8 A.M. to 7 P.M.—managed to pass us a little food, and I well remember the rapid transition from misery to happiness occasioned by so trivial a thing as a little condensed milk smeared on my black bread.

At the end of a fortnight we were taken in a motor-car to Ruhleben Camp to reconstruct our escape under the critical eyes of the German camp officers. While we were doing this, adding interesting little details as they occurred to us, the officers commanded a corporal to walk behind us all the time with his hand on the butt of his service revolver. Then we were exhibited to our English fellow-prisoners, in order, I believe, that our haggard appearance, dirty clothes, and pale unshaven faces should act as a deterrent on other men in the camp who might be working on plans for escape. It was during our preliminary examination in Ruhleben that we learned of the determination on the part of the authorities to prove us guilty of a charge of bribery.

When we returned that day to prison certain relaxations in the severity of our treatment were authorised. We were allowed to have our English parcels, without which we should undoubtedly have starved, and our hour's exercise in the day

was extended to an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon. The solitary confinement, however, was kept up for over four months.

At times when we were least prepared during those four months, our cell doors were flung open, and we were taken separately to a large cell on the first floor, and there subjected to a searching cross-examination at the hands of a clever Berlin barrister, who held the rank of captain in the service of the Army Headquarters in Berlin. My statement was taken down and read to me, I signed it, and was then taken back to my cell. Then came my friend's turn, the examination usually lasting three-quarters of an hour. We were then brought face to face, and had to explain away any apparent contradictions. We always succeeded, but the strain of solitary confinement, coupled with the ever-present fear of an interpretation of our statements which might lead to a sentence of two years' convict prison, was intolerable. Insomnia troubled us, due, no doubt, to lack of exercise and fresh air and to the mental strain of solitary confinement.

One afternoon my cell door was opened, and the warder appeared with a sheet of foolscap, pen and ink.

“Instructions have come from the *Kommandantur*

in Berlin that you are to write a detailed account of everything that happened to you from the moment of your escape from Ruhleben to the moment of your capture on the Dutch frontier, omitting no detail, however unimportant it may seem."

He went away, locked and barred the door, and I heard him deliver the same message to E——, in the next cell but one to mine. The trick was very clever. The least contradiction in our written statements, and all would be lost. I am sure the authorities in Berlin would like to know how it came about that two men, locked up in separate cells, managed to produce almost identically the same statement—but I am not going to tell them.

The only exercise-ground in the prison was a dismal courtyard, the shape of a flat-iron. One hundred and eighty barred cell windows looked down into the yard. On one side the wall was six floors high, and on the other two sides, five floors high. There was no ventilation shaft, and very seldom a current of fresh air. From the cell windows of the top floor it looked very much like a well—a comparison which struck me with great force one day, when I saw a sparrow circling round and round in order to get out of it into the

free fresh air. The longest walk in a straight line was one of thirty paces, and seventy paces took one round the yard. It was my only exercise-ground for two years and two months. The air down below was usually so bad, and the place so crowded, that I sometimes allowed weeks to go by without once entering the yard. One man I knew in the prison had not walked in it once during twelve months.

The effect of such a life on the mind, nerves, and general physique was appalling. I met no one who, after a stay of several weeks, was able to settle down to serious study of any kind whatsoever. The strain affected the strongest men—seafaring men as well as students—and we had all nationalities and all types. In a subsequent chapter I shall deal with some of the interesting men I met there.

CHAPTER XII.

IN A HOSPITAL FOR PRISONERS OF WAR, BERLIN.

IN February 1916 I became very ill, and was taken to the Hospital for Prisoners of War in the Alexandrinen Strasse, Berlin. There I remained for seven weeks among British, French, Belgian, and Russian soldier-prisoners of war. The hospital was really a disused dragoon barracks, dating from the time of Frederick the Great, barrack-rooms and stables having been converted into wards. As the doctors thought I was suffering from scarlet fever, I was taken immediately to an isolation ward, whose only other occupants were a German soldier-attendant and a French soldier, who was at the peeling stage in scarlet fever. There I remained for five weeks, and for the first three weeks lay, as weak as a new-born baby, in a bed infested with bugs. At the end of the third week my attendant burned them out with a

painter's spirit-lamp. Still, I was as happy as the day was long, away from the hell I hated so intensely.

One afternoon my Frenchman, a carpenter from a small village near Bordeaux, roused me from a reverie by a series of long-drawn sighs. I rolled over on my bed and saw that he was lying on his back, gazing in utter boredom at the white-washed ceiling.

"What's the matter, Fargeot?" I asked.

Another deep sigh.

"Ah, s'il y avait des mouches!"

I roared with laughter, and asked him if the bugs we had in plenty would not meet his case. The bugs devoted so much attention to me that I spent many an hour writing odes to them in German.

Late one night, our German attendant returned from a visit he had paid to his young sick wife in Berlin.

"Anything wrong?" I asked, seeing that he looked worried and depressed.

"Yes," he said, "my little wife has been standing five and a half hours in the queue to-day in order to get a little fat, and at the end of that long wait the women were driven away by Berlin policemen who had drawn their sabres. One

woman, near my wife, broke down, and sobbing, said—

“But my daughter *must* have fat. She is ill, and she will die if she doesn't get it.”

“Oh,” said the nearest policeman brutally, “a few women more or less don't matter; we have plenty of them.”

That was in February 1916.

The quality of the food supplied was better than that given to us in prison, but hopelessly inadequate to nourish men recovering from serious surgical operations. How the poor Russians, who received no food parcels at all from home, managed to regain strength on it, will ever remain a mystery to me.

I learned from our own soldiers that the Rev. H. M. Williams, formerly British Chaplain in Berlin, was doing a wonderful work among the soldier prisoners of war in Germany. By sheer pertinacity he had wrung from the Berlin Army Authorities permission to visit all the camps in the country in which British prisoners were interned, and a high meed of praise is due to him for his self-sacrificing work. He even found time, on one occasion, to visit us in prison.

When I came out of isolation, I spent most of my time talking to the French and British soldiers

who were also patients in the same hospital. Most of the British soldiers were "Old Contemptibles," and many of them gave me a most graphic account of their experiences at the Battle of Mons. One of them, by whose bedside I spent many an interesting hour, was a Scotchman belonging to the Dublin Fusiliers—Jock Crossley by name. Jock had been wounded in seven places by machine-gun bullets, and had to spend most of his time lying in bed. He has since been repatriated.

"Mon, I mind fine how I tried in Döberitz Camp to get my wife to send me an English newspaper in my parcels, but for a long time I couldn't just hit on the right sort o' thing to say in my letters to her so that she would understand and the German Censor wouldn't. At last I wrote to her and said, quite innocent like—

" 'DEAR MARY,—I wish you could let me have the *fine times* which Angus Mackenzie lets you have every Sunday morning.'

" Angus Mackenzie is the newsagent in the town where I live in Scotland, an' by '*the fine times*,' ye ken, I meant '*Lloyd's Weekly News*.'

" Mon, I got an awfu' letter back frae my wife!"

My petition, in which I begged to be allowed to go to a sanatorium for British civilians in Charlottenburg, was ignored, and at the end of the seventh week I was sent back to prison.

There had been a change in the administration of the prison during my absence. Götte had gone, and a young Prussian lieutenant, Block by name, had taken charge. He had been wounded fighting against the British in the early part of the war, and had frequently visited me in my cell while he was in charge of the military part of the prison only. He had an ungovernable temper, which once or twice took complete charge of him; but, generally speaking, he was very considerate in his treatment of us, as far as his regulations would allow, and I am indebted to him for many courtesies. I think he sincerely regretted that we should be kept in such a place after we had served our punishment for escaping. At one time I boxed regularly with him once a day in one of the large cells, the two of us stripped to the waist, slogging for all we were worth. A German corporal usually stood there to attention, keeping time. It was an amusing and interesting sidelight on the European war—an English prisoner and a Prussian lieutenant boxing together in a Berlin jail.

CHAPTER XIII.

MY FELLOW-PRISONERS.

THE Stadt Vogtei Prison in Berlin—*ein miserables Loch* (a miserable hole), as a Reichstag Deputy once called it—contained a queer assortment of prisoners. Its inmates were a constantly changing population during the two years and two months I spent there, and we had almost all nationalities among us. I can call to mind at the moment, Englishmen, Germans, Frenchmen, Belgians, Portuguese, Austrians, Poles, Russians, Caucasians, Finns, Danes, Dutchmen, a Canadian, Australians, a Jap, a Hindoo, several Siamese, Italians, Turks, Bulgarians, Servians, negroes, Arabs, Americans, Swiss, Rumanians, and Greeks. Our part of the prison was seldom without about two hundred Polish labourers. These poor fellows had, for the most part, been decoyed from Poland by German agents, who had held out to them splendid prospects in their own trades if they

would only take up work in Germany. Thousands left Poland for Germany, deluded by these hopes, and on arrival there found that they were allowed no choice of occupation. They were compelled to work where the German authorities sent them—in coal-mines, munition-works, gasworks, on railways, and on farms. They were induced to sign contracts which they could neither read nor understand, and if they left their employment in order to better themselves, or to find work more suited to their training and abilities, they were punished on arrest, either for breach of contract, for leaving the town without having reported to the police, or for both offences. I met in that prison boys of thirteen and fourteen, and old men of seventy. I know of nothing more inhumane than the treatment of these poor Poles whom the armies of Hindenburg had “liberated” from the Russian yoke. They were looked upon and treated like cattle. Some remained in prison as long as six months. They never had soap given to them. Very few of them had a change of underclothing, and it is no exaggeration to say that they could have eaten three times as much food as they received. The quality of the food was abominable—so bad that even the German corporals over and over again described it as scandalous. Before I left, men

were going to the prison doctor daily with some disease, due to malnutrition, which revealed itself in swollen feet and extreme emaciation. We did what we could to help the men from our English parcels, but were able to do very little. The sight of so much suffering, and the knowledge that we were helpless to alleviate it, made us either thoroughly callous or thoroughly melancholy. Those of us who could help a little usually "adopted" some sickly boy or frail old man, and gave him regular meals.

One day an old Polish farmer, seventy years of age, whom we had fed fairly regularly, brought along another Pole to a friend of mine, to interpret for him. The old man kissed my friend's hand and said to him, through the interpreter—

"You have a good heart, and after the war I shall give you one of my cows."

On one occasion when I was in the crowded yard I saw a little chap who looked more like a baby than a boy. He was a tiny fellow with a bonny face and big, melancholy blue eyes. On speaking to him, I found that he spoke only Polish, but another Pole interpreted for me, and told me the usual sad story. After working on a farm somewhere in East Prussia, he had found his way to Berlin, and the police had taken him,

not to a children's home, but to prison. I made him understand that he should come three times a day to our cell, and as long as we remained in prison we gave him each day three meals from our English parcels. Touched by the sight of his sadness, I strove hard to draw a smile from him, but on no occasion did I succeed. On the morning of our departure we packed up a few foodstuffs for him, but we were too busy to search for him and tell him that we were leaving. He came accidentally to our cell, and when he saw us packing and realised what it meant, broke down and sobbed as though his little heart would break. I tried to comfort him, but he was inconsolable. I see him now, going slowly along the prison corridor with our little parcel under his arm, still sobbing. I am more touched by the memory of that child's sufferings than I am affected by all the other accumulated miseries of my three and a half years' captivity. A few weeks later, when I met some one who had returned to camp from prison, I learned that the little fellow had become a lunatic. His infant mind could find no place for the senseless and purposeless cruelty of the German machine.

In the early part of 1915 some of my friends asked the prison chaplain if he would allow them

to attend divine service. His Christian answer was: "*Der liebe Gott ist nicht für die Engländer!*" (God is not for the English!)

When I heard this at a later date, and received confirmation of it from several reliable men, I sought an interview with the dear old man, and was quite disappointed to find that he had become more catholic in his views and received me quite kindly. In answer to his question as to how I was standing the strain of my long captivity, I told him, with a serious face, that I thought I was going mad. He asked me if I had noticed any symptoms of lunacy, and I conjured up a few, whereupon he told me of a prisoner he had once had under his care, who, after seven years of imprisonment, had emerged quite sane!

Other occupants of the prison, apart from a few luckless escapers like myself, were men suspected of espionage—German criminals who, after being discharged from convict prisons where they had served long sentences, were considered too undesirable for the outside world, though quite suitable society for runaway Englishmen, profiteers, men guilty of unmentionable obscenities in Berlin, and, finally, a dozen interesting roughs from Ruhleben Camp, who had been sent to

prison by the camp authorities simply because they were constantly drunk and quite unmanageable. When these men were not in solitary confinement for some offence or other, they had the freedom of the prison from 8 A.M. to 7 P.M. each day.

On one occasion two of them, whom we will call David and Jonathan, succeeded in persuading the sergeant to allow them to occupy a corner cell along with a nigger. They promised, almost on bended knees, to prove by their exemplary behaviour that they merited this privilege. That night they succeeded in procuring a bottle of fire-water from some source or other, and about midnight they were blind drunk. We others, locked up in our single cells, could hear them carousing, and then the inevitable happened. They came to blows. The nigger, frightened, began to bang with a piece of wood on the iron door of the cell, while David and Jonathan fought on. Presently two hefty warders rushed in, separated the two men by pinning their arms to their sides, and tried to hold them back. David made one last savage rush at Jonathan, with the intention, as he admitted later, of biting off his nose, and missing his objective, tore off half Jonathan's ear. The nigger, picking up the blue shrivelled piece of

ear later, handed it to Jonathan with the remark—

“Does dis eah belong to you, Mistah B——?”

Our friends took good care that prison life should not be wholly barren of incident.

About midnight on New Year's Eve, 1916, when most of us were still lying awake in our tiny cells, a Cockney ship's fireman climbed up to the barred window of his cell, and shouted across the yard to one of his cronies nicknamed Bristol—

“Brissle!”

No answer.

“I sigh, Brissle!”

“Wa' d'ye want?”

“I sigh, ain't this place like a bleedin' graveyard?”

There was a touch of genius about the description, and every Englishman's bed in the prison shook with laughter.

The roughest of these men had many excellent qualities, and, in things that really matter, had a code of honour which would have done credit to a public schoolboy. They were frequently generous to a fault, and although always in scrapes, were never known to give each other away. This characteristic more than once won for them the respect of the German soldiers who guarded us.

The Cockney ship's fireman above mentioned imagined that I had helped him a little in the early days, and at Christmas, when his parcels from home had begun to come in more regularly, came up to my cell with a tin of apricots.

"Look 'ere, sir. I can't eat this bleedin' stuff. I wish you'd take it."

I protested, but he swore he would throw it away if I didn't take it.

One of them told me how, in times of peace, he had deserted from the army, and then, tired of things, entered a recruiting-office in order to join up again under another name.

"What's your name?" said the Recruiting Sergeant.

"Smithson, sir," replied the would-be soldier.

"Hum! Where d'ye get that name?"

"Bread-van, sir!"

"Thought so," was the reply.

He had borrowed the name from a bread-van which happened to be passing when he entered the recruiting-office.

I read to him Kipling's "Back to the Army again, Sergeant," and his face lit up with wonder.

"By God, that's just it," was his comment.

One night one of our devil-may-care sailors in Ruhleben Camp escaped from the Camp, where

he found life much too monotonous, and made his way into the city. He had won about four pounds by card-playing in the camp, and meant to "have a night of it." Although he was quite unable to speak a word of German, his wealth bought him the smiles of a lady in Berlin, who was only too eager to help him to spend it. The following morning he went to a café for breakfast, and, with what remained, treated all and sundry in the place to drinks. Two shillings were left in his pocket. He took a taxi, drove to the prison gates, rang the bell, and gave the sentry to understand that he wanted to come in. The procedure was not at all "in accordance with regulations," and it was some time before he could persuade the sentry to do him this favour; but he insisted. Miracle of miracles, the *Kommandantur* saw the humour of the situation, and, after giving him a very light sentence, sent him back to Ruhleben.

It was as though many of these men had walked straight out of 'Barrack-Room Ballads' or the 'Seven Seas.' They respected Kipling almost to the point of veneration. I have come to the conclusion that critics who aver that Kipling does not understand human nature—and there are many such—simply do not know the types of men whom Kipling knows through and through.

Two other Englishmen I met in prison were a commercial traveller and a man who had been a special photographer for one of our London newspapers at the Front. Both had allowed themselves to be carried across the German-Swiss frontier into Germany in the train, and discovered their mistake when it was too late.

A note of deep tragedy, however, was struck more than once, and I shall carry throughout life sad memories of some of the men I met in that prison.

During my first experience of prison in April and May, 1915, I met an Englishman who had been taken prisoner by the Germans in Lodz. He was manager there of a woollen mill, and he had not the least doubt that the influences which were at work to procure his release, and enable him to return to business and wife and child in Lodz, would be successful. I refrained from saying anything which might discourage him, though I knew from experience of so many similar cases that there was not the faintest shadow of hope of his release. After an internment of several weeks in the prison he was sent to Ruhleben. He had not been long there before he learned that he was doomed to remain in camp as long as any of the other Englishmen. He became a lunatic, and was subse-

quently released as unfit for military service. On the arrival at Southend pier of the steamer which conveyed him to England, he committed suicide by jumping overboard.

Unutterably sad was the story of a young Finn I met in prison, who remained there for about eighteen months. When war broke out he was not yet twenty-one years of age, and lived with his parents in Helsingfors. His family had suffered much owing to Russian misrule, and hatred of the Russian *régime* had become an ineradicable part of his nature. When he learned of the outbreak of war between Germany and Russia, the boy left home without consulting his parents, and on arrival in Sweden volunteered at the first German consulate for service in the German army against the Russians. Facilities were provided for him to travel through Denmark to Berlin, and on arrival there he was at once enrolled in a volunteer regiment. He had not been long in training, however, when, to use his own words, "his eyes were opened and he became thoroughly sick" of militarism as he found it in Germany. An overstrain brought on an internal injury of a rather serious nature, and he refused to allow himself to be operated upon in a military hospital, realising that the only desire of the German army authorities was to

render him once more fit for military service. He begged to be allowed to leave the country and travel back to Sweden. The commander of his regiment argued with him, cajoled him, threatened him, but he was fixed in his resolve. Finding that there was no hope of making a German soldier of him, they sent him to prison to remain there with the other interned until the end of the war.

He was a tall handsome fellow, with a winsome manner when I first met him, but became thoroughly depressed and melancholy as time went on. It was in one of his fits of depression that he told me his story as I have related it above. A nervous breakdown followed, and the dry cough of the consumptive began to show itself. He was sent to the military hospital for prisoners of war in Berlin, but the liberal doses of bromide of potassium which were doled out to him could not touch the other trouble, which was far too deep-seated for a physician's care. He was sent back to prison. A further breakdown followed, and he was sent—I believe at the expense of the British Government—to a sanatorium for British civilians in Charlottenburg. From the sanatorium he found his way back to the hospital, and when I inquired of him from men who had returned to prison from hospital, I learned that his mind had given way and that he had been sent

to a lunatic asylum. I was several times forced to the conclusion that the German authorities deliberately tried to "break" men, who, if they returned to a life of freedom, in full or partial possession of their mental faculties, might tell the truth about what they had seen in Germany. There is no shadow of doubt that this intention lies behind the severe prison punishment meted out to the Socialist minority leader, Karl Liebkecht.

On one occasion a well-educated Russian Pole was sent for, to act as interpreter for two military prisoners. They had been brought into the military part of the prison, which was separated from ours simply by iron-netting gates. He naturally assumed that he would have to deal with Polish or Russian prisoners, but was astonished to find himself confronted by two men in the green uniform of a German Jäger regiment. He was told to ask the men for certain particulars, and, glancing at the charge-sheet, saw that they had been sent to prison to await trial on a charge of serious disobedience of orders at the Front. He was more mystified than ever. He tried them in Polish, on the assumption that they were perhaps German Poles who did not speak German; but they did not understand. On speaking Russian to them, however, he learned that they were Finns. They

told him that, shortly after the outbreak of war, German agents had appeared in Finland in search of recruits for an army of Finns to fight for the liberation of Finland, in Finland. The German agents had succeeded in inducing about two thousand men to volunteer. They were conveyed to Germany, trained for military service, and then sent, *not to Finland*, but to the front trenches on the Eastern front.

“We have been constantly in the thick of the fighting for eighteen months,” said one of them in words charged with all the bitterness they could hold. “Very few of us are left, and we protest emphatically against this injustice. We have been forced to serve under false pretences, and we refuse to fight any longer. Tell them they can shoot us if they like.”

The German prisoners in the military part of the prison were brutally treated by their own non-commissioned officers. A German corporal once said to me—

“The treatment meted out to our soldiers over there is enough to quench the last spark of patriotism that is left in a man after two and a half years of war. When I see these poor fellows brought into prison, some of them with artificial arms and legs, for such petty offences as smoking a

cigarette in hospital, I nearly choke with hatred of all that this terrible militarism means."

I met not a few intelligent Germans who needed no enlightenment on the evils of their own military system.

Added to the awful monotony of prison life was an atmosphere of petty and dirty intrigue, which filled one with loathing.

The prison always contained a number of low characters, who would cheerfully denounce their best friend for five shillings.

An officer of the *Kommandantur* in Berlin once boasted to the wife of an interned German that they knew every word that was uttered in the Stadt Vogtei Prison, and her husband had better beware. Sometimes it was possible to detect the informer, but, generally speaking, it was not.

One Easter, permission was given to a very shady character, who had been in prison since the outbreak of war on a charge of espionage, to invite a number of others into his cell, for the purpose of a mild carousal. He invited a few others of the same kidney, and late that night, when they were all merry, he proposed that they should establish amongst themselves a little club, called "The Club of the Faithful," for mutual support after the war. This led, I presume, to an exchange of confidences,

and they even went so far as to arrange to have cigarette-cases engraved with the motto of "The Club of the Faithful." The following day two men, who had talked more freely than was wise, were marched off to the *Kommandantur* by German soldiers to undergo a preliminary examination on a charge of espionage, based upon their utterances of the previous evening. The informer was sent to another prison very shortly afterwards, and another beautiful character of the same type took his place.

The day after the demonstrations in the city of Berlin, occasioned by the harsh sentence passed upon Liebknecht, the prison was filled with about one hundred and fifty Germans who had participated in them, and some of them remained there without trial for several weeks.

At one time, for a long period, two inmates of the prison were Dr Franz Mehring, the authorised historian of the Social Democratic movement in Germany, and Dr Marschlevsky, a contributor on economic subjects to *Vorwärts* and *Die neue Zeit*. Old Dr Mehring, who took up Liebknecht's mandate in the Prussian Diet after his release from prison, was over seventy years of age, frail, white-haired, and suffering from several incurable complaints. He was sent, after about six weeks'

detention in the Stadt Vogtei Prison, to the prison hospital in Moabit, and released just before Christmas 1917, after Scheidemann, Haase, Ledebour, and others had lodged energetic protests in the Reichstag. They bore their imprisonment, however, with amazing fortitude, and it is no wonder that Mehring, on his release, was invested with something of the glory of a political martyr.

The case, however, which created the greatest sensation in the Reichstag debates on this subject was that which dealt with the imprisonment of the Socialist propagandist named Klühs. Klühs had been arrested on the mere suspicion of having participated in incendiary propaganda. No charge was ever preferred against him, and no attempt was ever made to confront him with evidence of any kind whatsoever, though, as a matter of fact, his sole crime was that of having spoken on one occasion at a meeting of young Socialists. He remained for a long time in solitary confinement, and was kept in prison for more than nine months in so-called "Preventive Arrest" (*Schutzhaft*). His son had been seriously wounded on the Eastern front, and, simultaneously with a request that he should visit his son in hospital, he received word from his doctor that his wife was dying. He sent frantic petitions to the *Kommandantur* in Berlin,

praying for leave to go to her bedside, but received no answer. He then learned of her decease. He begged permission to attend the funeral. No answer. He finally received official permission to attend his wife's funeral the day after she was buried.

His case, and the cases of others I have mentioned, led to the passing of the so-called *Schutzhaftgesetz* (Law for the Regulation of Preventive Arrest), wherein the powers of the military authorities were defined by law. The law provided that, after the lapse of a certain period of time, a German arrested on suspicion could demand to be informed of the nature of the charge against him, and after the lapse of a longer period, the military authorities were bound either to release him or bring him up for trial before the Imperial Court-Martial. Many Military Governors flatly refused to comply with the provisions of this Act, and went on imprisoning Socialists on suspicion as before. I learned at a later date that the military authorities were dodging this Act by releasing men against whom they had not sufficient evidence to make a trial by court-martial worth while, and arresting them again after they had enjoyed their freedom for a matter of twenty-four hours or so. "Cat-and-mouse" tactics with a vengeance!

Klühs was released after a long term of imprisonment, because the military authorities had not sufficient evidence against him on which to base an indictment before the Imperial Court-Martial. After his release from prison he attended, and I believe spoke, at a Socialist meeting, and was promptly seized by the military authorities and put into the army. Military life was too much for him after the hardships of his prison life, and he died a few weeks after donning the field-grey uniform.

Another case, of great interest to Englishmen, was that of a Canadian, the Hon. Dr Henri Béland, who, in Sir Wilfred Laurier's short government in 1911, was Postmaster-General in Canada. Shortly before the outbreak of war he married a Belgian lady, and took up residence in the village of Capellan to the north of Antwerp. He was surprised by the news of the war while on holiday in the Pyrenees, returned to Capellan, lived through the siege of Antwerp, and witnessed the entry of the armies of von Emmich. German officers were quartered in the château, and, relying upon their word that he would not be molested in any way whatsoever, he remained there, instead of crossing the Dutch frontier into Holland, which was only about half a mile distant. The officers who had given him this assurance left for service elsewhere,

and other officers came, who chose to disregard the word which their colleagues had given. Dr Béland was arrested, and in June 1915 was taken to the Stadt Vogtei Prison in Berlin.

Just before Christmas 1916, Dr Béland received a telegram from his doctor, informing him that his wife was lying seriously ill in Capellan. He had been distressed, up to the date of the receipt of this news, by letters from his family, which led him to believe that such an eventuality was imminent; and he had repeatedly endeavoured to procure from the Berlin military authorities permission to return to Capellan on parole, or, failing that permission, to take up residence with his wife at some German spa. Not one of these efforts met with success. He appealed to be allowed to go to Capellan on a brief visit, but received no answer. He then received urgent messages from the doctor and from his family, imploring him to hasten to his wife's bedside, as she was dying. He said one day to the lieutenant in charge of the prison, after he had received no answer to his frantic petitions—

“Take me, lieutenant, blindfolded, if you wish. I want to see nothing of the state of affairs in Belgium. I only want to see my wife before she dies.”

It is only fair to emphasise the fact that Lieutenant Block did all in his power for Dr Béland at

this crisis, but all his efforts were in vain. Dr Béland was not allowed to leave the prison, even to attend the funeral, and on no occasion did he receive an explanation of this wantonly cruel treatment, or any apology whatsoever from the military authorities in Berlin. On three or four occasions he was buoyed up by the prospect of exchange and release to England, but on each occasion his hopes were dashed to the ground.

When I left, the military authorities in Berlin had granted him one or two small privileges which somewhat alleviated the monotony of his captivity, and he was bearing his almost superhuman trials with splendid fortitude.¹

Professor Henri Marteaux, a violinist with more than a European reputation, and the successor of Joachim in the Berlin Conservatorium of Music, was another inmate of the Stadt Vogtei Prison for about five months in the spring of 1916. His wife, an Alsatian lady of great beauty and intellectual charm, a society favourite in Berlin in times of peace, was imprisoned in a woman's jail in the Barnim Strasse for an even longer period. There she was compelled to live among women of the

¹ I met Dr Béland in London in July 1918, the day after his arrival in England. He had been exchanged against a well-known German, interned in England.

vilest type. Professor Marteaux had with him his favourite violin, which had once belonged to Maria Theresa, and frequently, at night, he played to the prisoners from his cell. His music is one of the sweetest memories of my captivity. It was as precious as flowers in No Man's Land.

A Turkish journalist, named Raschid, found his way into prison in 1916, and spent one hundred and sixty-two days in close solitary confinement. He used to count the days. He spoke a beautiful French, and he and Professor Marteaux became great friends, although, as far as I remember, the conversations which took place between them had usually to be carried on through the window-bars of their respective cells. Sometimes, as Professor Marteaux walked round and round the yard, poor Raschid would climb up to the bars of his cell window on the fifth floor, and look down, sadly smiling, into the deep well. Marteaux would catch sight of him, and call out with that ring of true sympathy which marked every word he spoke—

“Eh bien, Monsieur Raschid, comment va-t-il aujourd'hui ?”

“Ah, comme-ci, comme ça, Monsieur le Professeur,”
Raschid would answer.

At night, after we were all locked in, Marteaux would climb on to a stool below his window, and,

peering through the bars, would call across the courtyard to Raschid—

“*Eh bien, Monsieur Raschid, qu'est qu'on peut faire ce soir ?*”

“Ah, Monsieur le Professeur,” Raschid would answer, “play that strain that you played the other night.”

Marteaux would climb down, take up his violin, and the sweet strains of his precious music would float through his window-bars into Raschid's cell, and into the cells of a hundred other unhappy prisoners. I have often wondered whether any prisoners listened dry-eyed while Marteaux played.

Brutal and senseless in its cruelty was the decree issued by the *Kommandantur* in Berlin that Professor Marteaux should not be allowed to see or talk to his two little girls throughout the whole time that he spent in prison. They were charming little girls—one nine and the other eleven years of age; and although they were brought by their aunt on several occasions to the prison gates, they were never allowed to speak to their father, nor was Professor Marteaux ever allowed to see them. Even when, after five months' life in the prison, he was released in order to be interned in an out-of-the-way village in Mecklenburg, he was forbidden to see them prior to his departure from

Berlin. Senseless cruelties such as these, absolutely incomprehensible to the ordinary mind, were more than once characteristic of the attitude of the *Kommandantur* towards men interned in our prison.

Another occupant of one of the large cells was a Jewish Turkish Rabbi, who had lived long in Paris, and spoke French with amazing fluency. I do not know what was the nature of the charge preferred against him, but he was treated with great consideration and guarded with care. On one occasion he called me down to his cell, where I found him in a state of great excitement. He had had a quarrel with another wealthy Jew in the prison, and was anxious to clear himself in my eyes. After explaining the circumstances, he said to me, accompanying his words with violent gesticulations—

“C'est bien possible, n'est-ce-pas, Monsieur Ellison, que je ne sois pas millionnaire? Mais je suis un gentleman, je vous assure. J'ai une femme et deux maîtresses, et je suis un gentleman!” Could he have been more convincing!

The absence of women and children was one of the hardest things to bear. When I was met in Holland by a number of charming Englishwomen, I was asked by one of them, after I had told my story—

“Tell me, Mr Ellison, what were you looking forward to most in your life of freedom?”

I paused for a moment, and then said—

“To hear an Englishwoman speak.”

“How strange! All escaped prisoners say the same thing.”

A burly Austrian in prison, whom no one would have dreamed of accusing of mawkish sentimentality, said to me once—

“Ellison, I feel as though I could be tender to a goldfish.”

Towards the end of the first year of my imprisonment I smuggled in a pair of white mice, and kept them hidden away in my cell. A big Scotch friend of mine used to play with them and talk to them as one pets a baby in ordinary life. They increased too rapidly, however, and I had to get rid of them.

The escapers were a small but interesting group, and, with one or two exceptions, formed a solid coterie in the prison. The reasons for their failure were very varied. Several had been arrested by the detectives whose work it is to demand legitimation papers of travellers in railway trains, the greatest ingenuity and coolness in the world being no use at all in such an emergency.

C—— had travelled by train as far as Düsseldorf after his escape from the Sanatorium for British

civilians in Charlottenburg, and went into a hat-shop there in order to buy a German hat. On entering the shop he tripped over something at the door, and, forgetting himself, said aloud "D——n!" The shopkeeper heard it, sent detectives after him, and he was arrested.

H—— was seen eating a few Huntley & Palmer's biscuits in the station restaurant in Magdeburg.

"*Ach, Engländer!*" was the head-waiter's comment. He was arrested.

Quite a few were caught in their attempt to climb over the high barbed-wire fences surrounding Ruhleben Camp, and were punished as severely as though they had really "had a run for their money."

The way in which two of my friends were recaptured was exasperating in the extreme. They were making for the Baltic coast, and had gone into hiding at dawn on the third day in a clump of lilac bushes. During the afternoon a German soldier trod on one of them while plucking lilac blossom, discovered the two, and marched them off to the nearest village.

My friend Eric Keith, with whom I escaped from the Stadt Vogtei Prison at a later date, was captured while passing through a village close to the frontier late at night and put into the village jail.

On the second night he broke out of the jail by way of the ceiling and roof, and after a most adventurous journey on foot was captured, as he discovered later, on Dutch soil by civilian frontier guards. Whether they were Germans, or Dutchmen in the pay of Germany, he was never able to ascertain. He finally succeeded in escaping from Ruhleben with two others, and crossed over into Holland early in September 1917.

Mosquitoes drove another from good cover in a dense wood to less satisfactory cover in the open, where he was seen by a German peasant woman who happened to be passing by. Information which she gave to German officers at a flying ground near by led to his arrest shortly afterwards.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ATTEMPT TO BREAK OUT OF PRISON.

“If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again.”

PRISON never appealed to me as a permanent residence. The cuisine was unsatisfactory, the guests were not the sort of men I should ordinarily have chosen as associates, the sleeping accommodation was poor, and my hosts anything but to my taste. An old man, meditating once in my hearing, on his captivity, said—

“Yes, Ellison, I suppose this is what hell is like. You are compelled to live year in and year out with a lot of men whom you detest, and from whom there is no means of escape. Hell can't be any worse than this.”

“Quite so,” I answered; “but with this one difference. If I have read my Dante aright, there is no escape from hell. I think I shall find a way out of here.”

Escaping became a bad habit as time went on. The reading of serious books, when I could get access to them, became an impossibility. All my thoughts were concentrated on the problem of how to get out of prison and out of Germany. The prize ahead was my freedom, without which life was not worth living. It was a prize worth any risk, any hardship, and any suffering.

Before I escaped from Ruhleben Camp in 1915, I faced the possibility of failure and the inevitable prison punishment that would follow. Both my friend and I had experienced the horrors of solitary confinement, and felt convinced that another long term of imprisonment would end in our becoming insane. When I was being conveyed to prison in Berlin from the Military Prison in Wesel, I remembered the conversation which had led to both expressing the same thought, and I shuddered involuntarily at the prospect which lay before me. Looking back upon my prison life, I am convinced that I was kept mentally fresh by the constant planning to effect my escape.

It was my custom, in working out the details of an escape, to face the worst possible consequences beforehand. Addressing myself in an impersonal manner, I would say—

“The consequences, if you resort to such and

such means, will be, at the worst, such and such a punishment. A certain plan you have in mind, if it fails, may mean death or long imprisonment. Are you prepared for that? Yes? Then go ahead. No? Then discard the plan, or abandon your intention to escape. Study languages, do anything rather than court a disaster you dare not face as cheerfully now as you would wish to when it comes."

For a long time escape from the Stadt Vogtei Prison seemed impossible. I tried all means in my power, short of giving my word that I would not attempt to escape again, in order to get back to camp. One vigorously-worded petition after another, vehemently protesting against the injustice of our detention in prison, after we had served our punishment for escaping, found its way, directly or indirectly, to the American and Dutch Embassies. The Ambassadors did their best for us, but were met with the cynical reply that we were no longer in prison for punishment: we were simply interned! Our petitions, addressed to the military authorities in Berlin, remained unanswered. Once, when I saw an officer from the *Kommandantur*, I placed before him the case for our return to camp, but his only answer was—

"You remain where you are for the duration of

the war. You will probably only escape again if you are sent back to camp."

"What is your armed guard there for?" I ventured to ask.

"You remain where you are."

One day, when the Lieutenant in charge of the jail was conducting me through the labyrinth of corridors, he said to me with a smile, as he caught me glancing round—

"You find it pretty difficult to get out of this place."

I smiled, and gave no reply.

After I had occupied one of the small sixteen-cubic-metre cells for over a year, four of us managed to obtain permission to remove from our single cells into one of the large corner cells on the fourth floor, containing four beds and a tiny lavatory. An attempt to obtain a cell on the top floor, whence we might have escaped on to the roof, and thence, by means of a rope, let ourselves down the seventy-foot outside wall, met with no success.

About the middle of October 1916, after many months of careful and patient planning, we made a determined attempt to escape. German Jews, masquerading in Prussian uniforms at the *Kommandantur* in Berlin, trying hard to be more

Prussian than the Prussians (and succeeding tolerably well), had decreed that we should be detained for the duration of the war in a prison which they regarded as escape-proof. But we had fallen in love with a fair maid whose name was Liberty. We had wooed her. We had not yet won her, but we were not to be denied. We were resolved to prove ourselves the most persistent suitors she had ever known, and to come up smiling after each rebuff and each refusal. "Love laughs at iron bars," we said to ourselves, and so we laughed at our bars and at the people who had put us behind them.

Over and over again I repeated to myself those lines from Meredith's "Love in a Valley":—

"She whom I love is hard to catch and conquer—
Hard, but O the glory of the winning were she won!"

British prisoners are still languishing in German camps and prisons; the average German official has not been made more chivalrous and sportsmanlike by three and a half years of war, and—the Censor is still all-powerful. All these facts are reasons sufficiently weighty to make it impossible to give full details of this attempt to escape.

By a series of careful experiments we established

a number of facts concerning the movements of the warders at night, the strength of the guard, and the frequency of patrols. I had also made one or two experiments on my own initiative, always carefully avoiding any semblance of system in what I did, and, after discarding one scheme after the other on the ground of its impracticability, finally arrived at a plan of escape which I thought was workable. My friends listened somewhat sceptically to the scheme which I outlined to them.

Some one would have to be absent from the cell when the warder came round to lock the cell door at 7 P.M., and the warder would have to be bluffed into the belief that all were present. After a long wait in hiding, somewhere in the building, the man would emerge from his hiding-place, dodge the patrol, make certain preparations before releasing his chums, release them in a certain way, and then, the four, making their way in stockinged feet to another part of the prison, would escape by a certain exit.

“Hardly a practicable scheme,” said my friends with a shrug of the shoulders.

“Then let us eliminate every impracticable feature one by one,” I replied.

We set to work, kept our own counsel, and finally decided to make the attempt along the

lines I had suggested. What preparations we made, and how we overcame one difficulty after another, make a tale whose telling must be postponed until that uncertain date—after the war.

As the plan was my own, and as I was more convinced of its practicability than any of my friends, I was given the embarrassing honour of putting my theories to the test. I must omit the narration of how I found a hiding-place, where I hid, how we bluffed the warder, and how I had planned to release my chums.

Never shall I forget that long vigil. The prison was as quiet as a graveyard, the deadly silence being unbroken save for the noise of a spoon dropped at times on the floor of some cell, or the deep-seated cough of some sick prisoner.

I sought some way of employing my time. My hiding-place was too dark for reading, so I began to get everything ready for the moment when I should want to leave. The days had seemed long in solitary confinement, but those six hours were long almost beyond endurance. I recited poetry to myself. I debated fiercely and cunningly with an imaginary adversary on all sorts of subjects. Once or twice, in order to kill time, I went very slowly round the room in order to pick up a pencil which lay at my elbow, and then congratulated

myself on having successfully killed two minutes. At nine o'clock I made a solemn compact with myself that I would, under no circumstances, look at my watch again until half-past nine. I waited until I felt certain it was at least a quarter to ten, in order that there should be no disappointment, and then ventured to look at my watch. Ten minutes past nine! I groaned in despair.

Much of my time I spent in pondering over the details of our escape, once we were safely out of the prison, with Berlin behind us. I thought of our long tramp, night after night, to the Baltic coast, where we hoped to find a fishing-boat and row or sail across the narrow straits to Denmark. Should we find a boat there? Should we be able to evade capture by hydroplanes or motor-boat patrols?

The warder who guarded us was a good fellow, but very conscientious in the performance of his duties. We realised that in the event of recapture after we had made good our escape from prison, the story of our escape would, on the face of it, seem a very improbable one; and the warder would in all likelihood be charged with helping us to escape. To clear him afterwards, I kept a diary of my experiences in my place of concealment, recording every little incident which could

only have been observed by a man hiding in that particular place. It was our intention to leave this diary behind. The original is "somewhere in Germany," but, translated into English, ran somewhat as follows:—

7 P.M. *Unteroffizier* H— locked all the doors on floor No. —.

7.25 P.M. The orderly brought a letter to Mr M— at cell No. —, remarking, as he handed it to him: . . .

8 P.M. *Unteroffizier* H— turned out the lights on floor No. —.

9 P.M. Bell sounded in military prison.

10 P.M. *Unteroffiziere* H— and D— met and talked, D— then walking along the corridor to look through the "Judas hole" in Dr M—'s cell, &c.

At first I was afraid to sleep lest my heavy breathing should be heard by any one passing along the corridor. Finally, however, I became so sleepy that I decided to risk it. I rolled up my coat as a pillow, and flinging myself at full length on the floor, was soon fast asleep.

I woke up shivering with cold. I had slept three-quarters of an hour.

My original idea was to release my friends on

the fourth floor, on emerging from my place of concealment; but after a careful examination of this plan, I came to the conclusion that it would be better to make quite sure of the final preparations for our escape before I did so. The danger of being seen and captured when passing along the quiet corridors was very great, and it seemed better that one man should be captured and punished rather than four. In the event of my meeting a patrol, I promised my friends to make so much noise that they would receive warning and have an opportunity of hiding anything which might incriminate them.

As the strain of waiting became less and less bearable, the coward in me kept reiterating—

“Why not go now? Half-past eleven will do quite as well as quarter to two. And don't trouble about the preliminary preparations. You have done enough. Everything is sure to go as you have planned it. You are taking an absolutely unnecessary risk in making the double journey.”

Half-past one came at last. Only another fifteen minutes—nine hundred seconds. I put out my head to reconnoitre, only to draw it in again quickly and crouch, hardly daring to breathe, behind a door. Footsteps were audible along an

adjacent corridor. Was the corporal coming to arrest me?

I listened, listened, listened.

He came closer and closer, passed on, and I heard his footsteps die away in the distance. After the lapse of a few minutes he returned. The next ten minutes I remained undisturbed, but my heart was beating uncomfortably quickly.

The moment came at last. I cautiously emerged from my hiding-place, and in passing through a narrow aperture stuck fast! The thought passed like a flash through my mind that the corporal, whom I had heard twice already, might pass at any moment. Something shook with an ominous rattle in the deadly silence of the prison as I freed myself, and once in the corridor, I darted past an opening through which I could be seen from another part of the prison. Feeling like a man who had just committed murder, I backed into the doorway of an unoccupied cell for a moment, and then, as soon as I was breathing regularly again, slipped my slippers into my pockets and slunk along the corridor towards my first objective.

In descending a long flight of stairs I paused twice, thinking I heard a noise on the floor above me, but the glare of an incandescent light on the gallery dazzled my eyes, and it was a few seconds

before I could see clearly. Apparently no one was there, and I went on. I should impute this to the state of nervous tension in which I found myself at the moment, were it not for the fact that a friend of ours, who was cognisant of our plans, was unable to sleep that night, and in his cell on that particular floor heard the two noises at exactly the same time.

Even my stockinged feet seemed to make a loud noise in the unnatural silence of the prison.

I reached my objective at last. A glare of light in the basement below reminded me of the presence of the corporal on duty at the main entrance. He was armed, I knew, with a Browning revolver, and on no account must he hear me.

At that moment I saw something which filled me with dismay. I was nonplussed. A certain something was not as I expected to find it, and the change spelled defeat — defeat at the very last moment in sight of freedom. What could possibly be the purpose of the change? Were our plans known? Were we in a carefully-laid trap? Perhaps I was being watched at that very moment. All these thoughts passed in a few seconds through my mind, and I glanced hurriedly round to find to my immense relief that the corridors were empty.

There was nothing left for me to do but hasten to our cell and warn my friends. I darted up the steps, paused at the head of each flight to see if the corridor leading into the Military Prison were clear, and finally reached our cell on the fourth floor. The warder slept next door to us, but although I made a good deal of noise in opening the door, I succeeded in doing so without awakening him. Once inside, I hurriedly explained the situation to my three friends, and we set about to hide all traces of our preparations for the escape.

The following morning when the warder came round to open the door, he found it already open. He was astonished, and looked in to see if the birds had flown. I was washing at the time.

"Was the door open?" he asked in astonishment.

"Yes," I said, looking at him quite innocently. "I can't understand it at all. Last night I was aroused from sleep, about one or two o'clock in the morning, by the noise of some one opening the door. I can only assume that it was some warder, perhaps a little bit tipsy, who wanted to get to the corresponding cell on the floor above or the floor below, and after opening our cell door discovered his mistake. I was too sleepy to be able to recognise him. He went away, and when we got up

this morning we found the door open. I can't understand it at all."

He passed on, and that was the last we heard of the incident from any official source, though we lived in fear and trembling for many days.

The strain on my friends as well as on me had been a heavy one, and we needed a rest before we set to work on fresh plans.

CHAPTER XV.

FURTHER SCHEMES.

“Sam,” said Mr Pickwick, after a little hesitation : “listen to what I am going to say, Sam.”

“Cert’nly, sir,” rejoined Mr Weller ; “fire away, sir.”

“I have felt from the first, Sam,” said Mr Pickwick with much solemnity, “that this is not the place to bring a young man to.”

“Nor an old un either, sir,” observed Mr Weller.

“You’re quite right, Sam,” said Mr Pickwick. . . . “It is better for those young men, in every point of view, that they should not remain here.”

THAT is how Mr Pickwick and Sam Weller felt about the Fleet Prison, and that is exactly how I felt, as time went on, about the Stadt Vogtei Prison in Berlin. The prison was most emphatically not the place to bring a young man to, and it was better, I felt, in every point of view, that I should not remain there.

We had failed, it is true, in our attempt to get out, but if we had done nothing else, we had at any rate demonstrated the practicability of our theory.

The prison was not escape-proof. So much was certain.

As winter was approaching, it behoved us to set to work as soon as possible on fresh plans. The winters in Germany are severe, and we felt that it would be courting disaster to set out, in very cold weather, on an escape which might involve much lying out in the open. To be seen during the day in the danger zone near the frontier would be fatal to success, and, in view of the measures which were being taken by the German military and police authorities to recapture escapers, it would be equally fatal to leave the train at a station sufficiently close to the frontier to enable us to cross the same night.

We abandoned one scheme after the other on the ground of its impracticability.

One afternoon I was coming up the wearisome flights of stairs which led up to our cell on the fourth floor, when I was accosted in a furtive fashion by a man, S——. He was a queer fellow, an engineer by profession, and as far as nationality was concerned an out and out cosmopolitan. Interned as an Englishman, he had been brought to the prison from Ruhleben Camp on some charge or other, and had been frequently heard to say that he was determined to escape.

He had lived a long time in South Africa, Belgium, and Germany, spoke excellent German, fair Flemish, indifferent French, and abominable English. I had known for some time that he wished to see me, but I had deliberately avoided meeting him, because I doubted the sincerity of his desire to escape, and, in any event, was pledged to my friends. On this particular occasion, however, there was no escape from him, and, impelled too by curiosity as to what his plans might be, I followed him into his cell. I soon came to the conclusion that his desire to escape was genuine. There was the prospect before him of a long prison sentence, and he was bent upon cheating the police of their prey. I listened as he unfolded his schemes, talking little myself, except occasionally to drop a word of criticism or ask a question.

When he had finished I told him that I thought his scheme unsound, and gave my reasons. He shrugged his shoulders and sat very disconsolately on his stool, with his hands spread out on his knees.

“Well, what do *you* think is the best plan? Have *you* a better idea?” he asked.

With very little seriousness in my words I said—

“Yes, I think I have. Find some way of getting out of the front door, out of the main exit.”

He grew serious. We discussed possibilities for a while, and then I left him.

Although I had made the suggestion with a serious face, I meant it mainly as a joke; but the idea struck root in his ingenious mind, and it was through the main door that we escaped from the prison about three weeks later.

In the narration of this escape I am free to give fairly full details of what took place, partly owing to the fact that all who participated in it are now in safety, thanks either to subsequent escape or release, and also because the escape was undertaken in such a way that the German authorities learned very soon afterwards the lines on which we had worked. Conditions in the prison were changed immediately after our escape was discovered, and steps were taken to cut off the main exit for ever afterwards as a possible avenue of escape. The interned were no longer permitted to use the yard at any time from 9 A.M. to 6 P.M. when not in solitary confinement, but were passed in by the sentry at stated times, the yard door being kept locked by him.

All the courtyards in the prison are inside the huge block of buildings. There is no wall fencing

in the prison from the street. One steps at once from the street into the gloom of the jail through heavy oaken doors. The first step takes one into a sort of vestibule. Facing the outer doors, inside the vestibule, are other oaken doors leading into the exercise-yard for our part of the prison. To the left of the entrance are two steps, and then a corridor not more than twenty paces in length leading into the administrative office. The office is used by the lieutenant, sergeant, warders, and corporals who guard the prisoners. To the right of the entrance is another corridor, but in our time the door leading into it from the vestibule was usually closed and locked. Along the two corridors mentioned, were, on the one side, heavily barred non-transparent windows giving on to the Dircksen Strasse, and on the other side the doors of cells on the ground floor. The third cell along the corridor to the left of the entrance was the porter's cell, where a German corporal armed with bayonet and Browning revolver was kept on guard day and night. After our escape the first cell was made the porter's cell, and a special window was built into the wall, so that when fitted with an ingenious arrangement of mirrors the sentry could see at once if any one attempted to open the main door. Each time we escaped quite a lot of Prus-

sian officials were kept busy trying to catch us, and, when they had locked us up again, trying to devise ways and means of preventing another attempt. I suppose it all belonged to the conduct of war, and that we may have been "doing our bit" after all, "tying up" and annoying an infinitesimal part of the Kaiser's army for a day or two!

From the description I have given of the prison inside the main gate, it will be obvious that in attempting to open the main door certain risks would have to be faced. There would always be the possibility of being seen by the sentry in the cell close to the main gate. There was the danger of persons coming from the yard into the vestibule. There was the risk of the door of the administrative office—twenty paces along the straight corridor—being opened, when all would be lost, owing to the fact that a German corporal, and frequently the lieutenant in charge of the jail, sat at their desks in such a position as to command an uninterrupted view of the main entrance. At any moment the door on the right-hand side of the main gate, the one leading into the right-hand portion of the prison, might be opened by a warder passing through; and finally, there came the risk—against which all the forethought in the world would not enable us to guard—of a transport of

prisoners arriving at the door at the very moment of our escape. To a certain extent, by means of a careful disposition of forces, and by a rehearsal of the right sort of story to tell, in the event of being surprised before we had actually opened the door, we thought it possible to guard against all risks except the last. There we should have to take a sporting chance.

One afternoon, when I entered our cell after an aimless walk through the smelly, monotonous galleries, I was accosted by one of my cell companions, who said to me—

“G—— has been here to see you, and would like you to go down to his cell before locking-up time, as he has some sketches he would like to show you.”

I smiled, and my friend smiled. G—— had escaped some time before from Ruhleben Camp, along with his friend C——, and, possessing the two invaluable assets, from an escaper's point of view, of a perfect command of the language, and a thorough knowledge of the country and the ways of the people, they succeeded in reaching the Swiss frontier, passed over during the day, but unfortunately, unwittingly walked back into Germany, and were arrested by two German sentries. They had not taken into account that

they had crossed the German-Swiss frontier at a point where a narrow tongue of Swiss territory runs into Germany. They had walked into freedom on one side of the tongue and back into bondage on the other side. He and his friend were charged, after capture, with having attempted to bribe the German guards who accompanied them from the Swiss frontier to the Stadt Vogtei Prison in Berlin, and both men, I knew, were eager to avoid the long term of imprisonment which would surely be the consequence of conviction in the Berlin Police Court. At a later date, C——, G——'s companion—after G—— had made good his escape—was tried on a charge of attempted bribery, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. He showed me a copy of the judgment, in which the judge who had tried the case had put his signature to the following astounding sentence:—

“It must not be overlooked that the crime committed by the defendant is a direct consequence of his internment, but it must also be borne in mind that he belongs to that nation which is responsible for this war, and an offence of this character must be proceeded against with the very utmost severity of the law (*muss mit der unbedingtesten Schroffheit der Gesetze entgegengetreten werden*).”

C——, who had lived thirty-five years in Germany, had been decidedly pro-German in his sympathies for some time after the outbreak of war, but if he had not become anti-German before the date of his trial, he certainly swung round when he found himself face to face with so wicked a mockery of the very elements of justice.

I say that I smiled when I heard that G—— had been to see me and wished to show me sketches. I went down to his cell, and had not been in conversation with him long before I learned that he had certain proposals to make to me regarding escape from the prison. He said that three, including S——, had decided to escape through the main door, that a duplicate key was almost ready, and all that remained to be done before the night of the escape was to make perfectly sure that the key would fit. While the stage rehearsals were going on, one man was to hold the door leading from the exercise-yard into the vestibule, in order that no one should come in from that direction. Two others were to stand to the left of the main door on the two steps leading into the corridor, at the end of which was the administrative office, and were to indulge in casual conversation in a nonchalant fashion, drowning any noise the key might make when

turned in the lock, and so prevent the suspicions of the sentry, in his cell close by, being aroused. They were a man short, and I was asked whether I would undertake to help them with the rehearsals, and also on their real escape, by holding the door leading to the vestibule from the exercise-yard. At that stage it was not suggested that I should become one of the escaping party. My functions were simply to hold the door, and as soon as the three had escaped, rush upstairs to my cell. I smiled at so naïve a request, by acceding to which I should be running all the risks and enjoying precious little of the fun. I told him so, whereupon he invited me to come with them. We discussed plans in full detail, and I finally obtained permission to co-opt my friend Eric Keith, to whom I was pledged.

CHAPTER XVI.

OUR ESCAPE FROM A BERLIN JAIL.

A few crowded hours of glorious life.

KEITH and I did not definitely decide to escape with the three until the last moment, though we made all necessary preparations for such an eventuality, and, having been taken fully into confidence, we felt it only right to volunteer to help them in trying the key.

We had some amusing and rather exciting rehearsals. S—— was the man who had had the key made, and to him fell the honour of testing it. G——, Keith, and I stood on the steps and talked in as nonchalant a fashion as we could, while the fifth man held the other door.

S——, doubtless spurred on by his fear of approaching punishment, was very daring but very excitable, and throughout the series of rehearsals in which we participated we were never quite sure

whether the key was a misfit, or whether he had failed to make the key turn in the lock because of the trembling of his hands. I have often smiled since at the recollection of how he would turn away from the door and follow us upstairs, muttering in his queer English under his breath—

“’E will go! ’E will go! I know ’e will go,” meaning that the key would eventually fit.

After three unsuccessful tests, we hit upon the idea of covering the wards of the key with a thin film of candle-wax, in order that when the key was turned in the lock any obstacle it met would leave the imprint of its shape on the film of wax. That portion of the key had then simply to be filed away.

The fourth test was successful. We did not escape that night, because certain other preparations were not yet complete. We met in many places for the purpose of discussing plans, and finally decided to make the attempt between half-past five and six, on the evening of the 16th of November 1916.

That day, about a quarter of an hour before our rendezvous with our fellow-conspirators in the exercise-yard, Keith and I decided that we would join the rest in escaping from the prison, and then, in all likelihood, endeavour to escape from the

country on our own initiative. We put on our warmest overcoats, and, as we were stuffing into our pockets certain impedimenta we should require on the way, Keith looked at me and said—

“I suppose you are not overlooking the fact that we may both be dead men within a quarter of an hour?”

I nodded. I guessed that he was referring to the possibility of our being shot by the sentry at the very moment of passing through the door, or crossing the street.

It was about half-past five in the evening, and already dark when we entered the yard. We found our fellow-conspirators walking round and round the narrow confine—less than seventy paces round its outer edge—with a most hang-dog look, which would have been intensely amusing had not the whole matter been too serious for laughter. We postponed the laugh for the time being. We joined them once or twice, when whispered consultations took place.

Our first move on arriving in the yard was to ascertain who was the corporal on duty inside the main entrance. We saw to our dismay that he was a German corporal, named Behnert, who, we knew, had insisted upon being furnished with a Browning revolver if he accepted sentry duty there,

and he had boasted on one occasion that he would shoot dead on the spot any man whom he found trying to escape through the main door. I confess that this made me feel very uncomfortable, and I think all my confederates, except S——, who was astoundingly determined, felt that we were running enough risks already without facing this additional and very grave one. S——'s determination, however, made us feel ashamed of our nervousness, and with some misgivings we decided to carry on. During the suspense of waiting until the coast was clear, I candidly confess that I did not feel as cool as the proverbial cucumber. The really trying part of an adventure of this kind is not the strain of doing things, but the nerve-trying ordeal of *waiting* to do things.

The yard was crowded when we entered, but shortly afterwards the cry of "Essenholen!" rang through the building, and most of the Poles left in order to receive the prison skilly in their cells. We waited until we were almost alone in the yard. Then one of our number opened the door leading into the vestibule, in order to reconnoitre and see that the coast was clear. Evidently the vestibule was empty, for he signalled to the rest to follow. Once inside the vestibule, Keith, G——, and I took up our posts and started a conversation, with a view,

as I have said above, of shielding S—— from any one looking down the corridor from the office, and also with the intention of drowning the sound of the key being turned in the lock. Another man held the door leading from the yard. Keith and I had our suspicions aroused by the presence of a sixth man, as apparently a passive spectator. This man, I knew, was an interned German, who had been running a gambling-hell in Berlin which had shortly before been raided by the police. It was too late, however, to make any protest. S—— had already inserted the key in the lock. We waited and watched, our nerves tense with excitement. The key would not turn. There was no time for another trial. We dared not linger longer, and followed him back into the yard. Keith and I charged him with a breach of faith in admitting a sixth man without having first secured our consent, but he assured us that the man was all right, and in any case had not the intention of leaving Berlin after his escape from the prison. As to his failure to open the door, he thought that in the excitement of the moment he had put in the shank crookedly, though he swore that the key would fit.

“’E will go! I know ’e will go!”

We fell to pacing the yard again, for we had

become ill at ease, and our minds were filled with a vague fear that our failure to open the door at the crucial moment might perhaps be an omen of approaching disaster. In other words, it is just possible that we had a touch of "cold feet." We had had too much prison to be in first-class escaping condition.

Presently one of our number looked again into the vestibule, and came back with an expression of undisguised disgust on his face.

"The soldiers have just brought in the food for the remand prisoners in the military part of the prison, and their cart fills the vestibule."

"That's bad! They will not take the cart away until well after locking-up time, and they usually leave a sentry beside it," I said. "It seems as though escape is out of the question to-night."

S—— left us in order to reconnoitre.

He came back and said, in an excited whisper—

"Come on! Dere's no soldier dere. De cart was up against de door, but I have shoved him back. Dere's room to get out now. Come on."

Away we went once more into the vestibule and took our appointed places. S—— glanced round before he put the key into the lock. The coast was clear. While he was opening the door the Lieutenant's orderly passed into the office, but we

were covering S—— and he noticed nothing unusual. We were close to the sentry's cell, but he did not stir. Perhaps our casual conversation served, as we intended it should, to drown the noise made by the turning of the key in the lock.

Wonder of wonders, the door opened! S—— swiftly withdrew the key, and without glancing round slipped out into the street. We followed, one by one, Keith and I coming last.

The arrangement had been that we should on no account run lest we should arouse the suspicions of any one passing by, but for a second or two we all clean forgot the arrangement and ran. Happily, the street was fairly empty. Thirty or forty paces to the left of the exit was a side street. All, except Keith and me, made for the street in order to jump on to the first tram-car. We, however, had decided to cut adrift from the rest, and slowing down, we crossed the street, trying hard to walk as unconcernedly as though we had never known the inside of a jail.

It was a queer feeling that came over one. It seemed beyond belief that we had at last succeeded in escaping from the hated place, and every second we were conscious that a bullet might hit us square between the shoulder-blades. Crossing the Dirck-

sen Strasse diagonally to the left, we came to a railway arch and passed through, feeling a good deal easier, though conscious still that we were not yet safe from pursuit. Only when we had turned round two other corners did we feel any real relief from the great tension. By that time we were lost. Neither of us knew Berlin well, but we wandered on, conscious of a tremor as we passed a policeman, fearing lest he should ask for our military papers. Before long we found ourselves in the famous Unter den Linden near the Dom, and, as we discovered later, passed quite close by the Berlin *Kommandantur*.

CHAPTER XVII.

ONCE MORE AT LARGE IN BERLIN.

WE had arranged a rendezvous with S— and G— in the *Wilhelms Hallen Restaurant*, near the Zoological Gardens Station, and, after inquiry from several people, we managed to find a tram which took us there. It was late at night, and we did not see a great deal of street life in Berlin. On arrival at the restaurant, which was quite a fashionable one, we found our two confederates waiting for us, and sat down to drink beer, smoke cigarettes, and discuss plans. S— had in his possession a receipt for some very necessary articles of ours which had somehow or other found their way from prison to a certain place in Berlin. We here made the fatal error of trusting our accomplice to too great an extent. He suggested that we should meet again at ten in the *Café Josty*, opposite the *Wilhelms Hallen Restaurant*, and said that he would arrange in the meantime to find us

quarters for the night. We had no papers, and therefore thought it unwise in the extreme to endeavour to procure a room in any hotel. In the meantime Keith and I were to go off, before the shops closed, to make certain necessary purchases for our final tramp to the frontier. We left, and went straight to a kind of Harrod's or Selfridge's—the *Kaufhaus des Westens*—in one of the principal thoroughfares of Berlin, the *Taentzienstrasse*, and there bought such things as rucksacks, water-bottles, and two very shoddy-looking sleeping sacks. The latter, we had decided, were absolutely essential, if our plans involved our spending one day or more lying out in the open.

The weather was bitterly cold, and it seemed likely that we should have snow. While we were making these purchases from a shopgirl, on one of the upper floors, a shopwalker came along and addressed us.

“These things going to the Front, gentlemen?” he inquired quite affably.

“Yes,” said my friend, who spoke perfect German. “As a matter of fact, we are off soon to Roumania.” (We had heard of the big German offensive against Roumania which was taking place just about that time.)

"There, at any rate," added Keith, "we are making rapid progress."

"Yes," said the shopwalker, with an eloquent shrug of the shoulders and a most sad intonation; "but the d——d English! Every time we come up against them, things seem to go wrong."

We agreed, of course, that the English were a particularly obnoxious people. Our friend the enemy seemed to be thoroughly weary of the war. We did not spend too much time in conversation with him.

We made no attempt to buy food, because we thought we should have sufficient in the parcel we hoped to procure with the receipt we should get from S——. We bought a large, cheap suit-case, big enough to contain all our purchases, and went from the *Kaufhaus des Westens* direct to the Zoological Gardens Station, in order to deposit our luggage there and call for it later in the evening. Keith took charge of the receipt. About nine o'clock we accidentally met S—— and G—— in front of the *Café Josty*, and reminded them of the appointment in the café at ten o'clock. They promised to be there.

We spent some time walking about the streets trying to kill time, but finding things rather mono-

tonous we went into the café somewhat earlier than we had intended, and, ordering two cups of coffee, which we suspected was brewed from acorns and was served without milk or sugar, we sat down at a table in the midst of perhaps a score of others who were seated around us, smoked cigarettes, and read the German illustrated papers. My friend left me in order to have a wash, and the lavatory attendant with whom he entered into conversation said—

“You are not a German?”

My friend looked at him, and said indignantly—

“You would think I was if you saw the wound in my thigh which I received at the Front.”

I visited this café on my last successful escape from Germany, and was interested to notice that ‘The Daily Telegraph’—about four days old—was amongst the newspapers stocked by the proprietors for the use of customers.

At ten o'clock no signs of G—— and S——. We waited until eleven, and still they did not come. When they had not put in an appearance at half-past eleven we came to the conclusion that it was time to make a move, and felt justified in assuming that they would not come. When we left the café we felt very disconsolate. The parcel

for which S—— held the receipt contained a number of articles in the way of dripping, ship's biscuits, and warm underclothing, which were as near being absolutely essential as anything could be, and there was no prospect whatsoever of being able to replace them.

In the first place, our funds were not large enough, and we had hoped to be able to purchase for me, out of the money we had, a pair of strong walking-boots, as I had left the prison in a thin pair, which were very uncomfortable. There was no possibility of buying these if the money had to be spent on replacing the articles we had lost. From facts we learned later, there is very little doubt that S—— had not played the game. We wandered about the street in front of the café for some time, before we abandoned hope of meeting them, imagining that they would probably arrive later than they had promised. Finally, we abandoned all hope, and, very downhearted, went across to the station, in order to get our suit-case and precious articles for the journey from the left-luggage office. When we arrived there, we found to our consternation that Keith had lost the receipt.

While we were standing in front of the counter,

and while Keith was searching through all his pockets for the receipt, a man, who I am absolutely certain was a detective, came and rubbed shoulders with us, and intently watched what was going on. Seeing that our prison was next door to the chief police station in Berlin, we had had very many opportunities of getting to know the detective type, and there was no doubt whatever, in the mind of either of us, that this man was one. As a matter of fact, we learned, after our recapture, that detectives had been placed on the main stations in Berlin within an hour of our escape, with a view to preventing our departure from the city.

Keith, conscious that he was being watched, made a display of a document, furnished with a Prussian official stamp which he carried in his pocket-book, and I said to him in German in as matter-of-fact a manner as possible—

“ You are unable to find the ticket—what ? ”

He answered in German—

“ Yes ; I am afraid I have lost it. ”

To our immense relief the detective turned away, strolled to the counter to watch other people, and then moved about, inquisitively observing the movements of persons passing to and fro in the crowded hall.

We got out into the street as quickly as possible, in order to discuss the serious state of affairs. It was close upon midnight. It seemed futile to go to a hotel, without luggage and without papers; and in view of so many disappointing occurrences at the very outset of our adventures, we felt that we were doomed to failure at the very beginning. While we were wondering where we could possibly spend the night, I remembered the name and address of an unpretentious hotel, where I had once stayed in times of peace. We drove there in a cab, having decided that we would say we had come from Elberfeld or Hannover, and that we had had the misfortune to lose our luggage, which contained our identification papers.

“Full up!” was the night porter’s reply on our arrival there.

The cabby, however, at our request drove us to another quiet hotel of the same class, and there the night porter informed us we could have a room, though he listened very suspiciously to our story of lost luggage and lost papers. He was inquisitive in the extreme, and when he had left our room, we looked at each other, and agreed that we should be very fortunate if we managed to leave the hotel without being arrested as suspected characters.

Still, in for a penny in for a pound. There was nothing for it but to make the best of things.

After our prison beds, the clean white sheets and eider-downs were a wonderful treat, and we both slept well. We knew that it was the practice of the Berlin police to inspect hotel registers at eight o'clock each morning, and make inquiries about the different guests. We therefore arranged to be called early, on the pretext that we had to leave by train from a certain station. We took the precaution of giving the name of a station in quite a different part of the town from the station from which we actually intended to leave. We left the hotel about half-past seven in the morning, and after having written fictitious names and addresses in the hotel register, had a short conversation with the landlady, who asked us point-blank whether we were foreigners or not. We denied the horrid imputation, and assured her that we were German business men who had come on business to Berlin, and were unfit for military service. A young officer took breakfast at a neighbouring table in the dining-room and bowed to us as he entered. We asked for minute directions in order to get to the station from which we did *not* intend to travel, and, telling the landlady that we should, in all

likelihood, be back again that night, and that we should be obliged if she would reserve the same room for us, we left.

We went for a short distance in the direction in which she would expect us to go, and then, after waiting a long time for a tram, got one, full, apparently, of women clerks going to business. This tram took us again to the Zoological Gardens Station.

Keith, before we left the hotel in the morning, had found the luggage receipt in one of his pockets. This, coupled with the fact that we had managed to get away from the hotel without meeting the police, brought us one little ray of hope.

We realised that it was absolutely essential to get food of some kind. Ration cards we did not possess, and rationed articles we were, therefore, unable to buy. As practically everything was rationed, the only things which we were able to purchase were two pounds of chocolate-creams at nine shillings a pound, and two small tins of sardines, which cost us four and six each. We had hoped to be able to buy nuts, but we could obtain them nowhere. We got our luggage, and at about half-past ten in the morning found ourselves on the platform of the Zoological Gardens

Station, with second-class tickets for Hannover in our pockets. Our experience on the previous evening with a detective on that very station did not tend to make us feel very much at ease, though we were carrying one or two German newspapers, and I had also bought Captain König's recently published book, 'The Voyage of the Deutschland,' the story of his sensational trips across the Atlantic in the first German submarine merchantman.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OUR DASH FOR THE FRONTIER.

WE had intentionally taken tickets for a *Bummelzug* (slow train), in the belief that such a train would be less likely to be visited by detectives than an express corridor train, and I think we were correct in our surmise. The journey was a painfully slow one, and there were times when we seemed to be subjected to very close scrutiny by some of the other occupants of our compartment. At Stendal we had a long wait, and spent about an hour over a fairly decent meal of fish and vegetables, which we obtained without having to produce ration cards. While we were walking along the platform to our compartment in the train, we found ourselves at the tail-end of a column of about one hundred Russian military prisoners who were being transported by German guards to a village in the neighbourhood. They travelled by the same train, and I remember to this day my

feeling of mingled exultation and compassion,—exultation at the thought that we had, for a brief spell at any rate, flung off our bonds, and compassion for the poor fellows who walked in front of us, cut off for the uncertain duration of the war from the land of their birth. With what glee those very guards would have marched us back to prison had they only had the faintest notion of our identity! It was one of those amusing situations which could be enjoyed at the time. Most similar experiences are funny only in retrospect.

Whenever people entered our compartment, I was always either pretending to sleep or pretending to be very deeply engrossed in my book, which I read twice through. Keith later on pointed out to me with pardonable glee that I had bought a faulty copy, several chapters of the book appearing in duplicate. I had read the book twice from beginning to end without noticing this. My thoughts were centred upon other things than Captain König's adventures. Our own adventures were my chief concern.

On arrival in Hannover about 7 o'clock the same evening, we deposited our luggage at the railway station and went into the town. It was already dark, and we spent about an hour in the main streets making a few additional purchases, visiting

cafés, and searching for a suitable hotel for the night. In a shop where we tried in vain to purchase a pair of boots for me, in place of my thin ones, two young Germans who came in eyed us very suspiciously, and Keith thought he saw them follow us and enter the same café. We immediately paid for our beer, and, once in the crowded main street, set out to throw them off the scent, zigzagging through quiet and crowded streets until we felt reasonably certain that they had lost sight of us.

Knowing quite well that the odds were dead against us, we were both of the opinion that it would be very nice, after recapture, should we fail in our enterprise, to have as many pleasant memories as possible to dwell upon in solitary confinement. What could be pleasanter than the sharp contrast between prison skilly and the memory of at least one good square meal? So, to a restaurant! We found Hannover's best in the *St Georg Palast Restaurant*, where we had a most excellent fish meal. The large room was full of elegant women and smart officers, in their pale-blue uniforms, Hannover being a centre where the *élite* of the cavalry officers of the German army are quartered. We ate, drank, and smoked, supremely at our ease by this time, and when an excellent

string orchestra on a raised platform at the end of the room began to play light music, I had to take a very firm grip of myself in order not to blubber like a child. Heigh-ho! we were having a run for our money.

Late that night we went to our fifth-rate hotel, where no one asked to see our papers (though we were required to sign the registration book), and we asked to be called at an early hour the following morning. I gave myself a name which I thought would not be too difficult to pronounce, and quite enjoyed inventing occupation, birthday, the name of the place from which I had come, and so on. One mistake I made, and remembered when it was too late, was to misspell the name of the town I chose as my place of residence.

When we were called the next morning, Keith, roused from sleep by the noise of some one knocking at the door, called out in English "Thank you!" which I tried to drown just in time with a very sleepy but fairly loud "*Danke schön!*"

At breakfast, the waiter was very insolent because we could not produce traveller's bread-cards, and it was difficult to know what attitude to take up towards him. An attitude of haughtiness on the one hand, or of obsequiousness on the other, might have ended in fatal consequences. We got out of

the difficulty by telling him resignedly that we would do without bread altogether. He little knew!

Although we had no intention of leaving from the main station, we sent the porter to the cloak-room with our suit-case, and called for it about an hour later. The intervening time we spent in a park, the name of which I have forgotten, in the suburbs of the city. Then we took a tram to a suburban station named Hainholz, to the west of Hannover on the main line, and there booked to Osnabrück, I believe, by slow train, our intention being to book again there to Haltern, a small railway junction about twenty to twenty-five miles from the Dutch frontier. It was about ten o'clock when we left, and apart from long waits at certain stations *en route*, we were in the train until about seven o'clock in the evening. Captain König again rendered me yeoman service, and I am very grateful to the gallant gentleman.

At Minden, where we had a long wait, we wished to spend our time in the station buffet, and in order to reach it, had to pass through the barrier between the ticket-collector and two German military police, who were examining papers. The presence of these military policemen made us very nervous, but we noticed that, like the "red-caps" in our own country, they had to do only with men in uniform,

and when our turn came we passed by them quite safely. In the buffet we were served with a fine veal ragout and vegetables at a very low price, and no coupons were asked for. I mention this fact because I have often contended that food conditions in Berlin are not typical of food conditions throughout Germany, and in my opinion never will be. It is misleading in the extreme for a casual observer to generalise from what he has seen in Berlin. My experience is that food conditions vary very greatly throughout the whole empire, according to the favourable or unfavourable situation of the town in question, and also according to the efficient or inefficient administration of the particular district. Prophecies to the effect that Germany will collapse through starvation in a few weeks' or a few months' time should be received with great caution, and inquiry should be made as to whether the prophet is generalising from one specific case, or really in a position to speak with authority on conditions as they actually are throughout *the whole* of Germany.

CHAPTER XIX.

FAILURE AGAIN!

WE arrived at Haltern, the station past Dülmen—a great distribution camp for military prisoners—about seven that evening, Keith having re-booked at Osnabrück without difficulty. Fortunately, quite a crowd of people were leaving the station as we passed through the barrier, I remaining some little way behind my chum, and following him at a distance along the dark road which led to the village.

Haltern had been more or less Hobson's choice. Among other things which we lost in losing our parcel in Berlin, was our map, and as Keith had taken this route on a previous occasion and found much to recommend it, we thought it better to trust to his remembering the landmarks, even by night, rather than gamble on a new and entirely unknown route. Luck had been dead against us all along the line. Everything that could possibly

go wrong, short of recapture, had gone wrong; and when, in the train, we saw snow falling and felt the bitter cold, we knew that only the luck that carries men back to safety, after fighting a forlorn hope, could possibly carry us through. Still, we were in for it. There was no turning back. We resolved to do our best, and leave the rest to fate.

The night, as I have said, was bitterly cold. The road and paths beneath our feet were covered with sheet-ice, and it was difficult at times to prevent oneself from falling. We got to the centre of the village, and then came to a main road running due west, where I noticed a large sign, indicating that this was the road to Wesel. I still remained some distance behind my chum, who was walking ahead rapidly with the suit-case. When we came to the outer edge of the village, I noticed that a woman wearing a shawl passed him, going on her way from the country into the village, stared intently at him, went on, stopped again, turned round again, and continued to watch him for some seconds. Then she hurried on into the village. She took no notice of me. As soon as she had disappeared in the darkness, I rushed up to Keith and told him what had taken place, and said that I feared the woman had gone to the village to report

the fact of our presence in the neighbourhood to the police. Fearing the possibility of immediate pursuit, we dashed from the highroad behind a broken hedge on our right, and flung ourselves flat in the wet grass among stones, turning up our coat-collars so as to hide our white collars and shirts.

We lay there for some time, listening and quietly breathing. We heard nothing, and presently Keith arose and made for the open country in what, I suppose, was a north-westerly direction, right through the fields which covered the rising ground. I was about to follow him, just as he was becoming lost to view in the darkness, when I heard footsteps coming in our direction along the path at the side of the road. It was too late to warn Keith, and in any case he was already out of sight of any one passing by us. I flung myself flat on my stomach, with my head in the direction of the approaching footsteps, and listened. It was evidently a man coming into the village, for I heard his heavy walk as he passed me at a distance of about three yards. In the meantime Keith had missed me, and had come back, whispering my name. I answered, joined him, and we again set out for the open country.

It was, as I have said, pitch-dark, and we had

not gone a hundred yards before it commenced to rain. By that time we had reached a dry ditch, on one side of which was a ploughed field, at the summit of the slope. Beyond the ploughed field in a direction due west we could see the dim outline of a dark wood silhouetted against the sombre sky, and behind us, on the other side of the ditch, ran the stone wall of a cemetery. Here we began to pack our rucksacks. I was ready a little earlier than Keith, owing to the fact that he wished to strap his overcoat to his rucksack, instead of wearing it as I preferred to do. While he had been filling the pockets of the rucksacks with the chocolate-creams we had bought in Berlin, I heard one or two chocolates fall into the ditch, and one or two into the open suit-case. Thinking that it was a pity to waste them, I began to fumble in the suit-case with my gloved hand, until I found what I thought was one of them. As far as I knew, the suit-case had been emptied. It was much too dark to see anything. There was no moon, and no stars were visible. In size and shape, something which I picked up from the suit-case resembled in every respect the chocolates which we had bought, and after tearing off with my teeth part of the tinfoil which covered it, I took a bite and swallowed a portion before I had

time to spit it out. I did not discover until much later in the evening exactly what it was that I had swallowed, though I felt quite sure it was not chocolate-cream. I said nothing about the incident at the moment to Keith, attaching no importance whatsoever to it.

As soon as we were ready we set out to look for a certain road, running west, which Keith had taken on a former occasion. We spent about two hours looking for that road, walking across open country, stumbling across ploughed fields, smashing through the ice which covered ditches, tearing clothes on barbed wire, and sliding across lanes covered with sheet-ice at the bottom of deep cuttings. I knew that Keith was in very good condition, and I felt, for the first two hours or so, ready to face any physical fatigue.

In a certain steep cutting, with high banks and hedges on each side, we heard footsteps, and a man passed us in the dark, who, however, seemed more afraid of us than we were of him. He hurried on past us, and was soon lost to view in the darkness.

We had an exceedingly trying two hours, trying both to our nerves and temper, until we found the right road. In order to satisfy ourselves that it was the one we sought, we had to return to the

cross-roads at the western edge of the village, in order to establish certain facts. Then we set out for the west.

Before we had gone very far, and as nearly as I can remember between eleven and twelve at night, I became painfully conscious of the fact that my strength was ebbing fast. I could not understand it, in view of the fact that I had felt so fit in the early part of the evening. We had had a fairly strenuous time searching for the right road, but we had done nothing that could explain the condition in which I began to find myself. Although I said nothing to my friend, he noticed that in spite of my efforts I was not able to keep up speed, and he anxiously questioned me about it. Feeling that my condition was perhaps after all due to my long term of imprisonment—I had had much longer in the Stadt Vogtei Prison than my friend—I thought it possible that I might be able to work it off; but try as I would, I soon found that this was impossible, and all my assurances that I should be all right soon failed to reassure my friend.

We discovered quite accidentally at this stage that what I had actually eaten, in the belief that it was chocolate, was as a matter of fact *part of the end of a stick of Colgate's shaving soap!* I learned later that it was a well-known dodge among

regular soldiers in the British army in times of peace, when a man wanted to avoid taking part in night manœuvres, to swallow a tiny soap-pill, the effect of this on the action of the heart being of such a character that the man was invariably pronounced by the regimental doctor "temporarily unfit for service."¹ Although I spat out as much as possible of the soap when I discovered it was not chocolate, I had nevertheless swallowed a certain amount, and most decidedly much more than a tiny pill. My legs and feet became almost like lead, and it was only with the utmost exertion that I was able to drag one foot behind the other. We were filled with consternation.

Our route lay for a time along a good road, which rapidly deteriorated and became simply an irregular line of very deep cart-ruts in clay and mud, which in a night had been frozen into stone. Snow lay upon the ground, and over and over again I crashed through the film of ice which covered the ruts, stumbled, and fell. My friend dragged me up and urged me on. On we went

¹ Since this account of my adventures appeared in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' several medical men have questioned the accuracy of this statement. All that I can say is, that I know of no other cause to which my sudden breakdown could have been attributed. I have related the practice, sometimes resorted to in the army, exactly as I heard it from regulars in prison and hospital.

again. My condition grew worse and worse. Presently we came to a part of the country where the landscape was entirely different from the country through which we had passed. Sometimes for about half a mile our way led through forest aisles, with tall and ghostly rows of pine and fir trees on either side.

A mixture of sleet and snow beat in our faces and froze on our hats and overcoats. Over and over again I sank down amidst the snow on the wayside, was helped up again by my friend, struggled on twenty or thirty yards, and fell down again, to repeat the same procedure a hundred times. The country grew wilder, and opened out into expanses of heath partially covered with stunted shrubs.

We came to four cross-roads, and chose one of them, after frequent consultations of the compass, but soon found, after we had gone about half a mile, that it led on to a wild and snow-covered desolate heath, which Keith was certain he had not crossed on his former escape. Seeing that his former escape had been undertaken in the spring, when the appearance of the country was entirely different, his ability in route-finding, with snow on the ground, and on such a night as this, I regard as nothing short of marvellous.

By this time, about half-past two in the morning—we had been tramping almost continuously since seven—I had to confess that I was “done.” I was completely exhausted. He helped me back to the edge of the forest and bedded me on some broken twigs in the gloom of the pine-trees, while he went back to the cross-roads in order to see, with our last match, whether he could discover where we had gone wrong. I lay there motionless, with mingled feelings of disgust, heart-breaking disappointment, and an intense longing for sleep. How long I lay there I do not know. Keith returned after a time, and, as he told me later, thought I had died while he was away. He examined my pulse, and told me later that it was hardly perceptible, and very very slow.

Feeling that he ought to have the best possible chance, I pleaded with him to leave me there and go on alone. He would not hear of this, and turned down all my arguments. He helped me on to my feet and practically dragged me back to the cross-roads, carrying my rucksack as well as his own. There I sank into the snow again. He pointed out to me the road we should have taken; but we both realised that it was out of the question for us to go on, and we decided, after a short consultation, to return to a rickety straw-shed which we

had noticed near a farm, at a distance of about three miles from Haltern. It consisted of a straw-rick, covered by an open leaky roof supported by four corner-posts.

We chose the road which we thought was the right one, and painfully made our way along its deeply-rutted surface, for a considerable distance, only to discover that it led us into unfamiliar country. We were wrong again. There was nothing for it but to retrace our steps. By this time my eyes were beginning to play me tricks, and I dimly remember swearing most volubly—not usually one of my many faults—as the thought came over me of all that our failure at the last lap would mean. Still, as I have often thought since, whenever, while in jail, we had indulged in calculations of our chances, we had always been most firmly of the opinion that we should have no prospect of success in attempting to cross the frontier when the landscape was white with snow. Two dark moving bodies on a white surface would present an ideal target for the frontier guards. Our plans also necessarily involved our spending a full day—from dawn till dusk—lying out in the open, and unsatisfactorily furnished as we were with food and clothing, and with nothing in the way of stimulants, it is an open question whether we should

have survived such an ordeal in our then state of health, or whether we should have been compelled, nearer the goal, to crawl to some habitation and give ourselves up to the people there. The gall, however, that tasted so bitterly at the time, was the thought that my breakdown had deprived the two of us of a sporting chance. I felt keenly for my friend, and my readers will place their own value upon the splendid way in which he stood by his chum.

To return: we found that we had gone wrong, and there was no alternative but to retrace our steps to the cross-roads. I am not quite sure, but I believe we took another wrong turning before we eventually struck the right road, and then, proceeding wearily along it, we came to the first cottage. We tried half-heartedly to knock up the people there, but receiving no response, I stumbled along, helped by Keith, to the straw-rick, which was our real objective. By means of a rickety ladder, two of whose rungs broke when we tried to use them, we climbed up into the straw, and all that I remember is lying there, convulsed every three or four seconds throughout the long night with shivers which shook every nerve in my body, constantly wet by the dripping snow from the roof, and too exhausted even to

be able to cover myself with the straw which lay around me.

We got through the night somehow or other, and at about six or seven in the morning, heard below us the noise of some one walking in the farmyard. Keith climbed down the ladder and went to the farmhouse, to inform the people that we were two young Germans who had lost our way the previous night on the snow-covered heath, and had been forced to take refuge in their straw-rick. He came back shortly afterwards with the welcome news that the farmer's wife had requested him to take me into the kitchen, where we might sit by the fire and drink a cup of coffee which she would prepare for us. Painfully, and still trembling in every limb, I managed to climb down the ladder and hobble into the house. The goodwife and her young son and daughters received us quite kindly, and although we remained there more than an hour, and drank and ate the things they provided for us, they never seemed to doubt our story that we were Germans, who were not in the army because we were physically unfit for military service. The old lady told us of her soldier son, and when we left in order to return to Haltern Station, we paid her for the food, and for any damage for which we might have been responsible.

I left Captain König's 'Voyage of the Deutschland' with the eldest daughter. I have often wondered since whether I shall ever have an opportunity of meeting these kind people again, and telling them the true story which lay behind that little incident.

I was feeling better, thanks perhaps to the coffee and food, but I recognised that it would be folly to attempt to lie up the whole day, in the condition in which I still found myself; and as we walked along the highroad, through beautiful snow-covered country, we discussed plans, and decided that we would return to Haltern Station and take tickets for a certain town in another part of Germany, where I thought we might be able to find a hiding-place, with a view to our lying up there until the snow had disappeared and I had completely recovered. Had fortune favoured us in carrying out this plan, we should, at a later date, have emerged from our hiding-place, and made another dash for the frontier. In spite of our heart-breaking disappointments, and our very slim chances of ultimate success, I was glad to be free, and remember how, with a feeling of intense gratitude, I walked along that country road, with pine-woods on either side crowning the snow-covered slopes; how my heart leapt at the sight of an occasional robin-redbreast,

and how gladdened I felt at the sound of children's laughter. We got through the village safely, and arrived at the station. There we took tickets for a certain town, and as we were passing through the barrier my friend asked the ticket-collector from which platform the train left. The man looked at us and said quite quietly—

“From over there, gentlemen! But you have time enough. You have more than ten minutes to spare. Why not go into the waiting-room? You will be notified of the departure of the train.”

“Thank you,” we said, and turned to walk to the waiting-room, which, as soon as we entered, we discovered was not only the station buffet, but also the Army Headquarters for the village. A tall Lieutenant, in the smart green uniform of a Prussian Jäger Regiment, stood near the buffet, and, as we ordered coffee, we noticed to our dismay that the ticket-collector had followed us into the room and was engaged in conversation with the Lieutenant. They glanced several times in our direction, and before the waiter had time to bring our coffee, the Lieutenant came up to us, and putting his hands on the table and leaning over, said—

“*Wo kommen Sie her? Wo sind Ihre Papiere?*”
(Where do you come from? Where are your papers?)

We looked at each other, made a sorry attempt to smile, saw in each other's eyes recognition of the fact that the game was up, and that bluff would serve us no longer. We admitted our identity.

“Corporal, take these two men across to the guard-room!”

.

Failed again!

CHAPTER XX.

IN HALTERN JAIL.

THE Lieutenant who arrested us at Haltern Station was certainly very pleased with himself at our capture. He treated us with great courtesy, and told the soldier who was to take us across to the guard-room to give us double rations of soup, adding, with a significant smile—

“ Sie werden sehen, dass wir noch nicht ausgehungert sind trotz der englischen Blokade.”

(You will see that we are not yet starving, in spite of the English blockade.)

The guard-room was a wooden hut on the other side of the railway lines, and was the place where the station sentries lived and slept when they were not on duty. It was clean, and contained, at one end, a long wooden bunk with horse-blankets, in which the soldiers slept side by side, three tressel-tables with benches, and a big cast-iron stove, which heated the room so thoroughly that the tempera-

ture was quite uncomfortably high. We were given a very good soup, identical with the soup which was given to our guards, and chatted quite amicably with the German soldiers who came and went during the day. The corporal in charge of the guard was a pedantic boor, and very different in his attitude towards us from the ordinary soldiers, one or two of whom came very close indeed to expressing sympathy with us in our failure to win through. When we asked whether it was usual, on the actual frontier, to challenge escaping prisoners if they were seen, the corporal growled—

“It may be the rule, but if ever *I* am on duty there, and see any one trying to get over, I shall shoot and shout ‘Halt!’ afterwards. I have five cartridges in my magazine, and if I miss with the first, I shall not fail to hit with one of the others. I shall take no risks.”

Some time after we had eaten our soup, the lieutenant came in, accompanied by a far-away-behind-the-lines official in officer’s uniform, who was greeted with respect and almost fear by the soldiers, and addressed as *Herr Inspektor*. He spoke to us in the usual insolent Prussian fashion, much to the evident embarrassment of the young lieutenant, who had been quite palpably striving

to play the gentleman. He demanded, with much bounce and bluster, that we should pay for our food, to which request we made no demur, and he seemed, the whole time, to be determinedly looking for trouble.

He began to discuss the war in its different aspects, laying the blame, of course, on England and her devilish diplomacy, and showed himself absolutely inaccessible to the arguments we did not hesitate to advance, when we became somewhat nettled by his absurd statement of the case. He left shortly afterwards, and we did not see him again. The corporal, who was bubbling over with unctuous respect for his superior's gay uniform, made a perfect salute on his departure.

We had assumed that we should remain in the guard-room until the transport arrived from Berlin to take us back to prison, but shortly after dark the lieutenant appeared again, and apologised for having to send us to the village lock-up. He had tried hard during the day to elicit from us full information concerning the manner in which we had escaped from prison, and also how we had managed to get to a point so near the frontier, but we told him just as much as we thought was good for him, and no more. The two soldiers who escorted us, with fixed bayonets, from the station

through the dark village to the village jail, were good fellows, and did not conceal their appreciation of the fact that we had several times had a run for freedom, and also their sincere regret that they were compelled to play a part in taking us back to bondage. When handing us over to the jailer inside the village lock-up, they passed on to him a recommendation from the lieutenant that we should be treated as considerately as was consistent with keeping us in safe custody. After we had had our pockets searched for weapons, and even our penknives taken away from us, we were taken along a short corridor, the cell door was opened, and we were shown in. The jailer—a good-hearted fellow, with the slowest-moving mind I have ever encountered (he appeared to live constantly in a state of semi-coma)—brought us a little food before he locked us up for the night.

The cell did not differ, in any marked degree, from what I suppose is the appearance of most cells of the same kind, except for the fact that it was abominably dirty, and the bed was so lousy that I was kept awake for hours at night by what appeared, to my vivid imagination, to be whole regiments of dauntless vermin. In one corner of the room, underneath the heavily-barred window, was a nine-foot pile of bicycle tyres, which had

doubtless been confiscated by the authorities some time before, for the sake of the rubber they contained. The only furniture in the place consisted of a hard bed, with dirty mattress and blankets, a wooden, wedge-shaped pillow, a table, stool, and an abominably insanitary convenience.

We spent three days in this cell, our only relief coming when we were occasionally allowed to tend the corridor fire which was supposed to heat the cell. When permitted to do this work we usually lingered over the job as long as we could, before the time came to be locked up again.

Whether it was a boon to be allowed to live together or not I do not quite know, for our minds were filled with the galling disappointment consequent upon failure in our enterprise, the prospect of transference to the hell we hated so intensely, and speculation as to the punishment we were likely to receive. During the time we spent in this jail we saw no possibility of escape, though we might have succeeded by some ruse or other had we remained there sufficiently long to make the necessary thorough investigation. Our food was usually passed in to us through a tiny trap-door in the door of the cell, and we were charged for it on leaving the jail.

In the cell next to ours was a Russian flight-

lieutenant, who had been recaptured near the same village after a very plucky and determined attempt to escape. While tending the fire we dropped down the trap-door of his cell, and poking our heads through, endeavoured to carry on a conversation with him, but he spoke no English, no French, and practically no German; and as I knew only about three words of Russian and two lines of a Russian song, whose meaning I did not understand, we were not able to do much more than grin at each other and look sympathetic.

CHAPTER XXI.

BACK TO OUR BERLIN PRISON.

ON the morning of the third day the cell door was opened, and we were advised that our guards had come for us. They were a corporal and a private from Berlin, who had been sent specially to escort us back to the prison. We bade farewell to our well-meaning if undesirable host, and leaving the jail set out for the station, where we took train for Dortmund. Our guards warmed up to us after the first few minutes, and had they not been our guards, would have been quite acceptable travelling companions.

At Dortmund we had to change and wait some time for a train. The soldiers very considerably suggested that we should go into the third-class waiting-room, and there they allowed us to order a meal and drink beer. Our train from Dortmund to Berlin was a corridor express train, and almost full of soldiers. For a short distance we had to

stand in the corridor, but later one of the soldiers succeeded in inducing the guard to find room for us. The third-class compartment which he found contained only two vacant seats. For obvious reasons we tried to induce our guards to take these seats, while they, also for obvious reasons, and with more success, insisted that *we* should take them. On taking our seats we found ourselves sitting face to face with a private of the Zeppelin Corps, who, in spite of the notice warning soldiers and sailors to be guarded in their conversation, was allowing himself to be "pumped" by his fellow-passengers, and was talking as freely about Zeppelins and attacks on England, in which he had participated on three occasions, as though he were talking to his commanding officer.

We arrived in Berlin late that night, and were handed over, in the office of the Stadt Vogtei Prison, to the care of the warders whom I had fondly imagined I should never see again. Great was their glee at sight of us once more. We were taken to the worst cells, at the back of the military part of the prison, and locked in for the night.

CHAPTER XXII.

MORE SOLITARY CONFINEMENT.

I THREW myself on my hard low bed and slept.

It soon became evident that the punishment to be meted out to us on this occasion was intended to be so harsh in its character that it would act as a deterrent in the case of any of our fellow-prisoners who might be working on similar plans for escape. We were to be allowed no English parcels whatsoever, and our friends were warned that they would be severely punished if they attempted to pass in food to us. The reason why we had been given cells in the back part of the military prison was to make it impossible for our friends to see us or to speak to us.

Our cell windows looked down into another yard, where only the German prisoners took exercise. Books were allowed us, and although one's range of choice was very much limited, I found solace in such books as the second volume

of Morley's 'Life of Gladstone,' Prescott's 'History of the Conquest of Peru,' 'The Autobiography of Lord Herbert of Cherbury,' Walton's 'Compleat Angler,' and the first portion of 'Don Quixote.' Another book which I read was Gordon's 'Diary in Khartoum.' In one entry, Gordon, referring to the shortage of food from which the besieged suffered in Khartoum, says:—

“The stomach governs the world, and it was the stomach (a despised organ) which caused our misery from the beginning. It is wonderful that the ventral tube of man governs the world, in small and great things.”

It was certainly “that despised organ” which caused my misery, and our failure, on our last attempt to escape.

Apart from these English books, I managed to procure from a fellow-prisoner a number of recently published books, written by German flying-men, submarine commanders, naval officers, and war correspondents, and found them intensely interesting.

Two or three days after our arrival in the Stadt Vogtei Prison, we heard that S——, the ringleader of our little party, had also been captured and brought to the prison. He was put into the cell next to mine, and on the night of his arrival, he,

Keith, and I were taken to a room near the prison office to await examination at the hands of *Kriegsgerichtsrat* (Court-Martial Advocate) Wolff from the *Kommandantur* in Berlin. He was not free to see us immediately, and while waiting for him we were kept together in one room.

Wolff, a baptised German Jew, wore on his gorgeous tunic the ribbon of the Iron Cross, which I suspect was conferred upon him for his courage in persecuting the countless poor Polish civilians who had passed through his hands since the outbreak of war. He sat there, smug, fat, and complacent as ever, and, like Sam Weller when he saw the turnkeys who let Mr Pickwick into the Fleet Prison, I reflected upon the immense satisfaction it would afford me to make a fierce assault upon him—if it were only lawful and peaceable to do so. He cross-questioned me thoroughly, his secretary taking down my statement in writing. He showed a most ill-bred curiosity concerning every detail of our escape, and my statement, when I had signed it, no doubt aroused considerable interest among those officers in the Berlin *Kommandantur* who still retained an interest in, and understanding for, the fairy-tales of their childhood. Keith was then called in, the statement was read over to him, and he signed it,

with what mental reservations I know not. Keith and I were then taken to our cells, while S— had to undergo a short examination alone. The following morning we were told by the sergeant that we should be kept in the strictest form of solitary confinement for four weeks, and should be allowed no privileges whatsoever. The lieutenant was determined to see that the punishment meted out to us should be of such an exemplary character that none of the other prisoners would commit the same offence.

It would make an interesting story if I dared relate exactly why we emerged from our five weeks' solitary confinement—it became five weeks instead of four—without loss of weight, but I must refrain.

After we had been in solitary confinement for about a fortnight, the lieutenant occasionally came to my cell, accompanied by the warder, when the conversation which took place between us usually ran somewhat as follows:—

“*Guten Tag*, Herr Ellison. Well, how is the prison diet suiting you?”

“Abominably, lieutenant. I am losing weight fast, and feel very slack and weak.”

He would look at me with a puzzled expression, while I tried to appear as sad and careworn as possible.

“ But you look all right.”

“ Yes, lieutenant, I may *look* all right, but I know how I *feel*. It is scandalous to give men food like this.”

I enjoyed the joke immensely.

Of the men who escaped with us, all except G—— were caught before they had been long in enjoyment of their liberty, and of him we heard no definite news whatsoever. Whether he remained in the country, or succeeded in crossing one of the frontiers, or was shot in trying to do so, I do not know to this day.

S—— had been very incautious in Berlin. One night he telephoned to a lady friend whom the Berlin police were expecting him to visit. The police tapped the wire, and when he arrived at the rendezvous, he was met, not by the lady, but by detectives who were waiting to arrest him. He arrived at the prison wearing a pair of dark-blue spectacles.

Our friend, the proprietor of the gambling-hell, jumped on to the platform of a tram-car in Berlin about eleven o'clock one night, and ran straight into the arms of a policeman who knew him quite well.

“ *Guten Abend, Herr R——. Kommen Sie mit,*” said the policeman; and our friend being a Ger-

man, and well trained in obedience to authority, came *mit*.

The other man, a corporal in the German Army, who rejoined us after he had been at liberty for about six weeks, had been living in the meantime with ladies of doubtful chastity, and told us that on his mother's birthday he could not refrain from going to see her in order to wish her many happy returns of the day. Detectives surrounded the house, his mother pleaded with him not to "scrap" with them, as he said he yearned to do, and he was brought, unresisting, back to prison. Shortly afterwards he volunteered again for service at the Front, and I have no doubt that he was placed in such a position there that his days would be numbered.

We had been put in charge of a warder who had the reputation among his fellows of being particularly punctilious, and even harsh, in the performance of his duties; but he turned out to be a very decent fellow, and did what he could, so far as the regulations would allow, to make our punishment bearable.

The treatment in the prison varied from time to time, as I believe it did throughout every camp and prison in Germany, according to the character of the man who happened to have charge of one

at any particular time. It was neither uniformly bad nor uniformly good; and I feel bound to place on record that, on several occasions, we received from certain of the corporals in charge of us treatment as considerate as could have been meted out to us by our own countrymen. Such treatment, though, was rare; and when we experienced it from men who had neither been offered, nor desired, any inducement to treat us well, we appreciated it very highly indeed.

Two days before Christmas 1916 we were released from solitary confinement, and I was allowed to take a single cell in the part of the building where my former fellow-prisoners were interned. Our Christmas was a melancholy festival, but it was as merry a one as we were able to make it. A sort of defiant cheerfulness characterised the attitude of most of us, and if, deep down in our hearts, there lurked a feeling of black despondency, none of us allowed it to appear on our faces. It was the second Christmas that I had spent in prison, and I resolved that it should be the last. It was the last.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LEFT BEHIND!—DEPARTURE OF FRIENDS TO
RUHLEBEN.

EARLY in January we all put our heads together, and set to work on still another petition for our return to Ruhleben Camp. We advanced all the old arguments, and perhaps something of our desperation fired the words it contained. To our amazement, rumours ran through the prison—rumours which no one seemed able to confirm—that the authorities at the Berlin *Kommandantur* had decided that we should return to camp. We were incredulous.

I had long since abandoned hope of ever seeing Ruhleben again, and my mind was constantly at work to find some other way out of the prison, which I felt was destined otherwise to be my home until the end of the war. My health was seriously impaired; my nerves, at times, were in shocking condition; my memory had begun

to suffer, and, in spite of all my efforts to be, and remain, defiantly cheerful, there came hours when I was overwhelmed by fits of gloom and despondency, against which I battled in vain. And I was by no means an isolated case. My friends were similarly affected. We grew strangely irritable. The best of friends quarrelled violently with each other, and without cause. We had long since abandoned the little debates in which we used to indulge, in the early days of our prison life. Apart from the fact that each man knew his neighbour's point of view from A to Z, we were none of us in a fit condition to argue good-temperedly. Few of us were able to read books, and we spent most of the day wandering aimlessly about from cell to cell in search of the congenial companion we so seldom found.

Stevenson, in his 'Virginibus Puerisque,' says:—

“ People who share a cell in the Bastille, or are thrown together on an uninhabited isle, if they do not immediately fall to fisticuffs, will find some possible ground of compromise. They will learn each other's ways and humours, so as to know where they must go warily, and where they may lean their whole weight.”

So it was with us in our Bastille. When we found ourselves drawn constantly into contact with all sorts and conditions of men, it did not take us long to learn the ways and humours of our friends. We soon discovered men whom it was necessary to avoid. With others we had to walk very warily indeed, lest in their moods of unnatural irritability we should be constantly guilty of offence where none was intended, and long and intimate acquaintance in the case of others taught us indeed that they were men on whom we might lean our whole weight.

Finally came the day when we were informed that the authorities had decided to send back to camp the Englishmen who were interned in the prison; but, alas! four of us who had escaped from the prison were to be kept behind. We were able to draw slight consolation from the fact that we were evidently considered too dangerous for even this partial release.

The other two Englishmen who were kept behind, apart from Keith and myself, were S—— and W——, who had made a plucky escape about seven o'clock one morning through one of the corridor windows into the street. A certain German, whose name I have forgotten, was interned for a time in the prison, and shared their cell.

S—— and W—— had taken compassion on him and had fed him regularly. This German, by way of showing his gratitude for all that they had done for him, told them that when he was released he would take out of prison with him certain articles and foodstuffs which they might require, if they succeeded in escaping, and would declare that they were his own personal effects when his luggage was examined at the moment of his departure. He further invited the two to call for their luggage at his house when they had once made good their escape from the prison. Once clear of the prison, they called upon him, and he was most profuse in his expressions of delight at seeing them. Shortly after their arrival he made some excuse in order to leave the flat, and told them that he would be back within a very short time. What actually happened (and this I have upon absolutely unimpeachable authority) was this: This German gentleman telephoned immediately to the prison office and said—

“As a proof of my patriotism, I wish to inform you that the two Englishmen, S—— and W——, who escaped from the prison this morning, are at my house.”

He then gave instructions that they should send and arrest S—— and W—— in such a way that

he would not appear to be implicated at all. This was done, and the luckless two were brought back to prison about four o'clock in the afternoon of the same day. I pity the gentleman if either of the two has an opportunity of shaking hands with him after the war.

That parting from our friends was a sad affair. Although we had all lived under the microscope to such an extent, and for so long a time, that the most minute of our faults became magnified in the eyes of our best friends into enormities, it must not be forgotten that the microscope also brought the finer points into relief. Bad as life had been with those men there, we saw before us the prospect of a life indescribably worse when they had gone. We British are not a demonstrative people, and the simple statement that eyes lit up with affectionate regard, that hands clasped tighter and lingered longer together, will convey a world of meaning to any Englishman who reads these words. For all practical purposes Ruhleben Camp—a bare seven miles away—was more remote than Egypt is from England in times of peace.

S——, when he escaped from prison along with the rest of us, did not attain the end at which he was aiming. He did not, on that occasion, succeed in robbing the police of their prey. He was

taken out for trial on one occasion, after his recapture, and—did not return.

The wily scoundrel was taken to the police court by a Berlin policeman, and, on the return journey from the court to the prison, succeeded in inducing the policeman to enter a public-house for refreshment. S—— was bubbling over with generosity, and in his eagerness to give the enemy a good time, he made the policeman blind drunk, and at a convenient moment escaped through a lavatory window.

A fortnight later a post-card addressed to me, bearing the signature of S——, and posted in Holland, arrived at the prison office, and although I never received the card, I learned that on it S—— informed me of his safe arrival in Holland, told me gleefully that there was plenty to eat there, and very foolishly, in a final sentence, asked me when I intended to join him.

For quite a long time after the arrival of this post-card, instructions were given to the corporals to keep the strictest possible watch on Keith and myself; and at all times during the day, though particularly just before locking-up time, we found it impossible to get away from two of the corporals, who, in a most clumsy fashion,

were endeavouring to disguise the fact that they were keeping careful watch on us.

A Pole, who had a cell looking down into our yard, but situated on the fifth floor—one floor higher than our own—made a remarkable escape from the prison, and, so far as I know, was never recaptured.

In some way or other he had secured possession of a small file, and night after night, when the inmates of the prison were asleep, he climbed up to the bars of his window, and filed away at one of the perpendicular iron bars until at last he had filed it completely through. He used to fill up the notch he had made with soap, so that his work would not be discovered by the warders during the day. When the bar was completely filed through, he decided to escape the following night, and by a most ingenious use of various contrivances which he found in his sparsely-furnished cell, he made a means of exit from the cell on to the roof. He bent back the bar through which he had filed, and just managed to squirm through on to the zinc window-ledge. He jammed a piece of wood which he found in the cell between the bars and the bricks, so that it formed a convenient ledge, steadied himself on the window-ledge by means of his towel which he had drawn

through the top iron cross-piece, and, stepping on to the wooden ledge he had made, took a firm grip of the brick coping above him and climbed on to the flat roof. As there was a sheer seventy-foot drop below him on to the stone pavement of the yard, it will be clearly seen that this was a feat demanding considerable nerve and coolness.

How he escaped from the roof into the street was never discovered, but it is possible that he found his way on to the roof of a series of flats, and thence climbed through an open trap-door into the attic of some house. It was a wonderfully plucky escape.

When spring and summer returned, we were cheered somewhat in our loneliness by the arrival of a few other luckless escapers, who had made a bid for freedom from Ruhleben Camp. New friendships were formed, and our prison life again became a little more bearable. Each man, as he arrived, had a more or less interesting story to tell, and we learned something from each failure.

CHAPTER XXIV.

RUHLBEN AFTER TWO YEARS' ABSENCE.

I BELIEVE, in July 1917, we heard reports of the Conference between British and German delegates at The Hague, which was being held for the purpose of discussing the question of the treatment of prisoners of war, and when more details came to hand we learned that the case of such luckless ones as ourselves was also being discussed. At about the end of the first week in August, we learned quite definitely that the delegates and their respective Governments had agreed that those who had already served sentences for attempts to escape should be returned to "conditions of ordinary captivity," and that escapers, in future, were to be punished on recapture with a maximum sentence of fourteen days' solitary confinement, after the expiration of which period they were to be allowed to return to camp.

At the time I had serious thoughts of escaping

from prison, but my friends argued—and argued quite rightly—that in view of the fact that so many possible avenues of escape had been closed once and for all by the prison authorities, and that the most thorough precautions had been taken to prevent any further escape from the prison, any attempt along the lines I suggested would mean facing absolutely unwarrantable risks.

My eagerness to make the attempt, whatever the risks, was not in any sense meritorious; it was the expression of a seething revolt against the injustice of my treatment and the unnatural life I was condemned to lead. There were times when I examined myself, and frankly and quite honestly admitted to myself that I should face the prospect of a quick death at the hands of a shooting-party in the prison-yard with perfect indifference. If I am grateful for anything in my prison life, it is, more than anything else, for the fact that I seldom, if ever, lost “kick”—I can find no better word.

As I expected, the *Kommandantur* in Berlin evidently did all in their power, before sending us back to Ruhleben, to see if there were any possible way of evading the treaty obligations into which they had entered, and it was not until it was clearly brought home to them that it had been

the intention of the British delegates expressly to include in the treaty such cases as our own that they decided to allow us to go back to camp. Almost a full month had elapsed after The Hague agreement came into operation before we were released from the prison, and it was near the end of September when we arrived in camp.

We received a warm welcome from the interned on our arrival. I met scores of friends whom I had not seen for over two years, and found that the camp conditions had changed for the better. My long incarceration in the prison, with the absence of sun and fresh air, along with the depressing life there, had left me very much blanched. An Irish friend came up to me and said, with a laugh—

“Good God, Ellison, you look like a b—corpse! When are you going to order your coffin?”

“Not yet, Tom, not yet,” I answered with a laugh.

The naughty escapers were put into Barrack 14, which had been cleared of all other occupants prior to our arrival. The intention was to keep us there under very strict supervision, and for about a week many of us were unable to sleep at night for the noise of corporals and soldiers tramp-

ing through the barrack and examining every bed, every hour, from bedtime to daybreak. If a man happened to be missing from his bed, they awoke the whole barrack in order to get to know where he happened to be at the moment.

The camp was given three roll-calls a day—one at half-past seven in the morning, the next at half-past one, and the third at half-past seven in the evening. The first two were held on the race-course, and the evening roll-call took place in the barrack at night.

It was apparent that it was no easy matter to escape from the camp, though many of us had returned with the determination of having a run for our liberty at the earliest possible moment.

For a time I thoroughly enjoyed the privilege of strolling about the camp, taking meals with old friends, inspecting the different institutions which had been established, and making new acquaintances. It was like a holiday to me by sheer force of contrast. All the distances in the camp seemed most spacious after my close confinement in the prison, and I revelled in such elementary things as wind, rain, sun, green trees, and the clean young English athletes who were so plentiful in camp.

Life in Ruhleben, however, replete as the camp was with opportunities for work and diversion of

all kinds, had not been without its effect on many of the interned during my two years' absence. Particularly sad was the marked effect it had had on the minds of some of the fine young boys whom I had known and liked when the camp was founded. Quite a number whom I saw were suffering from various degrees of melancholia and depression of spirits; but on the whole the men—old and young—were standing the strain remarkably well.

It was some time before I could regain the necessary physical fitness to think seriously of fixing a date for my next attempt at escape. The prison life had had a softening influence upon my physique, and one severe cold after another led me to think, at times, that I should never regain my former physical fitness. The question of internment in Holland was being much discussed at the time in camp, and, along with the rest, I had to undergo a medical examination, in order to see whether I were eligible or not for internment there. I attached no importance, however, to this, preferring to exchange myself rather than await the convenience of official bodies. I felt that it would afford me greater satisfaction to win back to freedom in my own way, rather than wait until I was exchanged. It would have been a sort of

anti-climax to my many failures, had I been given my freedom along those lines.

Keith made his final and successful attempt some time in October, along with my friends Armstrong and Kaufmann, and reached Holland within a fortnight, taking train from Berlin by devious routes and walking the rest of the distance to Holland.¹ They wished me to accompany them, but I had resolved that I would make my next attempt absolutely on my own initiative, and I was only waiting until I felt sufficiently well to be able to face any ordinary physical fatigue, and any possible nerve-strain.

I was not at all certain of the quality of my German, but had, for some time, been working very hard at the language, and I felt more confidence in my ability to pass as a German or neutral than I had done at any previous date.

¹ Armstrong and Kaufmann had failed on two previous occasions, and were for many months my cell companions in prison.

CHAPTER XXV.

THREE MORE UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS TO
ESCAPE.

AFTER the escape of my three friends had been discovered, conditions in camp, from an escaper's point of view, became changed for the worse. From nightfall to daybreak the guard around the camp was doubled; the strategic points were carefully studied by the officers, and such precautions were taken to prevent another successful escape that, for a time, the situation appeared almost hopeless. One or two who attempted to escape at night were caught, and sent to prison before they had got clear of the camp.

All this gave me furiously to think. I studied the movements of sentries in as unobtrusive a manner as possible, refused to allow myself to be pumped by men who were unduly inquisitive, and when asked whether I intended to escape again or not, usually told the questioner that I felt that

I had had enough, and should settle down quietly to some sort of work in the camp.

The result of my reflections was this. I succeeded more or less in putting myself into the place of the German officers, who had determined to make the camp as much escape-proof as possible, and after trying to think, as it were, with their minds, I came to the conclusion that they expected men to escape along certain well-established lines.

Once having learned so much, I examined the precautions they had taken to prevent further escapes, with a view to discovering whether I had correctly interpreted the working of their minds or not. I found that I was not wrong in the conclusion at which I had arrived, and that the measures which had been resorted to—effective as they undoubtedly were—were of such a character that they did not make escape impossible, provided only that one decided resolutely to depart from the usual methods of escape. In a word, I arrived at the conclusion that the scheme which offered the most prospect of success was a plan of escape on entirely original lines. I decided that I would do something which the German officers had not dreamed that an escaper might think of doing.

Once having made this principle my own, I found that it offered immense possibilities, I discovered quite a number of possible avenues of escape, and almost regretted that the nature of the enterprise demanded that I should restrict myself to one of them.

My motto became, "Do the unexpected!"

I discovered among other things, that most of the precautions taken by the camp officers were designed to prevent escapes after dark, when most of the attempts were made.

"Very good!" I said to myself. "Then it is quite obvious that I must escape during the day."

Secondly, the usual practice, in the gentle art of escaping, was to avoid meeting the sentries. Again it was perfectly clear to me that if I intended to stick to my motto and do the unexpected, I should have to proceed on quite different lines, and *deliberately place myself in the way of the sentries*—rub shoulders with them if necessary.

From careful and cautious observation of a certain part of the camp—for obvious reasons I cannot enter into details—I discovered that three sentries were placed in line during the day. Their sentry-boxes were about 150 to 200 yards apart.

I decided that I would watch for a suitable moment, and then climb quickly over the second

fence at that part of the camp and drop as quietly as possible between them into the road. My idea then, if I attracted no attention, was to walk brazenly past the one or the other, just as though I were a German civilian out for a stroll. If I felt sufficiently cool I might pass the time of day, in my best German, with one of them. From what I had learned of the mentality of the German soldier, I felt convinced that he would not expect *that* in broad delight from an escaped prisoner. It would be quite outside all the rules and regulations he had been taught in his carefully regulated life. I was beginning to enjoy myself beforehand—which was also unexpected. Every prospect pleased me, and only man was vile.

Very carefully and quietly I made the necessary preparations. It would have been very agreeable—and again quite *unexpected!*—if I had been able to take luggage with me; but there were difficulties of transport in the way, and, after all, there was a limit to one's strict adherence to a motto. The high barbed-wire fences would be sufficiently difficult to negotiate without suit-cases; so, regretfully, I decided to carry only what my pockets would hold.

The day arrived.

My overcoat pockets were crammed with all sorts of things, including map, compass, tobacco,

pipe, cigarettes, a spare collar, and gloves. As my overcoat was rolled up into a bundle, I had to make sure that my precious belongings would not fall out, by fastening the pockets with safety-pins.

It was a Sunday afternoon about three o'clock, and all was ready. I had chosen this hour because the first football match of the season was being played, and most of the prisoners would be on the grand stand or around the ground as spectators. Three of us made our way, as unobtrusively as possible, to the chosen spot.

Two high barbed-wire fences would have to be climbed before I was clear of the camp itself—the first one nine feet high. There then came an intervening space about three or four yards wide, and after that the second and last fence. The second was a wooden board fence about seven feet high, surmounted by two very awkwardly-placed strands of barbed wire along the whole of its length. The barbed wire was attached to iron stanchions which sloped inwardly.

“Is the coast clear?”

“Yes. Now's your chance.”

To protect my hands from laceration by the barbs, I wore a pair of old gloves, into the palms of which I had stuffed several folds of stout mackintosh. One of my two friends gave me a leg-up,

while my second friend mounted guard. Very few people saw me.

A second later I was pivoted on the palm of my right hand on the apex of one of the posts, saw that my clothes were clear of the wire, and dropped lightly down on the other side of the fence. Vanity of vanities! I remember hoping that I *looked* cool, and remember quite distinctly that I didn't *feel* the least bit cool. My coat was flung over, I darted across the intervening space, and crouched down behind some bushes whose foliage I thought was far too thin.

As soon as I was breathing more or less regularly again, I took a grip of the top of the fence and pulled myself up breast-high in order to ascertain the position of the sentries on the other side. I had decided to take into account only the two on each side of me. The third, on my right, was a considerable distance away, and I trusted to his being too far away to see me.

On my left the coast was clear, but on my right, about one hundred or a hundred and twenty yards away, the sentry was standing in the middle of the road. The sun was in my eyes and I saw the glint of it on the brass of his helmet, but stare as I would I could not see whether his back was towards me or not.

By this time my arms and fingers were aching, and I dropped down, darted back to the first fence, and told my friends of my difficulty. One of them volunteered to come over and help me, but I refused to allow him to do so.

I ran back, and just as I was about to pull myself up again I heard the noise of approaching footsteps on the other side of the fence. I crouched down again, listening and waiting.

When they were three or four yards past me, on my right, I peeped over the fence and saw a German officer and two ladies going in the direction of Spandau. At first thought it seemed to be sheer madness to go on with my plans, but like a flash my motto came back to me, "Do the unexpected!" If I jumped down behind the officer and the ladies—they were at the moment less than twenty paces from me—the likelihood was that the sentry on my right would have his eyes riveted on his superior, preparing to salute. The chances were that he would not see me at all. I was assuming that the coast on my left was still clear.

Having so placed my overcoat that I should be able to drag it over after me, I climbed up and was almost level with the top of the fence when I felt the stanchion which I held give way. In changing

my grip it occurred to me to see if the coast were still clear to my left.

Oh, damn! I was staring straight into the eyes of a German sentry who was standing not more than twenty paces away from me!

I clean forgot my motto and did—the expected;—dashed back to the other fence, flung over my coat, and followed it myself with astonishing agility. As soon as we were clear of the spot and lost in the camp I explained matters to my friends.

About two hours later I tried again, but again narrowly escaped being seen by another German soldier inside the camp before I had an opportunity of reaching the second fence.

I did not try again that Sunday.

Within a week I tried once more with another man, but we were seen again, and had to disappear in the camp in order to escape detection.

It seemed as though I should never succeed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

I ESCAPE ALONE FROM RUHLEBEN CAMP.

ALTHOUGH I stuck to my principle of doing the unexpected, I finally came to the decision to abandon my scheme of escaping along the lines of the three futile attempts described in the preceding chapter. A most interesting plan was suggested to me by one of my friends, and I took up the idea with enthusiasm.

On Friday, the twelfth of October 1917, I decided that I would escape the following morning, between half-past eight and nine. Most of my preparations were made, and, during the afternoon, I saw to other details which required attention.

About six o'clock on Friday evening everything was ready for my escape. The same evening, at eight o'clock, I received, from a reliable quarter, the appalling news that certain plans on which I had been patiently and cautiously working for about eighteen months had gone smash. There

was scarcely a vestige of them left, and I was at a loss to know what to do. Should I abandon all intention to escape, or should I, at almost the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour, endeavour to improvise fresh plans and go notwithstanding?

I confided in a trustworthy friend, who was as much concerned as I was at the news I gave him. I was weary of waiting, and finally decided that I would stick to my resolve to escape the following morning, and trust to my wits and good fortune.

I confess it was rather a mad thing to do, pitted as one is, in escaping from Germany, against a ruthlessly efficient organisation and a disconcertingly intelligent people; but, as will be seen, although I found myself committed to a whirl of queer and bewildering adventure, luck was with me, and I won through.

I set out, however, with a mind by no means free from concern regarding the ultimate issue of events. But, apart from my determination to adhere to my motto of doing the unexpected, I quite realised that another long term of imprisonment, which would undoubtedly be the penalty I should have to face in the event of failure, would break me mentally and physically, and I therefore determined

on this occasion that I would avail myself of every means which circumstances placed in my power. Had I known beforehand how trying my adventures would be, I think I should have hesitated before embarking upon them.

I must refrain, until the war is over, from describing in full detail how I managed to escape from the camp. It is quite probable that the German authorities know, but I prefer to assume that I am leaving them in ignorance of the actual facts until I can relate all, without running even a remote risk of implicating others.

As I have said, I had determined to play a lone hand, and, added to the knowledge that the odds were heavily against me in any case, there was this additional disquieting circumstance—that an English accent in my pronunciation of German might spell failure at any stage of my enterprise.

I was present at roll-call, on the race-course, at half-past seven in the morning, and after breakfast, said "So long!" to the friend in whom I had confided, and, with an attempt at a cheery smile, left him. He was one of the two who had helped me on my last three futile attempts, and when I parted from him, he said—

"I won't say good-bye, because it will look d——d silly if the scheme doesn't work after all."

At half-past nine, I found myself at a point facing the camp (and outside its confines) on the railway line which runs from Berlin, through Spandau, to Hannover and Holland. I had got rid of a certain disguise in a certain manner, and was dressed in town clothes, which were more or less German in cut.

I must here explain that a straight road, very little frequented by any one except the German camp officers and guards, runs past the front of the camp in the direction of Spandau. Opposite the camp is a series of allotment gardens, a little wider than the road. These allotments are separated from the railway by a wire fence, and alongside the wire fence runs a rough path, which is not supposed to be used except by employés of the state railway. Briefly put, facing the camp in three parallel lines are a road, the gardens, and the railway lines.

Once on the side of the railway, my cue was to stroll past the sentries in broad daylight, by imitating, as well as I could, the whole bearing and ways of a Prussian railway official of the higher order—a sort of railway surveyor, who would have the right to walk along the edge of the railway line unchallenged by any one. I felt that a Prussian official of this type would, by

nature and upbringing, be haughty and supercilious in his bearing.

Glancing round in the direction of Spandau, I noticed a working-gang of British seafaring men from the camp, at work unloading parcels on a railway siding about twenty or thirty paces from me. They were accompanied by an armed guard, but I based my hopes that I should escape his attention upon the fact that I was doing something entirely unexpected. It occurred to me that it would be well to practise on my fellow-countrymen, and I eyed these "damned Englishmen" in as haughty and supercilious a manner as I could. Then, turning on my heel, and facing Berlin, I lit a cigarette and strolled away from them along the railway line.

I saw that I had five sentries to pass, who were separated from me only by the width of the vegetable gardens which lay between me and the road. Three of them were on point-duty to prevent escapes, and two others emerged with two working-gangs from the main gates, just as I set out on my trying stroll. Each of the five, I believe without exception, saw me, and one or two of them stood still and stared intently at me. When I saw a sentry opposite me staring more than was consistent with good manners,

I stood before him, eyed him brazenly up and down, while I smoked my cigarette, and varied my tactics by sometimes carefully examining a damaged part of the barbed-wire fence (as though I felt annoyed that the Prussian Railway Administration had had to suffer so much damage at the hands of careless people), stared up at the signal-box—an additional danger—or examined with absorbed interest a set of disused buffers on the side of the line.

In this way I got past four sentries. In order to get past the fifth, who stood at the "Tea House" end of the camp, it was necessary to get through a wire fence on to the road, pass through a railway arch, and walk away from him for a distance of a hundred yards, before I was lost to view.

The man was evidently suspicious of me, for as soon as I arrived at the fence which separated me from the road, I found that he had moved into the middle of the road, and was standing watching me intently, at a distance of less than twenty paces from me, his loaded rifle slung over his shoulder. He seemed to be debating in his mind whether he should challenge me or not, and I was wondering what sort of "dressing down" I ought to give him in the event of his

challenging me, in order to leave him with the impression that I was a *pukha* railway surveyor who objected very strongly to being hindered in the carrying out of his duties.

I decided, first of all, to stare him out of countenance, which was rather an ordeal; but fortunately his eyes dropped before mine, and, clumsily lifting the strands of wire, I got through the fence pretty much in the way in which I thought a German railway surveyor would. I then turned my back on him, adjusted my coat-collar, lit another cigarette, and, careful not to appear to be hurrying, walked through the railway arch, along the road which ran, at right angles, into the *Spandauer Chaussee*. After I had gone about a hundred yards I turned to the left, and was immediately out of sight of him. I began to feel rather pleased with my motto.

There was no tram-car in sight, and I set off in the direction of Berlin, walking as fast as my feet could carry me, in order to put as much distance as possible between the hated camp and myself.

The road was lined with trees, and seeing an officer approaching on the left-hand side, I crossed over to the right-hand side before he saw me, and, taking advantage of a slight wind

that was blowing, I put up my left hand, ostensibly for the purpose of holding on my hat, but actually for the purpose of concealing my face from him. When he came level with me, I recognised in him the camp censor. He passed, and I hurried on. A tram-car was approaching me, going from Berlin to Spandau, and I crossed to the other side of the road. I thought that in it I recognised two of the camp officers. Again, when I saw the tram approaching, I crossed over to the other side of the road.

When I had walked about half an hour, I saw that a tram-car was overtaking me, and I waited for it at a stopping-place. I jumped on, and fortunately remained standing—as one is allowed to do on German trams—on the conductor's platform. I say "fortunately," for I had not been more than a few seconds on the platform when I noticed, half-way inside, sitting facing me, an Englishman from the camp named Jones, who was reading the *Berliner Tageblatt*. I knew that Jones had the privilege of going into Berlin on stated days for the purpose of making purchases for the camp canteen, and my first impulse was to go up to him and quietly have a good laugh over the manner in which I had got past the camp guards. Then I thought—

“No; he is certain to be accompanied by a sentry from the camp.”

Jones had not seen me, and, glancing round the wooden framework of the door, I saw, sitting opposite to him on the other side of the gangway, one of the German soldiers who belonged to the camp, in helmet and full uniform. My cue then became to remain unseen if possible, and as Jones was so engrossed in his *Berliner Tageblatt*, I was able, with the help of the wooden framework of the door, to stand in such a position that he would not see me. I remembered that I was smoking an English cigarette, and glanced round to see if any one had noticed its peculiar aroma, which is so different from that of German cigarettes. Relieved to find that it had apparently attracted no attention, I flung the cigarette into the street.

It became necessary to do a little careful calculation. I assumed that Jones and the soldier would take the tram to a certain tube station, the *Wilhelms Platz*. I also wanted to take a tube from the *Wilhelms Platz* into the centre of the city, but I had already had more of their company than I thought was wise, and decided so to arrange matters that I should be certain of taking the train after theirs. I inquired of the conductress

concerning the whereabouts of the *Wilhelms Platz*, which I had never visited before, and dropped from the tram about three hundred yards away from it.

In order to kill time and give the two an opportunity of leaving the tube station before me, I went into a shop to buy cigarettes. The woman seemed to stare at me rather suspiciously, but she allowed me to go, and I took no further notice of the incident. I then strolled in a leisurely fashion to the tube station, took my ticket, and found the train waiting. I walked quite unsuspectingly to the smoking compartment, and just as I was about to enter, found myself again running into Jones and the soldier. Turning back just in time, I entered another compartment.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AT LARGE IN BERLIN.

“Back once more on the old trail, our own trail, the out trail,
—The trail that is always new.”

—KIPLING.

WHEN, the night before my escape from the camp, I found that all my carefully-laid plans had gone smash, it was a crushing blow to have to face. I felt like a general who had dreamed for months of a brilliant victory, drilled his armies to the highest pitch of perfection, and, just as he imagined himself on the very eve of the realisation of his ambitions, found his armies surrounded and decimated before they had had an opportunity of striking a blow.

The friend in whom I had confided, however, introduced me to another man in camp who was able to give me an address at which I might stay in Berlin. This address, he assured me, was absolutely safe, and I should be able to stay

there as long as I liked. But if I find myself mixed up in the next Armageddon in a similar manner, I shall at least know how *not* to act upon the well-meant advice of a friend. It was on the strength of his recommendation that I decided to adhere to my resolve to escape from camp on the Saturday morning, and when I took the tube from the *Wilhelms Platz* to a certain other part of Berlin, I did so with a view to calling at this address, and remaining there in concealment until I had sufficient time to improvise fresh plans.

I had no great difficulty in finding the house in question when I left the tube station, but I came out of it ten minutes later in a state of the most abject despair. I had not reached the corner of the street, however, before I found myself humming, half consciously and half unconsciously, "Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag, and smile, smile, smile!" I had heard this delightful song sung in a *Ruhleben Camp revue* two nights before my escape, and throughout the four weeks and three days which I spent at large in Germany, I found myself involuntarily whistling it in all sorts of queer places. My troubles were plentiful, and I doubt very much whether an old kit-bag would have held them. Still, the song cheered me tremendously.

The address which my well-meaning friend had given me was perfectly useless, and I was fortunate in getting out of the house without meeting the police. I found myself, within an hour of my escape from camp, without any prospect whatsoever of a roof to my head for that night or any of the succeeding nights which I was bound to spend in Germany before I succeeded in crossing the frontier into Holland.

As I walked along the street I pulled myself together, realising the immense importance of appearing in the eyes of passers-by as little like an escaped prisoner as possible. I then reasoned out matters in this wise:—

“It is now eleven o'clock in the morning. At half-past one, at the latest, my escape from camp will have been discovered. It may have been discovered already, and my pursuers may be hot on the scent at this very moment. I will set to work, however, on the assumption that my escape has not been noticed, and that it will not be discovered until half-past one. That leaves me with a narrow margin of time. I will make immediate use of this opportunity to call at a certain place in another part of the city, where I expect the Berlin police will be looking for me at two o'clock in the afternoon at the latest. When there, I shall

be able to learn in a few moments whether the news that I received last night is correct or not. When I know definitely that not a vestige of my plans is left, I shall be able to cut myself adrift from the past, and start with a clear mind on plans for the immediate future. If things are not as bad as I have assumed, all the better, and I will make the fullest possible use of those vestiges of my plans which remain intact."

There was not much time to be lost; so I darted into a tube station, took a ticket for another part of Berlin, and was soon well on my way. I got to the place I sought—partly by tube, partly by cab, and finally on foot, leaving the cab in a crowded street about three hundred yards from the place at which I intended to call. On arrival there, I gave the person whom I sought to understand that I was out from the camp on leave, and, by carefully questioning, elicited information which confirmed my worst fears.

I felt very despondent. Luck seemed to be dead against me, and I began to debate in my own mind whether it were wiser to go ahead and trust to my wits and good fortune, with the odds so heavily against me, or return to the camp and accept my punishment, before I became too deeply implicated in a score of unforeseen troubles which,

on recapture, would only result in making my punishment all the more harsh.

There are moments when one is led to question whether it is advisable, after all, to undertake an escape alone. One feels an almost overwhelming longing for companionship—not necessarily for some one to talk, or to talk to, but for one who is *there*, sharing the same troubles and cherishing the same hopes. A lone hand, however, is, I am inclined to think, the best of all. The strain is heavier, and seldom relaxes until one has reached the goal; but it has this overwhelming advantage—that the lone man plays his own game, needs to consult no one, and, when he finds himself in a tight corner, can come to decisions rapidly and act upon them at once. In an emergency there is no time for debate. The course of action decided upon may be right or wrong, but it *must* be immediate. There is no time for a consideration of conflicting views, for balancing *pros* and *cons*—the *cons* usually have it! The lone man is “Generalissimo.”

While I was in this place talking to this person, and wondering what on earth I could do next, a man came into another room and stared hard at me through the open door. The person to whom I was speaking went to him, and the two talked in undertones for some time.

More than once I have had occasion to be grateful, in escaping, for conclusions at which I have arrived—not by any process of reasoning, but by instinct; and on this occasion the conviction flashed through my mind that the man who had entered the other room and had stared at me so intently was a detective.

I felt that the game was up. I suspected every one. As they talked in low voices, I strained my ears to the utmost to catch what they were saying, but I could not understand a single word. This strengthened my suspicions. Presently the person came back to me, asked me to sit down, and then returned to the man who had entered and continued the conversation in undertones. Again I could understand nothing. After staring at me again, the visitor left the place, as I thought, to wait for me in the street.

“Who was that man?” I asked, as nonchalantly as I could.

“Oh, only a detective.”

I forced a smile as I said—

“Whom is he seeking? Not me, surely?”

“Oh, no! of course not you.”

And then the person told me the purpose of the detective's visit.

It was clear that I had had a very narrow escape,

as this was one of the very places in which I expected the detectives to seek me, less than two hours later.

“You have not escaped, have you?”

Again I forced a laugh as I said—

“No, indeed not. I am out on leave, as I said before.”

Then, glancing at my watch, I pretended to be horrified at the time.

“Good heavens! I must be going. I have squared my soldier to wait for me at such and such place, and I shall be late if I do not leave immediately. Good-bye.”

I went out, wondering what on earth I should say by way of a last attempt at bluff if I met the detective at the door.

On arrival in the street, I found that he was not there; but the street was fairly crowded, and I thought it best to assume that he was somewhere among the people waiting to watch my movements.

“All right,” I said to myself; “I will see, at any rate, that I get a run for my money, and give you one as well.”

All thoughts of returning to the camp had vanished of their own accord. Fortune was harrying me at every turn, and my blood was up.

I turned down the first quiet street which I could find, and, choosing only those streets which were little frequented by people, I zigzagged until I had quite lost my bearings. As I turned round one corner, I glanced back along the quiet street, through which I had just passed, in order to make sure that no one answering the description of the detective had followed me. This was an easy matter, seeing that I always chose streets which were not crowded with people. When I felt fairly certain that I had thrown him off the scent, if he were actually following me, I decided to make matters doubly certain by dropping down into a tube station and taking train to another part of the city.

I asked my way to a certain tube station of an old man whom I met, and discovered that I had completely lost my bearings. In order to get to this tube station, I had to go along the whole length of the prison in which I had been incarcerated for over two years, and also along the whole length of the Chief Police Station in Berlin. Luckily, I saw no warders, and arrived at the tube station in safety. There, without loss of time, I took a train to the West End of Berlin, and got out at the Zoological Gardens Station.

I was still at large, but the precious freedom

for which I had struggled so long and so persistently seemed no nearer than before.

By this time I was hungry, and went into the *Wilhelms Hallen Restaurant*, which I had visited on a former escape, having previously purchased a smart imitation-leather attaché-case, into which I transferred the odd articles I had brought with me from the camp, and with which my pockets were overloaded. Throughout the remainder of my stay in Berlin, I carried this attaché-case wherever I went, walking about with the air of a twenty-fifth rate commercial traveller.

A major, resplendent in his parade uniform, sat at the next table to me, but I took no notice of him, and ordered an expensive vegetable meal which quite failed to satisfy my hunger, but served, nevertheless, to stave off its more acute pangs. Afterwards I visited a number of cafés and walked along the *Kurfürstendamm* and the *Tauentzienstrasse*—the Pall Mall and Regent Street of Berlin—and did my utmost to ascertain the whereabouts of a certain address which had been given to me by a Russian Pole in prison. Two addresses which I had obtained in this way I had written down on cigarette papers and concealed on my person, with a view to using them in some such emergency.

It appeared, however, that this particular address was in one of the most unsavoury slums in Berlin. All the cab-drivers whom I approached refused point-blank to drive me there—mainly, I suppose, on account of the distance. I spoke to one jehu, and asked him to drive me there. He looked me up and down, and then, jerking his thumb over his shoulder at his horse, which was simply a bag of skin and bones, said in his funny Berlin dialect—

“*Wot, mit diesem Hund? Det glaub' ich nit.*”
(What! with this tyke? Not likely!)

There was a great shortage of fodder, and I do not remember to have seen one decently fed horse, either in Berlin or in any of the other German towns through which I passed.

The contrast between London and Berlin in time of war is most marked. While there are few indications in London, at the present day, that England is involved in war, apart from the presence of an unusual number of men in khaki and an all-round rise in prices, in Berlin it is impossible to escape from the atmosphere of war. There is much less traffic in the streets than in times of peace. Apart from army automobiles, practically no motor-cars are to be seen in the streets, and the very few which one meets are, on

account of the shortage of rubber, furnished with noisy wooden tyres, which are fitted with steel cushion springs between the outer and the inner rim. No bicycles may be used except for business purposes, and the few that are allowed have a type of tyre similar to the one described. By paying through the nose, and producing the necessary coupons, it is still possible to obtain a meal in hotels and restaurants; but I usually found that I had to have a meal in each of at least two restaurants to satisfy my hunger. The low-class night cafés which used to be characteristic of a certain seamy side of Berlin life are still to be found, but the better-class cafés, such as the Palais de Danse, Maxim's, and the Fledermaus, have been closed by the police.

There is a marked absence in the streets of able-bodied men of military age in civilian clothes, and many of the women and children look pinched and hungry. I noticed the effects of the shortage of food more particularly in the case of little children. Tea, cocoa, coffee, and chocolate were unprocurable. The coffee supplied in the most sumptuous Berlin cafés is a concoction brewed from roasted acorns, barley in the husk, or corn, and it is supplied without sugar or saccharine. The hand of war lies heavy on the German people, and wher-

ever I went I heard no sentiments so frequently uttered or so strongly expressed as an utter loathing of war and a fervent desire for peace.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, after many futile attempts to find the address given to me by the Russian Pole, I began to think again that there was something wrong with my luck, and I rashly resolved to put matters immediately to the test. I walked along the *Kurfürstendamm* in search of the most sumptuous café there. I found one without a name, and entered, to find that it had been called, in times of peace, "*Das englische Café.*" Sitting down in an easy-chair, I lit my last English "Waverley" cigarette, and decided that I would startle the waiter. He came up.

"What will you take, sir?"

"*Bringen Sie mir bitte ein Whisky and Soda.*"

He stared at me, with a puzzled expression on his face, and said quietly—

"We haven't got that, sir."

"Haven't you?"

"No, sir."

I then decided that I would ask for something French, and told him to bring me a Hennessy's cognac.

"I think we have a little of that, sir," he replied, and presently brought me a small glass of Three

Star brandy, and left me. I sat there for three-quarters of an hour, sipping my brandy and smoking my English cigarette to the end. Neither the aroma of the English cigarette nor the strange thing I had ordered seemed to arouse the waiter's suspicions.

When I left the café I felt justified in coming to the conclusion that luck was with me after all—that my star was not as malignant a one as I had feared it must be.

I then set about with more determination than I had previously shown to find the address which I sought, and, with the help of a chauffeur, who gave me partial instructions, I managed to find the place in the slums of *Alt Moabit*, after a wearisome journey by tram and on foot. I was not altogether sorry when I found the door of the house banged in my face and locked, before I had had an opportunity of explaining the purpose of my visit. I left to wander a little longer in the streets of that part of Berlin, in the dark and rain, and then, with the future as black before me as ever, I took a tram to the *Potsdamer Platz* in the centre of the city. It was a Saturday night, and there was a great crowd of people.

I needed an opportunity to collect my thoughts, and to decide definitely upon some course of action

before it was too late. It was quite out of the question for me to go to a hotel, for I was not furnished with papers, nor had I any luggage, and I had not sufficient confidence in the quality of my German to risk long conversations with any one—at any rate, not until I had become a little more experienced in the art.

It occurred to me to visit a café and cinema theatre. In the café I sat among German soldiers and officers for about an hour, examining time-tables, and wondering whether I ought to endeavour to escape from Berlin before midnight. It was essential, however, before I did so, that I should have a more or less clear idea of the lines on which I intended to carry my escape through, and this was not a problem which could be settled in a few minutes.

Thinking that I might have the best opportunity of collecting my thoughts in a cinema theatre, where the darkness, to a certain extent, would shield me from too critical observation, I went to the best cinema theatre I could find, and took one of the best seats. I had not been there three minutes before I discovered that the film on the screen was a detective film, in which the particular Sherlock Holmes in question was getting the best of it all the time! Now, I had

had enough of detectives for one day; they were beginning to get on my nerves, and, leaving the film-star to track down his luckless victim, I got up and walked out of the theatre into the drizzling rain.

People who knew Berlin well had warned me to steer clear of the *Unter den Linden*, *Friedrichstrasse*, *Leipzigerstrasse*, the *Potsdamer Platz*, *Taentzienstrasse*, and the *Kurfürstendamm*; but, by some strange cussedness, I found myself, during the three days I spent in Berlin, wandering most of the time along those very streets. If I took a quiet side street in order to get out of one of them, the quiet side street invariably led me into another of the main streets.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

I FIND A FRIEND.

“Smile not, reader, too carelessly facile! Frown not, reader, too unseasonably austere. Little call was there here either for smiles or frowns. . . . These unhappy women, to me, were simply sisters in calamity; and sisters amongst whom, in as large measure as amongst any other equal number of persons commanding more of the world’s respect, were to be found humanity, disinterested generosity, courage that would not falter in defence of the helpless, and fidelity that would have scorned to take bribes for betraying.”—DE QUINCEY, *Confessions of an Opium-Eater*.

By this time I had come to my last card. It was one which I wished to avoid playing if I could possibly do so, but everything else had failed me.

It was impossible for me to sleep out. Not only was the weather cold and wet, but there was the more important consideration that I had by this time decided, that I would not endeavour, as one usually does on such an enterprise, to keep out of sight as much as possible. I would try and disarm suspicion by deliberately

placing myself in the way of people, and would try to do everything which the average German, on whom no suspicion rested, might be expected to do. This meant that I could not go about like a vagabond. A clean collar, clean shirt, a shave, and, at any rate, the remains of a crease in my trousers, were quite as essential as cool nerves, and it was therefore necessary that I should find some place in which I could spend the remaining nights of my stay in Berlin with a certain amount of safety. I therefore set out in search of my last address, which was a brothel in one of the lower parts of Berlin.

This address, too, I had obtained during my long sojourn in prison, and had treasured it up in my memory for some such emergency. It took me fully an hour to find the exact neighbourhood in which the place was supposed to be situated, but when I came to make close inquiries, I discovered that the number given me did not exist, and I did not dare to make chance inquiries at what might turn out to be quite respectable houses. In my despair, I saw the gaily-lighted windows of a low-class café on the opposite side of the road, and, without a moment's hesitation, walked across and entered.

It was a fairly large café, chiefly frequented by

unfortunates, dissipated-looking men, and a few soldiers. I took a seat at a table near the door. Near me, at the next table, was a girl of about twenty to twenty-two years of age, whose smile drew my attention. This caused me to regard her with more care. I was feeling lonely, and it seemed years since I had had a smile from any-one. Her features had nothing that was vicious in them. She was rather a pretty girl, with big, blue, melancholy eyes, and, among the loose women who were there, seemed to me to be quite a thing apart. At my invitation, she came to my table and drank coffee with me.

We talked, and I had not spoken many sentences before she said to me—

“You are a foreigner, are you not?”

I smiled and said—

“No, I am a German, but prior to the outbreak of war I spent many years in America, hence the foreign accent which is noticeable when I speak German. I came over from America shortly before the outbreak of war, volunteered for the army when war was declared, but was rejected as being physically unfit for military service.”

“Oh! that’s it,” she said. “I thought you spoke with a foreign accent.”

Whilst we were talking, I noticed a noisy group of soldiers on a raised dais to my right, all of whom were more or less tipsy. They were drinking *Sekt* (German champagne), and one of them, more tipsy than the rest, was smashing champagne-glasses by flinging them on to the floor as fast as the waiter brought fresh ones. He then began to stroll about the café, and, feeling that a row was approaching, I thought it wise to disappear before I became involved in it.

I paid the waiter, and my new-found friend and I went out into the dark streets.

Few things in literature have impressed me so much and affected me so deeply as De Quincey's story of Ann and Oxford Street — stony-hearted stepmother — in his 'Confessions of an Opium-Eater.' My situation that night was perhaps more desperate than that of De Quincey when he tramped Oxford Street, friendless and penniless, and met that angelic street-girl, who tended him like a mother and loved him like a sister. But I was older than De Quincey, and the troubles which threatened to overwhelm me had come of my deliberate seeking, so that the advantages from that point of view, at any rate, were heavier on my side. Like De Quincey, I never learned more of my benefactress than her Christian name, and, like

De Quincey, however assiduously I may search for her as a free man, to tell her of my gratitude for all that she did for me, I may search and search and never find her. I shall refer to her from this point on as "Ann."

Within a quarter of an hour of first meeting her, when we were away from the café and alone together, I looked at her carefully, and came to the decision that I would confide in her.

"If Ann is to deserve my confidence," I said to myself, "then she deserves my whole confidence, and I will tell her everything about myself, leaving her with the option of informing the police, or helping me in the one or two directions where assistance has become absolutely essential."

"*Fräulein*," I said, "when I told you in the café that I was a German and not a foreigner, I told you a lie."

Her eyes lit up with interest, and I went on—

"I was unable to tell you anything else there, but I am a foreigner. I am an Englishman. I escaped from Ruhleben Camp near Spandau this morning, and escaped with the intention of crossing over into Holland."

While I watched her carefully, the conviction seized me that I had taken the right course, and that my confidence was not misplaced. I never,

from that moment on, regretted having told her, and I never once had occasion to falter in the confidence which I placed in her. Never again in my life will I allow to pass unchallenged and unrebuked any sweeping condemnation of the women of her class. Magdalen she may have been, but, for me, she broke her alabaster box of ointment, and discovered depths of tenderness and unselfishness which then and since touched me more deeply than it is in my power to describe. In my memory Ann ranks among the good women of the world.

Through Ann, I managed to get an introduction to a gentleman who was a burglar, and something worse. I met him on the Sunday night in a certain café in a low quarter of the town. Before we met him, Ann said to me—

“I hope you won't mind my having told him that you are a burglar friend of mine?”

I laughed.

“Not a bit. I shouldn't mind in the least, Ann, if you had told him that I was a murderer.”

We found the gentleman sitting at a table alone, and I introduced myself to him by clicking my heels together, bowing, and murmuring the name which I had chosen as the most convenient to pronounce.

We were both a little embarrassed at first, but after I had persuaded him that I was one of the same kidney, he warmed up to me.

“Look here, Herr —,” I said, “I have committed a certain crime, but”—here I feigned embarrassment and winked—“if you don’t mind, I would rather not go into details.”

“Oh, that doesn’t matter. One is always willing to help a pal. One never knows when he may need it himself.”

“That’s very fine on your part,” I said. “Now, look here! the police are hot on my heels, and I must get clear of Berlin as soon as possible. I want to go to a certain town,”—I gave the name of another town, of course,—“and, in order to be able to get past any of the detectives who may question me in the train, it is absolutely essential that I should have suitable legitimation papers, and those that I have at present are, of course, quite unsuitable for my purpose.”

He nodded, and I continued—

“What sort of papers have you got? If they are what I am seeking, we might come to some arrangement with each other.”

He produced his, and eventually I bought them, giving him my word that I would post them to him, anonymously, within three days, after which

time they would be of no further use to me. Except for the fact that they were for a younger man, they were exactly what I was seeking. The burglar had been several times rejected by the Army Medical Board as being unfit for military service, and had therefore every right to wear civilian clothes.

While we were sitting in the café, my friend, the burglar, looked at me and said—

“You are a Swede, are you not?”

I looked at him in amazement.

“Yes,” I said; “but how on earth did you discover that?”

“Oh,” he answered, “I could tell at once from your Swedish accent.”

“That’s wonderful,” I said. “You must be gifted in that way.”

This rather pleased him, and he answered with becoming modesty—

“Yes, I am rather good at that sort of thing. I can always tell a man’s nationality from the way he speaks.”

More compliments from me.

Ann grew mischievous, and with a twinkle in her eye, which the burglar happily failed to notice, said to him quite seriously—

“Oh yes. An Englishman, for example, would

“speak with an entirely different accent, wouldn't he?”

“Oh, quite different,” answered the burglar.

When everything had been arranged between us, Ann and the burglar began to discuss a certain criminal of their acquaintance who had formerly been one of their set. They described how this man had murdered his mistress and appeared in their midst the same evening as though nothing had happened. They seemed to be greatly impressed by the murderer's *sangfroid*, and I felt it the proper thing to do to express a sort of horrified admiration of his coolness. I am afraid I gave the burglar the impression that such amazing nonchalance as the murderer revealed would be quite beyond my modest powers.

We went to another house to complete the deal, and when he had left I set about to learn by heart all details concerning the new personality I had assumed. The burglar had had the bad taste to choose a father whose name was unconscionably difficult to pronounce, and I found that he had also been born in some out-of-the-way place which was equally difficult to pronounce.

My funds were running low, and I was therefore compelled to decide to leave Berlin earlier than I should otherwise have done.

Ann used to meet me for meals during the day, and during the three days I remained in Berlin, I wandered about the city, visiting different cafés, picture theatres, restaurants, and hotels, frequently sitting in crowded restaurants among German officers and soldiers, doing my best all the time to look as little like an escaped prisoner as possible. The future was still very uncertain, but my plans were maturing.

All this time, Ann did wonders for me.

"Now look here," she would say, "what art thou going to do about thy next meal? Thou wilt have hunger if thou hast no meat to eat. Here are meat coupons, a potato coupon, and a bread coupon. With these thou canst go to such and such a restaurant and get a fairly good lunch. I will meet thee there. No, no, take them. I don't need them at all."

The day before I left Berlin she said to me—

"I have been trying to get three emergency bread coupons, but I have been unable to do so. With these coupons, however, thou canst go to such and such a shop and buy a quarter of a loaf. At a certain other shop there is a peculiar kind of sausage for sale, without coupons. It is rather expensive, but thou hadst better buy it than go hungry, for the railway journey is a long one."

Make sandwiches for thyself with the bread and sausage, and take them with thee in thy attaché-case."

When I insisted on her taking some of my money, she looked worried and said—

"No, thou wilt have need of it before thou reachest Holland."

I had decided that I would spend the Monday night in a fifth-rate hotel, close to the ——— *Bahnhof*, and that night Ann came along with me, and waited for me in a café close by, until I had booked my room. I was rather afraid of complications which might arise through registration, as I did not want to use my new name in Berlin, unless I were compelled to do so. Most of the hotels were full, but eventually I found one where a room was free, and when I told the landlady that I should have to leave in order to catch a very early train, she said, to my great relief—

"Oh, well, if you are only staying those few hours, it is hardly worth while to worry about registration."

"Just as you like," I said nonchalantly. "It's no trouble, of course."

"Oh, I don't think we'll bother."

"Right you are," I said. "Good-night."

I rejoined Ann later at the café. We walked

about the dark streets for a time among the crowds of soldiers and civilians, and then came the moment of parting. Ann looked sadly at me, as the tram which she was to take came to a stop.

“Good-bye, Ann,” I said, with a lump in my throat, and tried to put into words the deep gratitude I felt for all that she had done for me.

“Good-bye,” she said quietly. “I hope that all will go well with thee. Do not forget to write to me under the name we have agreed upon when thou arrivest safely at a certain town.”

I promised, and kept my word two days later. That is the last that I saw of Ann. As I walked back to the inn, I felt inexpressibly sad and lonely.

CHAPTER XXIX.

I LEAVE BERLIN.

I LEFT the inn at an unearthly hour the following morning, after a short but sound sleep, and went across to the station, where I bought my ticket for a certain town in another part of Germany, without difficulty. The waiting-room was literally crammed with soldiers going to and from a certain front. There were hundreds of them in full field kit, lying on benches in the corridors, and on tables, chairs, and the floor in the big waiting-room. I stood at the bar among them, and drank coffee, before I left to pass through the barrier to the train.

For reasons of economy, I had taken a third-class ticket; but I noticed, to my dismay, that the third-class compartments were rapidly filling up with soldiers, and, fearing that they might be too talkative for an English escaped prisoner, I decided that I would change into a second-class

compartment. I informed the conductress of the train, but it was too late to go back to the booking-office and change my ticket. She said that that could be arranged on the way.

There were one or two other people in the compartment, but I took no notice of them, and settled down to read a German novel that I had bought, which, curiously enough, had the title, "*Ins neue Land*" (Into the new country!). It was only later in the day that the significance of the title struck me.

I had taken a slow train in order to avoid control by detectives, and, owing to an accident on the line, we were delayed so long that I was in the train, without leaving it, for over nineteen hours. Six hours of the journey I spent sitting opposite a German officer, who was apparently returning to the front from leave. For a long time he was the only other occupant of the compartment, and I had to maintain a very surly demeanour, lest he should belong to the very unusual type of German officer who is willing to enter into conversation with a chance travelling companion. When we stopped for a long time between stations, owing to the accident to which I have referred, I frequently leaned out of the window and chatted with the girl conductress,

and deplored, along with her, the fact that the delay was very hard on the soldiers in the train who were returning home to spend a short leave with their families.

I got into very great difficulties through losing my railway ticket. My conductresses changed about three times. I was going to a station which we will call Y, and at X, the station before Y, late that night, I was still without my ticket, and left the compartment in order to make inquiries of the conductress as to whether she had obtained a transfer ticket for me or not. To my horror, I discovered that the conductress who had taken my third-class ticket was no longer there, and the one who had taken her place, after a moment's consideration, said—

“Oh, that is very awkward. I know now what has happened. The other girl left at Z and took your ticket along with her. When you get to Y, you had better go to the chief station-master and explain the whole matter to him and see what can be done. It is very awkward indeed.”

This quite unexpected turn which events had taken worried me a great deal. I knew that my German would not stand the test of long explanations before so astute a railway official as the chief station-master of Y, and I returned to my com-

partment with a feeling of certainty that I should never get through.

It may be that at times such as these the mind is stabbed awake, as it were, and one seizes hold of possibilities which, under ordinary circumstances, would not occur to one. A railway guard was standing opposite to my compartment, and, judging from the paraphernalia he was carrying, I came to the conclusion that he was going off duty. He had, too, a devil-may-care air which rather pleased me.

"That is my man," I said to myself.

Calling him to me, I explained the whole situation in my best German, and slipping a tip into his hand, said—

"There's another for you of the same amount if you can only fix up this matter without loss of time when we arrive at Y."

He winked at me and said—

"I will see to that all right, sir."

I pressed him to tell me how he intended to do it, and emphasised the fact that I had had a long journey, was thoroughly tired, and wanted to get to my hotel.

"Above all," I said, "I want to have no fuss with officials. I am too weary for that."

I promised to look out for him at Y, and, on

arrival there, soon found him in the crowd which was leaving the train, and passed through the subway with him. I was still very nervous lest he should drag me before some railway official, but evidently this was not his plan. He went to one booking-office after another, and whenever he saw a man clerk there, he turned away. At the last booking-office he found a girl clerk, who looked very tired, and he said to her with a good deal of bounce and bluster—

“Look here! This gentleman, through no fault of his own, has lost his ticket. He has travelled third-class from such and such a place to Y” (mentioning a place about eight miles away from Y, whereas I had come close upon three hundred and fifty miles and had travelled *second-class*). The man’s audacity quite took my breath away. “Give him a third-class ticket from such and such a place to Y.”

The girl did so. I paid 8d. instead of about twice as many shillings, gave the guard his promised tip, winked at him, and passed safely through the barrier into the dark street.

CHAPTER XXX.

FOUR WEEKS AT LARGE IN GERMANY.

DURING the next four weeks I wandered about a number of different towns, carefully gleaning as much information as possible concerning conditions along the German-Dutch frontier, with a view to ascertaining the most suitable point at which to cross. This time, I was determined to make no mistakes and to do nothing in haste.

Most of my nights I spent in little inns in various places, and lived under the guise of seven different nationalities. If the person to whom I happened to be speaking showed extraordinary powers of discernment and guessed that I was a Dane, a Dutchman, or a Swede, I thought it only polite to admit that I was. In my eagerness to be all things to all men (and women), I find that I was, at different times and on different occasions, an Englishman, a German, a German-American, a

Swede, a Dane, a Dutchman, and a Dane from Schleswig-Holstein. When I found myself in conversation with a man or woman for the second or third time, it was often puzzling to remember exactly which nation I *did* belong to. In addition to my many nationalities, I had four different names during the four weeks and three days which I spent at large in Germany.

I passed through some strange vicissitudes, having beforehand resolved to take on anything that came my way. In one inn I soon saw that the people were very short-handed, and in order to ingratiate myself with them, did all sorts of things, from washing-up in the kitchen—a hateful business—to making three barrellfuls of *Sauerkraut*. In another room where I stayed for a few days the landlord came to me one day and asked me if I would help him to kill a pig.

“It’s illegal, you know,” he said. We shall be heavily fined and the carcass will be confiscated if the police hear of it.”

“Why, of course I will,” I answered.

The pig’s doom was sealed. We got up very early one morning, waited until the policeman had passed on his beat, and then went with our murderous tools into the pig-sty behind the inn. I felt like a murderer.

"But the old pig will make a terrible row," I said nervously.

"Oh, nonsense! Wait and see!" replied the landlord, unconsciously plagiarising an eminent English statesman.

I carried a huge frying-pan, my function, like that of the fish in "The Death of Cock Robin," being to catch the blood.

Never again shall I be able to look a pig straight in the face. The heartrending cries of that poor beast we so foully murdered haunt me still. It seemed as though all the police in the neighbourhood would be roused by its screams.

"How undignified!" I thought to myself, "to be caught, escaping from Germany, in the act of killing a pig!"

Like a certain illustrious monarch, the pig was an "unconscionable time a-dying," but she did die, and after we had roped the heavy carcass to a ladder, we carried it away upstairs to an attic. My reward came later in the shape of a number of pork chops, and while I ate them I reflected, to my huge delight, on the envy I should arouse in the heart of the average German if he could but see me eating them.

Once I sat in a café, among a crowd of officers and soldiers, at the same table with a man who

insisted on telling me, in much too loud a voice, how he had deserted from the German army.

On another occasion I was talking to a Belgian who worked in some factory in the town.

“What are you doing here, Herr——?” he asked.

“Oh! I’ve come from Berlin to look for a job.”

“Ah, yes. May I ask what sort of job?”

“Oh, certainly. A clerkship, but I want to get a good berth, and intend to have a good look round before I settle down.”

He smoked a few of my cigarettes, and then joined a German soldier at another table. Without any apparent provocation, the soldier began to curse the English with all the epithets at his command.

“Yes, a vile people! a dirty crowd! And poor Belgium! How sorry I feel for Belgium! And all the fault of the English.”

“Yes,” said the renegade Belgian, “I can stand a Frenchman, a Russian, or even a German, but—an Englishman—never!”

He little knew.

I very frequently had to sit tight and listen to similar abuse of my own country. Sometimes it was amusing, but usually it was exasperating in the extreme. Occasionally I heard praise of our

institutions and of the full measure of liberty we Englishmen enjoy.

The densest, most appalling ignorance prevailed among the common people concerning the motives which had led us to declare war. Jealousy of Germany and of her success as a commercial nation seemed to be regarded as the main if not the sole motive underlying our action. A sinister though skilful press propaganda had attained the ends at which it had aimed.

Deep down, however, in the hearts of many whom I met lurked a black hatred of militarism in all its forms. One man said to me—

“If only the German workman had a bit of backbone, the Prussian Government would not dare to treat us as they do.”

The German-Austrian victories in Italy were in full swing, but they seemed to arouse no enthusiasm. Vague rumours of a separate peace with Russia were greeted with more jubilation, but only as the possible forerunner of a general peace.

Every one I met seemed to be hungry, except those who had *Verbindungen* (connections), and were able to pay high prices for illicitly procured supplies. Potatoes were the staple diet, and even these were sometimes unobtainable in sufficiently large quantities. Fat of any kind was almost un-

procurable, and I saw people pay with eagerness fifteen shillings a pound for dripping of inferior quality.

I had an almost unrivalled opportunity of judging, and I was very reluctantly forced to the conclusion that there is very, very slight prospect of internal trouble of such a nature as will seriously impede the Supreme Command in the conduct of the war. After the war — perhaps. During the war — exceedingly improbable. Goaded as the masses are, they have no longer left in their hearts the spirit which makes for a successful revolution. And in these times, when a couple of machine-guns can hold a whole crowd at bay, what use are old men, women, and children? They are all that are left. The rest are in the tight grip of the mailed fist and can do nothing.

Seditious propaganda is an impossibility in the army, and a perilous business at home among the civilian populace. The German people, when I was at large in the country, *were* hungry; they *were* suffering; and I am disposed to the belief that the effects of the privations endured by the civilian populace will be evident to a marked degree in coming generations. But the people are not dying by hundreds in the streets; and it must be borne in mind that, docile as the German

people may be, and blind as they undoubtedly are in their obedience to authority, they are also a people of wonderful mettle, steeled to bear hardships with amazing patience, and still doped with the doctrine that they are fighting in defence of their hearths and homes. We stand to lose, and not to gain, by underestimating the fighting qualities of our opponents, and among these qualities, capacity for patient endurance among the civilian populace is an essential which ranks not far below the valour of armies.

We must cram down the throats of the Kaiser and the pompous fools behind him the conviction that their mad ambitions have no prospect of realisation. We must smash the idol which the masses of the German people still regard with awe and adoration.

On several occasions I was sitting in the bar-room of an inn, when a policeman came in with what appeared to be a summons sheet in his hand. Sometimes he stared at me, while he questioned the landlord concerning one or other of his guests, and I used to listen with painful anxiety either for my real name or one of the other three which I had assumed. Usually, however, I strolled out of the room as soon as I could conveniently do so, and, once having closed the door behind me, darted

into a lavatory, and locked myself in there for twenty minutes, emerging only when I felt reasonably safe in assuming that the policeman had gone.

Many of the strange experiences through which I passed, I must, of necessity, refrain from narrating.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FREEDOM—AT LAST!

“When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.”—PSALM cxxvi.

TOWARDS the end of the four weeks, I succeeded in making the acquaintance of exactly the kind of man I had been seeking. I cannot tell more of this man than the bare fact that he had done a certain amount of smuggling across the Dutch frontier into Germany, and professed to know every inch of the land on a certain part of the frontier. Had he known my real nationality, I think there is little doubt he would have handed me over to the police authorities at once. The story I told him, when we first met, was the following:—

“Yes, I am a Dane, but by an unfortunate accident of birth I was born on the wrong side of the Danish frontier in Schleswig-Holstein, and am

thus a German by nationality, and liable to serve in the German army. I have kept out of it so far, but the likelihood is that I shall be roped in very soon, and I am determined not to serve, because at heart I am thoroughly Danish. My idea is—if possible, with your help—to get over into Holland, and from Holland, some way or other, make my way to Copenhagen. My sweetheart lives there, and my idea is to join her in Copenhagen, and live happily there until the war is over.”

He shook his head, and regarded me with a puzzled look.

“Now, look here! You are a German, are you not?”

“Of course I am not,” I replied. “That is, not at heart. According to my papers, I am a German—in a way—but as far as my real sentiments and sympathies are concerned, I am a Dane. Besides, you can tell that from my Danish accent.”

He seemed to be more convinced by this time that my story was true, and we fell to discussing ways and means.

His plan was to leave the train at a certain station not far from the frontier; but, as I pointed out to him, in order to do this, it was absolutely essential that we should both be provided with faultless papers, owing to the fact

that we should be travelling most of the time through the so-called *Sperrgebiet* (forbidden zone), and not only should we have to fear control by detectives on the way, but we should also be subjected to very close scrutiny when we passed through the barrier at the station in question. So much I had learned before I met him, and he bore out, from his own experience, all that I said.

I finally succeeded in inducing him to procure certain papers for me, and, in the meantime, I went to a shop, and had a dozen photographs taken. When I received the papers, I tore off the photograph of the real owner, and succeeded, tolerably well, in replacing my own, and imitating the military stamp on each of its four corners. They were not the papers actually required for that purpose, but I trusted to a certain something on them to carry me through. I was again acting in strict accordance with my motto, and was doing the unexpected.

The night decided upon for our departure arrived. The strain to which I had been subjected during those four weeks and three days had been unusually heavy, and I was glad that the period of waiting had come to an end, and that I had the prospect of action before me.

We took train together at a certain station that night, and travelled to our objective, not far from the frontier. The train was crowded, but at different stations on the way one person after another left the compartment, until we were finally alone together. The smuggler was a very cool fellow, but perhaps on account of the papers I carried, and the fact that he had not done this particular kind of thing before, he was evidently more than a little nervous. I said to myself—

“By Jove! my friend, you *would* be nervous if you knew whom you had along with you.”

He had taught me a certain volley of abuse which I had to hurl at the soldiers on the station, if they seemed inclined to question the validity of my papers, and wished to arrest me.

“My God and Father,” I had to say, with as much bounce, bluster, and indignation as I could muster, “I have travelled at least fifty times along this line with these papers, and never had any trouble, and now you stop me! It is too idiotic for words!”

I kept rehearsing all this in German as the train rolled nearer and nearer the station at which we should have to leave the train, and he was not at all satisfied with my pronunciation.

“It’s that confounded Danish accent of yours,” he said, in despair.

“Oh, that will be all right,” I replied, and I would try again, only to be corrected again and again.

“Good heavens,” he said, “I hope the train stops before we enter the station. In that event, we will open the carriage door and make a dash in the dark across the lines into the town.”

“I am afraid that is unwise,” I said, “because, if the station is near Holland, it is almost certain there will be goods trains there from Holland guarded by soldiers, and if they see any one running across the railway lines, they will be certain to take pot-shots at us. Now, look here! don’t worry about me. I will give you half a dozen yards’ start at the station. You are certain to be able to get through with your papers, and if I get caught, well, I am caught, and there is an end of it. I will swear that I do not know you from Adam. Whatever happens, I will guarantee that you will not be implicated in any way whatsoever.”

This seemed to satisfy him a little, but he was still ill at ease.

“But, what if those papers are found on you?”

“Oh,” I replied, “that is easily explained. I will swear that I was sitting in a café in X. I saw a man take out those papers and show them to a friend. I wanted papers myself, and on seeing him slip them into his overcoat pocket, which was hanging close to mine, I found an opportunity of stealing them, tore off the man’s photograph, put my own in its place, forged the stamp, and—there you are!”

The scheme seemed to satisfy him, and by the time this had been decided upon the train pulled up at the station. I allowed him to get two or three yards ahead of me among the dozen or so people who were going in the direction of the barrier from the train, and saw him pass safely through.

With my heart beating uncomfortably fast, I walked up to the barrier, with my legitimization papers in one hand and my ticket in the other. There were two soldiers, armed with rifles and fixed bayonets, and I had to pass between the two. As I handed my ticket to the girl ticket-collector, one of the soldiers made a grab at my papers, and scrutinised them very carefully. I seemed to pass through an eternity of torment. Then, thank God! he handed them back to me, and I passed through into the dark

street with a lighter heart than I had known for weeks.

There I was met by the smuggler, who took me by the arm, and, pressing it to him, said—

“That was splendidly done. Man, you will get a fine welcome in Holland as a German deserter.”

“Really?” I said, “that is fine”; and we passed on through the quiet, almost pitch-dark streets.

We stopped for a little refreshment at an inn in the town, and then set out in the drizzling rain for the frontier itself. We had about two hours' walking before us, before we came to the actual sentry lines, and I have simply a confused recollection of inky darkness, rustling leaves under foot, rain, patches of forest, field-paths, and open heath. The last stretch was across open country, divided into fields by hedges, ditches, and barbed wire. As we approached one hedge, I whispered to my companion that I heard some one moving on the other side. We flung ourselves flat in the wet grass, and listened. Presently we got up, peered round the hedge, and noticed that the noise we thought was made by a sentry came from a number of cows that were lying in the field. We went on.

It was close upon midnight, on the 13th of November 1917, when we came level with the last line of sentries. They were posted along a canal, which, I believe, although I am not certain, was the actual frontier.

As Holland lay before me, and as all that remained to be done depended on my own initiative and resource, there was no point in taking my companion farther. I agreed to crouch in the darkness on the banks of the canal until he had got back into safety.

As soon as I could no longer hear or see him, I dropped into the slime and water, and waded, as cautiously as I could, into the middle. I expected to have to swim, but the water only took me up to my arm-pits. Keeping my eyes fixed on a group of pollard willows on the opposite bank of the canal, I made for them, going slowly, and making as little noise as possible. When I got to the other bank, I rose out of the canal inch by inch, so that the water dripping from my clothes should not make so loud a noise as would attract the attention of any sentry who might be near me in the darkness. I learned later that many men had been shot, trying to cross not far from there.

Once on the opposite bank, I stood close to

this clump of trees until some of the water had dripped from me, and then, feeling as though I were clothed in a suit of lead, ran, as fast as my legs could carry me, across an open field.

Was this Holland? or was I still in Germany? I decided, in any event, to proceed for a time with the utmost caution.

There were no stars by means of which I might have found my right direction, so, flinging myself flat on the wet ground, I took out my compass with a view to striking a direction due north, which would have taken me deeper and deeper into Holland. To my dismay, I found that my compass had become flooded. My intention had been to go through the canal with the compass in my mouth, but I had been too eager to reach the Promised Land, and, in my eagerness, had forgotten this very necessary precaution. In my despair, I talked to it like an animate being. I held it still, I tapped it, I shook it, but in vain. The needle would not move.

There were no stars visible. There was no moon. No village lights were there ahead to help me. Already, I was shivering with cold in my soaking clothes. Obviously, the only thing to do was to keep on the move. But where? In which direction? Anywhere. Anywhere. But

God forbid that I should walk blindly back into Germany. Anywhere but there.

I began to walk, as I thought, in a direction at right angles to the canal I had crossed. Sometimes I came to an impenetrable hedge, or a patch of bog, or a broad ditch, and, in skirting it, completely lost my sense of direction. Three times I found myself back on the banks of the canal, on the other side of which the German sentries were posted, and realised, as I peered into the water, that I had walked in a rough semicircle back to the point from which I had started.

Good God! was I after all doomed to failure so near the goal? Were three years of persistent effort to escape about to end in my walking blindly back into Germany, after I had trod the soil of the country which had so long been the object of my yearning?

I was strangely calm. The heaviest strain is felt in waiting to do things, not in doing them.

How long I walked I know not, but I suddenly found myself in front of a farmhouse, which loomed up before me out of the almost tangible darkness. At last I had found a habitation. Its architecture seemed at any rate un-German. Would the people turn out to be German or Dutch? I decided to take the risk, and, in the

event of finding myself face to face with a German soldier, resolved to fight—or run—as seemed best at the moment.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The noise of my knocking reverberated through the whole house.

At last, I heard heavy footsteps on the brick floor, the key turned in the lock, and a burly farmer greeted me, thank God! in a language I did not understand.

The man was a thousand times too stolid. I wanted to embrace him, shake him, dance round and round on the kitchen floor with him.

I told him in a sort of pidgin-German-English that I was an Englishman who had just escaped from Germany. He took me inside the house, which I lighted with a flash-lamp that I carried.

The living-room was beautifully clean with its red-brick floor, and through an open door I saw a bed covered with a counterpane of many colours, from which a head peeped out, clad in a white night-cap. It was the farmer's wife. They spoke to each other in Dutch, but I could not understand.

I took from my wet trousers pocket all the money that I possessed, laid it on the table, and begged him to take me to the nearest village, and hand me over to the police or the military

authorities. He seemed reluctant to do so, and offered me the use of his barn for the night; but I was already shivering with cold, and decided that I would not trust any one who lived so near the German frontier. I felt that I should not be safe until I was in the custody either of Dutch soldiers or Dutch policemen. Then the old woman said something to her husband, and, feeling that it had reference to me, I asked him to tell me what she had said. In broken German he replied—

“My wife tells me to show you the path to the nearest village, if you will leave us your flash-lamp.”

I pressed him to take it, and, shortly afterwards, we left the farmhouse for the path which led to the village. There he bade me good-night. I swung along with a lighter step and a lighter heart than I had known for three and a half years. The cup of my happiness was running over. At last! My only pause was to drop on one knee on the gravel path and whisper three words of gratitude for my deliverance.

In the centre of the village I met two Dutch soldiers, gave myself up to them, and was led by them into some wooden barracks near by. There I spent two nights and two days.

.

Liberty is wondrously sweet when one has fought for it. Looking back upon those three years of suffering and hardship from the corner of an English fireside, I feel that I would not have had things otherwise for worlds. Strange is the alchemy of youth which can so quickly transmute pain and hardship into a pleasant memory.

THE END.



THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Santa Barbara

THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW.

NEW 477-1029
DEC 5 77-1116



aw



