The Book of Good Deeds 1914-1918

Collected and Edited with a Foreword by Bernhard Diebold

TRANSLATED BY HELLMUT AND LETITIA LEHMANN-HAUPT

FOREWORD

THE years 1914 to 1918—most terrible dates in modern history—make it difficult for us to believe in the goodness of any deeds done during that period. For a very different and fatal kind of deed was then being done in the world, on a scale that made the good deeds look insignificant indeed. But as “just men to the number of but ten” could atone for the thousand transgressions of the city of Sodom, and by their example sustain our belief in the charity of mankind; so also in the World War there occurred a few good deeds, as compensations and exceptions to the rule of war.

This book, a selection from many more contributions, contains 166 accounts from participants in the Great War, who found it some slight consolation for their shattered faith in humanity that once during these desolate years between 1914 and 1918 they were allowed to perform or witness a good deed. They are people from all strata of society, of every class, race and party who stand in need of such consolation: merchants, workmen, officials, teachers, artisans, employees, soldiers. This book, with its many voices, bears witness that a man, even when his humanity is most fiercely threatened, that is in war, may yet listen to the voice of his heart amid the tumult that is meant to deafen as it were the very ears of feeling. And the strange and miraculous thing is, that this still, small voice from within would often speak with more insistence to our warrior even than the danger of death, or the loudest command, or the uniform which demanded stern duty alone. And so there happened, as it were alongside the performance of soldierly duty, and in opposition to all logic of war, those exceptional acts of sacrifice and fellowship done not only by one comrade to another, but by enemy to enemy. Behind the lines, in captivity or in hospital; yes, even in No Man’s Land, between the blood-soaked trenches, the official enemies could suddenly no longer regard each other as enemies; as soon as they ceased to fight in anonymous masses, but faced the suffering individual from the other side, as a suffering individual. But nothing throws a stronger light on the dual nature of the warrior, than when he takes in his arms the enemy he has just before struck down, in the attack, gives him a drink and binds up the very wound he has just inflicted. In individual cases the stark absurdity of this dual morality confronts the soul with an even greater perplexity than the violent contrast between the machinery of war and the machinery of the Red Cross, which both obey the same superior command; with one hand seeking to heal with all care what the other just before wanted brutally to destroy. Thus paradoxically, does the modern God of War deal with life and death. He is no longer a great god, this old Mars, who tricked out in a Red Cross deals blood-red death. In his mechanical mass labor he does not know the enemy as an individual warrior but merely as a multitude. And he stands facing the enemy in the mass without the genuine hatred of one enemy for another but merely under the compulsion of his uniform. And this uniform alone marks him out to his adversary as an enemy to be destroyed.

But in this uniform there are at the same time two entirely different souls belonging to the same man. The one belongs to the soldier and submits to the common duty: the heart becomes insensitive under discipline and learns to bear all the horrors. You kill “beyond” your other soul: a dead soldier is a dead uniform. But the other soul remains the private property of the man in mufti, who, were it not for the compelling force of war, would be terrified by the feats of his own hands. Two different men live in one uniform, unless the wearer is a depraved specimen of his kind. Oh, how often did the man of the uniform forget the double of his naked soul?

This book contains no propaganda, for it aims only at reconciliation. All propaganda produces counter propaganda and renewed war. This book is not “against”: it is only “for.” That is, it aims to reconcile those who feel obliged, even after the war, to indulge in national or political hatred about this same war. Books on peace, films about the horrors of war, despite their real intention, only incite the hostile groups against each other. This war book, however, tries the “positive” method, that does not repel us from the enemy but rather binds us to him. It aims to bridge over the unavoidable cleavage of opinions, at a point where even political opponents may join hands, in those grave tests of humanity, when even national enemies, under far worse affliction, could act kindly towards each other.

They are not all deeds of unheard-of heroism, that have been collected here. Neither have “works of mercy” of neutral countries, or of the Red Cross, or the Quakers, who during these years of terror provided the only means of communication between enemies, and the care of the suffering behind the lines, been mentioned here. His the deed of man to man, of enemy to enemy, that is to be recorded here. This deed is often small enough, and would be no more than natural under conditions of peace. But from 1914 to 1918 conditions of war held sway, unnatural in all its situations and sentiments! In many of these stories the “good deed” is the merest trifle, but it becomes magnified in the mind of a sufferer, and shines for him like a little star in a dark world. The prisoners appreciate a few kind words from the camp commander, as the greatest comfort to their lost self-respect; but only of course because this poor little word from the enemy was not expected in wartime, was perhaps even prohibited, and was always out of the ordinary and amazing. A gift of a few lemons to a sick child from an enemy soldier can seem for the moment to contain the whole gospel of love. So great is the contrast of love and war. The unexpected works wonders: from the desert rises a spring. Half-wild Bedouins give a few sacks of dates to starving prisoners in Africa; enemy aviators throw down a wreath across the lines to honor the death of a fellow aviator from the other side. A Rabbi holds the cross of Christ for hours before the dimming eyes of a dying enemy; soldiers from Württemberg steal wood from their own camp in Lombardy for an old woman who is freezing to death; a German major arranges for the protection of animals in occupied Belgium; a wounded Russian, in gratitude for a sip from his enemy’s flask, kisses his hand and makes the sign of the cross over it, to bless him with the holiest sign he knows, so enormous and so miraculous does this smallest of all deeds appear to him. He is amazed beyond words and his simple world shaken, because this man, “dehumanized by higher duty,” suddenly, and contrary to any rule of this war of soldiers against soldiers, shows a completely new face; the features of that spiritual second self beneath the uniform. The paradox of destruction and preservation appears to him a matchless miracle. Many of the letters accompanying these contributions end, in consciousness of their perhaps insignificant content, with the words “this was of course not an heroic deed but …” and this “but” tells, often in clumsy enough terms, of the incomprehensible goodness of a man expected only to kill; and his miraculous transformation from a destroyer of life to a preserver of life. Through this miraculous metamorphosis the greatness or smallness of a “good deed in a naughty world” becomes only relative, is submitted to a spiritual measurement that can be gauged by no external standard.

The good deeds may be evaluated not only by the doer, but also in the mind of the recipient. For the benefit received was often infinitely greater than the gift offered. And it is often more blessed to give than to receive. The good deed has two hands; that of the recipient and that of the giver. The giver’s hand does not always act upon the impulse of simple human feeling; we are familiar with the deeds of soldierly chivalry, of a genuine sense of sport and

“fair play”, the products of education and culture. Those deeds show an admirable discipline; compared with which, however, the equally “fair” deeds of those simple and anonymous Muschiks, Landsers, Poilus and Tommies who did not on these occasions need the breeding of a gentleman, appear only the more astonishing. There are deeds also of merely vainglorious generosity; yet how much better is such pride than the vainglory of barrack brutality demanding “destruction of the enemy at any price” and practicing it on helpless prisoners of war. The men in the front lines, near to the fatal source of destruction, no longer understood that brand of heroism, none of them, from the true major down to the true “man.” And it is the true man who counts: the uniform is only an outer skin, the symbol of office. Underneath is either the comrade or the monster.

This book is a selection of many hundred tokens of gratitude to an enemy helper, or to Destiny itself for allowing, amid a thousand horrors, the one good deed to happen. It is not a literary book, for hardly a dozen professional writers have participated, it is rather a book of experiences and confessions. Few of them are written in a cultivated style; many of the documents showed an untrained hand and a spelling that told plainly of the simple mind of the author. We also learn that the expressions of the War are still alive: the “Goulash Kanone” (kitchen cart) ; the “Affe” (knapsack) ; the “Pudel” (bottle or canteen) ; the barren “No Man’s Land” between the Fronts; the “Nix bum-bum!” of the man who could not bear to shoot any more; the “Guerre finie!” between two enemies; and finally that mysterious “Ambulance hour” during which both sides collected their dead and wounded in the quiet between attacks. Many have asked the editor to correct their bad German, but this favor he has by no means done them, finding the awkward German rather simple than bad. To be sure he had to change sometimes the order of events, or cut out long passages from the descriptions of battles, or change place-names, numbers of regiments, and unfortunately also the names of many doers of good deeds. For he feared, even fourteen years after the war, lest this Book of Good Deeds should betray to over-zealous military authority or civilian sycophancy, that a man, contrary to higher discipline, and on his own authority, had performed an act outside the law but worthy of a human being. Except for this kind of alteration of the text, the original version of these “good warriors” of 1914 to 1918 has been preserved as far as possible; even at the risk of literary readers finding much that is sentimental, boastful or romantic. For the literary writer with his training can more easily translate into the refined language of detachment and modesty, his own need of sentiment and romantic self-expression; and unlike the simpler souls he does not need to draw on the conventional expressions of sentiment of the newspapers and novels. Moreover not every sentiment is a false feeling: not all romancing is bragging. Even the most incredible stories of chance can be true, as true as life itself.

Naturally among those turned down there were also narrators of pure egotism and vanity. A neutral actually wrote in to tell how on the Basle-Frankfort express he had given up his duly paid for seat to a badly wounded soldier! And thought this extraordinary sacrifice should be preserved in the Book of Good Deeds for the sake of eternity and a seat in Heaven. And a letter from the part of Poland which was formerly German began, “Enclosed I am sending you a few heroic deeds which I performed on active service during the World War”! And another wrote in the folly of his pride: “Then I jumped out of the trench to finish the war”! But even in these instances one must distinguish between a morbid self-adulation and the naif self-esteem of the man who wanted to have his experience of enemy to enemy preserved for his own sake as well as for others; often with the sole purpose that his former protege or protector should hear from him. Again and again is expressed in the accompanying letters the desire to render due thanks

to the enemy-comrade of yore, because he has forgotten his name and address, or lost, in the confusion of war, the scrap of paper with the scribbled pencil note. There came letters of gratitude from the Burgomaster of an occupied village, thanking the doctors who sacrificed themselves for the “hostile” inhabitants. There came letters from former prisoners to the people with whom they had been billeted. On a visiting card the Staff Officers of a French Brigade sent their thanks to a Bavarian sergeant, who had taken good care of them during the transportation of the wounded: the thanks are as truly creditable as the help. The accumulation of such small traits of charity results finally in a complete recognition of the fact that among a thousand war devils, nine hundred were poor devils acting under compulsion.

In war the good deed which is humanly possible assumes only a few fundamental forms: succoring the wounded, protecting the weak, caring for the civilian population, mitigating the lot of prisoners. These fundamental forms are varied according to the scene of action: land, sea or air; and according to the nationality, race or temperament of those involved. But despite the similarity of most of those small or great deeds, they are individually as different as all the acts of everyday life, repeated daily and yet never the same. Again and again recurs the drink from the flask, the rescue amid the hail of shrapnel, the last cigarette in the jointly- occupied shell-hole, the coin or ring as token of thanks for help in direst need. From this recurrence of situation one sees how men from all parts of the world can suddenly become alike, if they are only of good heart and find themselves in the same need and living together under the same severely primitive conditions. Compared with the precious drink from the flask the value of investments or philosophy becomes as unimportant to the man dying of thirst, as to him who is poor in material or spiritual goods. In the last need bread and water, or a roll of bandage, become more important peacemakers than any treaties. This reconciliation between man and man, between enemy and enemy is the one to be stressed in this “Book of Good Deeds 1914-1918.”

Certainly, war does not consist of good deeds: rather the good deeds happened in spite of the war. And only to the very few did the discipline of war prove a moral clinic, where their manly strength was steeled in the bath of Devotion to duty. Thousands of good deeds were done, but ten thousand good deeds meant ten million deaths of men who died not of good deeds. And when the good enemy in his mercy, drew the bayonet from the bleeding bowels of his opponent whom he had just overpowered, the tenable implication of the good deed is that just before many bayonets must have been thrust into many bodies. And for every bayonet drawn out perhaps ten were left in. The rule of war is the most cruel one ever made, and what is here called a good deed happened usually as an exception to the rule of war: happened usually in opposition to the stern demand of human heartlessness. This quiet book requires very quiet and slow readers, who will be able ever to picture to themselves the smallness of the good action against the background of such universal and powerful needs which could magnify these insignificant things to the proportion of “good deeds.” For behind these little stories of peace there rages brutal war and foul death. Only against the blood-stained curtain does this little play of the good warriors acquire its human significance. This book serves all nations and yet it is a German book. Of the 166 pieces in this selection 155 come from German-speaking and German-writing participants in the war. Of these German writers only about one-third speak of the deeds of German soldiers, while twice that number speak of the humaneness of a former enemy; Frenchmen, Englishmen, Russians and the rest of the Entente from Americans to negroes. As the good deeds of all former nations have been gladly praised and gratefully

described by the German side, so this book, sprung from the people, may be called a genuine document of peace.

— Bernhard Diebold.

OVERTURE

DECLARATION OF WAR

ON January 6, 1915, when after a voyage of 118 days, we were held up by a British cruiser close by the Shores of England none of us had any idea of the world-wide fire which had flared up since our departure from Nicaragua.

The German flag floated from the Hamburg barge “Ujanella” just as in days of peace, while we watched in suspense the English boat laboring towards us through the heavy seas. “Lower your gangway, we are sending out a boat!” had been the last signal from the British man-o’-war. We stood in curiosity by the gunwale; what could be the reason of this extraordinary visit?

Conjectures were made in German, English and Spanish. We Germans guessed it was a maneuver, the Norwegian said it must have something to do with the fishing, the Mexicans chattered excitedly in their native idiom. Only Bill, my English comrade of the watch, was curiously silent at the sudden visit from his countrymen….

Finally the boat came alongside. An officer and twelve men climbed the gangladder. The officer went aft at once to where our captain awaited him, while the twelve sailors took up their position on deck. And then we learned that for nearly half a year the World War had been raging.

The English sailors made themselves at home in our quarters. Soon pistols and bayonets lay about in an empty cabin; our eager questions were readily answered; and when they learned how for months past we had been living on poor food, strictly rationed, they got out their provision boxes at once and shared up their white bread and corned beef in true brotherly fashion. The same applied to cigarettes and tobacco; the English made a collection so that soon each of us had his packet of cigarettes or piece of plug tobacco.

For two more days we cruised in heavy weather with the prize crew on board. On January 8 we cast anchor in Plymouth and took leave of our friends.

Bill, as well as the Norwegians and Mexicans, was at once isolated from us, and we Germans were put in separate cells in a military prison. I was sitting downcast in my cell when suddenly Bill appeared before me in full uniform, laden with cigarettes, chocolates and magazines which he had hastily gotten together for me. At first I was speechless at this speedy transformation of my old comrade. While the guard (who had been bribed) watched before the open cell door, Bill hastily explained that he had been advised to join the army as soon as possible, especially since on our ship he had been in the service of the Germans, which might yet get him into difficulties. So he had enlisted at once. In his uniform he had been able to gain admission to the military prison and surprise me with these small yet precious gifts. After a few minutes we had to part. I never heard of him again!

— Ernst Wagner, *Sulzhayn.*

THE PATROL

IN 1910-12 I was in active service with the 88th Infantry Regiment: Mayence 1914; on first day of mobilization was sent to Mülhausen, Alsace, near Millheim in Baden. First engagement near Mülhausen. Not wounded, only tip of helmet shot off. Baden Infantry

Regiment 112, 3rd Company. Was dispatched to Lothringen. Battle of Saarburg. I drew a bayonet from a wounded Frenchman's back, handed him my flask with wine and bandaged him. August 26, 1914, battle in the Vosges, near St. Die, Baccarat. As lance corporal with a nine man patrol into the wood. Took off pack, haversack, everything. Company to follow. Half an hour later ten men fighting the French. Took cover behind dense trees; nonetheless one after the other was felled. Shooting, nothing but shooting: everyone under cover. Company joined us, French retreated. Stood up to shoot, recochet shot went through right foot. Done for!

Germans attacked on right flank; turned and counterattacked: was left lying alone! One hour, two hours. Impossible to remove shoe. No knife to cut it open. Back to starting point on two hands and left foot. Impossible: loss of blood, faintness. Heavy rain. French patrol. "Hands up" shouted officer and six men. Not necessary. "Blessé, pas des armes" was my answer. "What have you here?" "Shot through the foot." One-two-three, knife out of pocket, boot in a thousand shreds, sock the same. Water from the flask over it, bandaged with French bandages. Everyone gave one. My prayer, please to let me lie and wait for German Red Cross, was fulfilled.

None came. I tried again to crawl back. Twenty yards and gave up, impossible. French patrol with me once more. Same request from me, to remain. Granted.

Pouring rain set in. Four o'clock in the afternoon. The same patrol for the third time. Aliens, this won't do any more. The Germans are retreating, and no Red Cross comes. Two Frenchmen, a gun in their hands and I was set on it. Off we went all into the wood, alternating every five minutes. Open highways. Was carried on the shoulders for another hour towards French lines. Carrying this way too strenuous and uncomfortable. Was taken on the shoulders of one Frenchman, every five minutes another one, so forward for a long, long time.

Open highway. Still carried on the shoulders. We meet someone: My company lieutenant, shot in the shoulder, in the arms of two Frenchmen. Greetings were exchanged. Finally goal was reached. Village school. Have forgotten the name. At once examined and freshly bandaged. Five o'clock next morning off on hay wagon with only Frenchmen, given something by everyone, wine, bread, preserves, cigarettes, conversation. Damn the war. Then souvenirs: all my uniform buttons, helmet, cockade, shoulder straps.

Arrived at Epinal station. Freshly bandaged, off behind the lines: Bourboule, Dept. Puy-de-Dome, hospital 66. Only two weeks ago still a hotel. Room to myself. Treatment and care very good. Three times operated. At last successful. Kept stiff foot. Could write more about captivity, would be too long.

— Matth. Zehnpfennig, *Cologne.*

GERMAN COMPOSITION

THE landlord Siebert from Skaisgirren fortified himself with a good draught of toddy and began his story: "Yes, you are quite right, the Russians acted like barbarians in East Prussia, I am the last to dispute that … But one must be just … I might tell you a little story that speaks very differently. And it is true, because it happened to myself, or rather to my boy Gustav. By the way I can even prove it; I have the corpus delicti in my pocket … Well, it was August, 1914, and what that meant in East Prussia we all know. Nothing more can be said about it except, God spare us a repetition to all eternity! Amen! Prost! Well, one day we were sitting in our little house,—my good father built it and it lies at a little distance from the village towards

the woods—and we were wondering whether next morning we should be off to Konigsberg. Most of our neighbors were off already, but I had a sick wife and two children, Lena and Gustav, and so it was hard for us. For, besides the house and a little land, we had not much left except a small sum put aside for a rainy day. We had already packed, as much as we could get on one cart, and now we were waiting. The shepherd from the estate had said that the Russians were still a long way off. And we had confidence in him, as he was an ex-service man.

I was smoking my pipe, my wife was knitting and the children were doing their vacation homework. Lena was doing a frightful sum which she could not work out at all, and Gustav, the boy, was writing away at his German composition. You can see for yourselves, here is the exercise book, but please don't look at more than the first page. You'll soon see why."

He took a blue exercise book from his breast pocket, rather dog-eared and dirty, smoothed it out with his hand and laid it before us. On the cover was written:

German Composition Book

Gustav Siebert. Upper III.

and on the first page the title was written: "Dulce et decorum est, pro patria mori" (Hor. Od. Ill, 2, 13). Then came the first sentences: "Yes, it is sweet and glorious to die for one's country. And when the damned Russians come …"

Yes … when the damned Russians come—so far the little rascal had written, and then they came. The shepherd came rushing out of the forest like a madman and shouted: "Mr. Siebert, they are at the castle, for God's sake hurry!" And he was off again while we without even stopping to think, rushed out into the courtyard, my old lady and the children were packed in and hey presto! off we went as fast as we could into the gathering darkness. Everything was left on the table as it was, the knitting, the slate with the sum, a plate of bread and butter and the composition book. As we turned the corner, I saw the door still standing open, and I thought "Good lord, you should have taken the gun along," and my wife cried "the chickens!"—but there was nothing to be done about it. It was really terrible at first, meeting other people also in flight, and during those two days we saw more tears than bread. But all that has been much better described than I can do it. Maybe you can't describe it so well if you actually were in it.

Well, we got safely to Konigsberg, where I had relatives, and we were certainly better off than many others, for we remained together. Meanwhile time passed— and then came Hindenburg—[Prost! Yes I'll drink to that and gladly]—and we refugees began to think about getting back. Gentlemen, but my heart was heavy as news of the devastations came from all around. What was I to do if my poor little place were burned down? With trembling and in trepidation I drove home, alone for the first time. I thought, "I'll have to break it gently to the wife." And then came the first miracle.

Everything all around was in ruins and burned down, and a trench ran right through the churchyard. But my house (I mentioned before that it was a little distance off) stood there quite intact; at least from the outside. The windows were smashed, the doors off their hinges; but the house stood, I couldn't think why. On tiptoe I crept in: I tell you I was still thinking the cholera must have been there, or that something lurked inside—but no, it was empty and the rooms, except for an ample deal of war dirt, in good order. There were heaps of straw where the men had slept, a knout lay in a corner and a rag with brown spots on it which may have been blood,

but nothing had been taken from the cupboard! And the table stood at the window, exactly as it had stood six weeks ago when we fled, only of course dirtier and the bread and butter gone. The knitting had been thrown on the floor, but amid rags, straw and cigarette packets, lay the slate and the exercise book side by side. And then came the second miracle: the sum had been worked out, and the composition had been written to the end…. There now, you don't believe me. But seeing is believing, now you can turn the page."

This we did and we read, in neat handwriting, and in good German, how the opening sentence went on—"When the damned Russians come" Gustav Siebert of the Upper third, had begun, and someone else had continued:

"… they come only because their Emperor wishes it and because it is their duty, and for some, my dear German boy, it is very hard. For I, who am writing this, have also a little home like this, and it also stands among trees, and there are two children in it, a boy and a girl. The boy's name is Fedor and he has a little horse on which he wanted to ride out to war, but he was too young. And the girl's name is Nina and she wanted to study in Germany where her father and mother were for many long years and were very happy. That is impossible now, but let us hope, not forever. For these times, which are cruel enough to teach even children to swear, will pass. When you are grown up, people will, I hope, have remembered again that they are human beings and what a good thing that is.

Remember me to your parents, and tell them that I have saved their little house as much as possible. And remember me to your teacher, as a colleague of his in Kurland, and ask him to explain to you that the poet Horace is right enough when he says that it is sweet and glorious to die for your country; but that it is still more sweet and glorious to live for your country and to work for its peace, no matter whether it is your German fatherland or that of us 'damned Russians.'

Your enemy friend,

Dr. Paul Fedor Heidenkamp, Lieut."

— Paul Block, *Paris.*

THE FIRST PRISONER

IT is night and raining. In the base hospital put up on the Somme front near Mailly-Maillet, the wounded men are lying in the straw by the dim light of a flickering candle. Suddenly a despatch rider of our 17th militia regiment comes in and asks: "Can I leave a prisoner here until tomorrow morning? He is wounded, but all the field hospitals are full. He has one wound in his arm and another in his foot—no fear of his getting away!" All the wounded soldiers sit up. A boche! Our 17th has been a year in the war and never had an opportunity to lay eyes on a prisoner.

At once a lively discussion takes place—where shall we put him? Some want to tie him up as a precaution. And then what? Let him stay outside. A boche, who cares if he dies? But one of the patients, the one who does the kitchen work, a big broadshouldered hairy fellow, declares: "Let me take charge of this boche. I'll keep a sharp eye on him. I'll let him lie here beside me and if he as much as raises a finger, ah, then I'll fly down his throat!"

Soon after this the wounded German arrives. He is little more than a child, has the lankiness of a growing boy, blond hair and big blue eyes. He can hardly walk. They lay him

down, dripping with rain, plastered with mud and blood; he looks round the circle of inquisitive eyes turned in his direction, with the terror of an animal at bay. So that is a boche! Everyone looks at him with interest, like a rare specimen of game caught alive so that at last one can study its habits and appearance. The cook, full of pride, has at once taken possession of his boche. Since he knows no German he thinks to make himself better understood by shouting very loud. And he shouts: “Hey you little swine, there’s nothing for you to pipe up about round here.” The young man, who does not understand a word, gets scared. Are they going to hurt him?

On the contrary: they wash him and bandage him. Somebody ventures “Perhaps he is hungry?” The cook brings some bread and a pot of coffee. He also brings a piece of cheese which he holds out sternly to the little boche. The latter understands less and less; his commander has constantly told him that the French maltreated their prisoners…. He thanks them as best he can, with an expression from which fear is fading and hesitant gratitude taking its place.

Hullo, it’s late. Everyone has to sleep. The cook, a stern guard, lays the wounded boy in the straw, gives him his own blanket and wraps him up, saying to him in a scolding tone: “Don’t catch cold, you!” Soon it is quiet in the room, the quiet of a warm stable, broken only by gruntings and the rustling of straw.

When they called next morning for the wounded prisoner, they found him sitting up in bed. The stern guard was still occupied with him; with the solicitude of a nurse for her child he was holding under him an old tureen for a night pot.

— Paul Reboux, *Paris.*

THE FIRST CASUALTY

IN 1914 I went to Chateau … to get supplies for the first company of the 116th Reserve. There in the churchyard I saw the first casualties. A Frenchman who apparently had several wounds in his leg asked me to take off his gaiters and shoes. His foot was very swollen and the gaiters and shoes glued together with dry blood. I started my job. I had to cut the shoes to pieces because I could not attempt to take it off, without causing him great pain. When it came to cutting the shoe up the back I needed someone to support the leg but nobody would help me. Were they disgusted by the crust of blood or was it because he was an enemy? Finally I put my field-glass under the leg and so managed by myself. I also gave him bread and water from his comade who could not move either. “Merci, merci,” were the last words he said to me. His pain was alleviated.

— Georg Fries, Foreman, *Offenbach.*

THE GENDARME

AT the time of the outbreak of the War, August, 1914, I was a lawyer in Gebweiler in Alsace. On August 19th I, with many other German loyalists, was arrested by the French and held as a hostage. For several days we were dragged round the Vosges along with the troops, finally to land in the jail at Gerardmer. Then a transport was arranged for and we were taken by train, two by two, and heavily fettered, to the fortress at Besangon. We were all quite exhausted because during this whole time we had not been given anything to eat.

The transport leader was a Gendarme L. and on the way my fellow-prisoners and I sat opposite him. He kept up a friendly conversation with us, and declared that he was a Frenchman of the old school, and saw in a defeated enemy nothing but an unfortunate comrade. When he noticed our exhausted condition and heard our tale of woe, he took our fetters off; then like a brother he produced ham and sausage from his pocket and shared them with us. Moreover he revived us with cognac from his flask; even, at one station, bought us beer at his own expense, since we had not a cent.

After a long and painful journey—on account of troop trains we were constantly shunted into sidings and had to wait there for hours in the scorching sun in sweltering railway compartments—we finally reached Besangon. The commander of the fortress, a captain of reserves, and a lawyer by profession, received us. Although he was aware of our miserable condition he spoke nothing but words of scorn, and without giving us even a crust of bread put us into a freight depot, where some of us collapsed on the floor from exhaustion. He let us lie there for hours before we were brought to the fortress. After L. had given his report he approached us, casting a look of indignation at his superior, shook each of us by the hand in farewell, saying in loud tones "Adieu, comrades, au revoir after the war." When the captain made a disparaging remark to him, using such phrases as "Bodies" and "German sons of dogs" the Gendarme said, "A real Frenchman thinks of his defeated enemies only as unhappy comrades and treats them with chivalry." Thus he spoke and went off with a friendly nod in our direction.

I greet you from far off, after this long time, Gendarme L. of Picardy, you nobleman.

— Franz Weber, Lawyer, *Ratisbon.*

A CRY IN THE NIGHT

IT was October, 1914. Our train full of volunteers arrived in Lille: here we were, in the enemy country. Rudely torn from our professional training we were athirst for the enemy, for fighting and adventure. At last we got to the trenches and I was trembling with excitement. It was night. … A command passed from mouth to mouth…. "Unload, fix bayonets"—aha, a bayonet charge. And off we went, plunging into the night. After a long run we shouted "hurra, hurra," and then came the response. It crashed around us, we heard cries and moans; but ever forward we pressed, until everything stopped and everyone began to dig himself into the ground. Our charge had been defeated. I was downcast that we had not been successful.

Day approached. We had burrowed into the earth and now looked round at the landscape. Fields everywhere, here and there a group of trees, to the right behind us a village, and about one-half mile back of us a deserted farmhouse. We finished our trench slowly and with the increased safety of the trench our fighting mood returned. Night fell again and I still lingered in the trench; the night was beautiful.

Then in the distance I heard a peculiar howling—a cry or rather a wail—such a sound as I had never heard before. In the silence of the night it sounded ghastly. Was it the baying of a dog perhaps, or the lowing of cattle? Ah, I remembered the farm. The howling did not stop. I woke a comrade, we had been strictly warned to look out for light signals and cries of animals. Spying was said to be rife, and I thought of that too. "Say, listen, what is that howling?"—"I don't know"— "Shall we go over there?"—"All right, I'll go with you."

With flashlight and carbines we set out into the night. Led by the persistent howling, we found ourselves sure enough approaching the farm. The cries grew more distinct—now and again they would cease and then recommence. The silhouettes of the farm became clearer: a fearful suspense weighed on my heart. Now we were there, we stood before the stable door; yes, there, inside it was. Surely it must be a horse or cow dying of starvation. The door was locked. Turning on the flashlights and kicking down the door was the work of a few seconds. … In the blinding light of our flash lights, there stood before us, naked, with squinting slits of eyes, unkempt hair, monstrous voice, plastered all over with filth, a man—an idiot.

I stared at him for a long time, the picture impressing itself deeply on my young mind. Deeply agitated I stood there motionless. My comrade said nothing, I said nothing. An acrid smell of urine and ordure enveloped us. Then slowly I collected myself. I looked around: a cement floor, with an empty tin pan lying on it, no bedstead, no chair, no blanket. Unspeakable pity overcame us, and instinctively I gave him a piece of stale bread. I had a mental image of his relatives deserting him, locking him up and abandoning him to his fate. We rubbed him down superficially with straw, wrapped his feet and legs in old rags, covered him with an army coat and brought him back. There he was taken further care of. We returned. What happened to him, I do not know; but the image of this idiot pursued me wherever I went and obsessed me at last so completely that the project ripened within me, to become a helper of such unhappy creatures. And thus it turned out. After the war and the necessary training, I devoted myself to insane and feeble minded children. And thus the face of this idiot became for me a sign pointing the way.

— Albert Schirr, Teacher of feebleminded Children, *Langen.*

THE LITTLE HOUSE IN BELGIUM

ON August 22nd, 1914, the 1st Regiment 118 got orders to take the village of Maissin and the heights west of the village. Around ten o'clock the 4th Company of the 118 Infantry Regiment, to which I belonged, advanced along the road between Villance and Maissin towards the latter village. Around noon the village was taken at the very first assault. I and about twenty other men under the command of a lieutenant were in a little house far up the village. It belonged to a carpenter, who with his wife and two children had hidden in a dark corner of the cellar during the fighting. There was only one story; on the ground floor were the workshop, kitchen, and bedroom. A steep ladder led to the attic where wood and boards were stored. Almost all of us stood in the attic, we had knocked out single slates here and there and were firing through these loop-holes. When towards four o'clock there were no more enemies in sight, the lieutenant left me in charge of our little fortress, he himself going in search of the rest of the company.

Meanwhile the din of battle had faded farther and farther away, so we made ourselves comfortable, took off our belts, produced something to eat and drink and felt perfectly safe. It was already five o'clock, our lieutenant had not shown up. The whole thing seemed queer to me. I wanted to see for myself what was going on, so I left the house and saw, to my great horror close formations of French infantry advancing down the village street at a distance of about fifty yards. In the course of the battle the French had surrounded the village from the North and our regiment had just escaped being surrounded by beating a hasty retreat. They had forgotten to convey the order of retreat to us in our little house, which lay far south. I rushed back to the house shouting "The French are coming." In a moment my comrades were rushing

from the house. I stumbled hastily up the steep stairs to the attic, hustled my pack onto my back, and leaped downstairs again. Outside there was wild shouting, the French had noticed our men at once and shot down most of them. Beside the front door I seized hold of my comrade Büttner and pulled him back with me into the house. We fled up into the attic and crept into a corner.

For some time after we still heard a wild din; shooting, shouting, commands given in French and the moaning of our wounded men. Then it grew quiet around us again. Comrade Büttner in his exhaustion fell asleep at once by my side. My heart was still in my mouth. What next? There we were, cut off in a Belgian village.

Darkness drew on. Suddenly steps were heard aproaching our little house which lay somewhat off the main street. My ears caught the sound of French voices: The door of the house opened; heavy steps were stamping about downstairs. I gathered that it was two French soldiers looking for quarters. My heart beat as though it would burst my chest. I pressed a hand over my comrade's mouth to stop his snoring: he did not wake up, just sighed and breathed on heavily. And then the steps came stumbling up the stairs to the attic, I heard them in the dark and knew they were approaching me. Then suddenly a match was struck right in front of me! At my feet stood the French soldier—lifting his tiny light so that it shone right in my face. He looked at the two of us for a second or two, the light went out and I heard the stumbling footsteps departing again down the stairs. Downstairs the steps of the two French men reunited, hastily left the house and died away into the night. I expected them to come back every minute: they did not come. Had the soldier not seen us or did he not want to see us? In the distance, on the German side, one could hear, now and then, the irregular barking of the French machine guns.

Around midnight I again heard a sound of movement in the house. It mounted from the cellar, went through all the rooms on the ground floor, then climbed the stairs to the attic. It was the house owner with a stable-lantern in his hand. My brain worked feverishly and hammered out: You must not let the Belgian go down from the attic again, otherwise he'll betray you: he will fetch all the other Belgian peasants and they'll kill you. Softly I sat up, my bayonet ready in my hand. Then suddenly he stood close beside me, held up the lantern and lit up my face, started violently and stood as though frozen to the spot. I jumped up and saw before me a round good-natured peasant face, in which horror, fright and surprise were mingled, and—I could not do it.

Like lightning it flashed through my mind; negotiate with him, he won't tell on you! And soon my scraps of French were sputtering forth: tomorrow the Germans would be back, if he betrayed me, he and his wife and children would be shot. He at last pulled himself together and assured me again and again, "I will say that all of you are gone." Then he asked me to let him go. He stumbled down the stairs, left the house and through the loose slates I saw the spot of light moving towards the village.

By this time my companion was fully awake and he grumbled at me: "Why did you let the Belgian get away? Now we're done for, he'll fetch the French and the other farmers from the village."

For us the night crept slowly on. Towards morning the German counter-attack began and in the gray dawn the French fled in retreat back through the village. We were trembling with excitement when at last, towards nine o'clock in the morning, we dared to leave our hiding

place. Towards ten the first German troops arrived outside Maissin. They had orders to set the whole village on fire, because the population was said to have participated in the fighting. We two were at once detailed to assist in the work of destruction. I went instantly to the commander of the company to which I had been detailed, a Lieutenant Hollmann, told him the story of my Belgian landlord and requested that his house be spared. The lieutenant understood my request and granted it.

In haste I wrote the following words on a slip of paper: “Good people! The owner of this house saved two German soldiers’ lives. His house must not be set on fire and nothing must happen to him and his family.”

This I had signed by the lieutenant and asked him at the same time to let me guard the little house during the destruction. This request too was granted me.

When I got to the little house I found the whole family sitting in the kitchen in tears. The man recognized me at once and told me that the whole village was to be set on fire. I reassured him, but he would not really believe me and looked mistrustfully on while I fastened the announcement to his door. Then I took up my post and marched up and down in front of the house. Before me the whole village had by degrees turned to a sea of flames. Again and again I had fiercely to turn away individual members and even whole bands of the fire detachment, in order to save the house. Those who know the ways of war know how difficult it is to insist on an exception in the face of a majority.

The farther advance began; I caught sight of my own company as it marched through the village. Once more I walked over to the house to take leave of the inhabitants. I had hardly told them that I had to leave now when the woman and children fell on their knees before me. The woman clung to my knees, stammering and weeping. I felt pity for them once more seethe up inside me; but I tore myself away and left.

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April, 1915: Champagne: in trenches made from shell-holes near Souain. Our quarters of refreshment are in St. Marie-a-Py and the regiment is under the command of General Scholtz. One day he visits us in our rest quarters and afterwards chats comfortably with the officers. He tells us that he is no stranger to us, it was he who rescued us at Maissin. And finally he describes how, a few days after the battle, one single little house stood there untouched, the only one. He had often wondered, just how this little house alone could have remained intact.

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May, 1916: Refreshment quarters near Sedan. I had an opportunity to be taken to Maissin by car, by a comrade. Most of the village had been reconstructed: my little house peeped still unchanged out of the green. Everything was as before, the workshop, the steep stairs. In the kitchen stood the woman, she gave a cry when she saw me and before I could say a word she was past me and out of the door and I stood alone in the kitchen with the children. At first I waited a little, disconcerted, while the children stared at me with great eyes. Then I walked out of the door again and outside, in front of the house, I ran into the man with his wife. The woman had hastily called her husband from work. The joy and surprise of the people was immense. Again and again they shook me by the hand and at last accompanied me to the car and waved as long as I was in sight.

— Dr. Waldemar Lichtenberger, School Teacher, *Wetzlar.*

BRUDERDORF

IN August, 1914, our regiment was engaged in the battle of Lothringen. A standard bearer from an adjacent platoon went crazy, and shouting wildly, rushed through the village of Bruderdorf, the outskirts of which we had captured. I along with the most advanced squad ran after him, overtook him and pulled him down into a ditch by the wayside. A Frenchman was lying there too, a sergeant he turned out to be. “Where are the others? Are there still any troops here?” He answered in the negative: “Tous pards.” We raised ourselves cautiously, but at once shots began whistling around us. I threatened to shoot him: once more: Are there any French here?” He shook his head. “Non, mon capitaine; ils sont tous partis.” Almost at that moment a French firing line crossed the road. They swarmed out from the gardens, hedges, houses. Thirty feet more and we would have run right into them. Now we began to fire, standing or kneeling, as hard as we could. Then reinforcements came up, and we pushed forward, beyond the village. No one remembered the sergeant any more.

A short time later a shell fragment shattered my hip and two grenadiers carried me back to the village stopping in front of the apothecary’s. A corporal approached: “The doctors have not arrived yet, but here is a Frenchman who knows something about bandaging.” The Frenchman came and bent over me. “Votre main, s’il vous plait”—we recognized one another. It was the sergeant again. Startled I shrank back while he, obviously unnerved, fumbled about with my emergency bandage. His looks evaded mine, I did not know whether from fear or hatred.

I was carried into the house and put to bed in the apothecary’s bed. Next door, in the shop, lay other wounded men. The sergeant examined them and one could hear him talking. The afternoon dragged on. Towards evening an officer, the Colonel of an adjacent regiment, came in, asked how I was and took my hand. “We’ll certainly get you again.” Why again? I thought, but he had gone.

Outside in the street shooting, calling and hurrying was heard: then quiet again. Twilight fell, more shouting and footsteps and the measured beat of marching. In the window frame appeared—all that could be seen —a kepi. That meant Frenchmen. A rifle barrel was raised and lowered again, and a shot cracked in the room. Then a ferocious noise started, trampling, pushing, shouting. In a minute they’ll be in here. The doorknob moved, was shaken, but the door was locked. Strange, a little while ago it was open. But at once the butts of rifles were thrust against it, and now I heard a voice giving sharp commands. It flashed across my mind, that’s the sergeant: and surely he must be saying that there is another German still there, an officer, who had threatened to kill him. Now he would take vengeance.

I got ready my pistol which lay beside me, and levelled it at the door; but nothing happened. In fact it seemed to grow quieter. Outside however, in the street, there was a hellish noise; artillery fired on the village, houses in flames, it seemed like thunder and lightning. I lay feverishly between sleep and waking; then suddenly a man was standing by my bedside. The glow of the fire outside showed me his profile, it was the sergeant. Automatically I seized my pistol, but he noticed and warded it off almost nonchalantly. He did not budge. I began slowly to understand, and tested it by saying “Soif.” He nodded, looked round and brought a glass of water which had stood on the table all afternoon. He supported my head gently. “Merci.” He left, the key clicked in the lock.

Once more at dawn he appeared and went across to the window outside which French soldiers were passing; then he turned and approached me smilingly, felt my pulse and whispered: “Ah ça va bien!” like a friend, not like an enemy.

Day broke, rifle fire crackled, there came shouts of “hurra,” a thundering on the door and German grenadiers stormed in. Soon a doctor appeared, examined the bandaging, counted some morphine tablets into his palm. As he crushed them down into a glass of water, he spoke to me: “A good thing they didn’t find you. It’s all up with the other wounded, they were either dragged off or badly maltreated.”

— Friedrich Franz von Unruh, *Freiburg.*

COURT MARTIAL

NAMUR had surrendered. At the end of August, 1914, the 87th Militia Regiment came with its four battalions to this fortress. The district was divided into four sections, each of which was assigned to one battalion for custody and defense. The forts were utterly in ruins and the town itself had suffered badly from our “dicke Bertha” cannon. It was full of out-of-work men from the once busy factories and of young men who had changed from uniform to civilian clothes just before the surrender of the fortress. The prisons were crammed with prisoners and in the Central Prison, which lay within our particular section, conditions were really inhuman and not to be put up with. To begin with, there were no records at all to show why the people were there. Most of them did not know why they had been imprisoned, and those who knew would not tell. It was necessary to get things in order as quickly as possible and to sift the grain from the chaff.

I ran round from pillar to post trying to relieve the conditions of the wretched creatures or to have them set free wherever possible. Thanks to the impartial temper of our governor, a Bavarian general, Baron von Hirschberg, the decisions were just and even liberal.

Among the prisoners was an old Catholic priest of about seventy, on whom firearms and ammunition had been found. Since, according to the proclamation, they should have been handed over, death was the penalty for this crime; for in war-time a proclamation is law. The officers of my battalion and I were assistant judges at the Court Martial. The evidence lay on the table; (a) a pocket pistolet of the oldest design; (b) a few bullets of the Lefaucheux model; (c) a traveling bag with “Bon Voyage” embroidered on it, in which the revolver had been found hidden under some garments in the attic.

The priest explained that the traveling bag had belonged to his long-deceased brother, that no one had remembered its existence nor known in the slightest that it contained a “weapon.” The bullets had been found, a long time after the proclamation, when dusting behind a row of books; and then, anxious to get rid of them, they had buried them in the garden of his neighbors, two old ladies. They could not throw them down the toilet for fear of choking it. This one could either believe, or regard as a subterfuge. However, the chief investigator took an offense for granted and was expecting a verdict of guilty. Things looked bad for the accused.

Then, during the ensuing discussion, one of the assistant judges, an old hunter, pointed out with some humor, that one could do more harm by throwing this little old-fashioned pistolet at someone, than by shooting with it. It was a joke rather than a weapon and would in fact only shoot round a corner. And the ammunition was just “small shot,” good for scaring off

sparrows; and anyway didn't fit the pistol. So the conditions of the proclamation had not been broken at all.

That settled it. The accused was unanimously acquitted. The chief investigator of our court martial had taken all his trouble for nothing.

— Otto Messmer, *A Izenau.*

THEORY AND PRACTICE

THE artillery squad to which I belonged had been brought up as a reinforcement during our offensive in the Champagne, on September 28, 1915. Both officers and men came from army units that had so far only had experience with distant range firing. The officer in command assembled the men, made them form a circle, and gave a little speech calculated to raise the spirits of his audience. He was a professional soldier, simple, and unskilled in judging the truth of the war propaganda. He dished up rumors which were then circulating about the cruelty of the Germans and which, as has happened at all times, exaggerated, and made generalizations about, breaches of international morality on the part of the enemy. And, since the Germans were waging a merciless war against us, he concluded, it was our duty to be inhumane, and even prisoners had lost their claim to pity.

This speech made all the deeper an impression since it was addressed to men who hailed from the North of France. They belonged to a stock which is industrious, but rougher and fiercer than in the center or South. Their villages were occupied by the enemy: many were desperate because, since the outbreak of hostilities, they had had no news from their relatives. This was good ground for the seed of hatred.

The next day my battery reached its station between St. Hilaire and Souain, behind the ridges of the Vedegrange. On the way we encountered several groups of prisoners, but we were in marching order and there was no occasion for personal contact. Then, for days and nights, we were bombarding: suffering cold, hunger and especially thirst upon this barren plateau of the Champagne where springs are not to be found. Some of our men were killed, others wounded.

On October 6, after we had put an end to a counter attack, there was an interval of quiet. Then, in the gray dawn, we saw a wounded German working his way painfully towards us. The soldiers quickly left their dugouts and crowded round him. I hurried to the spot, a little troubled in mind, thinking of the commander's admonitions.

The prisoner was a very young man, who—as he told us later—had shortly before been called quite suddenly from the Eastern front, thrown into the attack as soon as he arrived and taken prisoner at once. For the moment he could only utter a few faltering words. "What does he say?" the artillery men asked me. "He says he is in pain and thirsty."

In a jiffy the curious throng melted away and were back again at once, vying with each other to hand him their flasks of scarce and precious water.

Certainly, it was only a slight sacrifice and I should not like to represent it as an heroic deed. But what touched me in this was the spontaneous feeling of these men in the front lines, who, though just before they are in full fury against the boche, change suddenly when they find themselves face to face with a human being.

— Jean Laran, *Paris*.

BEHIND THE LINES

THE BURGOMASTER

LATE in the summer of 1916, I was in command of the occupied town of Chérisy, south of Douai, and therefore had often to make arrangements with the Burgomaster, an elderly widower, arrangements which were necessary to the German interest but frequently demanded grave sacrifices on the part of the inhabitants of the place. The situation had thus become extremely difficult and he could be certain of having serious trouble with his countrymen once we had left. Did he not appear to them as the announcer of all evil and suspect of conniving with us? Once he tried to resist, and I had no choice but to tell him that I would remove him and put in his place a more willing, though probably less patriotic man. In deep perplexity he left me.

Now, on that occasion he had come to see me to get my permission for the population to slaughter one of their cows. This permission he had received. A few hours later I was informed that the cow had had tuberculosis, so I gave them another cow free to be slaughtered. Afterwards I suddenly remembered that the sick cow had probably contributed to the milk from which the butter was made. Of this butter I had bought, with the permission of my superiors, and sent it to my wife, who was nursing her second child. My anxiety was all the more acute, because even by writing at once I could not alter things. All the same I did not speak to anyone about this.

Late that night a soldier came to ask me whether the burgomaster, who like all the French in the occupied area might not cross the street after dark, could come over and see me once again. He had been standing in his garden and had asked the passing soldier to deliver the message. I consented. The old man arrived:

"I wanted to bring you comfort, mon capitaine," he said, "for you must have been anxious about the butter which you bought. You can be perfectly at your ease, the butter-acid kills the bacilli. I know you have a little child and your wife will need fat. I know something about tuberculosis, my son died of it: so I know how a father feels when he thinks his child is endangered. And how a soldier feels, I also know; in 1870 I fought against you. I only wanted to tell you this. Good night." That was the Burgomaster of Chérisy.

— Bruno Goldenberg, Merchant, *Altona.*

A DISTURBANCE

IN June of 1915 our company was billeted in a small Galician village and, as in almost all Galician villages, our quarters were huts and barns with thatched roofs. Fatigued by the extensive marches which we as a reserve force had had to do in the preceding days, our platoon lay down early that evening in a barn, and was soon fast asleep. Around twelve midnight we were suddenly awakened by the barn door being noisily torn open by some Galician women, and by their loud shouting. Since none of us could understand the words or the gestures of the women, we were not particularly edified by this disturbance of our rest and treated the women in a not exactly friendly manner. Boots, cooking utensils, and whatever came handy, were hurled at them. Despite our not very respectful conduct the women would not leave off shrieking and raving but kept indicating by even more urgent gestures some danger which was threatening us. At last this did arouse some of our comrades from their lethargy—they got up to investigate the matter and on leaving the barn they immediately found

what danger we were in. The barn had caught fire. The men left behind were given the alarm at once. At the rate at which the fire was spreading we only just saved ourselves by a tremendous effort. Elaborate toilets, or salvaging of valuables, was of course superfluous in our warlike way of living. For once we felt this to be a real convenience. But had it not been for the Galician women, the whole platoon would have perished miserably in the flames.

— L. Herrmann, Merchant, *Offenbach.*

ESPIONAGE

TOWARDS the end of 1917 we had been brought up as heavy artillery into a section of the front near Lille. Each gun squad was relieved every three weeks, some times every two weeks, and was sent back to rest in Haubourdin. We held this position for quite a time and in Haubourdin we always had the same quarters, in a schoolhouse. Thus it came about quite naturally that on leave one made the acquaintance of the inhabitants. We, young nineteen-year-old warriors, wanted naturally to try out our school French at the front too.

Well in short, in the course of time I had made friends with a nice French family. A father, at the front but recently taken prisoner by the Germans, a mother and two daughters of fifteen and nine respectively. Every three weeks I was looked for, my dirty linen taken away to be washed, and a simple little meal served to me. Then I had to tell my experiences. The two girls were like sisters to me, my youth may have helped to promote this familiarity. The woman showed me letters from her husband in prison, all of which commended the good treatment shown him by the Germans. I could really feel how this woman wanted to repay me by love and kindness for the fortunate lot of her husband.

When once again I came back safe and sound from the front, my first errand was as usual, after I had taken possession of my quarters, to go and see the P. family. Now I must mention that at roll-call it had been announced that the schoolhouse was to be evacuated because it was to be transformed into a temporary hospital. In fact we were to move the following day. This news I told Madame P. and at once I noticed a great uneasiness on her part. And I also noticed that the woman had been crying. She answered my repeated questions as to what ailed her, evasively. After a short time she sent the children, who were as bewildered as I, to bed. Hardly was she back in the room, before she seized both my hands and began crying in a piteous manner. I was greatly affected by her grief and begged her again and again to have confidence in me and tell me her troubles. At last, after a long time, she grew quieter and said: “Monsieur Konrad, I know you as a kind person, not as an enemy. Will you do me a favor and tell no one of our conversation just now?” As I hesitated she spoke again: “What I ask of you will harm no one, only—” there she started crying terribly again —“only it will be my ruin if you refuse my request!”

I did not know what was happening to me; the behavior of the woman was so strange. I was to give her my word of honor without knowing what it was all about. Those must have seemed long minutes while I sat silent, and the woman’s eyes were fixed anxiously on me. At last I said: “You’ve just said that what you ask of me will harm no one. Is that true?” As though released from a spell the woman sprang up and addressed me in pleading tones: “Yes, Monsieur Konrad, it is so. If it is not so, my children will never see their mother again.” Now I asked what she wanted of me.

“A letter to be delivered to a farmer in Erquinghem.”

“What does this letter contain?” I wanted to know. That she could not tell me.

Damnation! Now I began to feel really spooky. I did not want to have anything to do with the thing, but the despair of the woman overcame all my scruples. I promised her to deliver the letter that very night, and she got out her writing materials. I had pledged myself and in half an hour I was able to start.

The village Erquinghem is about six kilometers from Haubourdin. I knew the way there very well, because a friend of mine whom I visited frequently, was billeted there: the place lay actually within the war zone. As far as I could remember there were no inhabitants left there, so I had to rely on the description of the farmer’s house, which the woman had given me in great detail. All sorts of misgivings possessed me as I went my way through the pitch black night. Was I being made a tool for some treachery? Had there not been some talk lately about carrier pigeon spying and had not some Frenchmen been arrested on that charge a short time ago? My heart was in my mouth and the nearer I got to my goal the clearer became the responsibility I had taken on myself. So by degrees I worked up to a decision. I had to read the letter. Fully resolved I looked up my friend at his battery, and let him in on the situation. Then we opened the letter. It was fortunately not sealed and after a few minutes’ manipulation the letter lay open before us. No heading. In concise phrases the spy—for the contents made everything clear—was asked to get the message “across” by the quickest possible means, that there must not be any bombing of the schoolhouse, because starting *“tomorrow”* it was to be used as a hospital.

Now I understood the woman’s conduct. My news had touched a cord of human feeling in her. She did not wish wretched men, already injured, to be the victims of airplane bombs as well. But none the less she was a traitor. Was I not guilty if I conveyed this letter to the spy? No. We realized we must pass on this letter with its message. But we also realized, with equal clarity, that the spy must be exposed. I was however convinced that the woman was only the pawn of this man, perhaps under compulsion.

Together we now set off for the “farmer’s.” We had no difficulty in finding the place, for this man was really the only civilian who had remained in the demolished village. While I was admitted, after a prolonged knocking, my friend lay in wait. The farmer had cold uncanny eyes, but his manners were very obliging. After a short explanation of my acquaintance with Madame P. I handed him the letter and withdrew. Very cautiously, so as not to rouse any suspicions, I took the route back to Haubourdin. My friend observed that the Frenchman actually crept after me and did not return till he felt sure I was actually going back. However I made a big bend and returned over fields and ditches to my friend.

And now we both lay in ambush, so that we could keep an eye on the back door of the farm which led to the court and barns. Hours passed before we heard a sound in the house. Our eyes were aching from the strain of watching but we saw what we wanted to see. The heavens, so to speak, came to our assistance, for the curtain of clouds seemed suddenly to grow thinner so that a shimmer of light from the quarter moon which hung in the sky was sufficient to let us see a pigeon dart like an arrow over the house in the direction of the front lines.

We had our evidence. My friend promised not to talk and left me the further steps in the exposure of this man. The rest is quickly told. The battery commander accepted my observation which I told him I had made just by chance, and a few days later the man was

quietly arrested, although he was not again caught red-handed. What happened to him I could not find out.

How was I to act towards the woman? She had saved well nigh a hundred comrades, but she could also have been the cause of their destruction. She had however shown human feeling the moment it came to injured men. I told her frankly that I had read the letter. She went as white as a sheet and nearly fainted. In great indignation I reproached her with her underhanded action. I would refrain from reporting her only on account of the children; but I was going to see to it that she would be watched in future and would be arrested on the slightest suspicion.

Now she confessed that the farmer was her brother and that he compelled her to report to him everything noteworthy about the occupation. Now and then he came to see her and got all the news which he then sent over by carrier pigeons. Again and again she had refused but her brother threatened to inform on her if she were not compliant. So, against her will, she took part in the spying. She implored me on her knees to forgive her and to have faith in her, that she would never tell her brother anything more.

Well that part was taken care of in any case, and I was convinced that the woman spoke the truth. Was she to suffer for past offenses? This my conscience would not permit. To this day I have kept silence on this point.

— Konrad Adelmann, Technician, *Nuremberg.*

THE STEAMBATH

THIS happened in Russian Poland in the Jewish quarter of Opocno, where I was in charge of the local administration, holding the rank of captain. On the very first day there arrived with all due solemnity, a delegation of elderly Jews, to ask me for permission to build a steambath. This permission had been denied them for twenty years under the Russian administration. This was reported to me by a Jewish sergeant, and I gave orders to admit the delegation. Even before the delegates had ceremoniously gathered in the room, I entered and asked bluntly "What is it you want?"

"A bath," shouted a voice.

"Got the dough?"

"Yes."

"O.K. Go ahead."

And the delegates were dismissed, beaming with joy; and to this very day they praise the benevolence of the Austrians who so promptly gave them permission to build the steambath.

— Karl Linka, Druggist, *Brunn.*

MADAME PATERNOSTER

IN the spring of 1915 we were stationed in a medium-sized village north of St. Quentin, to protect the railway lines. I heard from some comrades that at the far end of the village a woman kept a little inn and store, and that at any time you could get a good glass of coffee to drink there, and—which was the main thing for most of them—the woman would not accept any payment for it. I wanted to see for myself and so I went there. I found a woman of perhaps forty, with a boy of eight or ten, very busy but always cheerful and friendly. Several of my

comrades were already seated at their free coffee and feasting on delicacies which they had brought along. I also ordered a glass and asked the price. It cost nothing Madame said. I asked her if she were so rich that she could give away the coffee, which at that time cost three or four francs a pound. She was not, she said, but it did not make her any poorer. I ordered a cognac at ten centimes, so that I had something at least to pay for, and spoke to my comrades about how it was not fair to drink up the poor woman's coffee without at least some compensation. Money she would not accept, but a piece of bread or something would surely be welcome to her, because her boy with his healthy appetite must certainly clean up most of her bread ration, so that there would be little enough left for herself. My comrades saw the point, and from then on would bring along an extra slice of bread and butter when they had their coffee there, which pleased the woman very much. Usually she ate it at once, but always kept a piece for her boy.

On Whitmonday 1915, a glorious day, I decided to take a morning stroll and have breakfast with Madame. I had received some army mail packages, containing cake, from home, so I made up a little parcel and set off. The woman was already busy when I appeared, and greeted me with a friendly "Bon jour." I immediately ordered three glasses of coffee, and asked her and the boy to have breakfast with me. When she brought the coffee I had already cut the cake and put it on a plate, and I asked her to help herself. She stood before the table looking at it and was so touched that tears rolled down her cheeks.

A wound in the eye which I received a few days later made it necessary to remove me to the base hospital at St. Quentin, and prevented any leavetakings. On the second day of my stay there, the wounded sergeant who was in charge of my ward, came and told me that a Frenchwoman was waiting outside to see me, and what was he to do? I told him that I thought she would not do us much harm, so to go ahead and bring her in. He went, and to my astonishment, brought the friendly innkeeper woman and her boy to my bedside. With tears in her eyes she told me that she had heard from my friends that I was in St. Quentin, and that she wanted to see me once more: she wanted so badly to give me something but she had nothing, so would I accept this? At that she laid a Swiss franc and five sous on the bedcover. I refused the money, but she begged me to take it because she had nothing else to give me— "Vous avez été toujours un bon camarade."

I never saw her again, for on the third day I was sent by hospital train to Aachen. Nor do I know the name of the woman, whom my comrades called "Madame Paternoster" because of a pleading gesture she made with her folded hands when the jokes became too broad. But the Swiss franc is still in my possession, as a souvenir, and reminds me of how easily, often, a bridge can be built between one human being and another.

— Alfred Fischer, Office assistant, *Frankfort on the Main.*

A MINOR RESCUE

IN the Champagne Valley during the nights of Spring 1916, the French airplane raids from Vougiers became more and more frequent, and more and more terrifying. Night after night everyone would rush to the cellars, to seek safety or rather to imagine themselves in safety. The population and the soldiers alike crowded into the narrow confines of these clammy little cellars, often up to the ankles in water.

Alone and deserted—while everyone else made sure of their own safety in the darkness of night—there was a poor old blind French spinster. The only living creature belonging to her

was a hen, the last one left to her. And so in her fear she fled to the place which the French call “le cabinet.

Some German wireless operators heard of this and led the poor old blind woman, one on her right, the other on her left, to the shelter of a neighboring cellar: although the enemy bombs were already crashing around them.

— Max Otto Geserick, Merchant, *Auerbach.*

APPROACH OF THE ENEMY

THIS was in France, in the Pas de Calais, in a wretched little village, a few kilometers behind the front lines. Every night from twilight till dawn we were on duty on the big reservoir tower. In front of us lay the Division and we had to take up their light signals and pass the messages on to the staff by telephone. For seven or eight hours a magical display of fireworks would ripple and blaze and vibrate before our eyes: fire from gun barrels, trench flares, light balls, mines—the whole great apotheosis of death. The tower trembled as sometimes a shell crashed through it, but it remained standing. We did not see the terrible beauty of the flaming earth; we could not allow ourselves to see it. We saw only the regular flares of the precisely-working signals of our division, registered them automatically, growing more and more weary, until gradually the sky grayed, the colors grew fainter and the fallow dawn crept up.

Then shivering with cold we left and sank dead tired into our beds. Not even a drum fire could have disturbed that leaden slumber. And night after night passed like that.

Then one morning it happened that a voice disturbed my sleep, an excited voice. But that did not concern me: I only wanted to sleep. These stupid dreams. My brain would keep on working, the lights flickering behind my eyelids, the balls of fire straying through the subconscious. But I jumped when a firm hand shook my shoulder. Words came mounting up to me through the darkness “Monsieur!—Monsieur, les Anglais!”— Very slowly, reluctantly, consciousness returned: so, the English were coming. Before me stood the landlady of my billets. She gesticulated wildly with her arms. With one bound I leaped out of bed, now wide awake. A glance out at the village street told me all: down there everyone was streaming backwards in wild confusion. Batteries, infantry, horsemen, columns of men; and right into the midst of them the first shells were crashing. Cries, commands, curses, casualties, bolting horses, dust, sticky yellow smoke; in very truth, the English had broken through.

I stood petrified. Was it possible? “Vite, vite, Monsier, depechez-vous!” Yes, she was right, my landlady, I must hurry if I wanted to get out of here.

“And you, Madame?” I asked, as my hands started collecting my things and shoving them into the bags.

She shrugged her shoulders. Then she held out her hand to me: “Au revoir, Monsieur, et bonnes chances!” she said in a soft trembling voice. I pressed her hand. “Thanks, madame, auf wiedersehn.”

In her eyes, which had already looked on so much misery, so much cruelty, there was expressed no triumph over the defeat of an enemy, no joy over the release from a foreign occupation, no new hope. Only pity was in them, and anxiety for the safety of her adopted child who was her enemy, only understanding of the afflictions of suffering mankind.

I never saw her again. The attack was soon checked by us this time and the front line reestablished. But the village lay in ruins.

— Dr. Walter Ehrlich, Physician, *Neukolln.*

TWO EASTERS

WE came back dead-tired from the position on the Putna river. What a long, cold winter that was, below zero, six feet of snow, and a food shortage. Famished, ragged, filthy, and plastered with mud, we staggered towards our rest quarters. Separate quarters in a Roumanian village, that had not befallen us for a long time. I knocked at the house door of my allotted billets, and had to cling to the door-post to keep from collapsing from fatigue and hunger.

I had not waited long, when the master of the house, a small but wiry little fellow, opened for me. Behind him stood his wife and two daughters, sixteen and twenty summers respectively. As friendly as though we were old acquaintances, he gave me his hand and tested at the same time my knowledge of Roumanian with the words: “Nuschte romaneschte?” To which, to my regret, I had to answer, “Nuschte-nuschte.”

I threw the pack down from my back in complete exhaustion and made a gesture with my hand to convey “I should like a drink.” As soon as my host understood what I wanted, he ran off, his womenfolk also ran off, and the next minute the oldest daughter, Marina as I soon learned, stood before me with a pitcher of water. And right behind her came my host, Georg Fulna was his name, and smilingly offered me a stone pitcher of wine which he kept recommending with a “bona vino, vino bona.” Meanwhile Mrs. Georg and the second daughter Florika had got busy in the kitchen (that is to say it was kitchen, living-room and bedroom all in one), and how can I describe it? Not ten minutes later I was sitting before a dish so heaped with fried eggs that Punchinello himself could not have jumped over it. Eggs and bacon, real bacon and real eggs, after a winter of 20°, almost six feet of snow, mutton broth and broad beans. And the whole family stood by and giggled over my German appetite.

Satisfied at last I looked round for some kind of a shake-down. There were only two poor, very poor, wooden couches in the room, so I proceeded to lay down my ground-sheet and woolen blanket. That however provoked an energetic protest from my hosts. By all sorts of signs Mr. Fulna tried to convey to me that I was to use the front bed. And as he noticed that I had some misapprehension he cracked two nails together significantly and said again “Nuschte-nuschte.” So I lay down on the bed and a little later when it was dark, Mrs. Georg, after making sure that I was well covered up, went to bed beside me with her daughter Florika.

The next days were really Easter, German Easter of course. What holidays those were! I had everything I needed. Early in the morning came Florika, bringing hot milk to me in bed, blushed and greeted me: “Bona Diminiaza—, Labtin bona,” meaning “Good morning, here’s some nice milk.” I leaped from my truckle-bed, dug a bar of chocolate out of my pack, and gave it with a good-natured slap to Florika. It was the first she ever had in her life. Soon we were fast friends, I and the whole family. They gave me, when they went out to the fields, the keys of the house, I had access to the chicken coops, to the curing-room, store-room, and the larder. The warm weather brought on a painful rheumatism, and aspirin was all that the surgeon could recommend. Mrs. Georg gave me footbaths, wrapped me in blankets, made me compresses: my mother would not have known better what to do. And then just eight days after Easter, well, there was another Easter, that is to say the Russian Orthodox one. Good lord, how the local policeman blew his horn all over the village the Saturday before, and proclaimed

the joyous Easter message. “Moine Diminiaza ona German Soldat ran,” he proclaimed in every part of the village. What did it mean? Just wait!

On the first day of the Easter festival, according to the Russian calendar, Mr. Georg Fulna and his wife and daughters, Marina and Florika, appeared beside my bed bright and early and presented me with four brown, really brown-dyed Easter eggs, with many Roumanian good wishes. Then as I fetched my coffee from the field kitchen, from every house came an old granny with bright shining eyes and presented us soldiers (with a warm hand-shake and the usual morning greeting of “Bona Diminiaza”) with a beautifully dyed Easter egg.

A few days later we had to leave again, with a great respect for the hospitality of these poor Roumanian peasants. None of us have forgotten the two-fold Easter of 1917 and the Roumanian Easter eggs.

— A. Daus, Fechenheim.

PROGRESSIVE APPEAL

ON November 2nd, 1914, I was in command of an ambulance corps in Lille in the north of France. After 8 in the morning I had come back from a very strenuous night’s duty and was so tired that I wanted to lie down at once without waiting for breakfast. Just at that moment my orderly announced that a young French woman wanted to see me on a very pressing matter. I was so tired that I did not want to admit her, but my orderly kept coming back and telling me that the woman was crying and begging to see me. So I let her come in.

She told me that she had traveled from Limoges to Lille (about 800 kilometers in the train) with her two-year-old child, to look for her husband. She had heard that he had lost his left arm, and was now in the Citadel of Lille, from where he would be sent to Germany as a prisoner in a few days.

I explained at once that in that case I could do nothing and that it was as good as impossible to prevent her husband’s deportation to Germany. At this she began to cry so terribly and distressed me so much that I let myself be persuaded, and although I had not been out of my clothes for two days and two nights, and was dead tired, I promised her faithfully to look into the matter.

After breakfast I went first to the station in the north of the town, where I understood that the French prisoners had already been taken, and I had the man brought to me. His name was George Francois Devoux, a painter by profession, a young delicate soldier of twenty-six with an amputated arm. His companions in misfortune were mainly men of the last draft, he was the youngest of them all.

Then I went to see the station commander, a Bavarian, Colonel Wopperer, whom I knew. I explained about the case and asked for his assistance. His adjutant, Major Hunert, called up headquarters, without success, as was to be expected. This I told the woman who was waiting outside the station, but she implored me so insistently to try again that I went myself to headquarters and later to the Supreme Command where I knew several officers. These efforts were also unsuccessful. On my way back to the station I met by chance the station surgeon, also a Bavarian, Doctor Schon, whom I knew very well because we had worked together at the station, and I told him about the case. He wanted at any rate to see the man and thought that perhaps on account of Devoux’s amputated arm something could be done. So we went back to

headquarters and—which I had never thought possible—after fifteen minutes we had a safe-conduct for Devoux, by virtue of which he was not to be sent to Germany but was allowed to live with his wife and child in Roubaix near Lille.

The scene which ensued I shall never forget. The woman was waiting at the station about half an hour before the departure of the train, and when I told her of the happy outcome she was so overwhelmed with joy that she could not speak a word of thanks to me. I asked her to wait and hurried to the platform where the prisoners were already lined up; had Devoux step out and imparted the good tidings to him. He could not get a word out either. His comrades, however, the old men of the last draft, pressed round me with tears in their eyes to shake me by the hand. Devoux was now taken to a room at the station headquarters, where he produced a cutaway coat and striped trousers from his pack and dressed himself in civilian clothes. He came out in a little round gray hat, took leave of his countrymen, and left the station with me to where his wife received him with open arms. Only then, while his wife was pressing my hands, with streaming eyes, did he manage to thank me. Then I put them into the electric railway for Roubaix, rejoicing in the happiness of these two people.

— Peter von Chrustschoff, *Karlsruhe*.

A LETTER TO THE ENEMY

I WISH I were once more in the Cathedral of Caon, musing peacefully in the corner of a pew, and dreaming: while above, in the gallery, Handel's *Largo* was being played and sung, with harp, organ, 'cello, violin, and that beautiful soprano voice.

I wish I could once more, as in those days during the war, see Moliere's *Tartuffe* played by Frenchmen on an amateur stage (which ought to look just as much patched together now as then). O you French, romantic people that you are! You had then even less soldiers than we, but you produced a *Tartuffe* that Reinhardt might have envied, could he have seen with what simple properties you managed the performance. Oh that delightful, prattling Dorine! And you were not even professional actors!

I wish I could once again console someone as I consoled that old Frenchman, who stopped me on the highway and complained with tears that they had stolen his hen, his Lisette as he called her (of whom we used to say that her name was neither hen nor Lisette, but "Pot-Candidate"). I have no success these days in consoling people. One is all used up.

I wish I were once more in Longwy, with Carmen (who by the way was by no means as dangerous as Mérimée's heroine) but who would laugh so heartily and who gave me rusks because I was sick and could not eat the rations. Oh my Carmen, Miss France, to use a contemporary expression, where can you be now and how are you? Have you got your Albert back, who was then a prisoner in the Seine camp? I hope you are well and have the six children that you wished Albert to give you.

I wish also I could thank the Mayor of Laon for getting me, by graft, the most beautiful room to be had there; a room with a clean bed and velvet-upholstered furniture and sunlight; on the Pont d'Ardon, with a better view than that from the Funkturm in Berlin. I should like to thank him. In exchange for a little bandage for his foot he gave me a kingdom.

I wish I knew how that child is getting on, who was brought in, blue in the face, half choking, with a rattle in his throat, by his breathless mother. The child had his windpipe slit

and immediately began to breathe again. The peasant woman cried with joy and brought egg-things for the doctor and me which she had saved from her own food, for she had herself barely the necessities. We did not take them. “The child needs those eggs more,” said the doctor. And the woman kissed our hands.

I wish I could hear the victrola again, in that little estaminet in Montmedy. It always played one and the same record because no other was available, and it had a bad spot in the middle, where the needle always got stuck while the record kept on turning, so that you could hear for minutes on end “des Festes, des Festes, des Festes … until a kind hand helped the soundbox over the difficult place. (It was the *Bride's Song* from *Lohengrin,* the gift of a German soldier.)

I wish I could see those French kids from Longuyon, now grown-up men and women, who used to deck themselves out in soldiers’ rags and march, single-file, through the little town singing—

Jeunesse di schuren, tue proche teuten

Jeunesse di schuren, zo gomm nich meh—

[Schon ist die Jugend bei frohen Zeiten

Schon ist die Jugend, sie kommt nicht mehr—

So sweet is youth, in the happy days

So sweet is youth, that never more returns.]

And I used to think, wait till it’s your turn, then you’ll find how right you are.

I wish I knew how that badly wounded man is getting along, of whom I only know that his name was Gaston: I had him in my barrack and had to nurse him, bandage him, and feed him as a mother does a very sick child. I wonder whether he still wants to take vengeance on his sweetheart Marguerite. She had taken another boy because he bought her lace and candy and could take her to theaters and dance-halls, which Gaston could never do: and because that lover of hers had scars on his face, more fascinating and lovable, or at least not so gruesome as Gaston’s. I want to write to him, the big black-haired boy who was so badly mutilated, write him that he is a dear boy.

I wish I could once more live through those moments of suspense, just before the rising of the curtain, when I, a young man, still indeed half a child, stood on the stage for the first time; that memorable evening in Remonville, where the foundation of my career was laid, when I sang to the guitar folksongs, before an audience of German soldiers and French civilians. But why do I write just this? Thereby hangs a tale. Some days later I received, indirectly, an invitation from a French family, whom I had seen in my audience that first evening. As I entered the drawing-room, I noticed that the master of the house took a picture down and turned its face to the wall. It was a picture of Rouget de Lisle reciting his recently-composed *Marseillaise* to the people of France. My host thought that it might embarrass me … I should like to thank my host and his wife again to-day for the refreshments they served me. Rarely has anything tasted so good as that did. There were delicious titbits served with Russian tea, which they undoubtedly procured through the agency of the Red Cross at Geneva, and which they now set before their guest, a German.

I wish I knew whether that girl Madeleine has become the great singer she wanted to be. She begged me to go to the Commander's office to ask that her spinet, which in any case would not make enough noise for the soldiers, should not be commandeered. To reward me for this errand (which cost me a reprimand for "minding other people's business") Madeleine gave a perfect rendering of Gluck's aria "Che faro senz Euridice" for me. She accompanied herself on the spinet which she had been allowed to keep. Madeleine, are you with the Grand Opera in Paris? I hope so. I hope that every evening that you sing there, they take the horses from your carriage and drag you home amid the cheering of the crowd. Where do you live? In the Champs-Elysees? Are you the rival of Mistinguette or Yvette Gilbert whom I never miss when they sing here?

I wish, to use a classic expression, that over there "new life may blossom from the ruins," that I may be remembered as I do all those who offered me hospitality, who treated me so kindly then because they knew that I was too young to do harm; because they saw that I had just left my mother, that I had been taken from the schoolroom, and that I was the worst soldier imaginable, so dumb (I admit it to my shame) that I never realized how many steps must still be climbed from a Red Cross soldier to a Hindenburg. But to-day this worries me as little as then—I wanted to be a bad soldier, but a so much the better healer of the sick. Gaston, you know, you can tell me, whether I was that. And you, Roger and Pierre, and you also, Mayor of Laon. I greet you all.

— Karl Kleehammer.

NO MAN'S LAND

A LAST REQUEST

IN the fall of 1913 I spent some weeks of vacation at home with my parents. The headmaster of the village school always had French students as boarders, and among them I met a young Frenchman of the name of Hugo le Tortier. He was studying at the military academy of St. Etienne. We became close friends during those weeks and went on drives and hikes together. After he went back we corresponded till the war broke out. He became a lieutenant in some infantry regiment.

Spring 1918, at the bend of the Marne near St. Mihiel. A raid had been planned, to be made by the storming troop of a Volunteer Regiment. The scheme was, to capture a short sector of the enemy's first and second trench, barricade each end of the sector against attacks, and capture and bring back the occupants. On the approaching night we were to fall in to our position of assembly, and attack the following morning at dawn, after a short bombardment.

We were just having a farewell drink in the canteen, when little lance-corporal Koch approached me. I had noticed that he—usually cheerful, smart, and an excellent soldier—had seemed curiously downcast during these last few days. A few passing inquiries he had evaded. Now he sat down sadly beside me: "To-morrow I shall die!"

I was startled, confounded, so greatly did this lugubrious prognostication of death upset me; but at last I did manage to produce a reassuring laugh. He however would not be dissuaded or consoled, but remained full of his dark presentiments. "To-morrow I shall die!" And then he told me that he was all alone in the world, but through a gift box he had some months ago

become acquainted with a girl from Dortmund. They wrote each other frequently, of their lives, wishes and hopes: finally they exchanged pictures and thus had found each other. During the leave to which he was entitled after that raid, he wanted to go and see her and they were going to get engaged although they had never seen each other. With tears in his eyes, which seemed to sear my very heart, he made me promise to send a farewell letter which he handed to me, to his fiancée, along with a sparing account of his end. His few belongings, letters, a few souvenirs, a little money, he had already tied up in a little package ready to be mailed. I was to give it to his fiancée when I was on leave …

Three o'clock in the morning in the storming tunnel! The last order was already given: for the third and last time we had compared watches. "Attention, only eight minutes more!" Up above it thundered and crashed. Then once again someone clattered down the steps. I glanced across—Koch! He was in the adjacent tunnel, and once again beseeched me—shouting above the resounding, crashing din "You—you must write! I have your word! If you can't take me along—I have a letter in my pocket—telling them to notify you—write to her —write—!" Then he was off again. And two minutes later a shattering report, the entanglement in front of the entrance to our tunnels flew up in the air, and we, pistols grasped in our hands, dashed up the tunnel steps, up the storming ladders so that the rungs creaked. … Among the three and twenty who did not come home alive was Koch. All the others were brought back, he alone was not found. Missing! What had become of him? Who had seen him fall? Who, anyway, was the last to see him … ? I had to send the letter off to Dortmund with my feeble consolations—Missing.

Three or four weeks later. A letter in unfamiliar handwriting reached me from Switzerland, from the Red Cross. A sheet of paper fell out and an identification tag. "Herr Kamerad! I am fulfilling the last request of your dead comrade Koch. He had a letter in his pocket, in which he asked the French comrade who found him to send you news of his death and his grave, so that you could communicate it to his fiancée. We found your friend Koch at twelve noon, when you had abandoned the position again, in front of our second line, mortally wounded in the chest. At four in the afternoon he died in B., behind the front lines, without regaining consciousness. There he is buried in the cemetery in a separate grave. His name is written on the cross. His identification tag I enclose: his letter I keep as a souvenir.

— H. Le Tortier, Captain."

Postscript. "My dear Friend! If you are really my old friend from R., I send you my greetings. With what sad affection I remember to-day the happy hours we spent together. We are now in opposite camps, may Heaven prevent our meeting; but should it happen, will you too let it be only as friends?"

Your old friend, Hugo."

— Richard Zils, Commercial School Principal, *Frankfort on the Main.*

A TOMMY

THE attack was repulsed in the section of the trenches held by our company; and yet our fate was sealed. The line beyond the highway was entirely broken through. Our attempt to flank the gap from the highway had to be given up after a short time on account of the continuous casualties. The mere handful of our men grew smaller and smaller. Round about 8 o'clock we observed the transport of some of our comrades who had been taken prisoner in the

second line, which had been destroyed by the English from the left flank. We had no more hope.

Towards nine o'clock two figures appeared coming towards us from the second line. Twenty gun-barrels were raised, but a corporal waved them down. It was an Englishman who wanted to bring back a prisoner and obviously had no suspicion of our existence. Suddenly the German threw up his arms and collapsed at the knees. (We could see clearly the impact of the bullets round the pair, although the shooters remained hidden.) And what did the Tommy do? Without hesitating he picked up the fallen man, disregarding the hail of bullets, and staggered on with him. And we? In breathless suspense, forgetting all else, we had but one wish: may Fate spare him! Let him live!

Then he became aware of us! The shock made him drop the wounded man, but he picked him up again at once—and handed his gun over to us. The wounded man, a comrade of ours from the 4th company, had been shot in the stomach; he died during the ensuing night in the only tunnel of the position under the highway.

At noon our trench was all destroyed by bomb firing. Many comrades of the company died in the firing, none of the wounded could be brought back to shelter. Our Tommy, a sergeant from a London regiment, the courageous comrade and rescuer, survived that terrible night with us on the steps that led to the tunnel, from which the moans of the dying resounded. By a miracle we remained unscathed, although English Red Cross men often came very close to us in their search for the wounded. On the fourth of May in the morning around nine o'clock we fell into the hands of a strong English detachment. We were prisoners of war—and our Tommy was free.

— Martin Meurer, Compositor, *Weilburg.*

WARNING

ENEMY snipers made our existence in the trenches very disagreeable, and the advanced posts, especially, suffered from them. Every day someone was shot in the head, often because the men themselves were not careful enough about keeping under cover. As platoon commander and officer on rounds I had warned private R., the sentry in the fourth sap, several times. One day on my patrol I found him lying in the trench with a deep wound in his head. In his hand he held a slip of paper and beside him a package of French tobacco.

The slip contained a warning in French, saying that the "German comrade" (our private R.) should be a little more careful and not stick his head so far above the edge. The writer of the note, the French outpost on the opposite side, would not do anything to him, but from time to time a French sniper came along, who was particularly keen on shooting the German outposts. This was written on the slip. Evidently our man wanted to wait for his relief so that he could show the message and have it translated. Now it was too late. For in the meantime the sniper must have come and shot the German outpost. He died without being able to tell about the occurrence. The well-meant warning of a noble enemy was not able to avert the evil fate.

— Melchior Baptist, Headmaster, *Lindau.*

FRIENDS

SOUTH of Metz some Americans were taken prisoner. One of them had been wounded in the face, and held his torn cheek together with his hand and a little piece of bandage. All the time he kept calling for his friend, whom he had evidently lost in the confusion of the fighting. (He was not crazy, as one might easily have suspected, but fully aware of the impulses which drove him in search of his friend.) He ran about searching everywhere and rushed fully armed towards our second line. No one stood in his way because he was looking for his friend.

— Erwin Eberlin, Clerk, *Freiburg.*

THE PUSSYCAT

OUR company was at the "French corner" in front of Compiegnes. The division had given us orders to grab a prisoner and find out what French regiment lay opposite our section. It was known that one more reconnoitering patrol was to be sent out; if unsuccessful, a desperate raid was to be made, to bring back prisoners, dead or alive. Among the men in this patrol was a young theological student, Musketeer R. In him, because he knew French well and had a pair of strong arms, lay our chief hope. His dear friend, a farmer's son from the eastern Elbe, who also had a pair of brawny fists, was to be in it too. And these two actually succeeded in entering the trench, by a little protruding French sap, unnoticed. They were just discussing in whispers what should be done next, when they suddenly noticed in the foreground of the sap, a human figure moving.

A French soldier had been left behind there—it was the work of a second for Musketeer K. to spring on the Frenchman (who swung around on hearing the noise behind him, fell on his knees from the shock, his dead white face gleaming ghostlike by the light of the rising moon) and to seize him by the throat to prevent his crying for help. The sentry had just time to emit a startled "O bon camarade" before he was silenced. Musketeer K. then loosened his grip, after arranging with his wounded comrade that he now would hold the prisoner. He whispered to the frightened man that nothing would happen to him if he would keep quiet and come along with them quickly. Then K. jumped up on the parapet, grasped the prisoner by his shoulder-straps and pulled him up beside him. His comrade followed as well and as quickly as his wounded arm would permit. Then he had to hold the prisoner again while K. clambered over the French barbed wire entanglement. Again the prisoner was held by his shoulder-straps and lifted over, and off they went over No Man's Land to the German trenches, our little Frenchman galloping in front of them. Plump, he fell into our trench, just at the feet of the German sentry who looked in astonishment at his guest. The guest saw him straight away and rushed up to him: "O bon camarade," he exulted, "la guerre est finie pour moi."

The rejoicing of the company over the successful raid was of course great. K. and his comrade were the heroes of the new day which was just dawning. And with the new day something else came over No Man's Land to visit us. A dear little cat came, mewing softly, in our direction. The astonished sentry who was a great cat lover, took this strange creature (who came, so pathetically helpless, stumbling across the battlefield) into his loving care. He stroked and petted it only as someone can do who has not laid hands for a long time on such a delicate form and has long had no opportunity for caresses.

In the middle of the stroking, which our pussycat acknowledged by a soft, happy purring, the soldier noticed a strong cord wound round the little creature's neck. Well, he thought, is that intentional? One does not usually adorn such a frail little cat with such a thick cord. And where could the little animal have come from except the French trenches? For the Germans

had no cats and human dwellings were far, so far, away. “Aha, here’s the explanation.” A piece of cardboard was twisted into the cord and peeped out behind one of the little ears. “A message from the French” flashed through the sentry’s mind.

“I say,” said the corporal who was just then going past the sentry, “what kind of strange creature have you landed there?” “Have you a knife?” asked the sentry. “I think we have a message from the French here.” They cut the cord, unrolled the cardboard, and sure enough a pencilled note came to sight which read:

“Chers Camarades! You have taken prisoner a good comrade of ours. We hope he is well. We mean well towards all of you and we send you our sincerest regards.”

Without announcing it all over the place, an answer in French, as from comrade to comrade, poilus to poilus, was sent by return mail, or rather “return pussy cat,” as follows:

“Chers camarades! It is true that we took your friend prisoner. He is not wounded and as far as we know, well. We too are good boys. We reciprocate your greetings with equal friendliness.”

This reply was attached to our pussy, whose departure the sentry watched rather wistfully. At first it did not want to go but after we had encouraged it with a handful of earth, it flew off like a whirlwind, and a few minutes later a cry of joy from over there, indicated that it had landed safely. The idyll was at an end.

Hardly an hour later the two positions lay again under heavy fire, and the evil spirit of war walked the earth again. But over there in France a mother would soon be happy again.

— Willy Dohmen, *Rolsdorf near Duren.*

AT YPRES

THIS was during the attack on the “Ypernbogen” on April 23, 1915. Drum fire and gas initiated the attack. Steenstraate was stormed and the attack on Lizirne started, and now the enemy began a systematic defense. Heavy artillery, machine gun fire, and bombing put an end to the attack. On the outskirts of Steenstraate I was badly wounded and there I lay on the ground, helpless and exposed; to the left of me a volunteer, Veerhof from Bremen, shot in the head, and to the right a volunteer from Holstein, with a bad wound in the shoulder. It was impossible to dig ourselves in, the ground we lay on was too stony, formerly it had probably been a cobbled court. But I had to get away from this hellfire corner, so at last I made a mighty effort and crawled towards a group of houses on a little hill behind us: an agony to me, as the lower part of my body was entirely paralyzed; I had been shot through the back. At last some comrades from a machine gun squad noticed me.

It was from this group of houses that our reinforcements came, and so the enemy kept them under the heaviest machine gun fire. But I was lucky, not a shot touched me. The comrades of the machine gun squad now started to build a sandbag wall in my direction, for their own protection. They pulled me back behind this wall and then carried me into one of the houses. They put me down in a room on the ground floor, where there were already fifteen or sixteen men, all serious cases: among them two comrades of my own company, one Landwehr man, Wolfgram, from a Pomeranian village, and a volunteer, David, from Stargard. The night passed, day broke, noontime, but still no one thought of us. No food, no water, and a terrible

thirst. A Red Cross man, who obviously dropped in on us by accident, was implored for some water; but he answered “I can’t get you any” and with that disappeared.

Then the French renewed their artillery fire. With a vigor which appeared terrific even at that time, they razed the roof from over our heads. An officer wandered in and we begged him to have us taken back out of the firing line. “Whatever for? You’re all right lying here for the time being,” he answered. That might very well be, for we could not form any estimate of the situation outside from where we lay. At that moment, a tremendous explosion went off right in front of our window opening, we were half buried in dirt, and cries and moans broke out on all sides. Our officer disappeared with a bound, and was seen no more. But I was still alive and along with me the two comrades of my company. And then … four impacts of heavy American Brisanz grenades through the walls and ceiling, smoke, vapor, shrieks. A terrible pain in my right leg. I still remember how I cried aloud and fell down, and then I lost consciousness.

I came to in the cellar of the house and saw that there too, Wolfgram and David were my neighbors. The three sole survivors, everyone else dead. Thank God, at least I was not alone. With us also were two Frenchmen, not wounded but gassed slightly. (It was the first gas attack of the war.) Enemies in fact; but here these people became our good angels. Wolfgram had got a big shell fragment in his chest and was suffering terribly. Despite the care the two Frenchmen expended on him, he died quite soon. David had a shattered foot, and I myself besides my old wound, a splinter in my shin and another in my back. That my hearing was gone on the right side was not noticeable till later. And where our German Red Cross man had failed, these two enemies succeeded: they got us water. It was not fresh spring water, but after all the first drop we’d had in two days. There were two mattresses on the floor of this cellar and a sofa against the wall. Our two enemies bandaged us, in part with their own bandages, and they laid us on the two mattresses: I myself moved over to the sofa later. They fed us with their last scraps of dry bread, and the last two cigarettes they had they broke in half so that all four of us had a smoke. The second night fell, everything grew dark, except for the red glow outside.

Then came sudden hectic machine gun firing and bombing, but no one knew the reason. Was I afraid or not? I no longer know. Morning approached, the activity of the firing outside increased to the utmost, then a clamor of voices and the command “All back!” “David,” I cried, “they are going back. Let’s get out of this, or we’ll be taken.” Anything rather than that —I rolled off the sofa and through the cellar to the stairs. David remained (and was later taken prisoner). I crawled as well as my crippled legs would let me and despite the pain, up the stairs. My strength half deserted me and I rolled back down again. But now my two enemies assisted me and with their aid I got up.

However it was not our men who were retreating but a detachment of prisoners, a couple of hundred men who were being sent back. They had to cross a narrow wooden bridge which our pioneers had built over the Yser canal. In the meantime it had grown light and the enemy, who could now see what was going on, trained heavy artillery fire on the bridge and thus on their own, though captured, men. Only by going one at a time, and running, could the prisoners get across the bridge.

And what did my two French comrades do now? I say “comrades” here quite intentionally, because for me they were no longer enemies, but friends. They interlocked their arms, took me up on them and, indifferent to the artillery fire, they went with me, showing every consideration for my pain and wounds, slowly across the bridge. Here our ways had to part,

they into captivity and I to the dressing station, to the so-called “cowbyre” near Bixschote. Too bad I forgot to ask for their addresses. I owe them my thanks.

— Emil Ehnes, Technician, *Cassel.*

IN A SHELL-HOLE

ON December 1st, 1917, during the attack near Cambrai, about two o’clock in the afternoon, I gave away most of my coffee to a young Englishman of about 21, who was sitting completely exhausted in a shell-hole crater full of hand-grenades. I had first to persuade him to come out of the hole, as I could not imagine for what reason he should have sat down expressly among all the shells. I should like to add that I served four and a half years in the war without receiving any decoration. The names of the places I no longer remember, but somewhere left of Cambrai.

— R. L.

INSUBORDINATION

THE eighth Leib-Grenadier Regiment defended their position on the steep ascent of Jouy (Jouy-Riegal) desperately, up till the 18th of September, 1918. On the afternoon of the 16th the French, after three hours of preliminary artillery bombardment, attacked with great force, but were compelled by our third machine gun
company to retreat in the late afternoon. After the attack our attention was drawn, by a French soldier who had advanced too far ‘and ‘got separated from his regiment, to the groanings of a wounded man who lay in front of us, in a deep cleft, and kept calling without interruption “Camarade, camarade … which disturbed our much needed rest after the storm and stress of the attack. Gunner Gruber and Gunner Zielecke of the third squad of the 3rd Machine-gun Company asked their corporal for permission to go in search of the wounded man, but this was refused us in a few abrupt words of command without any reason given.

It was night and our section of the front was quiet: only the wailing and crying “Camarade, camarade … continued, cutting us to the heart. There was no hope of sleep. At about three in the morning Gruber and Zielecke set out, despite their orders to the contrary, in search of the wounded man. After a prolonged search in the dark they found him. It was a French sergeant, a bullet had pierced both his thighs. When they knelt down beside him he clung to his rescuers moaning “Deutsche Camarade, la guerre finie …” In his gratitude he spontaneously offered them all his money, chocolate, canned sardines, everything in fact that he had, which they however declined knowing his own greater need. They tied the four corners of a tent canvas together, stuck a branch which they found after some searching, through, laid the wounded man inside, and off they went, sideways from our position towards a dressing station. As they went they kept stumbling over trees torn up by the shells and into holes at which the wounded man gave terrible cries of pain. This gave the alarm to the corporal who then noticed their absence.

In the meantime they had handed over the wounded man. Among those already at the station was a French captain who as soon as he saw him addressed him with animation. We gathered that they knew each other, which the officer at once confirmed in broken German. He was greatly pleased and gave us cigarettes, and shaking our hands assured us of his gratitude for saving his comrade.

When the two gunners got safely back to their trenches there was a severe reprimand from their corporal for insubordination, and some talk about reporting. However he never did report because a day later he was wounded and taken prisoner by the French. The wounded Frenchman got back to his own side next day through a successful attack of theirs.

— Hugo Zielicke, Workman, *Dollensradung.*

READING MAIL AT THE FRONT

ON the 26th of February 1915 we, that is to say the 1st battalion of the 2nd Saxon Grenadiers No. 101, lay in the trenches to the right of Rheims, between Berry au Bac and La Ville aux Bois. My company was on the left wing of the section held by the regiment. The hostile trenches were about eighty yards apart and in front of our trenches we had about fifteen yards of barbed wire entanglement. Also, to prevent ourselves being surprised by unexpected attacks, listening posts were placed at night outside the barbed wire, because at that time saps running beyond the wire towards the enemy lines were not known. I was to take the last shift and at five o'clock I relieved my comrade. These were our orders: the approach of the enemy was to be announced by three successive shots, and the listening post was not to be left before dawn.

So I lay out there frozen to death and greatly bored, because all was quiet and no enemy to be seen. Despite my thick gloves my hands soon began to freeze and I had to stick them turn about in my overcoat pocket. This reminded me of the four letters which I had received that night, after a four days' holdup of the mail, and had slipped into my pocket. I decided to read them as soon as there was light enough. At last day began to break in the east. My orders were to wait about fifteen minutes longer and then retreat to the trenches.

However I could not wait to learn the contents of my letters and in the dark I had already opened them all. As soon as I began to be able to make them out, I forgot my surroundings and read one letter after the other. My mother's letter I kept to the end. It contained a photograph of her and as I looked at that dear face, I noticed how care-worn and aged mother looked since our departure (which was no wonder, for besides myself, there were three other sons at the front). Suddenly I had the feeling that someone was watching me, and when I looked up—it was now broad daylight—I actually saw, on my left, a French soldier, his rifle leveled at my head, not more than thirty feet away, behind the bushes of the Miette brook.

I was thoroughly frightened, more dead than alive, and unable even to move my little finger. Never shall I forget the seconds which passed while I gazed into the barrel of my enemy's gun, waiting for him to fire. It was my own fault; now I must pay with my life for my carelessness.

But nothing happened after all. When the French
man saw that I made no move to defend myself, he lowered his rifle, gave me a friendly wave of the hand, smiled, and vanished into the thick undergrowth. Why had he not fired? That was my first thought when I recovered my senses. Was an enemy patrol under way and he did not want, by shooting, to betray the presence of himself and his comrades? But no, I abandoned that idea when I thought of the kindly face of the elderly Frenchman, who must have been between forty-five and forty-eight. Seeing me reading my letters from home— as he had probably realized—he too had perhaps been reminded of home: perhaps he had himself a brother, or even a son of my age at the front. And so he thought it a shame in this mood and in

this way to take the life of a man. Who knows for how long he had been watching me? Because when I began to read my letters, I lost all consciousness of time and place.

Suddenly I heard someone call me by my first name. It was the leader of my squad, greatly worried about me, for I was half an hour overdue. I quickly picked up my ground sheet and rifle and, crawling cautiously, returned to the trenches. Since no one else had noticed our belated return this experience remained a secret between us. It would have been my duty to report the incident at once to our company commander, but I should certainly have been punished severely for my unsoldierly attitude in the face of the enemy.

— Max Kind, Office Employee, *Leipzig.*

EVACUATION

WHEN the Germans retreated from their position on the Somme and fell back to the Siegfried position in March 1917, the evacuated area was, by order of the Commander-in-Chief, leveled down completely so as to deprive the pursuing enemy of all natural cover. Not a tree, nor bush, nor hedge, nor fence was left standing; villages and farms went up in flames. The inhabitants were all collected in certain villages and housed in the Churches.

In Vraignes, a little village in the Somme district, on the afternoon of March 15th, a heartrending scene took place. It was the day that the villagers were to leave their homes and take refuge in the Church which alone was to be left standing amid the ruins. In the streets were to be seen old men and women dragging themselves to the House of God and trying painfully to save their dearest belongings; children crying in their mothers' arms; boys and girls pushing the necessary belongings of the families in push carts to the church square; women weeping and casting one last look at their homes, soon to be demolished by the flames.

The soldiers of the 3rd Battalion of the 164th Infantry Regiment, fresh from the hell of the Somme, stood about the streets and for a moment watched unmoved this picture of desolation. Their hearts had become hardened by long fighting and the horrors of death. But this mood lasted only a moment, then a sudden movement went through the ranks. Here and there one turned away, and muttering something like, "Can't bear it any longer," hurried away. Others hastily passed their hands over their eyes; swallowed hard, or blew their noses.

"Come on, give them a hand!" the hoarse voice of an old soldier was suddenly heard.

Some of the older men, fathers of families, detached themselves from the groups, and took the burden from an old woman's back and carried it to the church. An officer nodded approval. This example incited others, many joined in and lent a hand. Carts were drawn, trunks carried, chests dragged, children picked up, mothers comforted, the weak assisted. In the church sleeping places were made up with mattresses and piles of straw. Looks full of gratitude and warm shakings of hands were the remuneration. When the Battalion left, the inhabitants begged—"Why don't you take us back with you?"

— Dr. A. Niemeyer, *Wuppertal-Barmen.*

A KICK IN THE PANTS

IT was December 1916, during the Battle of the Somme, that well remembered time when there was a frightful rainy spell on the Somme. Man and beast alike foundered in the mud. Shells became almost ineffectual, having no impact, so the enemies bombarded each other with

mines. There were as good as no trenches at all, just an unending level of water and mud. We could locate our position only with the aid of a compass. I was stationed near Bapaume as an ambulance man of the 33rd Division of Infantry. Every morning we used to advance about 15 kilometers towards the lines from where we brought back the sick and wounded.

One morning I slipped into the mud up to the arm pits, right in the front lines. The daily exchange of mines was just in progress and my comrades ran back past me leaving me stuck in the mud. The last one to pass was Vizefeldwebel Fleury, from Lothringen; he tried to pull me out but only began to sink in himself. Another mine exploded, so he left me, otherwise he himself would have been caught. I gave myself up for dead. All of a sudden a huge English sergeant-major stood in front of me with a plank of wood. He stepped on the plank and, swearing the while (I could only recognize the word “Boche”), pulled me out. I wanted to express my thanks to him, but he—gave me a kick in the pants and ran back to his dugout, throwing him self down in the dirt repeatedly on his way back to avoid his own mines. I owe him my life.

— Heinrich Weindorf, Merchant, *Witten/Ruhr.*

LETTERS FROM THE FRONT

I.

HERE is an extract from a letter from my son, September 1914. Henri writes: “A German Base Hospital with its complete personnel was captured by our troops. The German Surgeon-Major was given the choice of handing over the wounded to us and going free himself, or of giving himself up as a prisoner and so being able to take further care of the wounded. He chose the latter, and as a matter of convenience, the German and French hospitals were united. The surgeons undertook the care of the injured while the two ambulance corps went together to the battlefield to collect the wounded. Since the oldest ambulancier was a German, he was put in charge, and under an unceasing shrapnel-fire, he marched at the head of the corps.”

LETTERS FROM THE FRONT

II.

My neighbor had just received a letter from her son on the northern extremity of the front. He wrote: His company had been fighting for several days, and since they were quite exhausted, they had been withdrawn from the front lines. There were altogether about a hundred men, more or less exhausted, limping, wretched, dirty, insufficiently nourished for the last few weeks. They had to pass through a wood where they advanced cautiously. In the middle of the wood they saw, by the last rays of the setting sun, a shapeless heap. They approached, and there lay about fifty slain German soldiers.

Despite their fatigue they wanted to get the helmets for trophies and so drew nearer. Suddenly they noticed a slight movement in the heap and heard groaning. Fearing an ambuscade, they thrust their bayonets forward, but the dying men had only strength enough to raise themselves, and without a word stretched their hands towards them, weeping. “Then,” continued my little soldier, “we took the hands stretched out to us, and at the sight we too began to weep.” And by way of conclusion he added, “In a flash we realized the utter wretchedness of war, and we had no more desire to carry off the helmets of the dying.”

— Mme. Dispan de Pleran, *Hay des Roses, Seine.*

"WHY, THERE'S STILL ONE ALIVE"

DURING the war I met, on a street car, a countryman of mine from Borssum near Emden, whom I recognized by his dialect; he was a simple unskilled laborer. Among other things, he told me the following experience that he had had, shortly before he was seriously wounded.

"We had just blown an enemy dugout to pieces and were about to go back to our trenches, when we suddenly heard beseeching cries for help from the wrecked dugout.

'Why, there's still one alive. We'll have to have another shot at it,' said one of us.

'No, just for that reason we don't,' said I.

'Perhaps he also has someone who'll be glad to see him again. Let's get him.'

Thus we did, and brought him to our dugout. And the man was so happy that he would see his wife and children again after all!"

— Dr. Med. Kathe Neumark, *Frankfort.*

TEARS

IT was late in the fall of 1917. Since two in the morning the heaviest artillery fire had been drumming down on the concrete dugouts of the Italians, along the Isonzo front near Tolmein. During the bombardment, under cover of night we advanced to our storming position. Towards seven in the morning, after a lull in the shooting, a devastating fire from all sides was trained on the Italian infantry trenches. We attacked, broke through, routed the front lines, and advanced.

I drew near Woltschach, the first temporary dressing station, with my Bavarian machine-gun platoon. Italians led by Germans, Germans carried by Italians with bleeding bandages round their heads, arms hanging limp, legs dangling; these we encountered retreating back. My machine-gun platoon was scattered over the shell torn ground. Mules laden with carriers had here and there fallen in while they were crossing the trenches and I rode round striving to collect them together again.

Apart, crouching on a rock, I found an Italian, who clasped his belly with both hands, while the blood from his entrails gushed through his fingers. Before him knelt a sergeant of my own regiment, supporting his head, stroking the damp hair, and weeping, as the groans and stammered prayers of the dying Italian died gradually away into a monotonous murmur.

There was no heroism, no courage displayed by the German: but his stroking hands and his falling tears will hereafter ensure him a place in Heaven.

— Karl Münzinger, Merchant, *Mohringen.*

SINGING

IN the fall of 1917 we were intrenched opposite the English. The distance between the front lines was from seventy to eighty yards and the ground between was covered with shell holes. These were quiet days, no bombardments, nothing; only an occasional firing indicated

that both lines were occupied. I was with my platoon, on the left wing of the sector held by the regiment. Next to us was a Landwehr regiment.

One night I was notified that a patrol would be sent out early in the morning from the adjacent company of the Landwehr regiment. I therefore gave orders not to fire, because it was possible that the men might by some chance turn up in front of our sector. The enemy however noticed the party and at once a furious bombardment began. The machine guns trained on our trenches rapped away relentlessly over our heads and rained over the whole area before the trenches. Rifle fire crackled and soon the deep rumble of artillery set in, so that what with this firing and the constant shooting up of Very lights there was no chance for the patrol to get back into the trenches.

The artillery fire ceased after half an hour, but the tapping of the machine guns went on, so that there was only a slight chance of the men, who had crept into shell holes, getting back. We felt sorry for the poor devils lying out there between the trenches in compliance with a scarcely justifiable order. Soon day began to break and soon we could faintly distinguish the landscape. A return seemed all the more impossible, for the enemy still held the sector under fire.

Suddenly amid the machine gun fire I heard someone singing. I could not believe my ears. Two comrades standing beside me looked at me in speechless astonishment.

Singing here? In the very front line? Who could it be? That was madness. And sure enough the singing came from the ground in front of us. What song was it? I don’t know, but it was a heart-stirring moment.

And the result? The firing suddenly diminished and then ceased altogether. Not another shot fell and soon the four men were back in their trench unscathed, all well except for one slight casualty.

— Max Scholz, Traveling Salesman, *Chemnitz.*

MOTHERS AND SONS

THE NECKERCHIEF

DURING the retreat out of Macedonia in the fall of 1918 I and several of my comrades got parted from our company and all we knew was that Jagodine (in Serbia) had been mentioned as the gathering place. The Serbians were astonishingly amicably disposed towards the Germans and in almost every village I found quarters. Yet I always barricaded my door from within as a precaution and also my gun lay loaded by my bedside. In Nisch, the chief center of the Balkan army, it so happened however that I was turned away at every door. I persisted nonetheless in my search for quarters, knocked at the door of one medium-sized house and presented my case to an elderly lady who had cautiously opened the door to me. I told her that I merely wanted a bed, and that I had been “deloused” only yesterday. To my astonishment, she laughed at my unintentional joke and asked me whether I should be satisfied with a room in the attic. I thanked her, beaming with joy.

The next morning I saw through the window that a wash-basin with soap and towel were already laid out beside the pump. I had hardly crossed the courtyard and hung my coat on the pumphandle when my hostess rushed up to me, fell on my neck and broke into loud sobbing. At the same time she covered the woolen scarf which I wore round my neck at night as a protection against colds, with kisses stammering the whole time, “My son—my poor son.” It turned out that she had given her own son just such a neckerchief, and such a hand-knitted scarf was always the work of a mother. Did I not get it from my mother?

I admitted it in astonishment. I told her that my mother was a widow and I, her only son, had had to go to the war when only eighteen. In the severe winter of 1916-17 I contracted inflammation of the lungs in France and my mother absolutely insisted that when I went back I was to take along her woolen kerchief, so that on cold nights at least my neck would be protected. Since that day this scarf was my talisman and I thought I would never be able to fall asleep if I didn’t have it on.

My story worked miracles. The woman held my hand in hers and told me that she too was a widow and that her only son had been killed during the Bulgarian offensive in the fall of 1915. She too had knitted a woolen scarf and on seeing mine, she had realized immediately that I could have got it only from my mother. In that moment all her past suffering had been revived and she begged me urgently to allow her to treat me as a son. She immediately brought all my things down from the attic and I had to camp in her best room. I also had to share all her meals from now on.

When after four days I took leave of her I could not utter a word: but she kissed me on the brow and faltered out that she was going to pray that my mother might once again hold me safely in her arms.

— Albert Vieth, Actor, *Magdeburg.*

LEAVE

TAKEN prisoner at Mons, after being seriously wounded four times, Captain Campbell of the East Surrey Regiment learned, in captivity, that his mother was dangerously ill. The mother adored her son and was worrying about his fate. The son, interned in a sanatorium, could think

of nothing but his mother, and lived through endless days and nights of anxiety and longing to get to her sickbed.

Would the German authorities grant him leave to visit her? Perhaps her life could be saved by this. He wrote his petition although he knew it must be refused. It was refused.

In desperation he then sent a letter directly to the Emperor. To his great joy he received news that the Emperor had granted the petition, three weeks leave on parole.

— Sent in by an English correspondent. Retold from the "Daily Herald," May 7, 1931. (From Field marshal Sir John French's Memoirs.)

"MOTHERS REMAIN MOTHERS"

I AM not saying anything against my mother: she was a kind woman—and anyway she died two years ago. But she was still alive at the time that I, eighteen years of age, had to go to the war. And so there I stood in the living-room while mother admonished me in something like these words:

"There's no charm against death and fate, so I can not ask you to be quite sure and come home again; but I must ask you not to confuse strict fulfillment of duty with foolish recklessness. Also I advise you not to accept anything from the people in these foreign countries: enemies are enemies, they poison the water and are forever lying in ambush to shoot at you. If you should ever be suffering from thirst, you must at once ask the Frenchman who gives you water, to drink first himself. Safety first!"

The thought that enemy peasants or townspeople might secretly try to poison me, filled me with such wrath, that I passed on the word to all my gray-clad comrades: "Let them drink first, always let them drink first."

Well, one day we marched into Neuvilly, which lies about fifty kilometers southeast of Cambrai. And these fifty kilometers we poor Jerries had to march in the scorching sun, with only two short rests; and even then no one was allowed to lie down. You could just rest your pack on the end of your gun, your back was raw like burned flesh, your feet covered with blisters; and thirst, thirst, thirst. Our flasks were long ago dry, for sweating infantrymen are bad managers. I personally, when I had to blow my nose once, found the handkerchief covered with blood.

Finally Neuvilly was reached; we fairly stormed the houses: Water, water! Gasping with thirst we besieged pumps and wells, there were terrible fights with bare fists, and violent blows: and who remembered "Let them drink first"? I would not join my comrades in their gory struggle, so I approached the farmhouse where I was to be quartered, and right there on the doorstep stood a withered old woman with pitcher and cup. She smirked suspiciously, but I was so thirsty I let her pour it out, then shouted at the old mummy "Drink first: boire d'abord."

The old woman understood at once, her smile changed to bitter contempt. She drank from the cup however, so I could take the small enamel mug and I emptied it greedily. My room was clean, the bed smelled of lawn-bleached linen. It was the one and only time as a soldier that I had a real bed (not counting the weeks in hospital—but a man riddled with bullets does not think any more, he just endures the agony, internal as well as external) . For the rest, I found myself in a country laborer's house in which the old woman alone remained. On the wall hung a cheap crucifix and under it Chamfort's soldierly motto:

Guerre aux chateaux! Paix aux chaumieres!

War to the castles! Peace to the cottages!

Peace to the cottages! Let them drink first? Someone was inconsistent: either I myself or the warty old dame. Suddenly someone knocked, the old woman was once more in the room: she had forgotten something. What followed? … She placed a framed photograph of a French recruit on my bedside-table. It was a silly, cheap portrait, of the kind that our businesslike garrison photographers also were turning out in heaps. And what was the old thing muttering? "Here, camarade … la guerre, my son!" At that she disappeared, grunting reproaches and with an offended air. What was I to do with a picture of an enemy soldier on my bedside-table?

We remained in Neuvilly a whole week. Grave events were impending; hell was loose on the Somme; by day we performed elaborate field maneuvers, at night airplanes dropped bombs on the villages. Every evening I would return dead-tired to my quarters; the old woman avoided making any more scenes. Until one day—it was an unforgettable Sunday morning—the French local parson came to the house, and when he went away after an hour, the old lady came and knocked at my door, trembling and streaming tears. Had I called?

Yes, I had called, I wanted some water, this summer thirst was really unbearable … At once the woman brought what I had asked for, but as she stood holding the pitcher and cup she sobbed terribly and pointed to the picture of her son "Oh camarade, dead, la guerre, la guerre!"

What I did at this moment, anyone will understand who has been able to keep his heart pure and simple— in spite of all the wild events of war. I cried aloud as though someone had reported to me the death of my own brother. The old woman tried again dutifully to "drink first," but I tore the cup and pitcher from her hands in shame. "Nix boire d'abord, ma mère!"

"My mother" had I said? How did I come to it? No, this woman would no longer drink first; and as I took the old creature tenderly in my arms, and laid my hand on her trembling head, I paid secret tribute by that gesture to the grave of the unknown soldier, whose mother wished to be the mother of every son.

That evening I wrote to my mother in Cologne "… and you can say what you like: mothers remain mothers, in France as well as in Germany and you can't ask them to drink first. If you had any idea how ashamed I was when, six days ago, I scorned the smile of a mother who was only going to quench my thirst because she was thinking of her own son …"

— Heinz Steguweit, Author, *Cologne-Klettenberg.*

THE MIDWIFE

IN the summer of 1919 we were the prisoners of the English in Charleroi, a town in Belgium, where we had to clean the streets, etc., ourselves. One day a little girl of about nine came up to us, and as we were only two men, she asked us to come with her to her parents. We asked permission of the Belgian civilian who was on guard over us and he let us go. After a very hearty reception, the mother of the little girl offered us some coffee and her father gave us cigarettes. Then the woman told us the following story, which was translated for us by the little girl, who spoke German.

"After the German troops entered Charleroi in 1914, it was occupied by Landsturm men, one of whom was to be billeted in our house. He came the very day I was expecting my little

boy. I was alone with my little daughter when at noon the Landsturm man arrived. When we two saw him we hid ourselves in the farthest corner of the room because we both had the greatest fear of Germans. And he was, too, a big strong man with a beard reaching down over his chest, so we were more afraid than ever. However he came laughing over to us and greeted me and the little one. I mastered my fear, approached him hesitantly, and gave him my hand, whereupon he took off his pack, sat down, took the little girl on his knee and fed her chocolate, bread, and sausage. He gave me some too, and during the meal he noticed my condition, saw that I was about to give birth to a child. He would not let me work any more, took off his coat and set the place in order. Towards evening my hour came. In my fear I did not know what to do, for I had no one to help me. The Landsturm man put me to bed and my little girl too, and went out. After an hour he came back bringing a soldier with him. He too greeted me in a friendly manner and told me, in French, not to be afraid, the Germans were not cannibals, and that he was a doctor and would help me. This he did and around midnight our boy was born. The Landsturm man tended me as my own father would have done until I could do my own work again."

At the height of her joy she had taken a vow to do a good turn to every German who came her way. So the little one frequently brought us smokes while we were working near them.

— Emil Carl, Chauffeur, *Frankfort on the Main.*

JUST A LITTLE STORY

MY youngest nephew Karl was eighteen years old, when he marched with his regiment into Forbach in the December of 1916, weighed less than a hundred pounds and was still just a child. On the first of June 1917 he was put into the trenches, on the thirteenth of June a shell shattered his right leg; the enemy he never saw. At the end of the year 1917 he came back to Mainz, broken in health and with only one leg. He once told me this story:

"We were seven days in Comines; I was quartered with an elderly married couple, whose only son was at the front. These good people pampered me like a child. When I came back in the evening, dead tired from duty, the woman had prepared a warm footbath, dried my feet with a big bath towel, and then rubbed them with a soothing lotion. Later on, when I lay in bed, she would come in, smooth my coverlet, run her hand through my hair and say, evening after evening, "Mon pauvre petit." When I took leave of them, I had to promise both faithfully, that after the end of the war I would visit them, and that I shall certainly do as soon as I am well again."

This promise he was never able to keep. He suffered eight years before death released him.

— Eduard Strauss, Merchant, *Mainz.*

MOTHER OF ALL

SOME years after the war I was traveling back from England to Germany. As we left London an English lady entered my compartment, dressed in one of the most extraordinary uniforms I have ever seen. It was of military cut and crowned with an unbecoming cap. She was on her way to Moscow, to give aid and advice to British subjects living there. "It has been thought suitable," she told me, "that I and my colleagues wear this uniform."

Then we got talking about the war. She had been a nurse and told me a great deal about her experiences with German prisoners. Finally she told me this story: "One day, along with some

other badly wounded Germans, they brought in quite a young chap, a boy of sixteen. His case was hopeless, and he was very restless and kept calling for his mother. One of the Red Cross men came and said to me, ‘Nurse, do come and see whether you can do anything for the poor little chap.’ So I went to his bedside and took one of his hands in both mine. At that he opened his eyes, looked at me very tranquilly and said, ‘Mother, I knew you would come.’ A few minutes later all was over.”

What the Englishwoman told me I promised to myself to pass on at a suitable opportunity. Because, as every mother whose son was missing, thinks of the Unknown Soldier as her boy, so may every mother who gave a sixteen year old son think “It was mine whom the strange woman consoled for me.”

— L. M. Schultheis, *Darmstadt.*

TRICKS

SLEIGHT OF HAND

IN October 1917, a Bavarian army corps, supported by their Austrian allies, broke through the enemy lines at Karfreit-Tolmein. I was marching in their rear, in command of the pioneer train of our Austrian reserve division. The progress of the pursuing victors was impeded by ruined highways and railway bridges, continuous rain, congested roads, retarded reinforcements, and perpetual squabbles over authority between the different allied detachments as they pressed forward. In the middle of the night we stopped in the main thoroughfare through an Italian rural district northeast of Cividale. My reservists, dripping wet and quite worn out, sank down under the shelter of the house gables. The rain had stopped but it was damp and raw, so I kept on the move, and inspected my band from head to foot. Everything was all right. Men, horses, and cattle were dozing off. A lance-corporal and I were on guard, so I went up in front to try to discover the cause and probable length of the delay.

The frightful shriek of a woman caught my ear and made me go in search of its origin. In a barnyard, just off the main road, lit up by lanterns and torches, I saw several German reservists, commanded by a sergeant, in the act of dragging a cow from its stall. A half-starved Italian peasant woman, clad in rags, with an infant in her arms and three little ones clinging to the folds of her skirt, was protesting with heartrending cries, from which I could only understand “Mio bambino, mio bambino.” The farmer and a neighboring couple were trying to persuade the sergeant not to commandeer the cow, for the sake of the children: three had already been taken, surely they could spare the last one. Labor lost—war is war. Then, driven beyond endurance, the mother tore with one movement of her hand the frail linen of her shirt open and disclosed her starved and wretched dugs, no longer bearing any resemblance to mothers’ breasts. With a sharp word of command to his men the sergeant brought this painful scene to an end.

Now I tried to intervene and to make my colleague (who was of the same rank as myself) change his mind. “These cowardly, treacherous brutes,” he replied, “who lie in hiding to shoot at us, deserve no consideration.”

“But the children … ” I objected.

“Nothing doing. I have my orders and that’s that. Out with the cow.” With such demented strength did the mother cling to the cow that six strong arms were scarcely enough to drag her and the shivering children back to the house. The sight made me seethe inwardly, and a plan matured.

I decided that I would give the milch cow from my company’s stock to the peasants and replace it as we advanced by commandeering another. I confided my scheme to the lance-corporal who was in charge of the cattle, and together we wove a tissue of lies in case the captain should discover the illicit disposal of the cow too soon. Silent as thieves, so as not to awaken our men, we led our reddish-brown Liesel by a roundabout way to the farmhouse. On the way the illogicality of my action struck me, for within the next half-hour our milch cow might be taken from the farmer by another foraging party and the children left once more without nourishment. So there was nothing to do but leave the lance-corporal behind with the cow and give him strict orders not to hand over the beast on any account. “Say it belongs to the officers mess of the division staff—say it has foot and mouth disease—say what you like, only

see that the mother and children get their milk until the rationing is properly regulated," I instructed him.

At the farmhouse a neighbor, an Italian who knew a little German, interpreted my plan to the distracted mother. A cry of gratitude and a shower of kisses on my hand was my requital. I told the lance-corporal to look after his own provisioning until I could send him further instructions from the front.

We advanced, by tremendous forced marches, across the Venetian plain. I kept sending my corporals out to commandeer cattle, for there was not much chance of supplies from behind. Our reddish-brown Liesel was replaced by a black and white spotted milch cow. Three weeks later I and my squad joined our company at Tezze on the Piave. They were building concrete dug outs on the river bank! A few days later the lance-corporal, whose absence and that of the cow I had consistently concealed from my captain, also joined the company again. His life of enforced leisure had been made a misery to him by military police and supply controllers, and he had finally disowned the cow altogether. The peasant woman and her baby had been taken to a hospital and the father and other children had been evicted and retired to a refugee camp. So everything was all right. Only the chief of my company kept insisting that in the middle of October I had boarded the train at Zloczow with a reddish-brown cow, but had reappeared at the Piave line in November with a black and white spotted one! Since he was so occupied with the business of war he never discovered the true explanation of this sleight of hand.

— Franz X. Jordan, ex-Railway-Inspector, *Drosendorf.*

THE ELOPEMENT

IN the year 1918, a battalion of English soldiers arrived in Omsk, the capital city of Siberia. Shortly after the terrible cold of winter had set in, some German soldiers, who had been taken prisoner about three years before, were found suffering from the hardships imposed on them by their captors. The English commanding officer, Colonel R. A. Johnson, obtained permission to employ these fellows as general servants to the regiment. One, by name Ambrose, became affectionately known among all ranks as "Ham Bone." His job was as handyman in the room allotted to the sick. Day and night "Ham Bone" placed himself at the service of the sick. Men in the tortures of frostbite, and diseases common to the wastes of Siberia, came to regard him as the ray of sunlight in their lives. A pitiful cry for comfort and succor and "Ham Bone" was there. He it was who led a relief party during the height of a Siberian winter blizzard to the aid of a company of English troops who were unable to get back.

Late 1919, orders came for the Battalion to return home. What of poor "Ham Bone"? The British authorities had no concern for German prisoners of war, who must return to their former misery. "Ham Bone" was at the train bidding adieu with tears in his eyes to all his friends. Suddenly one asked him to step up for a final handshake. He did, and the train moved off with him still on board. For three weeks he was kept out of sight of official eyes, while en route to Vladivostok. An other three weeks while waiting for the steamer he was not seen officially, and finally in the uniform of a British soldier he was smuggled on the steamer. Before arriving in Vancouver, a considerable sum of money was collected together, a civilian suit was found among members of the crew of the ship, and the first night the ship was in dock "Ham Bone" stole away in the darkness to his new found liberty. Good luck to him.

— F. Edge, Restaurateur, *London.*

COMMANDEERING

IN March 1915 in the Carpathians, we left our rapidly liquefying trenches and advanced on offensive operations towards Galicia. A two days' infantry attack, without any artillery, and we captured the Russian trenches near Dolina.

Our triumph was, however, shortlived, for instead of getting help from the Austrians as we expected, the Russians descended on us again and caught us in the trenches. Their reception of us behind the railroad embankment was at first hardly friendly. A corporal, still irritated by our recent successful attack, struck our one remaining officer on either side of the head with a spade. The others laughed at the captured "Germanskis" or made faces at us. We took cover, as quickly as we could, from our own artillery fire which was just starting, and then we were handed over to a big patrol of Cossacks, to be transported back. Now, the Cossacks were reputed to be half-civilized creatures who committed the most terrible atrocities on their prisoners, so when they came dashing towards us, pulling up their galloping horses within just a few feet of our group, cracking their knouts above our heads, we thought: now we are at the mercy of the barbarians.

But it turned out differently. On the highway to Kiev the heat was oppressive. We were exhausted and parched and advanced slowly. Although, to be sure, our escorts kept shouting a rousing "Pascholl" at us, they never acted brutally. At every farmhouse we passed during the day they asked us if we were thirsty, and went themselves in search of the farmers.

One scene especially I shall never forget because it bespoke a really touching war comradeship. As we passed through one of the villages, an inhabitant brought out a basket of freshly cooked pastry, a thing we had not seen in a long time. A circle of would-be purchasers formed round the basket and the marching order was destroyed. The Cossack who rode ahead turned, wrenching his horse's head around, and came flying back. A sharp question to the seller, and the Cossack forced a way for his horse through our group, seized the big, full basket and distributed the fragrant raisin bread and other delicious cakes among our ranks. Then with a "Go to the devil, you son of a bitch," he flung the empty basket back at its owner, and fetched him a blow with the whip.

This seemed very hard on the dealer, but an interpreter informed us that the civilian had asked too high a price of us. By way of punishment had our comrade Cossack, from a pure human impulse, done this "commandeering" from his own countryman.

— Hermann Spannring, Frankfort on the Main.

FRENCH REDBREASTS

IN the ruins of Tricourts near Albert, in the spring of 1918, we had made use of a damp, fallen-in cellar, without door or windows, as a dwelling-place. With great pains we managed somehow to fit up a window, so as to protect ourselves a little against the terrible draught. When, finally, we had the window all fixed up, we could not use it: for we had forgotten our room-mates, a couple of red-breasts who had used the empty window frame as entrance and exit to their home! Well, what could we do? To leave our window meant certain death for the little birds, who would run their heads against it; so we decided to take out the window during the day, and stoically we endured the draught until the young ones could fly.

— Otto Reifschneider, Bookkeeper, *Ginnheim.*

THIEVERY IN BELGIUM

THE company was detailed to protect the railway near Tirlemont, for a few days; and our squad came to the village of Oplinter to keep an eye on the men there, because a biggish battle had just taken place outside Tirlemont. While looking for suitable quarters we came on a good sized farm, a former monastery. Fine, I thought, this will be a good place to sleep. This was of course the main thing after the strenuous marches and skirmishes in the scorching heat of August. Those were three lovely days. On entering the farm we saw lying in the gateway a strong-box with a broken lock—and then you should have seen how things looked inside the house! Everything was topsy-turvy and smashed up; everything of value dragged off. And this was a mystery to everyone, because a chalk inscription, made by the 66th Regiment on the door, indicated that the owner was absent. An empty room on the ground floor was soon fixed up, then down we lay to sleep.

The sentries by the front entrances brought to us, towards evening, a man who claimed he was the owner; which turned out to be the case. During the fighting he and his wife had done a bolt, and now he wanted to see how things were. The man (a Mr. Valis, a horse breeder) was dumbfounded. To our question, who could have done this, he answered that the German soldiers had done it. To the question, how did he know this since he had not been there, he said the people in the village had seen it. But we told him this was impossible, quite out of the question. For what should our people do with umbrellas, sticks, women's dresses and petticoats? Wine, yes, they would drink that and throw the bottles away, but there were none to be found around, so the wine must have vanished with the bottles. Women's chemises, well, every old hardboiled soldier who had been out from the beginning and through the big offensive knew that they too could be made use of when one was soaked with sweat: I had worn one myself at one time. Beautifully airy it was and trimmed with lace.

Mr. Valis however insisted that it was our comrades who had done it. We talked it over with our corporal and came to the following decision. We sent for Mr. Valis and said to him: "Now you go, or send someone, to the village, with the following proclamation: *Before eight o'clock to-night, all the things stolen from the estate must be brought back. Anyone ashamed to do this can hand them over to so and so, from where they will be collected. No consequences will follow. But to-morrow morning in Mr. Valis' presence every house will be searched and wherever stolen goods are found the house will be burnt and the proprietor shot."*

We were all in suspense as Mr. Valis sent a woman off. He did not want to believe it but our supposition about the people was right. Less than an hour later the people came trailing in. We were all quite speechless, our temporary host especially so. He was simply flat, flatter he could not be. Towards evening we were just cutting for the deal, when there came a knocking at the door. In came our boss, Mr. Valis, with a great palaver, apologizing to all of us and asking us not to hold it against him, he had not thought it possible. He wanted to withdraw the accusation against our men and asked us—his wife had meanwhile come back too— to drink a bottle of the returned wine with them.

Everyone went. The sentry got his share too, and those were two fine hours there. The next morning early there was a great squealing of pigs outside, and there, as we rushed out, lay a two hundred and fifty pounder in his own blood. Mr. Valis laughed and said "For you, Gentlemen" as he saw our astonished faces. Madame was already in the dairy churning, for us

too. Boy, oh boy, we all thought, let's hope we stay here a long time, and at noon we pitched in and ate as much as our skins would hold. He and she were right in our midst.

Early next morning a quiet alarm was given for departure. Did we swear, but leave must be taken. Unwillingly we departed from the fleshpots of Oplinter. Before we left there was a good big piece of pork in our pots and a good piece of butter too. Then a short but hearty farewell from our host: he wished us all a happy return home to wives and children.

We parted, not as enemies, of that I am firmly convinced. For a long time he went on waving to us. We marched towards new thunder clouds. Antwerp.

— Christian Bovennann, Postal Official, *Millheim/Ruhr.*

STOLEN BACK

ON a misty Sunday morning in April 1915 I and about 800 fellow soldiers were taken prisoner by the Russians north of Przemysl. I must mention that when I was barely nineteen I had gone voluntarily to the front and was always the youngest among my comrades.

I had a still fairly new coat, but that was soon taken away from me by one of the Circassians who were guarding us. After an unending day's march we arrived dead tired at a place where we were to stay overnight. Although food was given out and we had eaten nothing for almost two days, we left it untouched and stretched out just where we stood. My sleep was wretched because it was still cold, and I naturally felt the want of my coat. As soon as day broke I got up, to warm myself again by moving about.

A guard who had been observing all the time how I shivered with cold, came over and asked me, where was my coat? I pointed to the Circassian who lay not far off covered with his own coat and using mine as a pillow. The guard walked over, gently raised his sleeping comrade, and signed to me to pull my coat away. Then next, I had quickly to put a stone under his head and we made off quietly. After my protector had also rolled and lighted a cigarette for me, he indicated that I should now beat it, and of course I needed no second telling.

I had my beloved coat back, and I also brought it, though by then in rags, back home in 1919.

— Jos. Haase, Official, *Reichenberg, Czechoslovakia.*

THE SUN HELMET

IN January 1918, a hundred and twenty of us, sick and wounded soldiers of the Lettow troop from German East Africa, arrived at the prison camp Tura near Cairo (Egypt) . We had to hand over everything and marched in our birthday suits into the barracks, where we got dressed anew from head to foot. A few weeks later eight hundred more Germans arrived, among them a brother of mine. They naturally had also to hand over their old uniforms and other clothing, and after enduring a disinfecting bath they were given fresh underwear and clothes. Even our sun helmets, which during those four years had practically become part of our heads, had to be given up and many of us got in exchange one that hurt our heads terribly. Evidently this was very much the case with Corporal Mueller's helmet. Anyway he tried very hard to get his old one back, even to the length of reporting with a sick headache, but he was only advised to change with another man; which for some curious reason he did not want to do.

Every morning at 6 o'clock we privates had to get ourselves wheelbarrows and cart sand and bricks till noon. Near the place where we got the barrows lay the thousands of old German helmets in a great heap.

One day Mueller made a clean breast of it to me. "All this business about my headache is a lie, the English helmet fits perfectly. All the same I must get my old helmet back because there are ten coins of elephant gold sewn into it. By golly, we must get them!"

Through my knowledge of English I had already made friends with the Tommy who was in charge of us. Upon this I based my plan. One main difficulty was this: how was I to find among a hundred sun helmets which all looked exactly alike, the one belonging to my friend Mueller? The other difficulty was this: when I had it how was I to get it back to the camp? I couldn't throw my own helmet away and wear it instead, because the English ones had an entirely different shape, so that in the German one I would immediately draw attention to myself.

The English guard knew that I had met my brother Alfred in the camp. As he was a sergeant he didn't have to work. The hardships of an African campaign had undermined his health. On this circumstance I based my plan. I kept telling the Tommy how much my brother suffered from headaches, the only thing that would relieve him would be to wear his own helmet again; during the daily inspection he would of course wear the English helmet. I worked on the Tommy for at least a week before he at last gave me permission to hunt for the German helmet.

My friend Mueller had his identification tag sewn inside his helmet. I had to find it among the heap of over a thousand of them, without anyone noticing. When getting my wheelbarrow in the morning I never had more than two minutes' time. After a few days, how ever, I actually held the precious helmet in my hand. But how was I to get it back to camp with six hours of carting before me? And so the Tommy took the helmet and carried it under his arm for six hours, until we came back to camp. I brought the helmet secretly to Mueller and in a private place he took the ten gold coins out and gave me one as a reward.

— Theodor Freudenberger, Merchant, *Frankfort on the Main.*

DISPOSING OF ARMY PROPERTY

IN January 1917—it was 20^0 below zero—I was in a Red Cross troop of the 4th Corps, which was then stationed near Nicey (on the Meuse) and had been specially assigned to gas prevention service. I was ordered to Benoitevaux to look into a lot of old equipment left behind by the corps whom we had replaced. Among the things were a quantity of old shirts, which were to be destroyed.

Several yards away from my barracks was an internment camp with German prisoners, all of whom were without shirts and dressed in rags. Tuberculosis was rife among them, aggravated by the low temperature. As I was alone, and did not feel responsible to anyone in this matter, I tied up a few bundles of shirts one night and threw them quickly over the barbed wire entanglements around the camp.

I continued this little activity for two or three days until I was caught at it by an artillery adjutant who pointed out that I was breaking the rules. However he assured me that he would not report me. He must have kept his word, as I have never been questioned about it.

My only regret was that I never heard whether the poor devils really found my bundles of shirts.

— Louis Vallet, *Paris.*

BAVARIAN LORE

IN the late summer of 1917, when I was half recovered from a wound, I was attached to a convalescent division in T., and was there put in command of a big grain depository. Thirty German equipment men and forty-five French civilians were employed there, shoveling the huge quantities of grain all day. Each day the French men, who by the way received wages, marched off punctually to "lunch" at a neighboring inn, until I discovered that they were regularly smuggling about two hundredweight of wheat, hidden in the legs of their trousers, to the inn where they sold it. Strict orders were at once issued against this, but they went on stealing. A distinction had to be made between those who took the wheat home and ground it down in a coffee grinder to make a kind of cake with which they appeased the craving hunger from which every one of them suffered; and on the other hand those who sold the wheat at once and spent the money on drink.

Among the latter was a husky lad of about seventeen who stole constantly. I had already caught him twice in one week and had made it clear to him that the third time he would be sent without mercy to the "hard labor division." This they dreaded like the devil. Nevertheless three days later I caught him at it again; his greed for money made him defy the dangers. He knew immediately what was coming to him, but apparently, if he was to go to the dreaded "hard labor division," he intended to kill off one of the hated Germans first. No sooner did he see me coming than he reared up like a cat, bore down on me, and in an instant was kneeling on my chest and fumbling for my throat. In another moment, however, the fellow was down and I on top of him. He got a licking of the best Bavarian brand so that he was knocked out completely in a few minutes.

At this moment my superior officer arrived on the scene. I realized at once that the Frenchman was in for several years in prison, if I were to report the true story. In my opinion the dressing down which he had just gotten was enough of a punishment, so I reported to the officer some minor offense of the Frenchman. Whereupon I got a severe reprimand and was informed that it was a dirty trick to attack and beat up someone for such a trifle. A week later I was therefore relieved and despite my barely healed foot, sent back to the front. But my Frenchman remained at the grain depository.

And now the finale: In 1923 I was sent to a small town in the Palatine on a very ticklish mission concerning the policy of passive resistance. I was perfectly aware that I was constantly watched and followed about by French detectives. Suddenly one day from a group of soldiers someone called after me by name. I thought at once: "Now they've got you!" But no, it was my "friend" of yore, which naturally did not make the situation any pleasanter. But he was as happy as a king and embraced me in the middle of the street. Another soldier acted as interpreter and soon it came out that the boy, despite his seventeen years, had understood my action and knew perfectly well that he had escaped jail by the skin of his teeth. Even to-day it is a source of deep satisfaction to me that I beat up that boy so thoroughly but also saved him from jail.

— A. R., *Worms.*

THE CONSUL

ON December 6, 1919, the steamship “Semiramis” brought two thousand German prisoners-of-war home from the Island of Malta, by way of Venice. Through some oversight, the Austrian transport train which was to take us back to Innsbruck, had not arrived. The officer in charge of the transport steamer, an Italian Colonel, explained that we would have to lie in Venice for three or four days; but that, by order of his Government, no one was to leave the ship.

A painter in Venice and not allowed to see the town—it flashed through my mind—that could not be. The Colonel was adamant, so I approached another Italian officer. He also refused my request. I became more urgent: was not the war over? Probably I would never again in my whole life come to Venice: I would give my word of honor to behave absolutely correctly in the town and also to return to the “Semiramis” within forty-eight hours. He regretted, shrugging his shoulders, but he must obey orders.

At night when he was going on shore I stood at the gangway ladder, just looking at him imploringly. He winked at me, “Come along then.” While we went down the steps he whispered to me “Speak only English.” Up till now we had communicated in a mixture of English, French, Italian and German. On shore stood a sentinel with fixed bayonet; he approached the officer at once and drew his attention to the fact that no civilian might leave the ship. My delightful dream seemed to be at an end.

“That’s all right,” said the officer calmly, “this is the American Consul who has just been visiting the ship,” and he slapped my shoulder. “Oh, I beg pardon,” said the sentinel saluting. Then the Italian shook hands with me and said intentionally rather loud, “Well, goodbye, Consul. And don’t forget the day after to morrow.” “All right, Captain,” I answered laughing.

So a poor German painter was allowed to enjoy the incomparable beauty of the loveliest city in the world for two days and two nights, as an Italian prisoner of war and as an American Consul!

— Fritz Leopold Hennig, Painter, *Zoppot.*

RED CROSS

THE RED-CROSS HOUR

THE fighting to gain the heights of Paschendalle was fierce. The Army Reports mentioned in particular the brave conduct of the 132nd Infantry Regiment. After this battle I went home on leave. On the way a soldier from another regiment entered my compartment, looked at my shoulder strap and sat down opposite me. And we began to discuss the conduct of the English. Every day between eight and ten o'clock in the morning there would be a Red Cross Hour. Thus we had named the two hours when cannon and rifles were silent. Our dead and wounded lay right up as far as the English line, but we could bring them back without danger. The English indeed made the task of our men easier by pointing out the dead. There were comrades who had already lain there for several days, who had been bandaged, fed and covered with blankets by the enemy. This was a Yorkshire regiment, at the beginning of November 1917. Both our hearts were full…. For a long time we exchanged experiences. The train approached the German frontier.

— Hermann Hillebrand, Locksmith, *Millheim/Ruhr.*

A SAMARITAN ON THE DOUAUMONT

I AM writing about the 27th of February 1916. Near Verdun, during the first big attack the 25th Infantry Division had pushed its way through the forest of Caures and Wavril, after a heated and gory struggle. Beaumont had already fallen, and the division lay halfway up towards the village of Louvemont, ready to storm it in turn. The hills were bleak and the weather bitter. After an icy night spent in holes laboriously dug in the ground, we gazed upon Louvemont as the day broke.

The shells, shrieking and whistling in every key, sought their mark, and death reaped a rich crop. In the afternoon we attacked. It was successful, and towards evening of the 25th we held the lines just in front of the Thiaumont-Pfefferrücken factory.

We were stretcher-bearers of the 2nd Battalion of the I.R. 117, had been stationed near our troops before the attack, and had been kept busy with the casualties which ensued. It was therefore impossible for us to advance along with the troops and only towards evening could we change the location of our dressing station to Louvemont. Our work was not yet over: the following day was to afford me a grim opportunity to help the suffering.

Early on the afternoon of February 28th all our wounded lay safely in a ravine. We had just lunched on French supplies which we had found, goulash of corned beef and boiled potatoes, cooked and eaten in a cellar in peril of our lives. Then the hospital-attendant Becker of the 6/117 came up to me and asked "Peter, have you seen the barn full of wounded negroes next door?" I said no, and he said "Come with me." I went.

I served four years at the front: half the time as a stretcher-bearer and half as a hospital orderly. I know a little bit about war. I know not only the terrors of the weapons of war, but also their effects. My duty was always difficult, it never lacked horrors or terrors. But if I think back over my experiences, the memory of that barn in Louvemont, full of French negro soldiers, all desperately wounded, ranks among the worst.

There may have been thirty or forty of them, lying in the barn, if one can still describe that ruin by such a name. They must have been there at least five days. They had been wounded in the forest of Caures and wore only emergency bandages. All were seriously hurt, none could walk. Some were dead and lay among them, had lain there for days: the dead among the dying. All had fulfilled their natural functions where they lay, and a stench emanated from them which would have induced a perpetual nausea in most men.

Becker asked me “Will you help me to bandage them? I’ll provide cigarettes, for without smoking nothing can be done here.” I agreed and we bandaged them. Why had they been lying in Louvemont without being looked after? Who knows? The casualties were enormous, in the first days we had probably taken care of the white French soldiers first, and after that there was no time for the negroes.

Even today I am struck with admiration when I think what Becker did. He fairly went at it. He did the bandaging, I only assisted. He showed no hesitancy; no stench, no fear of infection, nothing could keep him from his work. He was compelled by no orders to do this: love of humanity alone demanded his help. It was a hard job. There was firing on Louvemont, heavy firing. Even at the present day I cannot understand how no shell struck the barn. In front, behind, on either side there were constant explosions and plenty of fragments fell, for the roof of the barn gave about as much protection as an umbrella.

It took hours to finish. I smoked one cigarette after another to overcome a constant nausea. Becker smoked too, but he could not all the time, because he did the bandaging.

Becker’s training was a great help to him on this job. In time of peace he had been a “Krankenbruder” in the monastery of Montabaur in the Westerwald. He had been a lay brother, not a cleric, and had the knowledge of a doctor. As I have mentioned before I marvel at Becker to this day. On that 28th of February 1916, I was struck dumb with wonder.

I did not understand him then. I could not understand him, because his labor of love was done for men who, almost without exception, were doomed to death. Most of them had gangrene in their wounds already. To the continual danger of the French artillery was added the danger of infection. And no conveniences were to be had there, no water for washing the hands, no rubber gloves. At the front, I mean in the very front lines, such things could be had only in very quiet sections, and at the division dressing stations.

I understood him only much later, after four, five months: I think just before we joined in on the Somme. In the meantime he had become a Red Cross sergeant. We had a camp service and Becker was assisting during mass. On this occasion his face showed the same almost fanatical expression of devotion as it had when I had helped him to bandage the wounded French soldiers—the same devotion as when we bore off the dead negro soldiers to save the living, though mortally wounded, men at Louvemont. On his face was that same expression with which at Louvemont he had, with his own hands, removed the ordure and filth and lice from the black men, to apply iodine to their wounds and bind them up.

He spoke only German; the negro soldiers spoke only a little French. As we bound up the first one the other wounded men around us wailed in a strange tongue. We could have no communication with them, but each one who was still able to speak said to him “Merci, Monsieur!” During the bandaging he must have caused pain to many of them, but they all thanked him for they too understood that expression of compassion in his eyes.

When the shells struck near us and the shrapnels exploded over the barn, Becker would say to me “Nothing can happen to us today,” and nothing did happen. Did he wrestle inwardly with his God as Jacob wrestled, until He blessed him? I do not know. I know only that what he did was good. I hope he is still alive and that if these lines are printed he may read them and rejoice in his work.

— Peter Heberer, Insurance Official, *Frankfort on the Main.*

DOCTORS

DURING the night between August 23rd and 24th 1914, about ten of us, wounded French prisoners, were quartered in a school hall in Longhier, near Neuf-chateau in Belgium. A German surgeon, although already quite exhausted, took care of us without sparing himself, during a part of the night, and consoled us with every mark of kindness. He helped the wounded when they wanted to relieve themselves and emptied the chamber-pots himself. This doctor had close-cropped hair, and beautiful clean-cut features adorned with scars.

Three months later—in Traves, in a barrack which had been transformed into a hospital, the nurse who looked after the wounded French with the greatest amount of self-sacrifice and the tenderest care was the wife of a German captain, of whose death on the French front she had just heard. In the same hospital a wounded German corporal shared the little gifts he got from his family with me.

Later on, in the hospital in the Cologne engineering school, about January or February 1915, I asked a doctor to amputate my right hand at the wrist because some painful complication had set in. This good man refused, saying with a friendly smile “Then it won’t grow again.” The next day he performed a skillful operation which cured me quickly and saved the thumb of my right hand.

When we arrived in this latter hospital, the population was allowed to visit us. The inhabitants were very sympathetic and distributed cigarettes and chocolate among us. However these visits were later forbidden. The personnel of this hospital was kind and disinterested in their treatment of us.

Finally when there was talk of sending me home as a serious case, around the 10th of July 1915, I had to have a medical examination at Konstanz. At first they refused to examine me because for a non-commissioned officer it was necessary to have been wounded twice. On the advice of a German N.C.O. I insisted to the German member of the medical commission that I should be examined and dismissed. Without even looking at my injured chest the doctor gave me my dismissal, and also my comrade, who had an amputated leg.

— Vicaire, *Clamart, Seine.*

THE CRAZINESS OF KILLING

IN February 1915 I came back from the Eastern Front in a hospital train, suffering from a serious inflammation of the kidneys. I was to be put up at the fortification hospital at Danzig. I was a reserve corporal in the 21st Infantry Regiment. The train was chiefly occupied by German soldiers, most of them suffering badly from internal injuries, and among them one with a bullet imbedded in his forehead. This one was considered the least sick. When he arrived he had no temperature and helped as best he could to stow the sick and wounded in the

hospital train. At night I slept opposite this grenadier. One day I received orders to take special care of him as he had suddenly gotten a high fever and was delirious.

This order was a mere formality, for I was neither able to leave my bed, nor call for help in an emergency because I had myself a temperature of about 104°.

At one point I had fallen into a restless half-slumber, when I suddenly had the feeling that danger was threatening. Cautiously I opened my eyes and saw the Grenadier with the wounded head standing before me. His eyes, of which only the whites could be seen, were fixed and staring and he grasped an open knife in his hand and murmured to himself "I don't want to be slaughtered alone … I will cut all their heads off … and you (meaning myself) are here as guard … so you'll be the first to get it." I thought my last hour had come and raised my left arm to avert if possible the blow of the dagger which I expected to follow the next instant: although indeed I had no chance of offering any resistance to the tall grenadier.

Luckily for me our compartment was just behind the kitchen compartment: which fact we appreciated for its warmth, its hot water (for the long neglected washing), and not least for its food. While I was still staring at my poor insane comrade, expecting the end every minute, the back door of the compartment opened and a crippled Russian, holding a cooking utensil in his hand, came in on his way to the kitchen to get hold of something to eat. Immediately grasping the situation he threw himself upon the much stronger grenadier and grappled with him until help came. He received in this struggle with the injured man, who fought like a maniac, a number of wounds in his left upperarm, fortunately not dangerous, and which healed well as I was able to see for myself.

My rescuer was sent to the prison camp Troyl near Danzig, where I often visited him and many a time brought him (although it was strictly forbidden) food and also cigarettes which the Russians missed most of all. Later I succeeded in getting him as a laborer on my father's farm in the district of Holp, where he stayed till the end of the War and where things didn't go badly for him. He was an infantry-man, Mingali Gilmanov from Kasan.

— Fritz Konig, Watchmaker, *Rehau, Bavaria.*

THE SLEEPING HOSPITAL ORDERLY

ONCE again I had behind me three sleepless days and nights with only an hour or half an hour's respite when my eyes closed of themselves: then to my horror I was ordered to do night duty as an armed sentry. For a hospital too has to be guarded against sudden attacks and robbery. The watch was from seven in the evening till seven in the morning, and the guardhouse a warm stable. I had the third shift and till then slept like the Lord himself. My turn was from eleven till one. It was bitter cold and shortly after twelve I was found by the corporal on duty, asleep on a wooden partition. I was relieved at once and slept like a log the rest of the night.

Next morning I reported to the chief. In front of the assembled squad my crime was thoroughly looked into. "Attention: For sleeping on guard in the presence of the enemy: report to Court Martial." So I could not go to my French patients any more, a comrade took my place. I was brought to the estate to be under the nose of the chief. Was I not already under suspicion for desertion? I walked around as in a dream, saw myself before the C. M., years of prison, shooting, all sorts of possibilities. I was all bewildered. My comrades avoided talking to me; it was a frightful state of things.

The reader may wonder why I had not spoken up before now, but the experienced soldier knows that this is, or at least was, as good as impossible. You were given orders, the orders were obeyed. At last one day, however, I screwed up my courage and went to the chief. I explained to him, as described above, how I had simply not been able to stand it any longer and had broken down in complete exhaustion. The chief drove me out of the room and went to see the French invalids. There were not many of them left—only five —the others had died. And now—so my successor who understood French well, told me—now I should have heard how the French praised me up to the heavens, what a good comrade I had been, always doing every thing for them, and always around at night. The angels in Heaven might have envied me.

And the effect: I was allowed to go back to my French patients; the report to the C. M. was withdrawn, a special commendation for self-sacrificing performance of duty and—three days mild imprisonment: for penalty there must be. The penalty was considered already paid however. But what would have happened had the French not stood up for me?

— Otto Vallert, Foreman, *Dietesheim on the Main.*

UNDER ENEMY PROTECTION

THE Battle of the Somme opened with a blockade which lasted seven days and seven nights. The losses of the attackers were terrible, but the defense demanded enormous sacrifices too. Every foot of ground was bitterly disputed.

The 180th Württemberg Infantry Regiment had to suffer great hardships. Time and again orders came from behind the lines that the strategic point Ovillers was to be held at all costs, even if the adjoining regiments to left and right had to retreat still further. Behind the German trenches the wounded were accumulating. All the hospital dugouts were overcrowded, and nobody could be brought back as the whole region lay under devastating fire.

Then, despite some misgivings, the 20th Red Cross Reserve Co. decided to drive an ambulance right up to the lines. At once English airplanes came swarming from all directions to watch this courageous action. Lower and lower circled the airplanes so that the English artillery had to stop their firing since their own men were in danger. Now ambulance after ambulance drove up, always accompanied by the enemy aircraft, and in a short time all the injured were in safety. This beautiful trait of humanity in the English could be observed again and again during the entire Battle of the Somme.

— Fritz Dietrich, *Heilbronn.*

THE ENEMY ON THE WHEELBARROW

BEFORE the war Karl was a handy-man in a little grocery store in Innsbruck. Industrious, honest, somewhat repressed and taciturn, conscientious and rather queer, he did his work without any telling and was loyal to his master. For only his master knew of the sufferings of his childhood. He came of a working class family in half-slavonic Southern Styria. His father was a confirmed drunkard and used the child as a sort of whipping-boy, until once he struck him too violently with a log of wood, and the poor creature was sent to the hospital with really serious wounds on his head. The father was sentenced and the child entered the working world which seemed a paradise to him after the hell at home. Thus Karl became a useful human being, only timid of people and repressed, because the memory of his somber childhood still hung over his beaten spirit.

In the scorching sunlight of a summer afternoon the Italian shells were throwing up jets of stones, earth and mortar into the leaden haze of the air. They were merely churning up the already ruined and disemboweled white-washed houses, that were once Asiago. Between, behind and under cover of the few standing fragments, the men of the company to which Karl now belonged, were running around like insects. The storming of the village had succeeded easily and swiftly, because first our artillery had made of Asiago a sort of sizzling cauldron in which the enemy could not hold out. Now the company lay amid this hotch-potch of ruins, while the enemy artillery stirred anew, with hand grenades and shrapnel, this hellish stew.

The commander soon realized that within a few hours his company would be buried in this rubbish heap. Scarcely had his men found a temporary shelter amid the wild chaos of exploding shells and tottering remnants of walls, than he ordered a retreat, and in a few minutes the company evacuated the riddled heap of ruins which was once a sightly village.

Karl had entered the village along with his platoon which formed the right wing. Brave and calm, no exultant hero with glowing eyes, but resolute and not overawed by death or danger, he had been since the beginning of the war on active duty with this company. Even this seemed to him better than the beatings at home. At the edge of the village, to which the right wing had penetrated, the explosions were worst. Karl had crammed half his body into the opening of a cellar which was partly filled up with debris and above which the remains of a thick wall stuck out like a thorn, from the wreckage. The debris suddenly gave way and in spite of himself Karl began to slip deeper down into the vault beneath. He fought with all his strength to prevent himself being carried down this shoot into a certain grave. Laboriously resisting the flow of the debris, twisting his body and straddling his legs he worked his way up again slowly through the opening. It was during this that the order to retreat had been given and his comrades had already left the village.

The shells fell more frequently, the enemy had apparently noticed the capturing of the village and was keeping up a regular barrage. Karl looked out cautiously from his hiding place but nowhere could he see one of his comrades. All under cover, he thought, and retreated back into his hole. Time passed, the artillery fire waned, and again Karl peered round from his shelter; no soul to be seen. A fresh layer of shells was strewn over the remains of the ravaged village: then again, silence. Karl crawled out quickly from his hole. At first he still advanced automatically by the method of springing a few steps forward, then taking shelter. He began to look eagerly around, leaping walls and looking round corners and finally began to call.

No answer: in uncertainty Karl stood still. He had lost all sense of direction and tried in vain to remember from where the company had come, and from where the enemy had been firing. In a way, it felt quite good, after the terrible turmoil of the last hours, to be able to think so calmly. He sat down on a stone in the shelter of a shattered house wall and reflected farther. The sun was scorching, some insects buzzed through the oppressive atmosphere; from somewhere amid the wreckage came intermittently the sound of moaning.

Karl became attentive. He crept round a corner or two and climbed into the ruins of a little house. In one corner of it lay a pyramid of debris from the collapsed upper stories of the house, and from under the rubbish a human body partially protruded. A step or two brought Karl alongside of the injured man. He pulled away the crooked arm which hid the face and head, and looked down into a ghastly face. The skin, caked with dirt and blood, was stretched tightly over two sharp cheek-bones. The lowered upper lids reduced the eyes to a narrow streak of

white. The trembling lips were pursed out to let forth a sort of whistling moan. It was an Italian, mortally injured.

Karl was terrified. In trembling haste he began to dig the wounded man out. With his bare hands he shoveled away and scraped off the debris. A renewed shudder ran down his spine as he brushed the last bloodstained pieces of mortar from the man's legs. These legs were a shapeless mass of rags, lumps of flesh, caked blood, and mortar dust. In a few places light red blood still trickled in thin threads. He grasped the Italian's body with both arms. The lips of the unconscious man let forth a still shriller whistling, the head dropped back and the two white streaks of eyes stared unblinkingly into the glaring midday sun. Falling and stumbling Karl carried his burden over the ruins, the mangled legs dragging over the sharp stones and drawing fine traceries of blood. In the shelter of a wall he laid down his fatally wounded enemy, as comfortably as possible. He plucked a few cool shady leaves that were within his reach and put them on the wounded man's lips. The whistling stopped, the breath entered cool into the lungs. With a bleared and staring look the wounded man gazed at him.

Karl did not know what to do. The man should be taken to a dressing station, or the evening sun would no more shine under his lids. As he did at home at his work, when a sack was too heavy for him to carry, Karl's eyes wandered round in search of a means of transportation. It was perhaps this instinct which made him find, after a short stroll through the ruined village, a little wheel among the planks of a broken-down barn. At once he recognized that this wheel belonged to a wheelbarrow and after some laborious search he rolled his vehicle, with a triumphant smile, up to his wounded enemy. As Karl was preparing a better lying position for the Italian with his coat and arranging him with great difficulty on the wheelbarrow, shrapnel began falling on the ruins once more.

An agonizing journey now began for Karl, who pushed his burden on the wheelbarrow through the ruined village, panting for breath as he went. Often for a little bit, where formerly the street had run, it was quite easy, then again barricades of wreckage, stones and wood barred his way and he had to move the debris or take it at a run. He was perspiring all over. The exploding shrapnel again began to assume a regular rhythm, while ever and again grenades senselessly stirred up the dust and rubbish. With an anxious look round Karl mustered his burden. The wounded man had closed his eyes, his head hung over the edge of the barrow and knocked against the wheel whenever he dashed at a run through a shell-hole. The firing became denser, more smoke and dust blinded and hindered him, the sun beat down more mercilessly on his steel helmet and back.

Crash! As though carried by a blow from a giant fist Karl flew in a parabola over the cart into the rubbish. A few feet from them a shell had exploded in the wall of a house and had sent a shower of stones over freighter and freight. With one bound, Karl was back to his wheelbarrow his fists gripping the two handles. Gasping and breathless he trotted along, pushing his cart through the labyrinth of ruins which were brought to life again by the impact of the shell. At last between a house wall and a tattered fence he got a view of the open field and a little lane winding through the hills. Another hundred yards or so Karl ran with his cart, then gradually his strength deserted him and he fell back into a walking pace.

Stumbling he pushed on, through his swollen lids he could discern men moving behind a wall of earth and the gleam of guns and steel helmets, could hear indistinct calling and shouting. A few more steps he pushed his car with drooping head, then his grip loosened, his knees gave way and he fell sideways over the shaft.

He was aroused by shouts, he was being shaken by the shoulders. Karl lifted his leaden head, the steel helmet rolled down his back to the ground. Then in terror he opened his eyes wide and leaped to his feet: a group of Italian soldiers stood around him, laughing, gesticulating and talking to him. With a feeble movement he felt his head which bore no helmet, then ran a few tottering steps down the lane. He did not get far: laughing and talking the Italians surrounded the reluctant boy, while others pushed off the barrow with the wounded man.

Shortly after he stood facing Italian officers in a dug out: the soldiers who had brought him all crowded in with him. More and more officers kept arriving. All talked at once to Karl. Then they gave him things to eat and drink and from every side came hands offering him cigarettes, filling his pockets. A captain gave him a glass of Vermouth and patted him on the back. Then the captain made a speech, pointing at Karl with outstretched arm. Finally a wild shouting of "Eviva" broke out. Everywhere Karl saw friendly faces as they dragged him from one headquarters to another. Finally, at a higher place, an interpreter was found and Karl was questioned about his action. He related his experience with perfect calm and did not forget to explain that he had run into the enemy lines very much against his will.

Then he was fixed up with a special document and sent to a prison camp in central Italy. Wherever he went and produced his letter of introduction he was received in a friendly way and with loud cheering.

— Gunther Langes, *Bolzano.*

THE ISOLATION HOSPITAL

DURING the war, in the year 1917-18, I was working as a nurse in the Isolation Hospital "Haus Schuller" in Ployesti (Roumania) . The dangers surrounding us were enormous, for we had cases of dysentery, typhus, spotted typhus, malaria and smallpox. The hospital held from two hundred and fifty to three hundred cases, only German soldiers, who were taken care of by five nurses, five orderlies and Roumanian prisoners of war detailed to assist us. It would have been impossible for us Germans to get the work on so many serious cases done, had we not had the help of the prisoners. They helped us in the roughest work, and in the most dangerous jobs connected with contagious cases: the disinfecting of the really bad cases, and of their beds. Faithfully and conscientiously they fulfilled their duty. Although they got worse food, the so-called prisoners' fare, they never complained: and rejoiced with us when the sick got well. And they also cooperated in paying the last rites to those whose eyes were closed forever.

I am thinking especially of Christmas Eve, 1917. The prisoner who had been detailed to help me at my isolation station, brought in sprays of evergreen. In my spare time I made Christmas roses from white tissue paper and made Christmas garlands of evergreen and roses. When Christmas Eve arrived the Roumanian helped me to carry the branches out to the church yard and together we laid the garlands on the snow covered graves of German soldiers.

— Sister Margarete Paech, *Berlin-Mariendorf.*

"WILL YOU WATER?"

THE fighting was over. The day was nearing its close and the wounded soldiers were trying to get to safety. Behind a hedge, at the entrance to a little farmhouse, lay Volunteer Lange, seriously wounded. A rifle bullet had ricocheted and hit his left leg, paralyzing it. The

shot had not caused him excessive pain and thus it was possible for him to remain fairly comfortable behind the hedge. Since early afternoon Lange had lain in this situation. By nightfall however he could stand it no longer behind his hedge. He tried to stand on his legs again, but as he tried he noticed at once that his left leg simply would not make the necessary movements, the main nerve was apparently paralyzed. Upon this discovery Lange was overcome by a certain fury which made him let out a volley of curses against the Tommies. A German comrade came and offered to support Lange and led him immediately into the house, to see there by the light of a candle, what kind of wound Lange really had.

On entering the kitchen of the house Lange noticed that some Englishmen were there, who during the fighting had sought cover in the cellar with their wounded. On seeing those people Lange had another outburst of rage against the English, and would—if he only could—have thrown himself on the first and best Englishman, to strangle him. However his helplessness forced him to contain himself.

In spite of Lange's swearing an English R.A.M.C. man stepped up to him and asked in English "Will you water?" (so Lange remembered it). The meaning of these words Lange at once understood but all the same he looked at the Tommy suspiciously and thought to himself "You rascal, I bet you want to poison me." And not till he had clearly seen the Englishman take a good draught from the flask himself, did Lange take the bottle and quench his wounded man's thirst. And hardly was the thirst quenched than another kind of man appeared in Lange. It was as though Lange had in a moment forgotten his deadly hatred of the Tommies.

The English R.A.M.C. man noticed at once the change in Lange. Confidently he approached him and offered him biscuits and cigarettes. Only now did Lange look straight in the man's eyes and discovered that the R.A.M.C. man only wanted to help the wounded Lange. On this discovery the last scrap of resentment left Lange.

The English R.A.M.C. man then took out his first aid kit and started right in to bandage Lange's wound. While he was being bandaged Lange thought to himself: "Why are people really having this frightful war against each other? Nobody knows the other person; nobody has done any harm to the other person and yet they work up this meaningless rage against each other so that they could easily strangle the other person; yet why on earth?"

"Come, comrade," said the English R.A.M.C. man, grasped Lange's arm and led him to the nearest wounded collecting station. While the Volunteer Lange became more and more aware of himself as a human being—the English and the German spirit drew ever nearer to each other.

— Heinrich Lehmann, Workman, *Herrensohr/Saar.*

THE OPERATION

IN June 1917 the 127th Inf. Division was stationed in front of the Fort Brimont near Rheims. We were not exactly in a quiet zone, but had escaped the bigger attacks. The chief dressing-station of the 65th Division was at Neufchatel on the Aisne canal: the hospital, operation rooms and dugouts were on a hill where the French population had formerly kept their wine in cellars cut out of the rocks. In our Division was Surgeon-Major v. B. and if ever a doctor deserved the title "a benefactor of humanity" it was he.

One night there had been heavy fighting out in the trenches, the Germans had unexpectedly captured a part of the enemy's trench and taken some prisoners in it. The following morning the French artillery kept up a heavy bombardment, evidently to prevent further advances, and meanwhile the prisoners were being sent behind the lines. A French officer, with a slight wound, was brought to our dressing-station, and while the wounded were waiting in the open, outside our rock cellar, a French shell struck the hillside and wounded the French officer a second time. This time his leg was completely shattered. We hurried him into the operating room and as the table just happened to be free, he was treated immediately. His leg had to be amputated. Surgeon-Major v. B. hoped to keep the man alive in spite of the serious loss of blood. When the amputation was over and Dr. v. B. was about to put in the stitches, the telephone rang. The telephone was my job so I answered it. The Division wanted to speak to the doctor on duty. I told Dr. v. B. and he asked me to inform the Division that for the moment he was busy on an important operation which could not be interrupted. This I repeated, whereupon the following conversation took place:

The Division Staff Officer: "Ask the Doctor at what hour today we can question the captured officer."

Surgeon-Major v. B. (to me) : "Say that no examination of the prisoner can take place today. He has just had a serious operation and it is not certain that he will pull through."

The D. S. O. (to me over the telephone): "It is out of the question for us to postpone the examination till tomorrow. Tell the doctor that by order of the General, it must take place tonight."

Again I repeated this and again I had to answer that Dr. v. B. would by no means permit an examination. For the moment the incident was closed.

After a few minutes the telephone rang again. When I answered I heard that the General himself was on the wire and asked for the Surgeon-Major. Angrily Dr. v. B. handed over the surgical needle to an assistant doctor, took off his rubber gloves and went to the telephone. There in a very decided tone of voice he declared that, as a physician, he could by no means permit an examination that day. The excitement of the questioning would mortally affect the officer who had lost a great deal of blood. The conversation lasted quite a while but Dr. v. B. did not give in.

The next day the prisoner was removed, without any examination, which would have weakened him beyond recovery. To our Surgeon-Major he owes his life.

— Hanns Gelsam, Journalist, *Wipperfurth, Rhineland.*

CAPTIVITY

HOW PRISONERS ARE MADE

ON September 27, 1915, at one o'clock noon, my company 10/254 made an attack on the Russian position which was situated slightly above us, at Shuprany near Wilna. After only a slight bombardment, we advanced and came up to within two hundred yards of the Russians. A devastating fire was suddenly turned on us, so that many a comrade bit the earth, and I was perhaps the first to receive a shot which stuck in my chest. Under enemy artillery and machine-gun fire I was bandaged by an heroic Red Cross man of my own company: his name I have forgotten, by profession I think a barber. After some time I regained consciousness and saw four Russian soldiers approaching me. Of Germans I saw none any more: only now and again a shell still exploded on the moist meadowland. At that moment however I did not know; was I a prisoner or not?

A German-speaking Russian explained at once that I was not his prisoner, but—the opposite was the case! A topsy-turvy world. My interpreter ordered the other Russians to lay me on a tent canvas, and now these four Russians carried their conqueror through the pouring rain to the dressing station of quite another division. The whole way we did not meet a single German soldier, so I was glad that those good Russkis got me safely through with all the necessary care.

In pure joy that I had got to a dressing station, I wanted to show my gratitude by giving something to the German-speaking Russian, but unfortunately I had no sugar or bread or cigarettes in my pocket or haver sack. Thereupon the captured Russian gave me a cigarette and a button off his uniform which I have to this day as a souvenir.

— Philipp Stroh, Architect, *Sprendlingen.*

ORDEAL

TRANSPORTED to the Italian front with a marching company of the 92nd Infantry Regiment von K. we were assigned to the 100th Infantry Regiment in Ceggia, at the beginning of January 1918. During the offensive of June 15, 1918 our regiment had been kept back as reserves, but on June 16 we were sent into action. On the afternoon of June 18, I was sent out on a telephone patrol to find a line, along with a Pole, the latter, despite my warning, went right and I left; suddenly there was a crash about my ears, a bullet grazed the steel helmet on my head. I ran quickly to some bushes and threw myself down. Then, as though suddenly sprung out of the earth, three Italians stood before me. The game was up: captured.

After several hours of marching late into the night, a halt. We collapsed on the ground wherever we were standing, to sleep and sleep. In the early dawn of the 19th on to Capello, near Treviso. There we were given our first meal; dried fish, a loaf to every five men, and a quarter of a liter of water! In the evening of June 21st, several thousand prisoners were transported by rail to the tent camp of Ferrara. Terribly hot by day, at night cold and misty; swampy region, and perpetual thirst. To quench this, we followed, after hesitating for a long time, the others' example and dug a hole a yard deep with our spoons and tent-poles, and this stagnant water we drank. The consequences: diarrhea and finally dysentery.

August 25th, by rail to Mantua. Seven o'clock at night I marched sixteen kilometers from there, broke down on the way; was loaded into a truck; into camp again, isolated. August 28th.

First an examination, Italian surgeon, very humane, prescribed hospital care. August 31st. Exhausted and altogether down and out I was to make the long march on foot. My guard, an Italian platoon commander, had pity on me and forced a farmer with a cart and mule to stop and take me along. And so, although bumped about and flayed alive I got a little more easily to the hospital at Mantua.

Put along with Italians only, treated well, good food, a quarter liter of wine daily. On the fourth day (I was the only German among Austrian prisoners) a wounded Italian came into the room and asked for Germans. I could hardly walk, but Pietro, my new friend, said: "Come along to the court into the sun, that is better than lying in bed." Now I was well off: he took care of me. From him I also learned that the offensive had failed and that the Austrians had been forced to retreat over the Piave again. After the medical examination, September 7th, I was assigned, along with a Slavonian platoon commander, a Slavonian corporal and a Croatian Serb who insisted on calling himself a Jugoslav, to a convalescent camp.

Pietro, who had lived three years in Germany and Austria, gave me, upon our heartfelt parting, three liras with his best wishes. This man I shall never forget. On September 8th the four of us with two guards traveled to Vigasio. In the railway carriage we were scoffed and jeered at by Italian soldiers, but a sergeant took our part, ordered silence and conversed with us far as was possible considering that only the Jugoslav, who had been a prisoner for some time, knew much Italian. The others too got interested and when we finally alighted, each of us had in his haversack, fruit, bread and other little items.

But at the station in Vigasio we had the most humiliating experience of all. From the opposite direction came a train full of American soldiers, young strong people. They rushed up to us like savages, roaring with laughter over the famished, jaded Austrians, so that in our wrath and fury we only wished we had a few hand grenades handy. The two Italians were powerless. Then just at the right moment came a sharp word of command, the Americans turned, and ran back to their carriages. In front of us stood an American officer, raised his hand to his cap and honored with a salute the lately despised, sick Austrian soldiers. Even our two guards expressed their approbation by a "buono, buono."

— Rudolf Paust, Bookbinder, *Eger, Bohemia.*

MR. COCULA

AFTER a long captivity with the French in Africa we were sent back to France. This reminds me of a sergeant from Cahors in the Lot department, who tried to make our lot a little more agreeable. When he gave the order to fall in, he invariably tried to do so in German, which always gave rise to some amusement. On the day that I was discharged from the prison, he came to me after the dismissal and addressed me in familiar tones, calling me by my first and last name. He expressed his sympathy because my child had died back home, and he told me at the same time that I was to be sent to quarters where I should be better off. This was in P. with Mr. Cocula. He was a cook by profession and lived along with us like a comrade. His wine, tobacco and coffee he shared with us. One day when it was pouring with rain he even lent me his coat. Mr. Cocula rolled cigarettes for me and fixed up a little room with a bed for me. In the evening after work and a good supper—which was forbidden to prisoners—we sat around the fireplace and I had to talk about Germany. At the end of these conversations Mr. Cocula always expressed his wonder that this country could offer resistance to a whole half of the world. One Sunday we drove over with horse and carriage to G. to fetch some other

comrades. On the way Mr. Cocula whistled tunes from the operas of Gounod and Verdi. Mr. Cocula loved art and music and he was always pleased when I recognized the tunes. In G. he took us to the barber and had us fixed up. The same day we were also to be photographed. This I was unfortunately unable to share in, because that day I found I was to be replaced by a corporal. A touching leavetaking … Mr. Cocula protested, but nothing could be done about it, I had to pack my things. Mr. Cocula asked me for a pen and ink drawing by Max Klinger as a souvenir … and that afternoon I was sitting in my railroad compartment. And from the ladies and gentlemen who sat opposite me I heard once again the old tune "Voilà des boches."

— Karl Schmidt, Railway Porter, *Frankfort on the Main.*

A RESCUE FROM THE FLAMES

IT was in the spring of that fateful year 1918, during my imprisonment in England, when the submarine warfare was at its height. Three endlessly long years had already crept by behind the barbed-wire fences. I had endured the rigors of a Scottish winter and was now sent, along with a few other comrades, to Richmond, a romantic little town in the county of Yorkshire in central England. Close at hand there was a great army camp and adjoining it a newly laid out military airport. Here we were employed as pipe layers; we had just come from Edinburgh where we had spent the winter shoveling snow.

On one of the first spring days, it was at the end of March 1918, English military planes were buzzing low over our heads and performing elaborate maneuvers. Suddenly a violent noise from near at hand drew our attention from our work. About 150 yards away we saw through the thin fog an airplane crash to earth in flames. We were the first to hurry to the scene of disaster as the Tommies were busy in the airplane hangars which lay wrapped in fog about 500 yards off.

My dear friend, Lance-corporal Dingeldey, a Thuringian, was the first to leap into the flames in defiance of death. At the risk of his own life he succeeded with our help in extricating one of the two officers, who were strapped to their seats, alive from the flames. The other officer had been burned by the scorching flames and could no longer be saved alive. As by a miracle Dingeldey received only slight burns.

The very next day the English papers published the German soldier's picture with a detailed description and appreciation of his courageous act. Besides that, our commander, an old Scottish Colonel appeared, accompanied by his staff, and during the roll-call he expressed "in the name of His Majesty's Government" sincere admiration and gratitude for our deed and especially that of the German soldier Dingeldey. By order of His Majesty he presented us with a substantial bank note, and the real rescuer of the aviator, my friend Dingeldey, with a gold watch.

— Adam Jost, *Sossenheim.*

THE EXECUTION

IN November of 1919 I attempted to escape from the French prison Company No. 414, which was quartered near the village of Bailleul. Although I managed to do over sixty kilometers of railroad in one night, I was unfortunately caught on the second evening in Roulers in Belgium. After four weeks in the fortress of Lille I was to be transferred to the penal companies specially formed of fugitives. This one was said to be particularly severe,

harsh and unjust. So one day I was ordered to set out, with three other men of the penal company of the fortress of Lille. On our arrival there we were received by an adjutant, a great husky Frenchman.

He asked whether any of us could speak French and I mentioned that I knew a little. We had to sit down on a pile of wood, then he gave us tobacco to roll cigarettes and I had to tell him how far I had got and how they had caught me again. Now, when he realized how misfortune had dogged us, he ordered good food and tea from the people in the kitchen and said we were not going to have a bad time with him, for every good soldier should try to regain his liberty, the rest were not soldiers but women. Such an attitude I had hardly expected. I asked him whether the penal company here was very severe, because we had heard that maltreatment of the prisoners was frequent. So he told me that during the Chinese campaign he had got cut off from his own French company and had stormed Peking along with the German troops; of which he was very proud for the Germans advanced upright, not, like the others, in a stooping position. Furthermore he got on very well with the Germans and had been sorry when the different nations exchanged back their strayed men. And since we were soldiers who had tried to escape we were going to be well treated.

Our work consisted in clearing up a village which lay several miles from our camp, and we were paid at the rate of a franc a day, as against twenty centimes in other companies. During the month of January it rained day after day, and naturally it was not pleasant to march the long distance morning and evening, and to work in the mud. One morning, after a specially stormy night, none of the prisoners wanted to go to work. Of four hundred and fifty, two hundred men reported sick and the others had bad shoes, coats or overcoats. The French guards had to produce all their extra articles of clothing, and so it was possible to send a detachment of twenty men. The others the adjutant ordered to fall in and he made a big speech, asking at least some of us to go to work. But it had no effect. So he had two machine guns placed and he said he would shoot us for our refusal to work. He ordered the guards to load. To us he said that if when he had counted three no one had volunteered, he would order them to fire.

Just imagine: over two hundred men in rows of four, in front of these two machine guns and the Adjutant. He counted one, then two, then he walked along the front with the interpreter and asked “Won’t you work”? But everywhere he heard a “non” or saw a shrugging of shoulders. This maneuver was repeated three times: the fourth time he stopped before two young soldiers, two hefty chaps with shirts and coats open at the throat like our sailors. These two he chose as scapegoats and locked them up. But all of us he left standing in the court and hurried off to the barracks.

After about two hours a sergeant came and dismissed us. In the afternoon there were clothes and shoes and also a surgeon came for a medical examination. The Adjutant freed his two prisoners from arrest and the following day the weather was better and many went to work again.

— Hans Altensen, Merchant, *Giessen.*

A TOMCAT IS NO TIGER

WHEN after long years of fighting we came from German East Africa, sick or injured, to the prison camp of Madi-Tura in Egypt, we hoped to relax after the frightful strain and hardships of an African campaign. Unfortunately this was not to be. Everyone who had not been fortunate enough to be raised to the high rank of corporal had daily, from 6-12 and again

from 2-6, to cart sand, make bricks, and drag them to the building site, mend sacks and so on. The English camp commander, Major Kater (which in German means tomcat) was feared by us for his severity: whoever was reported to him by the English sergeant was thrown into prison at once. Our N.C.O. comrades naturally pitied their suffering fellow countrymen and often substituted for us at work; only it had to be done unnoticed.

My younger brother Alfred was in the same camp as I, but being a sergeant he did not have to work. One day he substituted for me at sand-carting and I lay down, instead of him, to do nothing. I was just dreaming of far-off home when someone shook me awake. Alas, the English sergeant stood before me. “What’s the matter with you?” he shouted at me. “I don’t feel well.”

At that moment the German camp sergeant Pechler, who was bound to me in true friendship by many common war experiences, hurried up. Since he knew that I was easily excited, he laid his finger on his lips, indicating to me that I must keep calm. When however the English sergeant ordered me “Off to work with you!” I cried out in a rage “My wheelbarrow is working, my brother is pushing it for me and the dirt doesn’t care whether it’s carted by Alfred or by Theodor Freuden-berger.” In short I spoke double Dutch to him in English. I had to go with him to the guardhouse and my misdemeanor was reported to the dreaded Major Kater.

It was not for nothing that we nicknamed him the Tiger, for up to then he had shown no pity and every report was followed by a punishment. At 12 o’clock my brother and I were to appear before the Major. Until then—I had been caught at seven in the morning—we two brothers had to cart sand. Excitement reigned among the N.C.O.’s and malicious joy among the workers. At twelve we appeared in the Major’s office. We saw there also an English interpreter, our sergeant-major Pechler and the volunteer, alias chaplain, de Haas. I remarked at once that I needed no interpreter and related the incident; that my brother, although a sergeant, was younger than I and had for the first time substituted for me, out of brotherly affection, at the strenuous work, and that this meant no loss to the English as the required number of workmen were present.

Major Kater looked at me, looked at my brother, looked at de Haas and said, “In this case I shall forego punishment. I am a cat, but no tiger-cat. All right,” and out we went. It was the first time that Major Kater had shown his true heart.

— Theodor Freudenberger, Merchant, *Frankfort on the Main.*

IVAN THE GOOD

ON our estate in East Prussia we had thirty Russian prisoners as workmen. They were quiet, reliable, able men, and we especially liked to let them look after the cattle, for they were never brutal but constantly solicitous of the well-being of the animals. My husband did not go to the front till November 1917 because he had a broken arm which had healed badly. At almost the same time our old coachman had to go. After long consideration, my husband could think of no more trustworthy man, to whom he could entrust his horses, than Ivan, one of the Russian prisoners. With him he could without any anxiety let me, then only twenty-two years old, and our two little girls, go on long lonely drives to visit neighbors or to town through the deep forest.

My husband was killed in France and I was left alone with the two little children and the big estate. The first time, after this terrible event, that I drove over to friends in the neighborhood, I sat silent, wrapped up in my grief, in the little carriage beside Ivan the Russian. For a long time we drove through the silent forest which lay deep in snow, and then I heard Ivan murmur softly and very sadly "So the poor captain has gone …" He shook his head and his kind blue eyes were full of tears. Then in the midst of all my suffering I felt a little relief and cried.

Months after, we came home one evening rather late, for we had gone far beyond the town. It was winter once more. In the wood we heard the loud voices of men and soon we were surrounded by about fifty Russian prisoners of war who were on their way back home, carrying little bundles and a few lanterns. They had escaped from a neighboring estate. They talked to Ivan in excited tones, we stopped, and Ivan spoke to them for a while, naturally without my understanding what he said. I was not in the least bit uneasy. Only afterwards I realized that Ivan could have gone with them, that the horse and carriage would have been very useful to them, and also that they could have taken the money—though it was not much—that I had on me. Nothing happened: Ivan was my protector.

— Ursula Braune, *Hamburg.*

CHRISTMAS

IT was on Christmas Eve 1916 in a British prison camp in Scotland. Every hut in the big camp had its Christmas celebration according to German custom, and even a little tree was not lacking. The gift packages from Germany had been distributed and our hut senior had given a special little treat to each man by a present of cigarettes. After the little joint celebration all was quiet for a time in the room. Every one sat on his camp bed and held silent communion with the dear ones at home. Probably no eyes remained dry while they looked at the photographs, which every one of us had received, of parents, brothers and sisters, wives or children. Only one sound broke the silence, the tramping of the British guard who marched up and down his post, to keep his feet warm on this bitter cold night.

Our hut lay close to the wire fence which shut us off from the outer world. Inside the hut things slowly livened up again, each one trying to cheer the other. Our corporal proposed that we should collect a few gifts for the freezing guard, who was after all also a human being; and this idea was well received. Some cigars, cigarettes, and chocolate were soon contributed.

We then went out to the wire fence and the corporal called out to the guard in English. He answered and we explained that in the Christmas spirit we had also thought of him and wanted to give him a little pleasure. His struggle with his sense of duty and his conscience was soon decided; he felt he could not refuse our well meant offer and he came up to the fence. It was an old gray-headed man, a former colonial soldier and he himself had sons at the front. He thanked us with emotion and wished us all a merry Christmas and an early return home.

Soon afterwards we heard again the steps to and fro on the post. Any moment now he would be relieved.

— Wilhelm Gauckler, Metal Turner, *Frankfort on the Main.*

ENGLISH PROMOTION

IN the English prisoners' company No. 305 there was along with me a private Mueller. During his imprisonment he received news of his promotion from his regiment. This was of course no use to him in captivity. But our German commander, a sergeant-major from Hamburg, reported the matter to the English captain. Next day the captain ordered the whole company to fall in, and gave the command "Stillgestanden" ["Attention"]. Then he announced the promotion in English, and it was translated for us by the German interpreter. So private Mueller was promoted by the enemy and was also allowed the privileges of his new rank.

— Ernst Schiedhering, *Wiesbaden.*

THE SHIRT

THIS happened about the 25th September, 1914. I was a civilian prisoner in the Theater at Chauvay, which was being used as a prison by the German authorities. I was there alone with wounded and captured French soldiers. One day a nice woman came round peddling shirts, cups, and many other things of interest to prisoners, and many bought shirts and drawers from her. One poor wounded Frenchman would have loved to buy a shirt from her, but alas, he had not enough money left in his wallet to allow himself such a luxury. Regretfully he had to give up the purchase. Some German soldiers and a German postoffice clerk were standing near, and watched our wounded French soldier. I still seem to see before me this postoffice official with his blue Prussian coat and his bristling beard and big spectacles. Quite concerned at the sight of the long face our poor Frenchman made, the clerk asked his comrades, who knew French, for the explanation. As soon as he caught on, he drew two Marks from his wallet and gave it to the peddler woman. And our little wounded French soldier had his warm shirt.

— Lucien Jacquin, *Paris.*

AFRICA

IT was the end of the last year of the war. The South west African Colonial force had been in captivity in the desert of Namib for several years already. I, and a few comrades, were separately confined in a special little camp. The days were terribly tedious, nothing to be seen but sand and sky, and far off lay the mountains. Those not familiar with the conditions might have thought they were nearby. This illusion was given by the clearness of the air.

Driven desperate by boredom, five men decided to run away, though the way across the desert was long and dangerous. Around twelve at night during the changing of the guard, the escape was to take place. The fugitives tied bags round their feet, so that they looked like elephants' feet and would not leave any tracks of human steps in the sand for the English. The thing came off all right: the barbed wire was cut, and out they went into golden liberty. Since I was the cook just then, I had to supply the necessary food to the fugitives, especially canned milk, as they had to avoid the first watering places. Unlike in a big camp, we did not have to fall in and number off every morning, which was to the advantage of the fugitives.

The few of us in the small camp were under the supervision of the prison inspector, a Boer named Pitt. He came to the camp every morning, opened the doors of our self-made huts and looked us quickly over. Then with a "Good morning, Landsmann" our good Peter vanished. If he saw that his charges still had the covers drawn over their heads he walked very quietly, so as not to waken them. When Pitt had finished his rounds, he breakfasted with me as copiously as he could.

To prevent the escape being too obvious, I had put logs of wood in the beds, to make it look as though someone were lying there. Eight days passed and still Pitt had not noticed anything. One morning he came as usual to the kitchen for breakfast. After a while I said to Pitt, "Landsmann, have you noticed anything?" and I told him the whole story. Pitt nearly fainted, and kept exclaiming "Alla Machta"—Almighty God. In fact, our good Pitt was all shot to pieces, and kept wailing that this thing might cost him his rank, and that he would have to go back to the company. I consoled him as best I could, and advised him how to break the news to his superior officers. So Pitt reported "*Tonight* five prisoners of war have broken loose."

At once several patrols with native spahis were formed, and began searching for the tracks. For two days the Spahis searched in wider and wider circles, but could not find anything in the sand. Our runaways with their elephants' feet and eight days' start, had already reached the mountains. Beyond the mountains the pursuers at last found a track and also, unfortunately, the fugitives. But the chase had taken two months: hunger and thirst had worn the fugitives out, so that at last, throwing aside all caution, they had gone to one of the guarded watering places and there been caught. The German soldiers had traveled 400 kilometers through the desert, partly on foot, partly on the buffers of lumber wagons.

Pitt meanwhile lived in constant terror of the return of the prisoners, for then the commander would learn the true data of the flight. Finally the day came, tired and exhausted the prisoners arrived and were immediately locked up. It was now my duty to supply the half-starved men with food, so I cooked a pot of rice till it was stiff and stuck a scrap of paper in it, telling them what to say in court and especially the date which Pitt had given as the day of the escape.

The thing seemed queer to the commander, he could not understand how they had got into the mountains in so short a time, but he could not prove the contrary and so the previously given out date held good. Four weeks arrest was the penalty for the escape. Pitt kept his soft job, over the possible loss of which we had wept. After the trial he came to me, shook me by the hand and said "Germans big rascals, but good fellows!"

— Martin Horn, Former Police Inspector, *Frankfort on the Main.*

THE ALLY

THIS happened in May of 1917. After ten days in a so-called hunger camp near Arras, a hundred and twenty of us, prisoners of war, were handed over to the English and sent to one of the biggest English prison camps, near Abbeville. How we used to envy the fortunate few who, once in a while, were allowed to work for the camp guard and got a piece of bread or a few cigarettes from the Tommies who felt sorry for them. Also every opportunity to work outside the camp seemed like a fleeting return of our lost liberty. Only to be beyond the barbed wire entanglement, to see human beings who were not soldiers!

And so one morning I had the good fortune to get into a big workgang and we marched towards the town. In front, behind, to left and right were tommies with fixed bayonets. And look—how glorious—streets with people! We looked curiously about, there at the corner was a whole crowd of people. We drew nearer—and saw expressions of loathing, eyes alight with hatred, clenched fists, women shrieking, men making gestures as of cutting throats; all

repulsive. A low growl and a clenching of teeth went through our ranks. The marching became uneasy, lost its regularity.

Then a voice was heard “Come on, Fritz.” Near me was marching a tall English guard and again the voice rang out “Come on, Fritz.” How like the voice of a father it sounded! Everyone looked round at the speaker, his face was full of benevolence, serenity, and infinite compassion.

And gradually we fell into step again and the streets rang with our even tread. A high outside stairway came into view with screaming women and half-grown brats on the steps. Then a specially bold one spat into our ranks up front.

The guard on my left muttered a curse through his teeth. He raised his hand and with a resounding slap sent the fanatic flying into our midst; there a series of cuffs landed him finally at the rear escort, who, with one kick, sent him into the gutter. The feelings which animated us at that moment, who can describe? An enemy had paid the penalty for the insult he had offered us. Only a comrade, a real front-line-man could have acted so!

— Martin Meurer, Compositor, *Weilburg*.

“SOLDIERS DON’T PAY”

SUMMER 1916 in inner France. The war propaganda had done its work. Many haters had been convinced of the justice of their hatred: hatred in fact had become a disease of the masses. And this hatred affected also the attitude towards German prisoners-of-war. In great circles of military and civilian society the whole German people were regarded as inferior human beings, and they treated the prisoners with unbounded contempt.

At that time about a dozen of us P.G.’s (Prisonniers de Guerre) were detailed to do agricultural work in Montagny near Roanne. We were quartered in a former monastic school, where we ate also. We went to work in groups of four, each guarded by a man with fixed bayonet.

The general neglect weighed heavily on our spirits. Then suddenly there came a ray of light: the military commander of the district permitted the prisoners to go to church on the coming Sunday. A sigh of relief went through our ranks. At last, once again, we were considered human beings.

If we had already done all we could in our poor circumstances, to make a neat appearance always, how much more, this Sunday, did each one of us strive to show German soldiers in the most favorable light; as a sort of reply to the many disparaging remarks which reached our ears so often. How would the intolerant populace receive our appearance? That was the question that crossed all our minds, as we set out for church in good order. The answer we soon would know.

In many French churches there are no benches. So it was in Montagny, and the custom was that upon entering the church one could obtain hassocks for a sum of two sous (then eight pfennig). The distribution of these hassocks was the job of an old woman. Our equality perfectly taken for granted we received our stools like other churchgoers. And when our German leader wanted to pay the customary due, our human dignity was done full justice to by the touchingly simple reply of this old woman “Soldiers don’t pay”.

To you, kind reader, this little incident may appear insignificant and paltry. But to us humiliated prisoners, the impartiality of this poor old Frenchwoman shone on the spirits like a ray of warm sunlight.

— Gustav Adler, Merchant, *Freiburg.*

HOLIDAY AND ARMISTICE

A BRIEF PEACE

AFTER preliminary fighting in the open, we lay intrenched in the front lines on the railroad tracks between Wilna and Dünaburg, by January 5, 1916. Every single man who showed himself on our side, or on the other, was instantly fired at, and there were heavy losses on both sides. Meanwhile Easter approached, and every one was glad, as the weather grew warmer, though holidays in the very front lines—sometimes only a stone's throw from the enemy—could not very well be different from other days. Although no one dared to show himself in broad daylight even for a moment, at night we had for some time been poking fun at each other. We teased the Russians about their unsuccessful attacks, they in turn called us the "marmalade di vision." They probably did not know that apart from this "hero butter" we were given nothing but barley (only sometimes cooked quite soft) for weeks on end, and endured it with equal patience. The "barley division" would have been almost more appropriate for us. In the Russian trenches there seemed to be some who knew German, which facilitated our intercourse. And then one night, from somewhere or other a plan started. Someone, either on our side or on theirs, must have started the idea: that the approaching Easter holiday could be spent in another way than in shooting one another dead.

A strange suggestion, in the feasibility of which no one could really believe at first. For months we had lain opposite each other in deadly combat and now at night we were making friendly negotiations about the holiday. And we got together: on Easter morning the rifle fire gradually died down and even the artillery forgot to send across its terrible morning salute. At first no one trusted this truce, for, considering the preceding campaign, it looked more like a trap. But evidently everyone was longing for a few hours of perfect peace, and when everything continued to remain quiet, a few of the more courageous of us dared—a very risky game—to show ourselves for a moment above the parapet.

As a matter of fact, a few comrades stood meanwhile under cover ready to shoot in our defence; but these precautions were not necessary, and soon more and more of the Russians too began climbing out of their well-made two-story trenches. We waved and called to each other, and, hesitantly at first, the two enemies came nearer and nearer to each other with friendly intent. Soon a mutual barter began and each tried to communicate, making great use of his hands, with his opponent. The Russians had brought bread, butter, sugar, and vodka; we produced cigarettes in exchange. Our marmalade however was a drug on the market.

Even when it had been a reality for several hours, it still seemed strange, this peace. The stillness never broken by a shot, seemed in fact unnatural. We, who were now laughing, talking and exchanging goods in a friendly spirit, would have shot each other in cold blood only a few hours ago, had there been the least chance of it. We had never seen each other before, but we found they were men like us, just as fed-up with it all, longing for their homes and talking of an early peace—as we did. For the moment we were not enemies, and some may well have been searching in vain for a reason why we should want to kill each other.

At lunch time our meal carriers did not have to walk as usual for half an hour through the narrow communication trenches to the field kitchen, but came by the direct route, partly across the open field. In the afternoon the festive mood continued, the customary "shooting range" was lacking. Perhaps it would not have been long before we started a poker-game with our

enemies: but we could not put all our cards on the table, for this we all knew—that it could not last long.

And this we soon found. Evidently our leaders did not like this self-instituted armistice and the progress of our fraternizing, and the sergeant, probably acting on orders from above, had to bring all the fun to an end. We were all ordered back into the trenches and with the telescopic rifle (which was used to shoot at Russians hidden up in trees) in his hands, he stood in the trench, put the gun through the loophole and pointed it at one man who was just making merry with us, outside of the protecting trench, and who trusted in our arrangement. Here the right word spoken at the right moment saved the peace: As a matter of fact, such a breach of confidence would have been bitterly avenged on prisoners taken during the ensuing fighting.

Then evening fell and with it came the end of our friendship. Yet for a long time we heard through the quiet of the night the singing of Russian songs to an accordion. No one dared to disturb this peace, only once in a while a Very light admonished us—that was all. Although the second holiday (Easter Monday) was not included in the program, it was quiet too. But after that Easter was over.

Many must have found it hard to return again to their bloodthirsty duty: but a few days later we were once more destroying each other's trenches, so painstakingly constructed, with bombs and grenades. As before we took careful aim at anyone who was the least careless, or who had grown so on account of the Easter vacation: and yet we could not understand why it should all be over. Many a cry made us aware of the accuracy of our shots. One might call it lucky that at least he did not see whom he had shot. Perhaps our marksman and his victim over there had shaken hands and wished each other a happy return home, only a few days ago.

Many never saw home again; to us also each day brought losses. Many comrades remained forever out there in the place where at least for a day they were able to experience a semblance of peace. We others, however, wanted to fight on for the real peace; that was a soldier's duty and no one wanted to alter that. And besides—those at home were relying on us.

— Alfred Posselt, Bookkeeper, *Olbersdorf, Saxony.*

FIRE

AT the foot of the Cotes des Aures, there lay, opposite the position we were occupying, a village reduced to utter ruins by shell fire. Often German shells would still explode among the remaining walls and the dug outs. Once at night a fire broke out in this village. The flames lit up the sky high above, and by their light one could see the French trying to subdue the fire. This would have been an opportunity to fire on them.

Shortly afterwards a trench stove was overturned on a concrete block in our trenches, the fire spread quickly, and our men took the utmost pains to clear away all hand grenades and their own belongings around that block. And they were not disturbed at their work by the French, who apparently remembered the consideration shown them before.

— Erwin Eberlin, Secretary *Freiburg.*

THE WHITE FLAG

IT was in Eastern Galicia during the patrol skirmishing which preceded the cavalry battle of Kamionka, Strumilowa (August 24, 1914). A squadron of Cossacks had that night crossed the river Bug in the direction of Zolkiew, where they ran up against the Austrian Seventh

Uhlans in the hills west of the Bug. The Uhlans wanted to attack, but the Cossacks would not meet them. Instead they dismounted, took cover on the ground and began to fire. Whereupon there was nothing left for the angry Uhlans to do, but to dismount also and advance in open formation.

Although both parties shot so badly—or rather because of this—it became a lengthy affair. It lasted and lasted; by midday there were several dead and many wounded.

Behind the hill the Austrian regimental surgeon had erected his dressing station. He and two stretcher-bearers toiled hard but they could not cope with the many casualties. By one o'clock they had run out of bandages. And now a little scene took place which deserves to be recorded.

The surgeon was not perplexed for a moment. He ordered a wounded Uhlan corporal whom he had just bandaged to mount his horse. He tied a piece of linen —a foot bandage as a flag of truce—to his stick and said to him:

"Corporal, I'd like you to ride over there to the left around the hill behind the Cossacks. There must be a Russian dressing station over there with a surgeon. You will recognize him by his armband with the red cross. Ride up to him, give a nice salute and report that Herr Surgeon-Major Perka sends his best regards to his colleague, that he has run out of bandages and would the Herr Colleague be kind enough to help him out."

After fifteen minutes the messenger came back with a big package of bandages.

— Roda Roda, *Berlin.*

NOT A SHOT WAS FIRED

THE great offensive on the Somme was in progress. On the 22nd of August 1918, the enemy had broken through our front line near Achiet-le-petit and penetrated far into our back lines. Several enemy air squadrons kept flying low along our front. The planes, bearing the English insignia, directed their machine guns at our individual firing nests, occupied shell holes and sections of our trenches. At times we counted more than thirty enemy planes over our heads. Then suddenly, above the tremendous roaring in the air we heard the deep hum of a German plane, and sure enough one single German machine came towards our lines, heading directly for the enemy. Evidently the aviator had been ordered to ascertain the exact position of our front line; and courageously he fulfilled his commission, although the flight amounted to nothing short of suicide. For like hawks the scout squadrons of the enemy pounced down on the helpless Infantry aviator.

We realized at once that the pilot was a lost man for "many hounds mean death to the hare," we said to ourselves; and we trembled for the reckless aviator. Although he drew the most ingenious curves, the hostile planes cut off every possibility of retreat and tried to drive him back behind the English lines, there to compel him to land. Lower and lower they forced him down and as he now flew only about fifty yards above our heads we could wave to him. Suddenly he made a sharp curve to the right. He came back just behind our line. The sharp curve made him tip over on his right wing and he corkscrewed down revolving on the right wing, which touched the ground first. The wing splintered and the whole frame cracked up.

The airplane now lay hardly a hundred yards behind our lines. The enemy planes circled over their discomfited foe, but not a shot was fired from their machine guns. No shot at all was

fired in the whole sector; for friend and enemy alike had evidently watched this duel in the air with intense interest.

Our first thought was to run to the airplane and rescue the pilot, undoubtedly wounded, from the machine. But the level Somme land offered a perfect shooting range to the enemy infantry lying not more than a hundred and fifty yards distant: and any one who dared to approach the machine as it lay exposed could be shot down like a rat in a trap. Nevertheless two courageous corporals crawled towards the plane, taking advantage of the slightest cover that the ground offered. They could be seen by the English infantry as well as by the circling airplanes; but nothing happened! At a short distance from the plane the two stood up and sprang upright towards it. Still no shot was fired, although the entire stretch of land could be easily surveyed.

Encouraged by this, the two corporals tried to rescue the pilot, and were quite unhindered, but the two of them could not alone disentangle him. They therefore signaled back with their hands and three more German soldiers ran, quite upright, to the rescue. No shot fell, everything remained quiet. One of the soldiers was sent back at once to the front line to fetch a stretcher, and yet everything remained perfectly quiet on the opposite side.

At last the rescuers were seen dragging a human body from the wreckage, placing it on the stretcher and carrying back the pilot, alive though wounded. The enemy made no movement.

But when the three soldiers, who were walking back to the trenches, suddenly stopped halfway and made for the plane once again because, probably, they suddenly remembered to salvage some of the instruments from the wreckage, then immediately shots were fired from the English lines and a machine gun was trained on the wrecked plane. But no one shot at the three rescuers, their target was simply the airplane to which they were cutting off the way now that the pilot had been saved. The three soldiers returned to their shell holes quite unharmed.

We mightily respected this act of English chivalry we had seen. Although our pilot had at the last minute thwarted the purpose of the enemy, to force him to make a landing behind their lines, and had thus evaded captivity, they nonetheless respected his brave conduct. But during all the rest of this day not a hand could be raised from the trenches and holes without immediately provoking carefully aimed firing from the English lines.

This happened on the 23rd or 24th of August 1918, northwest of Baupaume, to the left of the road between Achiet-le-grand and Achiet-le-petit, in the section held by the 4th Bavarian Infantry Division. The undersigned corporal in the 3rd Machine-gun Company, 5th Infantry Regiment was himself a witness thereof.

— Franz Schmitt, Syndic, *Wurzburg.*

THE SLIP OF PAPER

SINCE I am a friend of books myself, I am sending you this short story for the “Book of Good Deeds” provided you can make use of it. I want only to show how the enemy could act nobly too.

In the summer of 1915 we moved into a position on the Sattelkopf in the Munster valley (in the Vosges). The hill was about 700 meters high and was still densely wooded, except on the summit where the two opposed lines lay. We occupied a position opposite a French

regiment of Alpines-Chasseurs, at a distance of 30 or 40 meters. But our advanced guard was only 3 meters from the French.

Every evening at the same hour we were exposed to French shelling which took us so much by surprise that we had hardly time to take cover. So there were continual casualties, and the trench had always to be repaired.

Meanwhile the French must have been informed of the arrival of new troops on the other side, because around six o'clock on the evening of the third day after we had come to this position, the French advanced post threw a slip of paper over to us. It was written in French and contained a warning that every evening after seven o'clock our trenches would be shelled. We reported the matter to the chief of our company and it was he who translated the message for us. Now we were warned and could take cover in time, to avoid unnecessary losses. This was what the letter from the Chasseurs Alpines intended.

At seven o'clock in the evening the shelling began, and after twenty minutes ceased again. We, having received the friendly warnings in this way, were not slow to thank the Chasseurs Alpines by the same methods for their advice. The result was that on outpost duty we communicated by word of mouth with the Chasseurs Alpines in so far as we could understand their language. It was a fine gibberish we produced. Often at night we sat together talking between the two posts without being disturbed. In this way we kept up a friendship with the Chasseurs Alpines, without our superiors knowing or hearing of it. This we had not reported.

However this kind of thing could not go on forever. One morning the chief of our company was inspecting the trenches and he came along to the advanced post as well, where we were on duty at that time. He caught us just as we were about to separate, dawn was already breaking and nobody must see us by daylight. Since the chief was back of us we would not have seen him, had not one of the Chasseurs Alpines shouted suddenly "Officier," and disappeared at once. For us it was too late to disappear and everyone got a bawling out. Besides myself and Heinrich Hamann from Lachen near Neustadt, five or six other comrades were put under arrest for several days. However we got over that all right: the main thing was, that during the rest of our time in that position we remained unmolested by the French shells. We were then in the 22nd Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment, 2nd Corps.

— Karl Kippenberger, Scaffold Builder, *Ludwigshafen.*

DATE OF BIRTH

ON March 17, 1916, I, then a pilot in the Marine air service, was taken prisoner by the English. A tiny fragment of shrapnel had pierced the radiator of my sea plane. The cooling water leaked out, and so I was forced to make a landing (or rather a watering as we seafliers say) on the Mediterranean near the Greek island of Thasos. An English torpedo boat picked me up and brought me to the island of Lemnos and on board the great battleship H.M.S. Agamemnon. The cross examination was short because I politely but firmly refused to make any statement that might be of military interest. So it really amounted to nothing but a record of my personal affairs.

Then I was taken by a commander to a cabin which the ship chaplain had vacated expressly on my account. I had hardly sat there alone for more than a few minutes when a naval officer knocked at the door. He had brought his attendant with him, who promptly unrolled a large

rubber bath-tub. “I’ll bet you’re simply longing for a bath” laughed the officer, and vanished. Before I had got into the bath another officer came in and presented me with a brand new pair of pajamas. He withdrew before I had time to thank him. After the bath two other officers appeared, one with a box containing more than 1000 (!) cigarettes, the other with German war books (!) and newspapers. Yes, and even an English-German dictionary.

The dinner was simply astonishing, and as a special mark of attention they served me a bottle of Rhineland wine. After dinner came two more officers. The first gave me a razor and everything that goes with it, the second a package not yet opened which had come by Army Postal Service. “It’s from my mother in London” he said. “I don’t know what’s in it, but I imagine chocolate and cigarettes.” I refused it with thanks; it would not do, the package was addressed to him and anyway … “Please take it, Herr Kamerad” the Englishman interrupted my objections with a smile. “Just pretend it came from your own dear mother in Germany.”

I was all bewildered but tried to make some answer. “But, Herr Kamerad,” the Englishman went on, “isn’t today the 17th of March? That’s why one has to give you presents!” And with that he vanished.

When taking down my personal data during the examination they had noticed that I had sure enough been taken prisoner on my birthday. The names of the officers of the Agamemnon I have forgotten but not their chivalry.

— Fritz Leopold Hennig, Painter, *Zoppot.*

SIBERIA

FOR three weeks we prisoners had already been traveling East. In our torn gray uniforms, most of us having been robbed of our overcoats, we were exposed to the rigors of a Siberian winter. The railway carriages, made to accommodate twenty-eight recumbent men, but now occupied by forty or more prisoners, had little stoves which were kept continually burning. But though the occupants of the upper berths were in a constant sweat, the men on the floor tried in vain to protect themselves against the cold which entered through the cracks in floor and walls. Since the forty-six of us could not all lie down to sleep at once, we took turns.

The men “on guard” stood or sat around the stove, hunting for lice. Our car was lousy with lice; it had been used before to bring Russian soldiers to the front. The guard had also the task of procuring the necessary fuel, during each stop at the bigger stations. This was done by appropriating one or two wooden logs from the huge heaps which lay ready to stoke the engines. We had soon acquired such a brilliant technique in this, that we were only rarely caught and chased off by the railroad men. Since my long, wide cavalry coat was especially well fitted for this, it participated in almost all wood consignments.

As in the case of fuel we had also to rely on our own initiative in obtaining food for ourselves. Only there was no chance here for “snitching” as the Bulki women watched their treasure with hawks’ eyes. The allowance of 25 kopecks per person per day to which we were entitled, was not paid any more after we left Moscow. When we complained to our transport quartermaster, a young Russian officer, he got out of it by saying that he had only big bills, which no one could change. At first we believed him, because we could not suspect an officer of embezzling our allowance. Soon however we were thoroughly cured of our good opinion and saw the uselessness of our expostulations. If only we had not had such a terrible hunger, and it hurt all the more at the sight of the wealth of eatables, so profusely displayed at all the

stations. So it came about that soon all our watches, wedding rings, pocket knives, and in spite of the fierce cold, one garment after another, had been sold, or exchanged directly, for food, and we were as poor as church mice.

As the morning of the 24th of December dawned we stopped at a station between Krassnojarsk and Irkutsk. We were still arguing about the date; the continual skirmishes and struggles of the Battle of Lodz, at the end of November, had confused our sense of time so much that three different parties swore to their date as the “right” one. This dispute was settled by a Russian high school boy who came to our carriage to try out his German. From him we learned that the day just beginning was really our December 24th. He was the son of the station master and declared himself willing to lead a delegation from our carriage to his father to complain about the inadequate provisions. Our claim that in the three weeks of transportation we had only three times been given a hot meal and had received no money to buy food, did not make the expected impression on the station master at all. He said he could do nothing against the transport quartermaster, but he would see to it that we got as far as the Irkutsk provision station today and that he would give orders there that we were to be given food.

As we reentered our carriage with this slight consolation, a big dispute was going on. Emil, a Landwehr man from Berlin, had spied a young fir-tree near the station, and brought it to the carriage as a Christmas tree. This some of the group objected to: in the desolate situation in which we found ourselves they did not want to be reminded of Christmas, else they would not be able to bear it any longer. So we agreed that we would celebrate Christmas after the promised meal. Even the strongest opponents of the celebration agreed to this, because after their previous experiences, they did not believe in Russian promises. While we were still disputing our train started again, and reached Innokentjewskaja outside Irkutsk in the late afternoon, where we drew up by the platform of the provision station.

Two of our men were just coming back from getting water, when two women, who had followed them, stopped at the open door of the carriage. They enquired in German, whether any of us had been in Petrikau, and whether it was very badly destroyed. We could relieve their minds about this, and learned that they lived just outside Petrikau and had evacuated it with the Russians at the first advance of the Germans, and come as far as here. They watched us with interest as we prepared the Christmas tree, and then disappeared with a shy glance at the Russian guard. Soon afterwards, in a big hall, ten at a time, we were given Kappuster soup and Kascha and a round loaf. After each of us had also been given several lumps of sugar and a little compressed tea, we returned to our carriage in considerably higher spirits and began at once on the final preparations for our Christmas celebration.

The little tree was tied with wire to a screw in the beam; a package of bandages furnished snow and garlands of gauze. The candle given out for the night was cut up into a lot of little stumps and fastened to the twigs with wire. After all had seated themselves, we lighted our Christmas tree and sang “Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht.” It was a strange, solemn singing, which wandered from one corner of the compartment to another; now and then a voice would fail, only to revive again after a few minutes. As we sang, the door facing the platform was slid a crack open, then opened wide. It was Russians, traveling to the front, whose transport train had stopped beside ours. They made the sign of the cross and participated silently in our celebration.

After the song was over, the “baby” of our group, a Silesian volunteer, read the Christmas story. As he finished, a woman’s hand pushed a big paper bag of sugar and a package of tea

into the compartment and disappeared at once. Karl, the reservist from Danzig, said afterwards that it had been the two women of the afternoon, one of them had stood back. The women's example was followed. The Russians felt in the pockets of their coats and each deposited something on the floor of the carriage, bread, bacon, cigarettes, sugar, compressed tea, and whatever they happened to carry on them. Gradually it became dark in the compartment as the candle stumps flickered out. The Russians obeyed a signal which called them to a meal and we closed the door. It had become icy cold in the carriage. Deep silence reigned, no one spoke a word. Even the "guard," who usually passed the time in wise-cracking, were quiet as mice.

At night we traveled on, and as we opened the door on Christmas morning, we were just stopping at the station of Baikal, close by the shore of the lake of the same name, whose breaking waves shivered the thin ice along the edge, at the very foot of the railway embankment. Here the bestowal of gifts took place, everyone getting his share. After we had feasted on tea with sugar, and bread, we sang across the lake "O du froliche, o du selige, gnadenbringende Weihnachtszeitl"

I experienced five more Christmases in Siberia, but no celebration stuck so deep in my memory as that one of 1914, when exiled women and enemy soldiers on their way to the front, tried to gladden us prisoners, by gifts sacrificed from their own poverty.

— Friedrich Geiger, Social Worker, *Schmiedel/Hunsruck.*

A TRUCE FOR THE DEAD

WE had been detailed as pioneers, of the 7th Pioneer Battalion, 1st Marching Company, to the 13th Infantry Division. A few days before Christmas, 1914, between Arras and Neuve Chapelle the English captured a part of our trench. They did not enjoy their victory long, however, for next day they were driven out again by hand grenades, and suffered severe losses. There were about forty yards between the two lines, and No Man's Land was strewn with khaki-clad corpses.

But not all were corpses. One was alive, an elderly English officer, who for two days had lain in the rain on the muddy battlefield, now and then moving his head or one leg to try to attract the attention of his comrades. But how could they help him? The man lay not more than fifteen or twenty yards in front of our trench, with a bad shot wound in the breast. We were sorry for the poor soul whose doom seemed to be sealed. How to help him? A rope which we threw to him turned out to be too short. Then one of our infantrymen waved a white handkerchief, climbed onto the parapet and took his pistol belt off.

The English caught on. One of their officers scrambled onto the parapet and also took off his belt and the two, the Englishman and the German, walked towards each other till they met beside the wounded man, saluted each other and shook hands. The wounded man was carried on a stretcher into their trenches by the English, and the two parted with courteous words after exchanging a few cigarettes. Then the heads of the men appeared above the trenches and all cried "Bravo" and there was no more thought of shooting.

An hour later the English waved a white flag from their side and a negotiator appeared on top of the parapet and begged for a four hours truce to bury the many English dead. This was granted by our company commander and the dead were buried. On either side in this sector there was no more shooting. Not even when the truce was over, in fact not for days after. And so it happened that Christmas, 1914, was a peaceful festival for us in the trenches.

But it was too beautiful to last long. Shortly after Christmas special orders came from behind that the shooting was to be resumed. Then at once the truce was over and the war continued many long and bitter years.

— Fritz Speckhan, Merchant, *C ologne-Nippos.*

THE STAG

IN the woods near Gross-Jaegerhof on the river Bere- sina a stag was shot at from the trenches by a reservist. It escaped and swam across the Beresina where it fell dead in front of the Russian lines. A Russian infantry man disembowelled the stag and carved it in two. One half the Russians kept, and with the other a Russian swam across to the German side. He put the half stag down and with a friendly wave swam back. Not a shot was fired during the whole proceedings.

— Karl Barbanes, Workman, *Hamm.*

DESTINIES AND SOUVENIRS

THE MALICIOUSNESS OF FATE

DURING the big English attack of September 15th 1916 (it was then the English used tanks for the first time) I was shot through the lungs. From eight in the morning till late in the afternoon I waited in vain for help, and by then I was so desperate from thirst that I tried to get away from my place of refuge. But I had lost so much blood that my legs would not carry me, and after a few steps I collapsed again. An English sentry, who had observed my efforts and struggles to walk, called to me from a trench and made signs that I should come to him. By one last mighty effort, crawling most of the way, I got there.

What now followed, I would never have expected from an enemy. Had this soldier been my own brother he could not have treated me better. When he saw that I was wounded he bandaged me, then he gave me his flask from which I took one or two long draughts. When I tried to return the flask he gave me to understand that I could finish it, which on account of my tremendous thirst, I was only too glad to do. Then he gave me some chocolate and army biscuit. After I had fortified myself properly, and it began to grow dark, this English comrade gave me his pack for a pillow, got a coat from a dead man near at hand, put it under me and covered me with his rubber ground sheet. Soon I fell asleep beside the Englishman, after probably the most terrible day of my life.

But this sleep was not to last long, for the German artillery still raised its voice from time to time and strewed the battlefield, where in the morning the fighting had raged. A shrapnel shell came whizzing over, exploded near us and in a second the English soldier lay dead beside me with a shot through his head. I got another wound in the arm.

In the death of this enemy I could not rejoice, and I send my thanks to him, beyond the grave, for his good comradeship.

— Karl Sachs, Customs Officer, *Landstuhl.*

THE CAMP ADJUTANT

THIS happened in the French prison camp of Dombasle, near Verdun. Our situation, at the time of our existence in this camp, was not exactly rosy. We did not get even the rations to which prisoners were entitled because a great part of them was resold to the farmers and the money invested in wine and tobacco by the French sentries at the receipt of the rations—especially on the journey between the provision store at Verdun and the camp. For the transport of this food, two or sometimes three of our own men were detailed to help to load. I was among them. We had to look on while on the way home the sentries sold the bacon, big pieces of horseflesh, bags of rice, beans, peas and coffee cheaply to the farmers, buying chiefly wine for the money, so that on the way home they were always drunk. We complained to the sergeant about this; he passed our complaint on, but without result. It probably got held up on the way to the Chef de Camp, for these conditions continued. Although our complaint was often repeated, it did not do any good.

We were getting resigned to this, when suddenly a good angel appeared to us, in the person of a new Chef de Camp, who introduced himself as our new camp adjutant. On his own account he asked us how we were satisfied with the treatment and food. When he saw our dismayed faces he of course wanted to know why we did not answer. Our camp sergeant now

explained to him the treatment we had had in the camp up to that day, telling him of the food sales of the guards. He got very angry at this, summoned us to his office and made a record of everything. Finally he even went so far as to apologize in the name of his nation: it was deplorable that anything of the kind should have happened, and he assured us that he would seek redress.

It was only a week before all the sentries were replaced by new ones. Then, some time later we had to accompany our new Chef de Camp to a court session at Verdun. We were even allowed to occupy the adjutant's carriage and we wore state-prisoner's uniform. We were not a little surprised to find our former guards as prisoners at the law court. Of course they cast furious looks at us: I believe if one of us had come near them they would have taken vengeance. But our adjutant remained with us and protected us. The case itself did not last too long. The record was read aloud and a few questions asked, and finally we had to swear to everything, which we could do with a clear conscience. On the way home our camp adjutant told us that the guards had all been given a severe detention of four weeks and would not again be used as prison guards.

Our situation, that is to say that of the entire company, improved considerably from that day on. We got our rations all right, every day a piece of meat and a whole loaf of bread to two men; formerly three men shared one loaf. We were given a football, and also allowed to act plays, so that captivity became tolerable under these circumstances. Unfortunately this good-hearted adjutant had to leave us after a few months, because he was discharged and resumed his profession of lawyer. Later on he visited us with his family and then we learned that his wife and child had likewise been interned during the war, and that she had fared very well in Germany, considering the times.

— Richard Dornfeld, Merchant, *Frankfort on the Main.*

LAUNDRY IN FLANDERS

SINCE I am a Flemish girl, and as such went through the war and all its horrors at home, I could write you many beautiful articles for THE BOOK OF GOOD DEEDS. It was May 1915, we were living in Hypersteenweg, a little house with a big sign on it saying "German soldiers' laundry taken in." In comes a new customer, a marine, and asks whether we will do his laundry for him. Of course. I ask him to have a seat because I must make the list of his laundry in his presence. I was just ironing some other laundry but had a very bad fire as our stove was broken and the wind was from the sea, so that the whole room was full of smoke. The marine noticed this and asked me whether our stove always burned as bad as that. So I told him the reason and that we had no chance of getting it mended, the smith was no longer
in the village. So the marine promised me to come at twelve o'clock at night (he had to go to the front first) to get the stove, and since he was a locksmith he would do it himself. In the evening my mother, one of my sisters, and I waited for the coming of the strange German soldier. And not in vain, because he really came and kept his promise. Mother offered him money but he would not accept it. She then invited him to have coffee with us sometime and this he accepted. From now on we were good friends. In October we got engaged. Have been here in Germany since November 13, 1919 and married to him since January 3, 1920.

— Frau M. N.

THE MAP AND THE CANNON

DURING the campaign in Russian Poland in the spring of 1915, on the 7th of March, the section of the front line held by the 1st Infantry Regiment of the 146th Masurians was thrown back, near the village of Kapustnik, by the superior forces of the Russians. Seven of our battalion fell into the hands of the Russians, alive but some suffering from bayonet-wounds; among them was myself, then probably the youngest in the regiment, being barely eighteen years old.

In the fall of 1916 the managers of the Demidoff works in Tagilsk (Ural) required, for their plant, skilled prison labor. When we were distributed among the different factories I had the luck to be assigned to the machine factory under engineer Bytschon, who had been trained at the Polytechnic School of Mittweida in Germany, and who had vowed, if possible, not to employ any of the so-called "Intelligentsia" (students, teachers, officials) as unskilled labor. This vow he kept. I personally was sent to the order department where six mechanics, a woman secretary, a woman typist, and an office boy worked on the orders and passed them on to their respective foremen. I was the only prisoner among the Russian employees in this department, who from the first day accepted me on terms of equality in their working community. All advantages and arrangements at their disposal in the service I was allowed, even compelled, to share. In their attitude towards me they took the utmost pains to avoid offending me in any way. I only have to tell the following incident.

In the order department of this Russian factory in Tagilsk there hung, at my first entry, a war map, upon which the different areas of the front were neatly marked with little flags. The next day the head of the department, a certain Alajeff, had the office boy remove the map and put it in the archives. Nothing in the office was to lead to a discussion of the war and arouse the emotions necessarily bound up with it; nothing was to stir up the hatred which incited people against each other.

I believe that the tact shown by this simple man, who risked the accusation of infamy and disloyalty, means just as much and even more than that very nice gesture made by the English when they entertained the German Chancellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs at the country estate of Chequers. A German cannon, captured in the World War, stood, as a symbol of victory, before the manor at Chequers. However, for the duration of the German visit, it had been removed and hidden tactfully behind a bush, by the gardener. Unfortunately, this peaceful measure could not prevent the Germans from taking a walk, during which they suddenly ran into the cannon—a souvenir of the World War! Even today it is not an easy matter to render cannon totally invisible.

— Georg Zielasko, Merchant, *Berlin.*

ENCOUNTER

JULY 1918. My mountain battery occupied a position on the Care Alto, 3200 meters high, in the Adamello region. On account of a wounded foot I was telephone operator to the corps, and as such had to work in the aerial-railway station at Pelugo. Every day I had to walk for three-quarters of an hour to Vigo and back to deliver messages. On this road I used always to meet a band of miserable, famished-looking Italian prisoners of war, marching to work. Among them I particularly noticed a sergeant, who marched in the front row, because I could distinguish a look of frightful homesickness on his face.

One day I met the band again in Vigo, and came just in time to observe how one prisoner was given a piece of bread by an Italian woman standing in a doorway, and how the guard

struck him furiously on the arm with the butt of his gun. Like a flash of lightning such a spasm of indignation went through me that I sprang over and, grasping the man's gun, I shouted the vilest curses in his face. A regular fight, bayonet versus gun, would have broken out between us had not a military policeman, who was passing on his bicycle, interfered. While he was taking down the full particulars about me, I suddenly felt the pressure of a hand, and looking round I saw the Italian sergeant addressing me with many "gracie amicos" until the policeman chased him off.

The next morning we met again, and he greeted me with wild gesticulations, and as he passed, let fall a piece of paper which I picked up and read in it the expression of his most sincere thanks for my intercession. Half in German, half in Italian, he vowed eternal friendship to me, and asked me if I could sometimes smuggle newspapers and cigarettes to him. This I did during the ensuing period….

November 4, 1918. I had come back from leave just as my battery was leaving its post and returning home. In Madonna di Campiglio we were taken prisoner and had to go back to Vigo under a small Italian escort. Outside Pinzolo I could march no further because the bandage on my foot had got out of place inside the boot, so I limped into a vineyard by the wayside to rearrange my bandage. When I came back onto the road, it was already dark and my people were gone. I therefore went on through the vineyard along by the road until an Italian sentry on a bridge shouted a very emphatic "Halt" and turned a flashlight on me. After taking all my belongings, such as my watch, money, and wallet, he tied me to a pillar of the bridge, so that he could take me along with him when he was relieved. His only remarks were a taunting "Austria Kaput" (Austria is busted) and "Austriaci mangian erba" (Austrians eat grass). This went on for half an hour until I suddenly heard the clatter of horses' hoofs and a rider stopped in front of the sentry who made his report to him. The rider dismounted and the sentry triumphantly turned his flash on me, his prisoner. But two sudden cries of joy amazed and discomfited him: the horseman was my friend the sergeant.

As soon as the Italians reoccupied the region, he had got himself a mount and had entered active service again. The sentry now set me free and I went with the sergeant back to his quarters. There we spent the night, with good wine, white bread and preserves, and mutual assurances of eternal friendship. In the morning he had a carriage ready for me and sent with me a soldier with an official safe-conduct, who was to turn me over safely to my own battery which had got ahead of me. We took cordial leave of one another much to the surprise of the soldiers, and promised to write to each other, because he strongly assured me that our captivity would last only a fortnight. I remained prisoner, however, for a year. The address of my friend I have lost; I only remember that his name was Salvatori and that he is a fruiterer in a village near Naples. I never saw him again.

— Alois Leeb, Army Worker, *Vienna*.

THE COOKER

IT was March, on the third or fourth day of the 1918 offensive. I was a stretcher-bearer in the 16th sanitary train of the 33rd Infantry Division. Our commander had ordered us to search the district, in groups of four or eight, for casualties. I and three comrades scoured the road from Guiscard to Noyon, especially the ditches. In the course of the morning a group of English prisoners came towards us. We asked them for something to smoke, which those who had anything gave us.

A German kitchen-cart passed us. The driver rode in front, the cook behind. The road was exposed to English and American grenade firing. When the cart had passed us about a hundred yards, it was hit by a direct shot. We ran up immediately; both horses were dead, the driver had been thrown into the ditch and lay there as though dead. The cook lay under the cooker which had tipped over backwards because one wheel was broken. I and a comrade began to attend to the driver in the ditch, who still showed signs of life.

Then two English infantrymen and an English officer hurried up to us and tried to help the cook from under the cart. He however kept crying "Help our William." They were two brothers working on one cooker. For at least a quarter of an hour five men tried to lift the cart and to free the cook. Meanwhile my comrade and I undressed the driver in the ditch and at last found a little wound on his body. Then suddenly a second grenade hit almost exactly the same spot. The five men had just freed the cook. The grenade killed one of my comrades and an English soldier and wounded the English officer's arm badly. The driver meanwhile had also died. Now we three stretcher-bearers and one English infantryman carried off the cook, who was seriously injured, after we had laid the three dead men in the ditch. The officer, bleeding profusely, walked beside us. We stopped in a ravine to bandage him. The English men had acted heroically; one had given his life for his German comrades, the officer his arm. At last we reached the dressing-station.

When we returned after two hours to the scene of disaster, the horses had been scraped to the bone, for roasting. Some hungry comrades had done themselves proud.

— Heinrich Weindorf, Merchant, *Witten/Ruhr.*

IDENTIFICATION TAGS

THE main attacks, unsurpassed in vehemence, of the Spring offensive of 1916, on the French positions on the left bank of the Maas in the forest of Avoncourt, had done their work. Across the frightful wilderness of mud and shell-holes, the ravaged forest with its splintered tree-trunks, disrupted steel turrets, broken and filthy weapons of war, and mutilated corpses dragged from their graves again by the shells—again a coherent front line was made. And now June, June 1916, was there: the blighted bushes were once again decked in green.

Those of us of the 25th Bavarians who were still among the living, on whom indeed life had been bestowed anew, used to creep back in our free time, behind the lines, go over from the east corner of the forest, left towards the steel turret, to visit once more in a happier time the scene of our former suffering and of the havoc worked of yore, to collect weapons and equipment, and also to bury many a beloved comrade.

On one of these rambles, some men of my platoon found, in the bushes behind our front section, two dead Frenchmen lying unburied since the attacks of March and April. Probably they had been reported missing to their families. Missing—perhaps the most terrible of words to parents, sisters and brothers, wives and children! that awful, continuous uncertainty!

We imagined ourselves in the position of the two Frenchmen's families. Then we took the identification tags from the dead bodies before we buried them, and decided to convey them somehow to the enemy trenches. These lay only ten yards from our saps, in places even less, and quite often friend and enemy would grin across at each other for a brief space. The nearness of the enemy position had however grave dangers, because such a sector offered a good opportunity for hand grenade attacks, sniping and bomb throwing.

Well, we tied a stone to the identification tags and wrapped the whole thing in white paper, so that at a favorable opportunity during the day we could throw it into the enemy's trench or near the enemy's listening post. He was supposed to see the white package and fetch it in during the night. Our throw was successful though we did not get it right into the trench: the French sentry noticed the white package and got it during the night. On June 21, around noon, a package containing a note flew over from the opposite side into our trench. It contained a letter of thanks from the enemy.

— Melchior Baptist, Headmaster, *Lindau.*

THE RING

ON my finger glitters a ring, and this ring delights from time to time in reminding me of the first overtures of peace that I, upon my own account, made with the English in 1915. How this happened I want to sketch in a few lines.

During the attack on Becelaere, a fiercely disputed position in Flanders, our regiment captured a whole company of the enemy along with their commander. While my comrades continued to clear up the place, I was ordered to bring back the prisoners to Letekhem, where there was a concentration camp for all prisoners. I got there just at the time of the Christmas Eve celebrations. It was snowing and darkness was already falling. A guard pointed me out the way to the church, the temporary destination to which I was to bring the men. For this purpose everything had already been cleared out, otherwise there would not have been room for all the men I brought. The entire floor was covered with woolen blankets upon which the soldiers sank indiscriminately down as soon as they arrived.

According to orders the officer was to be locked up alone behind the high altar in a place trellised off, where had once stood a Crucifixion group now removed for this purpose. I felt sorry for the man but nothing could be done about it.

When all this had been so far carried out, I brought in from a grave outside a little fir-tree, which I decked with glass beads from the priests' vestments, and placed in the middle of the soldiers who sat around dazed and stupefied. I wanted by this to give them some little consolation, to remind them that today was Christmas and that there was peace on earth. Through all this the guards with fixed bayonets marched up and down with their even tread. When it had become quite dark in the church, I put little candles on the tree and lit them.

As they flared up they threw a bright light on the long smooth pipes of the organ, which at the end of the central aisle rose steeply from the organ loft to the roof. An idea struck me as I looked at them, and softly I stole up to the instrument. I took only one comrade with me to work the pump for me. A few minutes, and my hands rested on the well-worn keys of the organ and I began with a Bach prelude from which I gradually led over to "Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht."

At the first chords all heads were turned quickly and the officer in the dark comer behind the trellis grew restive. He got up from the floor and came forward to see what was going on. It tormented me to see a human being like this, at such a time. I ended my piece at once, walked over to him, and invited him to come out and join us, and I opened the iron gate for him. Again every eye in the church was turned on me. I knew this was against orders, but I did it. And only now, when everyone could take part, did peace descend on this united Christmas celebration.

Next morning I was arrested for violating martial law. I got three days in prison for it and after that I had to go back at once to the front lines. So I could not hope to see the officer again. I was set free, but before I left for the trenches another report to the Staff was due during which I had to be present. As I entered the building the chaplain of the division came up to me with a little package in his hand. This, he said, he had been asked by the captured English officer to give me. I would know whom he meant.

When I opened the package I found a ring in it and a letter in German. In it he thanked me for the sympathy I had shown him. Now he was not dreading captivity so much, it said at the end, for this Christmas celebration had shown him that the world was not as devoid of kindness as one was inclined to believe in times of great affliction. The ring I was to keep as a reminder of that hour, forever. My heart clings to it to this day.

— Karl Leins, Printer, *Bonames.*

LOST AND FOUND

IN Spring 1915 the 1st Company of our Landsturm Battalion, consisting mainly of Frankfort men, was quartered in Kielmy in Lithuania. There was fierce fighting over Schaulen, and every day large bands of Russian prisoners were marched through the village to spend the night at the prison camp, before going on next day. While those bands were marching through, both sides of the streets would be lined with people. German soldiers and native inhabitants, looking on. One day when a large transport had been announced, I too was standing by the street watching the prisoners after their long forty mile march. Suddenly a woman standing by me gave a loud shriek; she had recognized, in one of the prisoners, her husband, who had gone to the front a year ago. Again and again the wretched woman tried to speak to her husband, but every time was prevented and pushed off by the German guards, who were indeed only following their instructions.

Shrieking and wailing the woman, several other women along with her, ran alongside the troop until it disappeared from her sight into the camp. Deeply affected, I had followed the band of prisoners and found the woman standing in front of the closed entrance gate, imploring every German soldier who came out of the camp to let her in. I explained to the woman the uselessness of her conduct and prevailed upon her to go to headquarters with me. I described the incident to the Commander and asked him in my name, and in the name of my comrades, who had also witnessed the occurrence, to make out a permit for the woman, allowing her to talk to her husband in the presence of an interpreter. Although the Commander really ought not to have given her this permission, he had the permit made out and handed it to me.

Never shall I forget the expression on that prisoner’s face when having been found after a lengthy search through 600 men, he was brought to the office; there to see his wife and two little children of four and six.

— Max Strauss, Merchant, *Cologne.*

I GET DECORATED

IN August 1917 I was dismissed from hospital and sent by the convalescent company Antokol to a disinfecting station at Wilna. Here Russian prisoners were employed to carry the clothes of those that were being “deloused” to the boiler rooms. One day I happened to see a choleric old Landsturm man brutally maltreating the Russians. I did not like this guard’s

conduct at all, so I stopped him and warned him against further brutalities. From that time on no one was ill-treated any more.

Soon after that I was sent back to Germany to the Reserve Battalion. When I took leave of my comrades, a Russian appeared as well, shook my hand, thanked me and gave me a little package. Later, when I opened it I found—a Russian decoration: a medallion with a picture of the Czar on a red and white ribbon. It was the most precious thing he had.

— Albert Steines, *Düsseldorf-Rath.*

THE TROPHY

DURING my first stay in England, two years after the war, both my trunks got lost, so that I used to appear daily at the baggage office. The English clerk had observed at once that I was a German woman, and he drew my attention to an old watch which hung before him on the wall: "That belonged to one of your boys," he flung at me maliciously, "I knocked him cold on the battlefield. There hangs his watch, I show it to every German who comes to me."

I was silent because I was moved, so that he, becoming less sure of himself, went on: "Well, do you think I should have waited until he hit me? Better he than I …"

"That is a terrible story," I managed to say at last, "I don't suppose you will ever be able to forget it. With how little pleasure you must work with that watch in front of you."

He was silent.

For nearly a fortnight I met this man every day until my baggage had been found. On the last occasion the poor German's watch was not hanging on the wall of the baggage office any more.

— Helma Schroder-James, *Arosa.*

FOUR KOPECKS

DO you know what debts are? I certainly have enough of them, but none that weighs on me like the tiny debt of four kopecks which I acquired sixteen years ago.

On the 18th of September 1914 I descended, leaning
on a crutch, from the ambulance train at Kursk in South Russia, to be taken to the hospital there. There were many curious, gaping, lookers-on on the platform, come to see the first spoils of Russia, wounded Austrians, those barbarians, of whom the newspaper headlines had reported that they tore out the tongues of their Russian prisoners and poked out their eyes. So we were not surprised when an enormous Russian backwoods-Tschinownik (Police-officer) with a flat green cap and a shiny red vodka-nose asserted his patriotism by pushing us off the sidewalk, so that we sank ankle-deep into the mud on the street. Awstrjcki Zabaki—dirty dogs of Austrians.

And then it happened. Russian soldiers with long fixed bayonets were organizing our miserable straggling group, when a beggar woman, with a handkerchief round her head and dressed in rags, pressed against me and shoved something secretly into my hand. Before I could do anything to betray my surprise, she had disappeared in the crowd to avoid being arrested for her illegal act.

I held in my hand a worn copper four-Kopeck piece. I blushed with shame. I—an officer—had been presented with a copper by a beggar woman. The money burned me. After so much horror and ugliness on the battlefield—after so much hatred and misery—a ray of love.

— Robert Hückel, *Brunn.*

DAILY BREAD

THE BAKER

THIS happened to me during the war. It was in Spincourt near Verdun, Christmas 1917 in the Army Bakery Koi. No. 15.

For the Christmas celebrations we bakers were given wheat by our superior officers and each allowed to make with yeast a loaf of white bread for ourselves. In the evening of Christmas Eve when we were through, each baker was given his white loaf, and so home we went to our lodgings. In Spincourt there was a Russian prisoners' camp. In the street were four Russian prisoners who had to clean the street. I was going home somewhat late and had to pass the Russians; I held my bread under the coat of my uniform, but they noticed it none the less. Three of the Russians (at intervals of twenty to thirty yards) each asked me for a piece of bread, but I refused. But the last, the fourth Russian, an old gray haired soldier, fell on his knees before me, and begged and beseeched me for a piece of bread. This melted my heart and I gave him my whole white loaf. And then came the hardest part for me. He fell upon my neck and kissed me on both cheeks as if I were his child: and always with the words "Good Panje."

I went home to my quarters, neither ate nor drank anything that evening, lay down on my straw mattress and cried far into the night, and thought, why must mankind suffer so?

— Gustav Eskstein, Master Baker, *Heldenbergen.*

THE BATTLE OF THE ISONZO

ON the Monte Gabriele, September 4, 1917, I was in the infantry and detailed to the attack unit of the 25th Landsturm Regiment. During the attack I was wounded in the left thigh by a shrapnel fragment, and was left lying with a few comrades who had also been wounded just in front of the Italian trenches. We lay in a shell crater and bandaged each other's wounds as best we could. For at least one hour the enemy artillery fire boomed over our heads. Only the Austrian shells came hazardously near us, and showered us with a hail of stones which wounded two comrades anew. I too, on top of everything, was hit on the head by a stone, which hurt me only slightly but caused violent bleeding. Then for a short time the artillery fire ceased.

Some Italians suddenly appeared and threatened us with hand grenades, but when they saw that they had wounded men to deal with they drew cautiously nearer. We were too exhausted to put up any fight. I was lifted up by the two Italians and carried down the slope with great effort. We had hardly reached the road when again we ran into Austrian artillery fire. Whether my two bearers were wounded, or whether they sought cover from the hail of shrapnel, I do not know. I lay alone on the road, which presented a fearful picture of havoc. Cars and artillery thundered past me, and only by summoning up my last atom of strength did I manage to roll into the ditch and escape being run over.

How long I lay there half conscious I cannot say and it does not matter. I suddenly felt something wet against my lips. As I opened my eyes I saw a bearded face bent over me. The man had tears in his eyes! Why was he weeping? From pity, or on account of my youth? (I was then eighteen years old and could easily have been his son). Or had he too a son at the front? He poured a few drops of wine between my lips; I was terribly parched and could hardly speak. I pointed with my hand towards the river Isonzo. He understood and asked "Aqua?" I

nodded. He ran off to fetch water though Austrian grenades were bursting all around. He came safely back, carrying a bowl of water in either hand. He supported me gently while I drank. With feverish avidity I emptied both bowls. He went a second time over the dangerous death-beset way, indifferent to the projectiles which tore the ground up. Again he got back safely. He washed my face which was caked with blood, then helped me to my feet. I put my right arm around his neck, with my left I supported myself on a broken mountaineering stick. Step by step we progressed through this hell and at last, bathed in sweat, we reached the dressing station. Here my brave rescuer turned me over to an attendant, then went off after putting two lemons into my hand. I was far too weak to thank him. The man had risked his own life to save a wounded enemy.

— Eduard Meidl, Druggist, *Brunn.*

"NON, NON, LE PETIT LAI"

ON September 26th I was captured by the French near St. Souplets, when I was only eighteen years old. I was small and weakish for my age, so that I was noticed by the French soldiers and won general sympathy. After two months in a quarantine camp we were sent to a permanent camp near Melun. We got very little to eat and on that account, round lunch- and dinner-time we would stand, hungry spectators, behind our barbed wire fence near where the food was being distributed to the French soldiers. Once in a while a Frenchman would hand a piece of bread or something through the wire fence. Every time this happened, a little battle would ensue. Not surprising—for hunger hurts!

On account of my weakness I always came out worst, so I preferred to stand quite apart, meekly hoping that some day I might get hold of something. And so it fell out: one day an elderly Frenchman approached holding a piece of white bread with some sardines on it, which he reached through the fence. At that my companions in woe rushed up to crowd me away: but my patron would not stand for that. Immediately he withdrew his hand exclaiming "Non, non, le petit la!" (No, no, the little one there.) Evidently he had noticed how I was always worsted in these struggles for daily bread, and so he wanted to see me get my share for once.

— Heinz Breddemann, Actor, *Sachsenberg.*

BAD BREAD

IN the spring of 1918 the bread which was supplied to our prison camp was made from "floor flour," a mixture which consisted in part of flour swept from the floor of the bakeries. There was sand and hairs and even grit in it. All complaints were useless. One day an elderly guard was with us at the place where we worked. When we showed him the bread, he took a specimen and complained to the French lieutenant. We heard afterwards that there was a heated argument and that the man was even punished. But the bread was better after that. Such guards were very rare.

— Karl Heinzmann, Street Car Conductor, *Dürkheim.*

WATER

OUR march into captivity, which began eight days after the capitulation of Przemysl, presented a grotesque scene. One old Landsturm man, who wanted to be prepared for all eventualities, carried a whole sack of potatoes on his back, since it was not certain that the Russians would not let us starve. Another one, who thought he would be sent home soon,

carried a heavy iron chain which he planned to use in the byre in his Carpathian village. The guards were not exactly courteous. And so on we marched, weakened by hunger and illness, over muddy roads until we reached Lemberg on Easter Sunday.

The Russians loved to display their prisoners very elaborately, so they left us standing for several hours in the blazing sunlight before the prison where we were to spend the night. We had to remain in rank and file and the efforts of the friendly population to feed us were frustrated, severely and most rudely, by the guards, young newly-enlisted soldiers.

The heat became intolerable and especially some of the older men were parched for want of water, which sympathetic women kept trying to reach to us. One time a nimble little Jewish girl succeeded in handing a glass of water to our sergeant, an elderly corpulent man. But at once the recruit was on the spot, pushed the little one back brutally with the butt of his gun, and dashed the water, with vile curses, from the sergeant's lips.

Not far from us a troop of old bearded Cossacks were drawn up on their small horses and watched the scene. In an instant one of them was beside us and his nagaika was dealing resounding blows on the back and shoulders of our brutal hero. "You son of a bitch, to snatch the drink from the mouth of a man, who is a soldier and could be your father! Do you think that he is less than you because he is down on his luck?" An officer then hurried up, and when he also took the part of the enraged Cossack, our minds were a little relieved. For if there were real humans even among the ill-famed Cossacks, one didn't need to despair altogether about the future.

— Leo Kramer, Merchant, *Vienna.*

MILK

IN October 1916 we advanced into Roumania, and crossing the Szurduk pass finally reached the Roumanian Plain near Szela. After a few days of marching we got to a village, almost completely deserted by the Roumanians, where we could rest for a day. In the evening, as I strolled, idle and weary, through the street, I was greeted by an old Roumanian with a "Gruss Gott" which I had not expected to hear in this abandoned region. I got talking with the old man and he told me that he was an Austrian and had moved here from Siebenbürgen.

The following morning I set out on my usual foraging expedition. Upon entering a dirty old farm I saw a scene which I shall not forget for the rest of my life, as though indeed it had been my only experience in this great war.

In a dark corner of the deserted house I came on three children sitting on a wooden bench, the youngest about four, the eldest about ten years old, stark naked, practically starved to death, yellow as canaries all over, apparently from hunger. The eldest of them stared at me out of sunken eyes. Was it fear and despair on the part of the poor creature, or did this look mean "Help us"? I do not know. The second child was leaning with its head against the wall, with but a faint glow in the little black eyes. The third child, the youngest, sat with the upper part of its body bent forward and resting on its little legs, apparently lifeless. I tried to straighten out the poor little thing and found that it was still alive. I had no doubt that here was a case where help was needed. At once I made for my quarters, threw some cubes of tea into the army kettle and soon the first drink that these poor creatures were to have was ready.

As I hastened back to the house I noticed an old woman who evidently had been unable to escape. I grabbed her by the arm and motioned her to come along with me, which she did with some hesitation. In the house the three poor children were sitting exactly as I had left them a quarter of an hour before. Following my directions the old woman gave the children the tea, for which I gave her my own implements. The old woman kept refusing the job all the time with the words “Njema, Njema”—she did not want to! So I gave her to understand what was coming to her if she did not want to, by pointing my gun at her, which did not fail to have its effect.

When we had dispensed our tea, I took the old woman to the farm-yard where two cows were eating off a hay-stack. I forced the army kettle into her hand to milk one of the cows into. First she gave me a look as though “Njema” were coming again, but one glance at my gun and she knelt down on one side of the cow, while I knelt on the other and held the kettle. Then off in a hurry to my quarters where the milk was boiled and back to the old woman who did not this time need any explanations when she saw the kettle with the milk. When we had dispensed the milk, I already saw a little more life in the three little faces, than at first. I went there that afternoon four times more, and each time milk was doled out.

Towards dawn I was secretly overcome with apprehension as to what would happen to the poor children when we had to leave. Then suddenly I remembered the old Austrian, whom I took as an interpreter to the old woman. He had from now on to take my place and supervise the daily feeding. As remuneration he received from me a packet of tobacco, “Army and Navy brand,” for which he thanked me a thousand times and promised to take care of the poor little children until their refugee mother returned.

To the old woman I conveyed the information that if ever she refused to obey the old Austrian I would shoot her on my return in a few days, which was impossible as we were advancing on Bucharest. But she too assured me she would do everything as I ordered. The next morning as we marched off, my last look was at the poor hut, which to the present day I have not forgotten.

— Ruppert, *Nieder-Wurzbach /Saar.*

THE EGG

I WAS taken a prisoner in the early morning of November 30th 1917 at Gouzeaucourt—near Cambrai and when the German soldiers—Württembergers—had surrounded us, one of their number in his excitement flung a bomb at an English soldier who was perhaps a little slow in throwing down his equipment—and severely wounded him. The Lieutenant in charge of the Germans turned upon his own man in a burst of anger and shot him with his revolver for having disobeyed what must have been a very strict order about harming prisoners when they had surrendered and I remember quite well his giving an angry lecture to his men on this subject.

Later, at the Reiherstieg Werft in Hamburg where I was sent, I made many good friends with the Hamburger leute, especially an old man who could hardly see to do his work. In the mornings I would read out the headlines of the “Hamburger Zeitung” and the most important news of the day, as he could not see the print himself, also I used to like to help him whenever I could with his work which he found very difficult to watch with his failing eyes.

In return he would bring me up some pieces of bread, or some potatoes—cigarettes and once he gave me an egg, although it meant that he had to wait a long time for another for himself.

— Frank Furber (8th Royal Fusiliers) , *West Harrow.*

POTATOES

THE three of us lay in the grass near our barracks in Targoviste (in Roumania) and enjoyed the sunshine, which poured down with burning rays, this Whitmonday of 1917. Suddenly, shrieks coming from the nearby farm caught our ears, and shortly after, three German soldiers rushed past us, two in front and one behind. It soon became clear that the last one was in pursuit of the others. They had tried to "commandeer" potatoes from the farmer and, because he kept asserting his own needs, the Germans were about to lay somewhat more emphasis on their demand with their drawn bayonets. But just to kill people off because they were unable to comply with a request to fork out provisions —that was a bit too thick even for our comrade the butcher's mate Uhlmann, who now, panting for breath, told us how he had driven the other two to flight.

It is to him that the Roumanian farmer owes his life.

— Parson Rose, *Fischbach/Rhon.*

CHOCOLATE

DECEMBER 1916. The 39th Reserve Infantry Division was entrenched on the Hardoumont, north of Verdun. For three days we had lain under the heaviest fire. Early in the morning of the 3rd day gas shells came over, then a heavy artillery barrage and rifle fire; and the afternoon found me gassed and a French prisoner. Physically a wreck, mentally shaken, I was sent via Verdun to the Fort du Regret. My quarters: the first night a cellar, the second a pig-sty, the third a stable. There I lay covered with my coat, on the paved floor of the stable; gassed, hungry, desperate, weary to death. No one to look after me, no doctor, no Red Cross. Geneva convention, European culture, Christian ethics—where were they? The night grew darker: outside on the highway munition wagons rattled over the uneven pavement, bringing thousandfold death to the front, and guns spewing out destruction. In the stable it had become quite dark, the lantern hanging outside before the stable window sent hardly a ray of light through the dulled panes into the room. There I lay waiting, waiting for death like a child waiting to fall asleep.

The soldier on guard, armed with a saber, had marched through the stable, with even tread, from the front door to the back wall; turned, and marched back the short distance, and to and fro again, for an hour or more already, always exactly the prescribed post…. Now he departed a step from his way, came in fact towards me.

More than once in this war, defenceless prisoners had been said to have been put "out of the way." Was it now my turn? The question shuddered through my brain. I was strangely calm. I had already, in this past week, died all possible deaths. Nothing could terrify me any longer.

Now the soldier was beside me. He bent over me and his saber caught a spark of light. I closed my eyes, my hands were folded across my chest. There—a strange hand groped lightly

from my sleeve over my hand, and with a soft pressure shoved a piece of chocolate between thumb and forefinger: pauvre camarade!

I got well again. And if my recovered reason did not reject it as a delusion, I would still believe today that I saw something like a halo round that helmet.

— Karl Jung, *Kulmbach.*

BEEF

THE following really happened, in 1915 out on the "hunger steppe" about 80 wjerst from the town Perowsk, and about three wjerst from the station Solo-Tjube. Perowsk and Solo-Tjube are both on the Taschkent railroad line in Turkmenistan.

Two hundred and sixty-three Austrian subjects, a mixture of eight nationalities, we squatted packed together in a close mass, in the center of the camp. All around the barren, somber gray hunger-steppe, stretched away into infinity, like the unending sufferings of prisoners' lives. We all held long-handled sharp axes grasped in our hands and stared gloomily at the white house where four Russian soldiers stood with loaded rifles. The blaze of the sun sapped the last scrap of energy from our famished bodies. Starschi, our Russian corporal, looked thoughtful and irresolute at this two hundred and sixty-fold famine. Then he pulled himself together and tried to overawe our hunger with a death menace. As rousing as the crack of a whip sounded his voice as he shouted across to us: "Pani! For the last time I tell you: get to work or I'll have you shot."

Without any response, the mass moved and surrounded the house with the four Russian soldiers, ready to close in with a deadly pressure on the slightest proocation. Starschi grew pale. "Stop! No force!" he cried. "Send in three men to me. Perhaps I can do something for you."

From the first row three men detached themselves and walked into the house with empty hands, followed by Starschi. All three knew Russian well and they talked in turn, supplementing each other. They said that one cannot live on water-gruel alone; that the men had bartered their last garments for food with the steppe Kirghiz; that half and more of the all too scanty food they got was stolen; that they were all running around half naked, in rags, and despite the extremities of hunger had to do the hard labor of wood cutting; that they had reached the end of their endurance but had no inclination to be buried just like that.

During the recitation of grievances by the three prisoners Starschi, absorbed in painful rumination, gazed out of the open window over the steppe. For everything said or left unsaid had long been familiar to him in all variations. Enraged at his own helplessness he racked his brains for a way to help us yet. Suddenly his face lit up. He caught hold of the three speakers, drew them to the window and, smiling, pointed outside.

"What do you see there?"

"Four cows," the three answered perplexed.

He looked at them with amusement and began to explain his idea.

"You are hungry, aren't you? In order not to be so any longer all you have to do is to take your axes and make beef out of those four cows. But in half an hour the beef and all

incriminating evidence must have disappeared completely. Bury it for the time being. For soon the former owners of this beef will be visiting us and expect to find it here."

The three rushed out to us howling with joy.

"Over there, on sixteen legs, our goulash is grazing," they shouted.

We understood at once. Within twenty minutes the beef was distributed over three dozen holes in the earth, wrapped in shirts and buried in corners. Then we made big camp fires in front of our earth holes and we awaited the visit of the Kirghizes with some misgivings.

Soon we saw a cloud of dust, getting bigger and bigger and coming towards us rapidly. Then it resolved itself into a band of horsemen, sweeping along at the gallop. At the head rode a fat old Kirghiz who flourished a hunting gun furiously, while his little people accompanied him with a shrill howling. Fear crept over us. We dashed into the earth-holes and armed ourselves with our axes. In a serried mass we awaited the charging horsemen and shouted a blood-curdling "hurra" as though we were in an attack.

Now the Kirghizes in turn were startled, suddenly grew silent and drew up their horses. As at a cue Starschi now approached with his three soldiers and inserted himself between the two hostile forces. The fat Kirghiz slid from the saddle and addressed Starschi in Kirghiz. The latter waited patiently until the fat man lost breath, then he ordered us to lay down our axes and to fall in in two lines. He then invited the fat Kirghiz, in Russian, along with the herdsman who had witnessed from a distance the transformation of the cows into beef, to single out the prisoners who were responsible.

Slowly the two Kirghizes went from one man to the next, inspecting every single one from all aspects. Some times they would quarrel, were doubtful; but at last, shaking their heads, they would go on to the next one. After an hour of intensive search they had reached the last one. The fat Kirghiz indignant at their lack of success, spat furiously and said to Starschi: "Your prisoners are devils. One resembles the other like the eggs of one hen." We grinned maliciously in the Mongolian faces of the Kirghizes, to us just as indistinguishable from each other, as they stood before us. Starschi too had difficulty in hiding his smile. Then he played the aggrieved and gave the fat fellow a terrific scolding; about his honest prisoners of war being unjustly suspected of cattle-stealing, about his authority being undermined, and so on. The Kirghizes on their part threatened Starschi with a letter of complaint to the authorities: and off they went.

As soon as the steppe had swallowed up the cantering Kirghizes, there began a great cooking. Until late that night everyone feasted on goulash and the pleasures of satiety were boisterously expressed in the national songs of eight different countries … thus we soon accustomed ourselves to this cheap and wholesome food. Our state of health improved so mightily that we willingly chopped wood again. We organized goulash raids, which consisted of driving the cattle which had strayed from their herd behind a sandhill and there transforming them to beef, before the herdsmen had an idea of it. Skin and bone were buried without leaving a trace.

Only the Kirghizes had any difficulty getting used to this state of affairs. Complaint after complaint reached the authorities. But they demanded proof, and at last the Kirghizes too accustomed themselves to it. Only now and then one of them would come to our camp and hint that the neighbor's herds were bigger and that therefore we should attend to him more. As time

went on these individual visits ceased too and they came to look on it as an evil of war, or as fate.

Thus by and by 150 cows, 60 goats, 120 sheep and 15 camels had died the goulash death. By them 263 Europeans were saved from starvation and could survive in good health till the Kerenski regime began. Then we suddenly got triple dues and a bonus which brought long missed luxuries within our reach. Life became more tolerable and once we had sufficient it was easy for us to give up the "ethics of the hungry wolf." From then on the four-footed Kirghizes grazed unscathed by us and the grass of forgetfulness grew over the herd we had consumed.

— W. Hamperl, Compositor, *Vienna.*

FISH

1915 in the North of France: We were encamped at Biache-St.-Vaast. The War Fury had devoured many victims, even among the population. All their earthly possessions were lost, they only managed to scrape along on American charity. The troops in the lines were also very poorly provisioned, and there were strict rules against helping the population.

However we shared with them whatever there was to share. Provisions, our "iron ration"; yes, even, when a man came back from leave, he might bring clothes and other things from his own impoverished family. It was a community based on necessity, man to man.

Moreover, we turned the latest productions in war machinery to our own uses, contrary to their real purpose. The "hair brush" grenade, which had just come out at that time, was excellent for more productive purposes. The waters near Biache contained an enormous stock of all kinds of edible fish. Never mind the rule against fishing with hand grenades; you threw, there was a muffled explosion, and in a few minutes the whole surface of the water appeared as though snowed upon. Hundreds of carp, pike, and perch were floating around dead. Highly pleased we bore our precious booty home.

Our French hosts were awaiting eagerly the outcome of our self-help. They stood around in the streets, conversing loudly, for our fishing expedition was a great event for the population. Hardly were we in sight before we were attacked, surrounded, and accompanied to our quarters. There an excellent display of feminine cookery was given, and soon general feasting was the order of the day.

The two days under arrest for disobeying orders did not dampen our spirits. We preferred killing fish to men.

— Hans Fischer, Glassworker, *Fürth.*

JUST A FEW LEMONS

THIS is only quite a tiny deed, but it fell into the heart of a mother and so on good and fertile soil. And indeed the seed has grown up and perhaps there has come from it one of those trees from which will be cut, in time to come, the beams for the house of peace.

It was in the years of the occupation of Cronberg by the French. The little son of a certain woman was very ill, he was in a fever and a lemon drink would have done so much good to the parched lips. But there were no lemons. A French officer was billeted with the woman. He brought her some lemons.

Nothing else? No, nothing else. Now it almost seems to me to be such an insignificant incident that I am afraid it will look quite unimportant and without glamor among the ranks of the good deeds. But I see again before me the hard working face of the woman all softened and relaxed, I hear once more the emotion in her voice, though years have elapsed since then.

— Gertrud Alberti, *Frankfort on the Main.*

A STUDY IN BLACK AND WHITE

IN St. Nazaire (on the lower Loire) the Americans had placed a camp where German prisoners were also quartered. We worked for the French, mainly unloading coal from the ships in port. In July 1918, one day after the midday meal, we were marching from the camp to our place of work in the harbor. An American truck full of German prisoners passed us. In passing a German comrade threw down about half a loaf of bread to our group. One of us snatched it, but the French guard, who marched nearby with fixed bayonet, took the bread from the prisoner, threw it on the ground and trampled it under foot till it was spoiled. … It does not follow from this that there were not also good Frenchmen.

At the same place a few days later, an empty American freight train had come back from the port and stopped in front of the American Red Cross depot. The trucks were being cleaned by colored soldiers. While we prisoners were loading in boxes of laundry from the other side, an American Negro soldier came and stood at the opening of the truck and inquired by means of gestures, whether we were hungry. This we could not deny as the rations were less than scanty. The black man disappeared. After a few minutes he again appeared at the opening, holding a loaf a yard long, half-hidden under his coat. He broke a piece off as though he were going to eat and in an unobserved moment handed it over to us. Then came one piece after another, for some of his colored comrades followed his example.

The black man saw what we were in want of: the white man no longer thought of us as human beings.

— Otto Staub, Architect, *Rheinfelden, Baden.*

OUR CHARLES

A. D. 1917. My family lived at that time in Raunheim on the Main, and I attended High School in Russelsheim. In spring we got some French prisoners of war who were billeted in a neighbor’s house and had to work in one of the local factories. In those days even the most essential food was lacking and our daily fare consisted almost always of potatoes and “graupen-wurst” which were done up in parchment paper instead of skin. Day after day potato soup with no floating spots of fat; even turnips, usually only used for the animals, were good enough for us.

Often we conversed with the Frenchmen, and Charles Dupont, a real Parisian, would come over to help us with our French homework. When he saw our food he shuddered and asked us how we could ever feel satisfied after such food. An uncle of M. Dupont, who owned a dairy near Paris, sent him a huge package of food almost every week: corned beef, chocolate and a lot of cheese. What Charles could not use up he brought over to us. So many months passed and at last came the end of the terrible international struggle. Once more we saw M. Dupont just as he and his comrades were boarding the train that was to take them back home.

One morning when we went to school we found that the occupation had begun. Later as we were just sitting down to table, the door opened and our Charles, with a gun and a package under his arm, burst in, radiant with joy, and greeted us most heartily. He handed us the package which contained the finest bacon, mutton, and a few pounds of fat. A few days later he also brought us a flask of red wine and a sack of green coffee beans. Then he took leave of us because his division had been ordered to Hoechst. “Jamais la guerre!” were the last words he called out to me, wiping the tears from his cheeks.

— Otto Henry Arth, Pastry Cook, *Frankfort on the Main.*

IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE

THE German Alpine Corps, in pursuit of the defeated Italian troops, reached the Piave in November 1917. Since all the villages were full up, the companies were usually quartered in the railway tunnels along the Piave at the foot of Monte Tomba. The abundance of food that had prevailed for this troop during the offensive soon diminished, and once more the men had to rely on the food from the army kitchens. For this reason the villages of Fener and Quero, at the foot of Monte Tomba, which had been evacuated by their civilian population as they lay exposed to the enemy’s artillery, were a double temptation to visits that promised booty. So one day lance-corporal Gerner made an excursion to Quero with the laudable object of securing something to eat for his men. Climbing over heaps of rubbish and broken walls, he searched the rooms and cellars of the houses, without, to his great distress, finding a thing to eat.

On his search he came on a little house which so far had been spared by the shells. He decided to pay a last visit there and then return home. The living rooms were empty, but his ear was struck by Italian voices coming up from the cellar, and when he went down there, he saw to his astonishment, by the flickering light of a candle, an old woman lying on a low bed, and in front of her on a stool an old white-haired man. When the man heard him approaching he got up slowly, made a few unsteady steps towards him and with trembling voice and helpless gestures indicated a few ears of grain and half a watermelon, explaining to lance-corporal Gerner that he and his wife had nothing left to live on but this meager remnant.

The old man’s pitiful implication touched Gerner and also made him feel ashamed. He knew there was nothing more to be found in the village, but over there in Fener, which lay three quarters of an hour off on the slopes of Monte Tomba, something could perhaps be found. The way there, certainly, lay entirely exposed to the enemy, and thus under constant artillery fire and bombing, so that the explosions in the village were audible as far as here; but perhaps he could help the two old people.

And so Gerner risked the journey to Fener. He had frequently to seek cover in the ditch from the exploding shells, but he reached Fener. There his search was not in vain. In the abandoned houses, not yet scoured by the troops, he found here and there potatoes and chestnuts, here a little corn flour for polenta, there some bacon. He put all this in a basket which he had also found and then went back, his steps again dogged by the impacts of the shells, to Quero. Soon he reached the little house and stood before the old man to whom he gave the basket. When he grasped that all this was for him and his wife, tears rolled down his cheeks and he kissed Gemer’s hand, who warded him off and left.

Empty handed Gerner returned: in silence he endured the reproaches of his comrades.

— Andreas Schelshorn, Street Car Conductor, *Munich.*

SAVAGES

“MAMA GUTT”

IN our old-fashioned parsonage in Gross-Gerau a few French soldiers and sometimes an officer were billeted. One of these officers, whose name and looks have escaped my memory long ago, had a colored man as batman. A real negro, with great thick lips and a broad nose, who came and went daily at our house on his officer’s business. He spoke no German, and also apparently—except a few words of command—understood not a word of French.

One day my mother noticed that his hand was all tied up in a dirty rag. She motioned him to follow her into the kitchen and unwrapped the filthy rag; the hand was all festered. A soapy bath was quickly prepared in a hand basin and the hand scrubbed with hot soapy water and a little brush. An odd picture: my little mother, and standing beside her the athletic negro with his white-rolling eyes and face twisted with pain: almost like a wild beast whose keeper is pulling a thorn from his paw. The cleaned hand was bandaged and now healed quickly, thanks to the healthy skin of negroes.

But the wild beast was no wild beast. Every day from then on the colored man would come to our kitchen, look for my mother and bring something for her with him, canned sardines or chocolate. Speak he could not. Or rather, yes, he had learned something. And this he kept repeating as he sat in the kitchen. “Mama gutt.” And the white-rolling eyes could look very grateful.

One day he went away. Did he get back to Africa? Perhaps he still remembers that someone in that cold Europe was kind to him; perhaps he still remembers his two words of European, “Mama gutt.”

— Dr. W. Scheunemann, Certified Farmer, *Darmstadt.*

A COSSACK IN NEED

DURING an attack in the Carpathians I was taken prisoner by the Russians on April 9, 1915. They pulled me out of a shell hole that was full to the brim with mud. One comrade had to pay with his life for an attempt to escape. I got back to the Russian company dugouts unscathed, and there met other Austrians and Germans. The Russians here were busily occupied removing as many as possible of our valuables, but just at the moment when one of them tried to pull the ring from my finger an officer appeared and ended this “comrade’s” activity by a resounding slap on the face. After that we were left in peace.

After a strenuous night’s march, we reached the concentration camp. For food there was black bread and tea, and also, for the march, a portion of bread was given out that was to last till the next camp, but was eaten immediately by most of us. Our troop had grown rather large and a detachment of Cossacks was ready to accompany us. After the order of march had been established amid much shouting and cursing on the part of the Russians, we were off at last. We Germans had to march in the rear of the troop, the tail of which the leader of the Cossacks himself, a fine-looking man, was commanding. I don’t know whether it was the new black bread, or the effect of the cold and humidity, but the indigestion I had had for some days grew so acute that I was forced to fall out. By appropriate, unmistakable signs I made my intention clear to the leader who granted me permission with a flourish of his knout and held his horse in till I was finished. As we went on I got so bad that I had to fall out every hundred yards and

produced nothing but blood. The Cossack did not rush me at all, to keep up, but waited patiently every time until I walked on.

We had lost sight of our troop, especially as I just dragged painfully along. Behind us a panje-cart ap eared. The Cossack stopped it and from the expressions of the faces I could guess that the Panje was asked to take me along. The Russian however did not seem to want to do this, because after an animated exchange of words he suddenly whipped his horse up. But he had reckoned without the Cossack. To untie his knout, gallop after the vehicle, fetch the Panje a blow, was all the work of a moment and soon the cart was at a halt. Whether he liked it or not he had to take me in and even give me his straw seat: And after I was well stowed in off it went at a trot, the Panje in front cursing incessantly, my guardsman behind with a satisfied expression.

Soon we had caught up with and even passed the transport and shortly after noon we reached our destination. We were quartered in an evacuated schoolhouse. The Cossack selected a room, asked me to take off my things and talked a lot to me, of all which I only understood the word “Germanski,” concluding correctly that the room was meant for us Germans. Then he motioned me to follow him and take along my cooking vessel. In the kitchen at first excited discussion took place, but the personality and the knout of this man seemed to carry weight. Cocoa was cooked and my vessel filled. A fire was already burning in the room and a few old blankets lying on the floor. After a short time the Cossack came back with a loaf of white bread which he gave me. After I had eaten and drunk, during which he looked on in silence, he signed to me to go to sleep which I gladly did. After he had made sure that I had everything, he looked at me once more, turned round and went quickly out of the door.

I have not seen the man again but to this day it is my sincerest wish that this noble creature —whose caste is generally cried down as brutal and ruthless—may have returned safe and sound to his family.

— Heinz Gick, Aluminum Worker, *Hanau.*

CHINAMAN

AFTER the Armistice a great many coolies were employed to clear up the devastated area. Almost every day there were injuries to be attended to because some accident had taken place during the work. One day a young Chinaman was brought to our ambulance with a shattered leg and I had to take down his personal data, which was one of my duties. As he seemed to be thirsty I gave him a cup of milk to drink and also brought him a blanket so that he should not get cold. He looked at me with gratitude and after searching through his bag for a while, he produced four tangerines for me. When I declined them he simply put them into my pocket.

As I went on taking care of the poor fellow, his eyes would brighten whenever he saw me. When three days later he was taken off to a hospital he threw a French silver coin to me from the car and went on waving to me as long as he could see me. Tears were rolling down from his little slanting eyes over his round cheeks, while he called: “German gutalla! German gutalla!” Good German!

— Jacob Walk, Merchant, *Eltville.*

GURKHA

THIS took place in the tropical bush war in German East Africa. Our colonial force had repulsed the attack of a British Indian brigade, among whose colored soldiers was a Gurkha regiment. The rumor went that the members of this tribe cut the throat of each wounded enemy with a knife. Lieutenant H. of the Colonials lay on the burning hot ground, a shot having grazed his spine at the neck; unable on account of the violent jarring of his spine, to move a single limb. To his great terror he suddenly saw a Gurkha crawling towards him. He closed his eyes in expectation of his approaching death. How astonished he was to find however that the Indian merely pressed out the bleeding wound in his neck with his thumbs and then tore off a piece of his dirty turban to bandage his German enemy.

— Dr. Paul Wolff, Gynecologist, *Darmstadt.*

"THEN I DON'T WANT ANYTHING EITHER"

I MUST first say that at the outbreak of the war I fell a victim to calumny and was arrested on suspicion of being a spy, in Nancy where I was then residing. Of all the terrors I suffered during these four and a half months and especially before October 1914 when we finally landed on the island of Frioul near Marseilles, I shall say nothing. Only, however, when one has endured such suffering, can one appreciate how I felt when I suddenly met a human being who possessed a heart and soul, even if he did not come from a civilized country.

I reached Macon with our prisoner transport, which I shared with the wives and children of officials from upper Alsace, on October 4, 1914. There I had hoped to improve my circumstances through a dear friend who lived there; unfortunately I was disappointed, for this man who was to help me had gone to the front three days before. What next? The man in command of the station did not know what to do with me, our transport had already been sent on to Lyons; so there I sat between two soldiers with fixed bayonets. After some time the commander approached with a huge negro and spoke a few words to my guard, which I did not understand. I grew scared: so this negro was to accompany me to Lyons. In mortal fright I boarded the military train with him. I soon observed however that this colored man was protecting me against the officiousness and insults of the white men. At the first station some nurses boarded the train and served refreshments: one offered some to my escort but with the remark "Nothing for the boche." And what did the Senegal negro do? He handed everything back to her with the words: "Thank you, Madame, then I don't want any either." I felt sorry for him, for he looked as though he would have liked something. Then a young lady came along, however, who handed both of us something. My gratitude can only be expressed in a wish that Charlie Ben got safely back to his two wives and five children of whom he had told me.

— Lina Seib, *Karlsruhe.*

ONLY A GIPSY

IT was only a poor devil of a gypsy who was to be shot. Why? Because his indolent blood, always longing for the sun, could not be spurred to action, even by the harshest punishments. He would be tied up for hours till he was blue in the face and body, because instead of digging trenches he always lay down to sleep. Again and again he disobeyed orders. He was sentenced to be shot. His eyes were already bandaged when the gypsy raised his hand. He had one last request. He wanted to give the few coppers he had in his pocket to a sergeant who had treated him better than the rest. Well, and then he was shot dead. That was just a poor gypsy, but so fine a human being.

— Erich Fischer, Engineer, *Frankfort on the Main.*

COMRADES EVERYWHERE

THE HORSE

THIS was after the first offensive in 1918, La Fere to Noyon. I was a stretcher-bearer in the 16 A. K. Red Cross company, which was detailed to the 33d. Infantry Division. On March 24 my company was quartered in Guiscourt and established a dressing station there. We were allowed to spend the night in sleep, but next morning were ordered to advance and bring some wounded men, who lay in the Noyon Cathedral, back to the dressing station, about ten kilometers off. The wounded had been left lying in the crypt of the cathedral. We set off and on our way ran into heavy shell fire. As we entered Noyon a terrible sight met our eyes. The main street, which led to the Cathedral, was covered with dead bodies. The injured, mostly French, had been propped up against the walls of the houses, so that they would not be crushed by the passing cannon. None the less many dead soldiers lay mashed to pulp on the roadway. We were marching full speed through the streets, as the shells still kept crashing through the roofs, when suddenly we came on a badly wounded Frenchman sitting on the sidewalk and groaning in agony. He had a mattress from one of the houses under him, but had almost bled to death. I said to my sergeant: “Kalweit, I’ll take this Frenchman along, he can still be bandaged.” “Do so at your own risk, but come right away to the Cathedral.” So I dashed over to the poor devil who had a shot in his leg, which had fractured the bone. He told me that he had lain there since yesterday; other men had put bedding under him but not taken him along. When I hoisted him onto my back, he cried out, but he did manage to tell me he had a sand bag full of food under his bedding. So I took that along too. It was about a kilometer up to the Cathedral. I must say that the transporting was a terrible job, especially since shells kept striking the houses and the beams would come flying through the air. In the marketplace of Noyon we took a little rest. I saw a horse standing there whose lower jaw was shot off but still dangled by a shred of skin. The horse was tied up and stood in the middle of the shell fire, so I concluded that an artillery man had forsaken his horse. The Frenchman pointed at my revolver and then at the horse. I ran over and fired several bullets through the horse’s head until it was dead. Then I took my French man on my back again and carried him to the Cathedral, into the crypt. There lay two hundred serious cases already. A Jewish doctor was playing a passion hymn on the organ. I wanted to take leave of my French man but he held onto me firmly and unpacked his sandbag. It contained: a bottle of champagne, half a pound of butter, a loaf of white bread, chocolate, and many cigarettes. We divided the stock equitably and drank the champagne together. Then I saw to it that he was taken to the dressing station. He said a hundred times: “Merci, camarade, au revoir.”

— Heinrich Weindorf, Merchant, *Witten/Ruhr.*

THE MACHINE GUN

THE 2nd Battle of the Marne was in progress. Fresh troops from Russia and Roumania were storming the heights of the Chemin de Dames, and pushing towards the Marne between the Oisne and the Aisne. It was a specially hot day in the beginning of June. In front of us the English and French had intrenched themselves in the ground and we had to take this provisory position. There was hardly any preliminary bombardment; as we left our holes the enemy greeted us with a hail of bullets. We advanced by intermittent bounds, and worked our way nearer and nearer. The machine gun on my shoulder, I ran beside my gun commander towards the tenaciously held position.

Something struck my ear and I heard a two-fold shout. I was not wounded, a shot fired from very close had pierced the cooler of my machine gun and ricochetted on to the hip of my gun commander. I was still busy trying to support him back—for I too must get back and repair my gun—when the first prisoners, fear and horror in their bewildered expressions, hurried past us. A big Englishman stopped and took hold of the wounded man under the arm to assist me in my efforts. Unfortunately he walked with such difficulty that we had to lay him down and when we tried to lift him up again he screamed so loudly that we had to leave him.

The Englishman and I walked back in silence side by side. I felt completely exhausted and impatiently shifted the machine gun from one shoulder to the other. I was just about to throw it down, when the Tommy reached for the weapon, whose bullets only yesterday and this morning had perhaps been whistling past his ears, and took it from me. With a stammered apology he put it on his shoulder. And so two men, strangers to each other in being and in language, enemies by the force of a terrible fate, could be seen marching along side by side for hours even past staff-head quarters. A giant Englishman and a tiny German: the Englishman carrying his enemy's weapon of his own free will, and refusing to have it taken from him till the destination was reached. He did this to help a comrade from the other side, who must go back into all that purgatory again. We could not communicate with each other but our handshake when we parted was more eloquent than any words could have been.

— Wilhelm Hauptmann, Locksmith, *Ludwigshafen.*

LEAVE

AFTER long months in the trenches, on the Russian front near Poldury east of Brody, news reached us that a hundred men from the 10th Kopeljaeger Battalion were to go on leave. Were we enthusiastic? We leaped and danced, crazy with joy that we would be human beings once more. The last time on patrol duty: we called over to the Russian sentry that we were going to leave them for some weeks, and much to our delight they honored us with a serenade. After we were relieved, all the men on leave assembled at battalion headquarters to listen to a short address. They admonished us to be loyal to the flag, spoke of tradition, and forgot that our thoughts were already at home.

At last we were on the march to the railway station at Laploci. We traveled to Lemberg in high spirits, which were suddenly disturbed by a terrible scene. There were a great many railway tracks, upon which, in the burning July heat, poor starved Russian prisoners were working, under a guard. They saw us, came towards us, fell on their knees and in heart-rending tones begged for bread. Hunger was in their eyes, their voices, their bodies. Shaken to the core we gave all we had, despite our own hunger. But instantly guards with fixed bayonets drove the poor suffering men back to work before our very eyes.

A cry of indignation in many voices went up from our transport train. Out of the train we got, to help the enemy prisoners, to help the men who had knelt before men to beg for bread. And we insisted that they should be allowed to keep it.

— Johann Mracek, Railwayman, *Vienna.*

CIGARETTES

THIS happened between Vranje and Nisch. The hospital train slid quietly along the wide valley there and stopped towards noon at a little station. Since our beds were swung on steel springs near the windows, we could look out at our surroundings in perfect comfort. German

railroadmen, huge straw hats shading their deeply tanned faces, were in charge of the station, and on the tracks worked Serbian prisoners-of-war, who inspected our train with curiosity. They were not the emaciated, degenerate type of the Montenegrin prisoners, but broad husky men, and haughty even at this work of slaves. Their pickaxes struck the stones of the railway embankment with energy.

Suddenly one of the prisoners stepped up to our carriage and stood on the running-board. A rough, bearded face grinned in through our window. “Eh, Germanski, saprali—no, no—dobre Papirossi—heidi Berlin—” and with that a hand was thrust through our window, a hand such as one can hardly conceive of. A bear’s paw it was, horny, thick with muscles, grimy and hairy.

The Serb returned to his working gang. On my bed cover some cigarettes lay strewn. The gift of a Serbian prisoner-of-war to his enemy comrade-in-arms returning home.

— Leonhard Hora, *Breslau.*

SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION

THE labor company No. 945 of the prisoners-of-war in France was quartered, in the spring of 1919, in the barracks of a pioneer depot on the outskirts of Saponay near La Fère-en-Tardenois. At a distance of about thirty yards from the camp was an old ammunition depot, and some of the prisoners were employed here in destroying the old explosives, under the supervision of a French sergeant. Naturally the sergeant was bored. He killed time as best he could, and at last took it into his head to make a trail of gunpowder and set fire to it with his cigarette.

The next moment quite a big heap of powder caught fire and the flames began to spread. Then several heaps of infantry ammunition and some stray shells exploded. We were sitting in the barracks with some of the camp workers when the sound of the explosions caught our ears. We saw through the open door what was wrong; alarm was at once given and we withdrew to La Fère-en- Tardenois, two miles off. There was only time to seize our wooden shoes in our hands and make off; sick men with high temperatures ran round clad only in their shirts. One heap of ammunition after another went up in the air.

As we left the danger zone it occurred to us that five of our comrades might still be shut up in the prison. We informed the French guards who had fled with us, and they confirmed our suspicion. What could we do? Different suggestions were made and rejected; but help them we must. Finally two of us screwed up our courage and announced that we were willing to try our luck. It was a difficult task, but what was one man’s life against five? Keeping constantly under cover, we advanced along the ditch by the side of the road.

We were within two hundred yards of the camp when we heard behind us loud shouts in French. The commander of the camp, a French lieutenant, and some guards came after us. We had to stop because they called us, so we sprang into a hut by the roadside and waited for the Frenchmen. The lieutenant wanted to forbid our action; but we insisted, in our best gibberish. Finally we agreed that two of the Frenchmen and I were to go on. Each took a piece of corrugated iron as a protection and then we waited until the next big explosion should be over and rushed over at top speed to the camp. Now it was as though we were in hell; the air was full of flying splinters, half and even whole shells. A drum fire could not be worse. We ran to the guardhouse to get an axe and with it hammered down the doors and let out our five comrades.

What a fright they had had! They had put two guard- beds upright and over them put the whole floor covering, so as to be proof at least against splinters. The roof and walls were pierced all over with shell fragments. The lieutenant was glad to have all his men together again, and the two Frenchmen had shown that they too could be comrades.

— Albert Sülberg, Turner, *Hamm.*

LOVE IS TO BLAME

IN the 226th Prisoner-of-War Company, in which I was marked in oil paint with the number 445, the following took place. Our water-wagon driver, an English cavalry man, had fallen in love with a French girl and spent his free time with her. This nobody forbade him, but he often forgot to return to his company. A warning had no effect, several times he had to be fetched by an escort with fixed bayonets. The last time the captain had the guard fall in, the man was made to step out while the guard stood at attention. A threatening speech followed, during which the captain flourished his whip in the cavalry man's face, and threatened the men with severe punishment if they attempted to convey anything to eat or smoke to the arrested man. The English knew their stern master and we prisoners, too, had often felt his wrath: he was one who stuck to his word.

The man was led away, the cells were bell tents with barbed wire entanglements and a guard in front. For his daily walks the man was given his shoes, then they were taken away from him again, all this under fixed bayonets. Since I as camp carpenter was always around the camp I saw him every day; he lost weight visibly. He received only water and a few biscuits. I decided to smuggle something to him, despite the warning of our sergeant Kawa and No. 9. Behind the cells lay our wood fuel. I took some biscuits, cigarettes, matches and a tinder box, wrapped them up in gray paper and walked over to the wood pile with a saw. Our sergeant held the guard in converse, I threw the package onto the tent, it rolled off—five fingers grabbed out from under the tent—it had worked. After that I did it often.

Weeks later came the sentence, how much I don't know. He was led off; but asked to talk to 445. It was permitted. I understood every word although I cannot write English. He just said "I thank you, I shall never forget you." He was led off; I never saw him again.

— Robert Jensen, Carpenter, *Singen.*

IN VAIN

IN the early morning of July 20, 1915, we of the 121st Infantry Regiment had begun the attack on the Narew fortress. In extended order the firing line climbed the gradual, mile-wide slope of the hill, toward the fort. The feeble hostile forces we met were after some skirmishing, either captured or repelled. Halfway up, however, we came up against unexpectedly strong resistance from the enemy. Wild confusion reigned, our formations slackened and fused. The Russians, with their superior forces and more advantageous position put an end to our attack. My corps had advanced furthest, up to about sixty or eighty yards from the Russian trenches with their serried ranks of men. We had no connections either to right or left. Each one of us, twenty-five or thirty men, lying flat on the ground, scooped out some kind of shelter. The light sandy earth simplified our task.

Had the counterattack begun at that moment we would have been done for. My nerves were strung to the breaking point. Suddenly I heard a cry behind me. Back of my neighbor, lance-corporal Gotz, lay a Russian prisoner in a pouch, who had just been shot in the ankle by his

own countrymen. It was a ricochet shot and must have been exceedingly painful because the entire bone was shattered. As I looked back at the man he signaled with a backward movement of his head. I took it that he wanted to go back and asked my permission, meaning that I should not shoot at him. He did make two or three efforts to crawl away, but the pain of his injured foot must have been too great. Groaning with pain he lay there while the bullets of his own friends whistled around him.

Further reënforcements joined the Russians. We noticed how their trenches kept filling up. To run back, in the midst of this firing, would have meant certain death: so we continued to shoot, to shoot wildly. The wounded Russian behind us groaned, cried and implored our help, but which of us, now that the fighting was at its height, could take care of the poor devil? A Russian machine gun sent a sheaf of bullets whistling shrilly over our heads and at a short distance behind the wounded man the steel hail buried itself in the earth. It was a desperate situation. Then suddenly lance corporal Gotz scrambled out of his firing nest and crawled back to the wounded Russian. He drew his knife from the leg of his boot and cut open the wounded man's boot; took out his first aid packet and pressing himself flat on the ground, bandaged as best he could under the circumstances, the frightful wound of the enemy soldier. Finally he slipped a sock or some thing of the kind over the injured foot. Heaven knows how he suddenly had the thing ready. I think the wounded man must have had it in his hand. I then saw how the Russian fumbled in his coat, held a bundle of rubles in his hand, and offered them to the German Samaritan. But he waved them off, gave a bound, and was back in his earth hole beside me.

The Russian however started to crawl. He crawled back, back to captivity or to safety, but away at least from the menace of death. He crawled five yards, ten. I looked back at him, saw him suddenly give a scarcely perceptible convulsion and then lie still—forever. A second Russian bullet had struck him and killed him right off.

The good deed of lance corporal Gotz was in vain. But was it in vain?

— R. Stahl, Merchant, *Heilbronn.*

SHOES IN THE DESERT

AFTER the collapse of our front in Palestine, a German company was forced into combat with the pursuing Australian troops in order to protect the retreat. This took place before the gates of Damascus, and some Australian prisoners were taken. A German, whose shoes had come apart during the marches of the past days (the sole was coming off), wanted to change his worn-out shoes for the good ones of a prisoner. The company commander forbade this, with the remark that such an attitude towards prisoners was not chivalrous.

The very next day the Germans fell into the hands of the English. As they marched towards the prison camp the man with the damaged shoes got into a place surrounded by thistles. Every step he took must have hurt him. One of the English guards saw this, walked over to him, took the man on his back and carried him pick-a-back out of the thistle patches.

— Leopold Zuntz, Merchant, *Frankfort on the Main.*

FEASTING IN THE DUGOUT

ON the 2nd of September 1916 I and two of my comrades were taken prisoner, in the Carpathians, by the Russians. Our company, of the 3d "Jaegers," had been ordered to protect

the retreat of the regiment. As the company assembled before departure, round midnight amidst streaming rain, one of the sentries was suddenly noticed to be missing. Although the Russians were just about to advance and threatened to surround us, my platoon commander, who could not bear me because I always fearlessly took the part of the men, gave me the absurd order to seek and bring back the lost sentry. The sentry was of course not to be found, he had either been taken or killed, or he had made off in time.

We groped about, however, in the darkness and fog, on the slippery, rain-soaked ground, and found ourselves at last behind the Russian lines, which were advancing rapidly. Not to fall into the hands of the enemy we sought shelter in an abandoned artillery dugout as the Russian troops marched by. A Bucovinian peasant had however noticed us and betrayed our place of hiding to the Russians, who directed a fierce machine gun fire at the ruined dugout. Strange to say we remained unscathed in spite of the murderous shooting. As no escape was possible and resistance would have meant certain death, we surrendered to the enormously superior forces that were besieging our little “fortress.”

They did not slay us as we expected, although several Russian soldiers fumbled furiously with their bayonets, but we were driven forward with the butts of their guns. At last we were handed over to two Cossacks to be transported. Our two companions turned out to be better than their reputation; they brought us without maltreatment to the Russian artillery position, where we were handed over to the officer on duty. The Russian officer greeted us quite kindly in somewhat ungrammatical German and invited us to take a bite in his dugout. We were very surprised at this reception, but suspected that this cordiality was only assumed so that he could cross-question us more easily later about the position of the German troops. The Russian however avoided all such topics completely and chatted with us about Germany, which he had evidently gotten to know on his travels. Then the orderly brought in lunch which consisted of very tastily prepared stuffed cabbage. It was like a feast in time of deepest peace, and only the distant rumble of the guns reminded us of the fearful present. Before the Russian officer handed us over to the men, who were to transport us further, he sympathetically inquired of each of us the address of his relatives, so that he might inform them of our captivity. He explained to us that he would send these addresses to his parents who lived in Petrograd, and that they would get in touch with our relatives through the Red Cross. “Then your dear ones will not have such prolonged fear and anxiety, for nothing is more terrible than the report ‘missing’.”

We parted from this humane “enemy” with deep gratitude in our hearts. The Russian soldiers took us into their midst, handed us each an enormous round loaf of black bread that we could scarcely carry, and after a few hours of rest the march set out in the direction of Czernowitz.

In 1918 when I had returned home from captivity and was one day turning over some documents of the war, I came across the following postcard from Russia: “Your son Waldo Bahmann was taken prisoner in the Carpathians on the 10th of August 1916. He is in Russia, and is well, in good health.” This date was not quite correct even according to the old-fashioned Russian calendar, but that was of no importance. On the card there was a pencil note in my mother’s hand: Received December 6, 1916. As the Red Cross only occupied itself with us much later, this information can have reached my parents only through the kind offices of the Russian officer’s parents. Among the brutes that war begot there were also a few kind souls.

— Waldo Bahmann, Merchant, *Stutzerbach, Thuringia.*

AN UNHEROIC STORY

THE third company of the 65 Infantry Regiment in which I served as a reservist, was thrown in for the second time on the Somme. Now the third platoon was to make a charge on October 5, 1916 at 7:15 in the morning, in order to straighten up the front line. The charge was made, but most of the men fell. The others dashed back. The French were scouring the whole district with machine gun fire.

The next night I all at once heard one of my comrades, a man from Hunsrück, calling again and again: “What are you doing there?” I thought, what is he calling for? So I looked carefully across the landscape. Then I saw in front of me a man stumbling around, about twenty or thirty yards off. Then I perceived that the Hunsrück man meant this man who was coming towards me over the tract of land. Whether the man had noticed me, I don’t know. All at once he shouted “Pardon, monsieur.” I called “Come on, comrade,” went a few steps towards him and took him into my shell hole with me. I called the Herr Lieutenant, who had the third platoon, that I had taken a Frenchman prisoner. I brought him to the prisoner.

When the prisoner saw the lieutenant he said: “Sergeant Major, blessé.” The Herr Lieutenant asked in French where he was wounded. The Frenchman pointed to the upper part of his right leg. The lieutenant also asked him how old he was and from what part of France. The Frenchman said he was nineteen and he came from the border between France and Spain. He began all at once to moan. “Sergeant Major, toulo” (de 1’eau). Herr Lieutenant asked me, “Have you water?” I said no. For three days past we had not had a drop of water. The water wagons could not get to us and stayed away. But I had my water bottle full of whisky. You see I drank no whisky in the front lines so I passed the canteen to the Frenchman. The latter would have drunk the whole canteen if the lieutenant had not taken it away from him. I personally had my fun seeing the prisoner drinking like that.

Now the Herr Lieutenant said to me, “Bring the prisoner to the first platoon,” which lay forty or fifty yards back of us, in reserve. “There someone will bring the Frenchman to the battalion staff.” The prisoner and I grasped each other by the arm. I supported him, and so the two of us, who had been shooting at each other before, walked amicably off, above ground, since there was no communication trench to the first platoon, that is to the medical officer. The latter bandaged him and I went back to sentry duty in my shell hole. The second night the Herr Lieutenant sent me over again to the first platoon. The M. O. was to come as we had another serious casualty. There was my Frenchman sitting amicably with my comrades. It seemed to me my comrades and the Frenchman were boozed. I informed the lieutenant that the Frenchman was still there. I was given orders that the Frenchman was to be sent back without fail. I tapped the Frenchman friendly-like on the shoulder and said: “Partie Allemagne.” He said: “Non non, Kamerad, Kamerad!” and made a circular movement with his hands. He wanted to stay there.

— H. F., Baker.

PIEFKE IS DEAD

TELEPHONE CALL: “Hello, are you there—Hannes?” I answered: “Mattes—what’s the matter?” “Piefke is dead.” “Piefke?” “Yes, Piefke, my—your Piefke.” The listener sank down. Piefke—our war dog, the dog of a thousand heroic deeds. “Mattes,” I cried into the telephone,

“you are lying. Piefke can’t die—never—do you hear me. That just can’t happen.” Then I heard the sound of sobbing. I hung up. It must be true, or Mattes wouldn’t be crying.

I lean my head on my hands. Mechanically I begin reckoning!—Found 1914 when two months old, today, almost fifteen years after the war, still with us. Fifteen years—just nothing, nothing at all, no time to compensate for all the endurances of a little dog’s spirit, with a pioneer battalion in the hectic struggles on the Somme, in the Champagne, at the Kemmel, near Verdun.

Yes, Verdun: that was your Golden Age, that was where you won glory and immortality. Verdun, at a height of 304 meters, the valley of the Shadow of Death, through which you ran a hundred times carrying food, reports, mail—yes, mail from home, anxious letters from the girl, from mother. You brought them safely through the barrage, through flames and death, you could be relied on, you would certainly come back, even though one hundred comrades fell.

You somehow managed, didn’t you, Piefke, to tell beforehand where the shell would strike and so avoid it. A hundred times you did that. You were so capable, so endlessly capable. “Piefke, off!” Not a quiver, no delay, out into the hell, through the hell, back, out again—and yet again—again—many times it had to be. We began to demand it of you, because you were so willing. When your two boys were resting, you must, you had to, go out into the surging hellfire—we ordered you—a pat on your rough fur, and you dashed off. You had become a soldier, Piefke, an able, dutiful, self sacrificing soldier: and you were so grateful to be with us, in spite of distress, death, misery; in spite of this everlasting “be prepared.”

You gained strength with your increasing duties. That was the miracle, your heroism never wearied. You were always gay, always ready for play. Mattes was your greatest friend. I was not jealous, Piefke, no indeed. Men too have only one person for whom they live entirely, who means everything to them. Mattes could be stern with you too, you were young then and had to be trained. Yes, he trained you because he was a stern master. And I wasn’t. That’s why Mattes was your choice. How wise of you! One thing I took care of: of proper recognition for you from the superior officers. That had to be.

Eight pioneers were digging a tunnel, which was to undermine a tunnel of the enemy. Weeks of labor. Mattes was among them, and you did not budge from his side. You complicated Mattes’ labor, because you were always near him. That was all right, where you were you had a right to be. You did not move an inch, make a sound, for Mattes had ordered it so; the digging was of great importance, because the French tunnel must be undermined. You knew about it.

Then all of a sudden one night you raised your head, pricked your ears, leaped up suddenly tense with excitement, tore at Mattes’ only pair of army trousers, tore back the bewildered man. As Mattes tried to ward you off you grew angry at his foolhardiness. Then you scraped wildly with your paws, with bloodshot eyes that looked in terror at Mattes—but you never barked.

Then it dawned on your friend in a flash of perception. In desperate haste he crawled back to the exit, spoke a few hasty words to his comrades, a listening apparatus was brought into the hole, ears were strained, listening, sure enough the French had undermined us, the greatest possible danger! … All out, clear the infantry dug-outs. Just in time—after two hours a huge piece of earth flew up in the air. A hundred people were saved: that was Piefke’s doing.

And then the General made your acquaintance. You probably didn't even know that the gentleman was a general, for you looked only at Mattes. But I was proud of you when your name was mentioned in the regiment bulletin.

Then came your darkest hour. Mattes was wounded and you had to stay behind. I took care of you, consoled you, knowing how sad you must be. You were no longer the dear, joyous comrade. Nothing would help. All my love was shivered against the rock of your grief.

After weeks a letter came from Mattes in Cologne. He was in a hospital there and ardent longing for Piefke was expressed in every line. I managed to get leave for you and for myself. Off we went. Then something seemed to well up in your being, unrestrained joy. On the way you looked at me incessantly, I had to tell you about Mattes and you nestled gratefully against me.

You made me happy in my love. Soon a door opened, your little body shot into the ward, stood suspended for a moment, a leap and you were crouching on a bed in which lay Mattes, bandaged beyond recognition. You did not bark, a subdued quavering whine gave vent to your long yearning.

A sobbing breath sounded through the ward where many comrades witnessed this scene. I stood aside and waited till Mattes called me.

That was Piefke, our hero, comrade, friend, our dog. Our most precious memory of an existence which had bound us together through the common lot of fighting, want, death, sacrifice and joy, in which this little creature had participated to the full.

I sprang up. Breathing with difficulty I arrived at Mattes'. Yes, Piefke was dead. He lay on a cushion, he rested as in life. We carried him out to the mountain ruin of Krakau. There, in a pretty garden he lies buried, under an old linden tree.

— Hans Schwaab, Wine Merchant, *Krefeld.*

WAR CHILDREN

THE LITTLEST CASUALTY

IT was during the offensive of March 1918. On the morning of the 21st, after a devastating attack of artillery we advanced along the stretch of land between St. Quentin, Hamm, and Noyen. Our advance was so unexpected that the civilian population, which still occupied their homes, directly behind the normal front lines, were barely able to escape. At the summit of the road between Hamm and Guiscourt we came suddenly under distant range artillery fire. At the end of the already half-ruined village the road made a sharp bend to the right, and this point the French were subjecting to deliberate fire, a shot striking it every three or four minutes. Our men were distributed in even numbers over the different ammunition wagons and guns. I and a comrade were allowed to hang on by the thin chain of a light ammunition wagon. And off we went; drawn by eight, ten, even twelve horses, the cannon and wagons charged round the dangerous corner, on the exact second after each dangerous explosion.

In our carriage were “Blue-cross” gas grenades. A friendly token from the enemy landing in the middle of this choice collection, would have meant a dubious treat for us. Dubious also was the thin wagon chain on which we hung, on the mad dash round this hellfire corner. The section of the road where the shells exploded was one big muddy hole. At breakneck speed we rattled over it and without diminishing our speed dashed along a ravine beyond. To the right was a rocky slope covered with a thin layer of earth, and at the side of the road lay the dead, French, German, and civilian, men, women and children, remains of household utensils, a doll: all the signs of panic-stricken flight.

My comrade, a reservist, a man of about forty, suddenly disappeared from my side, and I saw him by the side of the road, kneeling beside the corpse of a woman. Almost instinctively I too let go. I had barely time to get out of the way of the next ammunition wagon as it charged past, but the next minute I was kneeling by my comrade. He held in his arms a little girl of about three, who had been clinging to her dead mother. She was alive and whimpering softly. On one of the little legs and on the breast were bloodstains. We assured ourselves in an instant that the little creature, although wounded, could still be saved, if she could only be got out of this hell and into the hands of a doctor.

“Damn it, what a mess!” my comrade muttered between clenched teeth. And suddenly he addressed me furiously “One thing I can tell you, I’m going to get this little kid here back to a hospital or somewhere even if I lose my battery and the old man shoots me for desertion.”

“Sure” I answered, “but of course we have to get back through that damned hole back there”—and I pointed to the bend of the road which we had just passed. At that very moment another shell buried itself in the spot, the earth heaved, and spouted up like a fountain.

My comrade, the child in his arms, and I with him, rushed back. Again we had good luck. We asked our way to a hospital, but it took us a good hour before we found a dressing station. The ambulancier, a man of forty, caked with mud, stared at us as at a Fata Morgana. Then carefully he took the little thing, still whimpering, and gave her some tea from the canteen. So tenderly did he treat the child. The whole dugout, before a bedlam of human misery, grew quiet and so anxious for the welfare of this littlest casualty that we left with our minds at rest.

On we went again to find our battery. Tears of impotent rage still fell from the eyes of my comrade, and curse upon curse from his blanched lips. We reached our company and received a mighty bawling out. We did not care, did not attempt to defend ourselves; nothing could dull the image of the little French child in our mind's eye. Would she pull through? Today, if she is still alive, she must already have left school. She has forgotten the little episode by which she was snatched from the clutches of death.

— Fritz Muller, *Frankfort on the Main.*

TIN SOLDIERS

IT was Christmas Eve 1919. Once again the greatest happiness of the whole year had invaded our boyish hearts. Soldiers, soldiers and cannon, yes real cannon from which you could shoot peas, for these we three boys had been longing the whole year. We wanted in fact to make war on the French and English and all these scoundrels. For they must be scoundrels, according to all we had been told about them at school. Yes, and how lustily we had sung, along with the soldiers, through all those years of war "Siegreich woll'n wir Frankreich schlagen" and "Der Kitchener, der Kitch ener, das war ein grosser Schuft!"

Yes, if only Santa Claus would bring us soldiers this year, and cannon and perhaps a few dugouts. And in fact, he had brought us soldiers, and cannon, the very kind that have the fire and gunpowder smoke painted on at the mouth. Now we could really play war, now we would shoot down all the French. Of course father said the war with the French was over, and that in fact they were now going to occupy our land; they might be here any day now. But that made no difference, we were real war children, who till now through all our childhood had heard nothing but war!

How often had we rung "Victory" in the little neighboring church. When another great victory had been announced, we boys were ready waiting in the street outside the parsonage, till the window opened above us and the priest leaned out and called down: "Children, a victory!" How we rushed into the church and flung ourselves on the bell-rope. Yes, we were going to carry on with the war, and if the real French were coming, we would give them a great scare with our cannon!

Hardly had we swallowed our supper before we were at it, setting up our guns and regiments on the big round table…. And we were just in the midst of the hurly-burly of battle, when our door-bell was rung shrilly from without. Surprised as to who might be visiting us on Christmas Eve, Mother went out to see who it was. She came back at once into the room, pale as a ghost, and could only get out the one word "Frenchmen!" A feeling of oppression and alarm descended suddenly on our exuberant spirits. Now real Frenchmen had forced a way into our house.

Father went out without speaking a word. We crowded inquisitively after him to the door of the room, which we opened a crack so that a ray of light from the room fell in the hall without. There were two Frenchmen outside, Mother had said. In her fright she had slammed the door in their faces. Meanwhile there was no movement, all remained still. We thought, of course they will knock the door in with the butts of their guns, because Mother would not let them in. This, you see, was our idea of the French.

Father now opened the hall door, and the ray of light fell on two French soldiers, wrapped in long over coats and laden with packs. Strange, their faces did not look at all fierce, they had

not even any pointed black beards or malignant eyes. No, their expression was friendly, even a little anxiously expectant; they looked like two weary soldiers coming home. One of them even began speaking now, before Father could say anything: “Oh, nix enemy, very friends!” said he in warm tones.

How; was that a Frenchman? So he wanted to be friends, very friends? Our boyish minds worked over it. And the spell was now broken. They wanted “quarters”: Father led them up the stairs into the room above.

On the table stood the cannon, with which we were going to shoot down the French. And now a real Frenchman had come who said “Friends, much friends!” Before long we heard firm steps on the stairs and beneath Father’s voice we could distinguish sounds of broken German. What was that? Father would never bring the two soldiers into our living room? Were these two Frenchmen not enemies? What followed was incomprehensible to our childishly patriotic hearts: the door opened and Father brought into our room two Frenchmen!

On the table were standing our German and French regiments and our cannon, in positions of assembly. The lighted Christmas tree was shedding a festive shimmer on the white-covered table in the corner. We gazed speechless into the faces of the Frenchmen: tears, genuine tears were in their eyes. They approached the warm stove uncertainly, and stood there touched with gratitude and wistfully remembering their own families in the remote homeland. We stood motionless and gazed into their eyes. We saw the tears, we saw the homesickness—the eyes of these alien soldiers, who stood, the picture of peace, indeed a symbol of peace despite their soldiers’ uniforms—there by the stove and looked at the candle-light of the Christmas tree.

Then a great revelation took place in our young minds, the realization of the insanity of our education up till then! What was this war? The greatest possible mishap! And in silence we went over to the table and packed up our soldiers and cannon in their big box.

— Georg Muller, University Assistant, *Darmstadt.*

THE POLISH CHILD

THAT time, at the end of 1915, rises before me. It was a severe winter. We were somewhere in Poland, near the front, but there was practically no fighting. Hibernating so to speak. We were billeted in W., one of those typical Polish Panje villages near Smorgon. The population had been concentrated into a few huts to make room for us.

In wretched rooms ten to twenty people of every age and sex were crowded together, numb and apathetic. On the stamped mud floor, on wooden bedsteads, above the built-out fire-place, they sat, everything lit by the eerie light of pine torches stuck in the walls.

“Oh no, the poor child,” our comrade Dores suddenly cried. On the floor, in the straw, lay a little girl of about four, sleeping. She had no blanket over her, was barefoot and clad in rags.

Our rough hearts were touched with pity. All the more when we learned that the poor creature had no parents and was dependent on the favor or disfavor of an “aunt” who did not make a very trustworthy impression. After a short conference Dores declared the little one to be “annexed” by us, which the aunt at once agreed to.

We brought the child to our quarters and made a fine bedstead with tent canvas and poles. This was upholstered with eiderdowns as a mattress and for covers the same thing, which of

course we had commandeered. Matthes, who had five children himself at home, played the part of the solicitous mother, and gave the little Polish child a thorough cleaning-up: its wretched garments were also washed thoroughly. We observed, to our gratification, that the little one, who at first had been rather afraid, gained confidence after this necessary procedure. And after our protegee lay comfortably on the soft cushions, we stood with due solemnity about her bed and when the dark childish eyes looked at us in gratitude, everyone of us thought of his dear ones at home.

Our days of boredom were over. With eagerness we occupied ourselves as German teachers, to teach our adopted child at least enough to allow us to communicate with each other after a fashion. Of course only our beloved Colonge dialect was employed for this purpose. In a few weeks we could understand one another fairly well on all subjects, and it was touching to hear our darling calling our names with her soft gutturals: “Schang, Dores, Louis or Tünn.” We grew fonder and fonder of the child and she too got thoroughly used to us. If the aunt came to see her any time, the little one pressed against us in fear, lest she were forced to go.

Then several of us were given leave for the first time. “Everyone must bring something back for the child,” was Dores’ order. And so it was. That was a ceremony for us and the little one, when we dressed her up all new from head to foot. Even a fur cap and muff were not lacking; only it was difficult for her to walk in shoes as she had never worn any. “The child must feel in Paradise” said Schang. I think he was right.

What more is there to tell? Everything must come to an end. And so with our idyll. Epiphany 1916 brought the verdict. Departure: off to the hellfires of Verdun. Early in the morning packing and strapping on started. Our little one sat in the room on a window-seat and played with a toy. We had decided to inform the aunt and then to vanish quietly, so as not to have to witness the separation pangs of our darling. But we had not figured on the fine instincts of the child. She watched our preparations with tears in her eyes, became restless and finally posted herself beside us in the room. She must have guessed that something out of the ordinary was in progress and that we might go away. What was going on at that moment in the poor child’s head?

Of a secret disappearance there was no more chance. We tried to console the child, to assure her of our early return. In vain. As we were about to leave the house, the little girl gathered a few toys quickly together and clasping them in her arms ran after us crying loudly, “Dores, Schang, Louis.” She fell down on the slippery ice, picked herself up again, again running and crying loudly. It was heart-rending, we dared not turn round.

The aunt arrived, took the violently struggling child in her arms and went off. For a long time we heard the cries: “Schang … Dores …” And tears rolled down the cheeks of the fat corporal from Gladbach. We gritted our teeth and thought: this is war. We never saw our Polish child again.

— Wilhelm Noven, Merchant, *Cologne.*

FORBIDDEN FRIENDSHIP

I SHOULD like to tell you a little incident of my youth, during the war, when I was in a little Thuringian village. I was then seven or eight years old and was sent for a change to the country, to a little peasant family. The farmer himself was at the front, the young wife and the

old parents remained in charge of their small farm. They had a French prisoner to help them in the fields, whom they called Marso (Marcel?) as far as I remember.

He could not speak a single word of German. One day we drove in two carts, Marso, Grandfather and I, to the forest to get wood. When we arrived at the clearing Marso had his cart full in no time. Grandfather, who found it difficult to load on the big logs of wood, had scarcely half filled his. When Marso had finished, he turned to Grandfather and slapped him on the shoulder so that the shock made him drop his log. Marso however only laughed and began to load the other cart with great speed. When Grandfather tried to take up another log Marso took it from his hands again, led him to the other side and made him lean against a tree from where he could supervise Marso. When the second cart was full we started for home. We had been driving only a few minutes when it began to rain. The rain fell so heavily that we were soon soaked through. Marso saw that I was shivering in the rain; he took off his coat and put it round me. Then he lifted me onto the heavy-laden cart; but he walked beside the cart in his shirt sleeves. When we got home he lifted me down and brought me to the kitchen. There he put me on a chair and dried me off. Only then did he put on his old coat and unyoke the cows.

Next morning I received a letter from my mother which also contained some money. The money was to pay for some butter I had sent home and I was to give the money to the young farmer's wife. When I went to give it to her, Marso was standing nearby. She would not take it from me however, and said that I should subscribe to the War Loan when I got back to school. Marso looked at me with thoughtful eyes, but he did not understand and went on chewing a straw. But I watched Marso and felt that something was lacking as he was very depressed all morning. Towards noon it occurred to me that I must do something to give Marso a little treat, since he had been so nice to me yesterday. I ran to the store and bought him five cigarettes. When I got home he was just standing in the door of the house. I gave him the cigarettes. This moment, when I gave him the cigarettes, I shall never forget all my life, for there were tears in Marso's eyes.

But as ill luck would have it the young farmer woman appeared at that moment, saw, and asked me why I had bought the cigarettes for Marso. Whereupon I told her how nice Marso had been to me yesterday and that that was why I had got the cigarettes for him. She scolded me however and said our German soldiers at the front had nothing to smoke either and it would have been more appropriate if I had sent the cigarettes in a letter to my father, who was also at the front. She gave me back the money for the cigarettes. Marso, who was standing by, might not understand a word, but he could not help but feel what the farmer's wife had said to me. From then on the farmer's wife forbade me to be near him any more.

At last the day came when I had to take leave of the farm. It was a rainy day again. As I packed my things Marso stood in the doorway and looked on sadly; the farmer woman went out for a moment with a dish of fodder to feed the chickens. This moment Marso seized, plunged into his pocket and produced a big cake of butter and tucked it away among my things. Then he turned quickly and groped in the corner where the kindling lay, drew out an Army Postal Service package containing ten eggs and handed me these also.

Then he saw me to the station, for he had to carry my suitcase. The station lay just at the end of the street. As we stood before the station and Marso was about to give me the suitcase he started to cry. I felt in my pocket and tried to give him the money I had left over. But he pushed it away. Making a quick resolution, I went to the station restaurant, bought a big packet of cigarettes and gave it to him. At this moment the train was already entering the station. I

pressed his hand quickly again, hurried through the barrier and boarded the train. I had hardly sat down and looked out when the train started. Marso stood by the barrier and waved a handkerchief until we could no longer see each other. But often even now I think of this true friendship.

Up to this day I have not told this little secret to any member of my family, for my parents had brought me up strictly, and if I had recounted this little experience then I should have got a good licking. My mother asked me if I had given the money to the young farmer's wife to which I promptly replied with a firm "Yes."

— Willy Knof, Waiter, *Frankfort on the Main.*

ANOTHER GOOD ENEMY

WHEN I was eight or nine years old, my mother used to take me along on forbidden hoarding expeditions into the country. I always looked forward to these Sundays which passed all too quickly in childish games with chickens, cows, and on dunghills. Sometimes I would get dirty in the cobwebbed stable and smell of manure. The farmers' wives laughed good naturedly and my mother scolded me and cleaned me up.

We had to be very careful in bringing back the supplies. In a little army-gray bag, made from the remnants of soldiers coats, which my mother sometimes sewed, was stuck a tin milk-can. This disguise seems ridiculous to me today, and unnecessary, for its contents were obvious to anyone who wanted to look. She also often had a shoe-box tucked under her arm, wrapped in brown paper, in which eggs lay awaiting their consumption, each carefully wrapped in newspaper containing news of victory.

If a district police was standing by the station mother took me firmly by the hand and led me off quickly to the station of a neighboring village. Sometimes, of course, all the stations were occupied by police or militia. Then only those could get past the barrier who were practiced in lies and evasions.

Ordinarily, however, the local policeman stood at the station. I no longer remember whether he was large or small, fat or thin, his features I have also forgotten. Only two things have survived the years: his long saber in its shining black sheath, which I coveted more than butter, eggs or milk and which I wanted just once to be allowed to wear. I worshiped this saber as others might an idol. But my mother showed no understanding at all for my enthusiasm.

And the other memory which slumbers inextinguishably in me is the fact that the policeman with the beautiful long saber—saw nothing. Contrary to his orders, to report the Sunday hoarding expeditions and to confiscate the sacks of potatoes, boxes of eggs and cans of milk—he saw Nothing. He gazed vacantly into the distance from whence the faint light of our overcrowded local "train" would crawl in, or he kept up a bored conversation with the red-capped stationmaster.

But he saw well enough—the fallen-in, bony faces of the women whose little backs were bent under the weight of their hard-begged burdens; he saw the pale faces of the town children and the trembling veined hands of the old men. He saw those whom he must regard as "enemies" because the law willed it. And he became their friend, by disregarding that law.

— A. Kehr, Bank Clerk, *Preungesheim.*

THE CHILD

IN summer 1917 I was a lance-corporal in the 12th Company of the 28th Infantry Reserve at the front near Hulluch (Lens). Silently—gray figures in a gray world —we used to march towards the village of Provin, where we would be allowed a few days of eating, sleeping, and relaxation, before returning to the front lines, which still thundered behind us and lit up the whole sky like a veritable hell-fire.

So once more I entered that little house, the last insecure possession of Madame Vasseur; looked forward once more to feeling for a short time something like family and home life, eager for the gay laughter of little Palmyre again and to roll about like a child with the merry little five-year-old, René. But this morning Madame greeted me with a sinister, grief-laden look, and even on the round, girlish face of Palmyre there lay a dark shadow. My first idea was that something had happened to the father of the family, the fiddler Emile Vasseur, who in happier days went from village to village with his fiddle, but was now somewhere in the firing line "on the other side." But when I asked, Mama Vasseur told me with tears, of the terrible misfortune that had befallen poor little René.

He had found, God knows where, the percussion cap of a hand grenade and had struck the brightly shining object with a stone, until it suddenly exploded and practically tore off his little left hand altogether. An army surgeon bandaged the wound and at present René was, and had been for some days, in a French hospital in Lille. So the mother and sister of the poor little thing stayed sadly at home, for, on account of the traffic restrictions imposed by German military authorities, they were not allowed to leave the village. So they could not visit the little sufferer, and also received no news of his progress.

I was very upset over this accident, which I could do nothing about. In the few days that we had been together I had grown very fond of the child. I realized for the first time that really his carefree, unselfconscious existence, and all the important trifles which filled his long, childish day, served me as a beautiful escape from this world of killing which had dulled more and more my sensibilities and even my very sense of disenchantment. So when the days of relaxation had passed in unrelieved gloom, the thought of little René haunted me even at the front, in the trenches outside Hulluch. I thought and brooded in my dugout, whenever the Tommies gave me the chance, and one night I made a resolution to drive over from Provin to Lille during the next rest period, and look up my little friend.

A week later, when I entered Mama Vasseur's little house, and told her that one of my dearest friends would never return from the firing lines, the woman, usually so warmhearted, looked at me once only with great, far-off eyes, in silence. She gave only a faint, scarcely perceptible nod. But when I mentioned my plan to visit Lille, she suddenly awakened from her fearful numbness and with a stammered word of thanks, the happy creature began at once to prepare everything she had planned a thousand times for her child, in hours of despair. In no time a paper bag with waffles, a little package of sugar and some small toys were all carefully tied up and ready—the only offerings her poverty could make. Then with the blessing of the weeping woman, I departed for Lille. There, on my own account I bought a few apples and a picture book, and soon I was walking by the side of a Sister through the sequestered wards of the hospital which had taken in the unfortunate little invalid.

My eyes glided from one poor, small bed to another in the spacious children's ward, full of pale or wax-yellow faces, in search of Rene and wondering if he would recognize me—when, suddenly, a triumphant shriek broke the silence: "Willy!!"

And there, his little arms outspread, his face glowing, the mouth wide open in doubt whether to laugh or cry, stood René upright in his bed, as though about to leap after his shriek into space. And before I, my throat choked by the indescribable effect of this cry, could get a word out, the little boy was hanging on my neck and was crying without restraint. Many a time I have been less moved by the terrible wounds received by my comrades than I was by the combined rejoicing and complaining of this child, in whom everything that timidity and reticence had stopped up, now flowed forth.

Without any need of consolation René became calm again and listened in silence but with insatiable eyes, to his big friend, who told him about his mother. And when finally I had to go —cakes and toys Rend hardly looked at—the little one, strangely quiet and uncomplaining, followed me with his eyes as long as he could.

I never saw him again, never him nor his mother nor Palmyre. When next we left Hulluch it was to march past the sleeping house of Mme. Vasseur into the Flanders battle.

— Dr. Wilhelm Martin Esser, *Cologne*.

A BOY OF NINE WRITES

THIS is a story of the World War—twelve years ago there was the World War and then for four years people shot each other's legs, arms, and heads off. But once, in Russia, some good people got together. One Russian shouted across to the Germans "Hi, comrade, cigar? cigarette?" and then the German shouted back "Bread? white bread? brown bread?" And then the Russian soldier came over and brought a loaf of bread and the Germans gave him cigarettes in exchange. But when the Captain heard of it they had to go on shooting at the Russians with cannons and the friendship was over.

— Contributed by Mr. Ammer, Headmaster, *Fluorn, Wurttemberg*.

FAIR PLAY

DEFENSELESS

IN April 1918 we were flying over Bapaume at a height of about 7500 ft. to protect our observation plane which was photographing the enemy artillery and reserve positions. We kept about 700 feet above the plane entrusted to our care. Over us were some cumulous clouds which are frequently used as cover by fighting planes and it was advisable to keep a sharp lookout at these dangerous hiding places. Such an attack, from a cloud, could come very suddenly and incendiary bullets would be fired from both sides. Many airplanes had already crashed down in flames before our eyes. We were already fairly far West, the front lay far behind us, and all around the shells of the enemy aircraft guns were exploding. We climbed higher.

There—out of the mountain of cloud in front of us—a red, white and blue giant butterfly appeared, dipped down and plainly visible in the clear air could be seen the spray of the machine gun fire and the delicate traceries of smoke left by the incendiary bullets. They are firing to the left. My gun tapped out, the stream was well aimed, the enemy made a turn, came lower and then remained at the same height as we. I had a bad firing position, my right wing hid the Englishman, who now attacked from the right. I ordered the pilot to make a left turn in order to get a better view of the enemy. Then two, three shots and my gun jammed.

Now the Tommy was after us, and chased us before him. As soon as we dared to make a turn the shots rattled densely past us. The jam was fixed, the enemy climbed a bit higher. My firing position was good and my machine-gun tapped away without interruption, but now the enemy also began to fire again. His elevation was a trifle too high. I had another jam, could not repair it, the breech stuck, was as though glued.

The Englishman described an elegant curve and flew parallel with us, observing with interest my efforts to get my gun to rights again. Now he made a gesture which indicated clearly “I do not fight defenceless men,” shrugged his shoulders, waved to me and made a nose dive down. Fair play.

— Bruno Gutensohn, *Munich.*

THE HORSEMAN

DURING the big French effort to break through North of Arras, I had been buried by a shell explosion in a front trench near Notre Dame de Lorette at the very beginning of the battle and was taken prisoner by the French. Covered with bad bruises I was dragged back behind the French front lines, with hours of painful marching along saps and trenches. At the end of this memorable day I had a strange experience which I recorded in my diary as follows:

Night was falling as I limped along the village street between two Frenchmen. They had orders to conduct me to the division staff quarters, where my future residence would be decided. Soon we arrived at a simple country house where the Frenchmen halted. Weary to death I sank down again on the steps that led up to the front door. Hardly had I sat down when a band of horsemen rode up and halted there as well. The riders dismounted, three or four of the men, who from close up, I recognized as staff officers, approached the house with rapid strides. I was about to rise, but they signed to me with a wave of the hand to stay sitting quietly, and they passed close by me into the house.

The last of them turned as he entered the door, and addressed a short question to my escort, that evidently concerned me. Then he called one of the horsemen, who approached leading his horse by the reins, and gave him orders to conduct me to a place the name of which I did not understand. The mounted Yager did not seem particularly edified by these instructions. He returned to his comrades and I could hear how they discussed the matter exhaustively. It was a matter of the four kilometers which still had to be done. I bethought me of my condition and despaired inwardly. How should I, with my lacerated, inflamed body, my legs, whose every movement caused me terrible pain, who was liable to break down any minute, how should I march four kilometers on foot before the menacing lance of a man on horseback?

Then the Yagers, all beautifully robust men, struck on an obvious, but under war conditions quite wonderful, idea. “You’ll transport him on your horse,” I heard one of the group exclaim with a laugh. No sooner said than done. At once I felt myself grasped by many strong hands and lifted onto the slender, high-saddled little horse. They put the reins into my hands, and stuck my boots into the stirrups. Although this gave me frightful pain, I gritted my teeth and held my tongue. For I was really touched. This Frenchman who could have driven the prisoner like a sheep before his lance and thrust him down at last, held the reins of his horse lightly, as he walked beside me on foot, and I rode unsteadily through the darkling countryside….

— Wilhelm Stumpp, Merchant, *Frankfort on the Main.*

A SOLEMN BOW

IN October 1916 the positions south of Kowel were bitterly disputed. Trenches were transformed to a sea of shell holes; corpses strewn everywhere; the wounded from the last Russian attack lay dying between the lines. We could hear one of them, whenever there was a lull in the fighting, still moaning after two days. He must have been lying quite near our half fallen-in tunnel, but no one could search for him. Day and night Russian machine gun volleys swept close above the entrance of our shell holes. We were to keep ourselves so well hidden this time that the next attack could not fail.

“Get out: they are coming.” There were not many left in our shell-hole to hear this release. Everyone leaped up and across the open and threw himself into the next shell hole, and dead silence reigned in our section. Only two gigantic Russian soldiers walked leisurely right up to the jaws of our rifles.

Now, when every nerve in our bodies itched to fire, accustomed as we were on such a field of shell-holes and dead bodies only to shooting and grenade-throwing, it was well-nigh impossible for us not to blow off. The two Russians, not even medical officers, walked about searching among the corpses, or stepped carefully over the fallen. They were looking for the still living wounded man. About forty yards in front of us they stopped beside a shell hole, lifted the wounded man up and thanked us with a solemn bow.

Then they dragged their burden back and disappeared into the Russian trenches. A weight fell from off my heart when the two broad, earth-colored backs were no longer to be seen. We were speechless with astonishment at the courage of these two men, who had braved the enemy guns, despite the “no quarter” tone of the fighting, on the chance of saving the life of their comrade. And we were proud too that in our whole section no one, despite our badly jangled nerves, had fired at random.

— Kurt Pantlen, Merchant, *Homberg/Schwarzwald.*

SEAMEN

NEVER in my life shall I forget the 12th of July, 1917. On our journey we had a fog every day, thick as a blanket; it was impossible even to take one's bearings, but orders had to be obeyed. We were to lay our mines at a certain hour at the entrance of the harbor. It is always said: "It's the early bird that catches the first worm"; but on the above-mentioned day all I caught was being stranded with my submarine on the East side of Shipwash Bank. And as the devil would have it, after we grounded, and the bows of the boat lay high and dry at ebb-tide, the air became clear and bright and English warships were sailing along the West Side of Shipwash Bank.

We were, of course, sighted at once and things did not look any too bright for us: about 15 warships against one submarine. True, we did have the sun behind us (it was sunrise) and, farther, the English could not cross the sandbank as their keels were too deep. On board we worked assiduously, trying to get the submarine afloat again.

In the meantime the admiral ship signaled "Fly your national colors" and for about twenty minutes the signal floated on the breeze. But to us who had given up all hope of life formalities were a closed book at that moment: our object was to get out of the engines what could be got out of them so that the screws would work backwards full speed. Precautions against overstraining the engines and electrical equipment were disregarded; the hands of the manometer pointed away beyond the red mark. At last the boat moved.

The enemy must have noticed this too, because now at last the admiral ship gave three blind shots at an interval of about five minutes.

After a quarter of an hour our boat was afloat. Now at last the admiral ship fired directly at us with three guns, but the shells did not strike us: as I mentioned before we as the quarry lay in the sunlight and were thus a bad target for the English. And not until we replied to the firing with our guns did the admiral ship let its fourteen accompanying ships join in the attack. That was like the English!

In the meantime we tried to circumnavigate the bank. By this time we had gained deep water and dived down, for our object, to lay a belt of mines across the entrance to the harbor, must be achieved. As we were lying thus at the bottom of the sea, the English had come nearer and nearer; this could be easily heard as water is such a good sound carrier. We could hear the sound of the screws above our heads, so the English were damned near us. On our boat everything was mouse-quiet, and the enemy could not gauge our position even with their accurate underwater listening-apparatus, and so either catch us like a fish in a net, or destroy us with water bombs. And by the detonation of the bombs we were able to ascertain that the enemy was maneuvering ever farther away from us; so that the worst danger was over. As it grew darker we came up; our engines had suffered from overstrain, the batteries were breathless. We nevertheless reached port in Brouges.

Even in time of war, the Englishman, as my case shows, was a real gentleman. As long as my boat was unable to fight and had not shown its national colors it was for him no enemy with whom to engage in combat. For if the English had attacked us as soon as they sighted us, nothing would have remained of us—except perhaps the word "missing" or "U.C. 14 not returned from duty."

— Rudolph Fischer, Captain, *Hamburg.*

THE WATCH

A WINTER battle in Masuria. This happened at night between the 4th and 5th of February, 1915. During the day our company made a hasty march through the devastated Schirwindt. We were in pursuit of the Russians. Deep snow covered the ground, and hindered our march. We pushed on with frozen limbs, without baggage or mess-wagons, which had got stuck somewhere in the snow: and so without food. Our hunger made the march a torment of hell and the strain found relief in rage against the fleeing Russians.

The company marched forward through the darkness of night. The advance guard struck upon a farm, and the company rushed at the houses, which stood untouched by the enemy. They seemed to invite commandeering and our hunger was enormous.

At the entrance to one of the little houses we were stopped short in amazement. For our surprised company faced the equally surprised staff of a Russian regiment. They had believed themselves safely behind their lines. Not a shot was fired. The Russians threw up their hands when the exhausted and frozen Germans advanced towards them. Then began the commandeering and small indeed was the crop. The youngest volunteer of the company, a young chap of only sixteen, and a roughneck into the bargain, pinned his last hope to the Russian Colonel’s pockets. He found a little chocolate, nothing else. And then it occurred to him that he had felt a watch. And a watch he needed.

His comrades stood around the group. The boy tried to explain his request to the aged officer. It was no use. Finally he snatched the watch from the Colonel’s pocket. It was an ordinary silver field watch. The officer protested excitedly and demanded his property back. A slap in the face was his only answer.

The young roughneck disappeared. The Colonel stood downcast, sad almost but not angry, amid the embarrassed group of German soldiers, for they all felt ashamed.

An old reservist, a miner, from the Ruhr district, stepped out, his gun hanging around his neck, one foot in a Russian boot, the other in a German laced shoe. With stiff fingers he tore his coat open and unfastened his watch from his pocket. He saluted and, stammering an apology, thrust the watch into the Colonel’s hands. Then he turned and hurried out into the dark.

He searched for and found our young roughneck. The screams overheard were proof of it. On the 14th of February, 1915, both of them fell near Makaczie fighting against the Russians.

— Kurt Winkler, *Barmen.*

ONLY A NEGRO

ON August 20, 1918, the French made a horseshoe shaped bend in the German front line at Soissons. After we had dropped some bombs and mines on a troop which lay in reserve in a little wood, we considered turning back. Above us flew an enemy squadron of fighting planes from which several machines were already detaching themselves to swoop on us. A murderous anti-aircraft and machine gun fire attacked us from below. Making wild curves I sought to save myself.

Suddenly a jerk made my engines vibrate. We were flying through fire and smoke. My engines gave a few sputters and stood still. I was just above the little wood we had been bombing, and I wrenched once again at the stick. The plane reared up and then crashed to the ground in the middle of some barbed wire entanglement. Amid continuous firing from the airplanes we worked our way out from the wreckage.

In the little wood we were met by some French and some colored soldiers. Although we were wounded they drove us before them with the butts of their rifles and pointed in fury at the men our bombs had killed. At the foot of the valley we ran into another band of German prisoners, and after some questioning were placed in their van, and off we marched in the direction of the setting sun.

An English officer, with a pistol in one hand, and a stick in the other spurred on the colored guards (who tried to creep away at every explosion of the German shells, which were falling near at hand) like dogs beside the disordered ranks of the prisoner transport. I suddenly made off, leaping from shell-hole to shell-hole in the direction of an artillery position (indicated by the shells) which lay under cover of some shrubs. Behind me ran a dumpy colored guard.

Perspiration ran down his blue-black shining face. His thick lips emitted an incomprehensible gibberish. Perhaps he was praying. We lay together in a shell-hole, and when I was about to climb out he called “Doucement.” At that moment there was a hissing and sputtering all round, the tremendous air pressure threw me over, a hail of stones and earth descended on us. I felt a dull blow on my neck and lost consciousness, at least for the next few minutes. Then, as though from far off, a voice struck my ear “Allez en avant! Vite, vite!” The colored man was crouching by my side, holding his canteen to my lips and exhorting me to get up. By various scraps of French he tried to make me understand that we had to get on because the waves of fire were getting still fiercer. I got up painfully and saw further back the rest of the German prisoners and my observer making for the next hollow.

We reached the trenches, where in a little dugout two German prisoners were already sitting, and I there bandaged his arm, because he had a slight shell wound. Then he dispensed among us the rest of the red wine from his canteen, a piece of buffalo meat and bread. He himself did not eat a bite. Now and then his teeth chattered and he was shaken as though by cold. I tried to communicate with him though we found that our command of French was equally good, or bad.

He was twenty and came from Tamatave in Madagascar. His father owned great herds of cattle. The colored men did not want to go to war: they had promised him a white wife and a lot of other things. After four weeks training they had been sent into the front lines. Then he asked whether it was true that all colored prisoners were killed by the Germans: he was most afraid of the German artillery. Then he wanted to explain to the other inhabitants of the dugout, how he had pulled me out of the earth heap and so saved my life.

By this time the next group, with an officer, jumped into the trench. At once the poor negro stopped talking and crawled like a dog to the officer to make his report. When at night we were handed over to a provisory prison camp, the colored man in passing pressed my hand quietly…. He was only a negro!

— Jos. Fuchs, Printer, *Kempten-A llgdu.*

A RAPID FRIENDSHIP

IT was on October 10, 1918 near Romagne, and I was attached to the 10th Company of the 1st Baden Leib- Grenadier Regiment. Our artillery opened a bombardment, that showered densely over our heads. Every shot made its mark and the little wood grew visibly smaller. Everyone said: “No one can be there any longer.” At 6:30 prompt we began to attack our goal, indicated by an old shot-to-pieces dredging machine on a hill. But in spite of the previous bombardment, well aimed machine gun fire was directed at us from the wood. Out of about 60, only 16 reached the goal. The trench was empty.

Nothing happened until 11:30. Suddenly a barrage fire set in from the other side and we knew at once: now for the counterattack. I was in a hole with my comrade Sattler, where there was just room for the two of us. At 12 the firing suddenly ceased and in our trench everyone ran round aimlessly. From the left came the Fortieth shouting “They are coming, they are coming.” One could hear them rushing; up from over there. To get back was practically impossible, we were surrounded—what could we do? Take off our belts— surrender!

A lanky American soldier jumped our trench, turned, saw Sattler and me crouching; in the hole, took aim, shot, and hit Sattler in the neck. I leaped out, my hands up and just shouted “Kamerad, Kamerad!” He lowered his rifle and came into the trench. In one hand I held a pistol, which I had found shortly before, and in the other my belt and haversack. By this time the American was probably just as frightened as I and once again leveled his gun slowly. I stretched out my pistol—there was no shot in it!

He came nearer, his gun raised to his cheek. I was leaning against the wall of the trench and indicated to him with extended pistol that I could shoot any minute. I shouted “Kamerad!” He signed to me to throw away the pistol. I did this and he at once lowered his gun and we walked towards each other. He stretched his hand out to me and held mine for a long time. I pointed to my comrade Sattler. He gave us time to bandage the wound, and even lent a hand himself. And he kissed Sattler’s hand.

In the meantime the advancing wave of Americans had gone beyond us. We were in the hands of the enemy. The American motioned to us to go back with him. He reported to his commander, shook us both by the hand, gave us cigarettes and treated us to everything he could get hold of. Particularly he attended to Sattler’s wound. Again and again he apologized to Sattler, who was in great pain and could not understand him. The company-commander approached us with like friendliness. He asked in broken German whether we had a souvenir for him. I gave him a 25 pfennig piece and some other coins, and my watch which he wanted so much. For every object he gave us something in return.

Now we saw what our drum fire had done. The dead lay heaped on each other over there, and hardly one had escaped without a wound. They would have had every reason not to treat us in too friendly a manner.

— Paul R. Henker, Stage Manager, *Bad Brilckenau.*

THE GENTLEMAN FROM U. 28

DURING 1915 I traveled on a little boat from London to Holland. One evening a German submarine fired on us, as a sign that we should stop. Our captain hoped, by a hasty flight into Dutch waters, to avoid the danger, but the U-boat was too quick for us and soon came alongside.

In very good English the German officer asked our captain why he had not stopped after the shot had been fired.

The Captain answered: “Because I am an Englishman.”

“All right,” replied the German officer, “You are a courageous old chap and I’ll give you three minutes to abandon the ship.” This order was speedily obeyed and we made off in our two life-boats while the Germans sank our ship. We were rowing with all our might when the U-boat came after us and the following conversation took place:

The German: “Where are you going?”

Our Captain: “To Holland.”

“Do you think you can find your way there in the dark?”

“I’ll try; but if you were a sport you’d tow us there.”

“All right, I am a sport and will tow you in, and more than that I’ll give you a cigar so that you won’t be too bored on the way. Throw down your line and we’ll soon have you in Holland.”

And actually the U-boat towed us towards Holland. When we parted the German said: “Good night, Captain, you are a brave man, I pay you my respects.”

Our Captain answered: “Good night sir, you are a gentleman.” And so said all of us.

— E. F. Bass, *Greenwich.* Retold from the Evening News.

ESCAPE AND HOMECOMING

FRENCHMAN

BY the year 1919 the French prisoners-of-war had been sent home from Germany long before; only the German prisoners were still in France. Every morning at seven o'clock we had to fall in, in camp, while the roll was called and the work for the coming day assigned. French civilians, mostly farmers, came here to procure cheap labor. So it happened that one day came my turn, and in the morning I was taken off by a farmer and brought back at night. The first day he told me that his son had been a prisoner in Germany for three years, and had fared very well, and that he wanted to see that I got the same treatment. He was as good as his word.

I never had reason to complain either about the treatment or the food. My job was to assist in threshing the grain, chopping wood and other light farm work. The pleasant work was broken by frequent intermissions during which I was allowed to eat and drink, the daughter of the house always seeing to it that I had enough bread and sausage and even wine. On these occasions I would speak of Germany and of my longing for home.

One day I met the farmer's son. We spoke of Germany where he had been in captivity for three years, and talked about this and that. He even hinted that I should run away. I replied that I and two other comrades had once thought of escaping but could not go through with it on account of lack of food, money, and most of all, civilian clothes. He only smiled, and extracted a promise from me in any case to start the flight from the camp so that he could not be suspected of having helped us. Hardly three days later he told me at breakfast, that over by the edge of a copse he had hidden a bag containing pressed meat in an old cask, and in a shell hole some civilian clothes for us. As chance would have it, he had to drive to V. the next day to do some shopping. If we could arrange to make our escape that night he could take us along as far as V. So it was agreed that we should flee that very night and keep along the highway towards V. where he would pass and pick us up. We were just to get into the cart, he would act as though he did not notice us. At first all this sounded too unspeakably tempting, almost as though the Frenchman were laying a trap for us. But the more I thought about it the more I realized that he genuinely meant it. It was a risky job, but in any case I told my two comrades about it. We decided to take the chance of being betrayed by the farmer, and to run away that night. Should the farmer not come along with his cart we could always walk. The main thing was to get civilian clothes and food.

After the evening roll-call we were as usual given a meal, but it did not taste good to any of us three. The last preparations for flight were made. Time passed so slowly, it seemed like an eternity to us. At last darkness began to fall, and the camp was all locked up. We listened at the window, there was no movement: only the sound of voices came from the guard room where the sentries were playing cards. A guard passed us every ten or fifteen minutes and we had to choose the time when he had just passed. Then, out through the window and off.

We had to make use of a small depression under the wire entanglement, pressing ourselves flat against the ground and wriggling forward, so as not to get our things caught on the barbed wire. Everything went well, we were under the fence and ran quickly over to the copse on the other side of the road where, sure enough, we found a metal cask with food, and also civilian clothes on the ground not far off. We put the things hastily on over our prisoners' uniforms; we

listened once again, everything was quiet—and off we went, running in stooping posture, towards the highway, where we were to await the farmer.

We waited; from the village it had already struck eleven—but no sign to be seen or heard of a farmer with a cart. At last some figures did appear ahead of us, but no farmer and cart. Fortunately for us they turned off to the left. … At last another sound, this time the rattle of cart wheels. A cart with a high closed top approached. We waited for the signal that had been arranged, three cracks of the whip, and dashed across the road into the cart. The farmer acted as though he noticed nothing. Well, now we had time, now we could drive until it got light. We slept by turns.

Suddenly someone poked a whip-handle among the sacks. We woke up, day was already breaking, it was our farmer. We had to get out, we were only about a kilometer from V. One at a time we left the cart, the farmer gave us a last friendly nod—and we vanished into a shell-ravaged forest. We soon found an old dugout where we had to stay all day, so as to continue our flight by night. All went well; after several days of wearisome marching we reached the frontier. One more sharp lookout and we were over. Had we not had the map and compass which the son had handed us before our flight, we could never have progressed so quickly. We knocked, in a village B., explained who we were, looked up the Burgomaster and got ourselves passports, so that we could get through the occupied area unmolested.

And for all this we had only our dear farmer to thank, who had sought an occasion to pay back to us the kindness he had been shown in Germany under similar circumstances.

— Richard Dornfeld, Clerk, *Frankfort on the Main.*

ENGLISHMAN

AT the outbreak of the war my brother was on his way to America. The ship had to touch at a port in England, who in the meantime had declared war. My brother managed to escape and for two weeks he was kept hidden by a fisherman, on whom he happened to come during his wanderings. They procured him a passport under a false name and as “Jos. Miller” he lived for years in America. He wrote me that these people had known he was a German and yet had cared for him in a most touching manner, so that no relative could have done more. They had supplied him with money and conveyed him, in tears, to a ship by night, at the risk of their lives; which ship brought him at last to America. “Never in all my life,” he wrote me, “can I forget these good people, who have treated an enemy like this, without the slightest hope of reward, but out of pure humaneness. And this in time of war, when the general hatred was so fierce.”

— Ella Frey, Dreieichenhain.

RUSSIAN

IN February 1918 I was in flight from Russian captivity. There were two of us; a sergeant Schlicht from West Prussia (from the Infantry Regiment 151) had joined me. Our escape started from the railroad station at Sidor Ko wo in the Twer district on the railroad between Bologoe and Rybinsk. We had come disguised as Russians, by stages, with the railroad to Welike-Luk, from where it was at that time, the end of February, about 150 kilometers more to the front. The Germans had advanced beyond Dünaburg in the direction of Polotzk. We were figuring on the panic among the Russians and hoped to find a gap in the front lines.

Outside Newel our situation seemed uncertain. It was bitterly cold and we should have liked very much to turn in but it was too dangerous. Finally we put up at a sort of tea shop which was owned by a Jewish family. We felt a little uneasy when we learned from their conversation of the atrocities of the Red guard. Outside, hundreds of sleighs sped past, laden with flour, bread and sugar from the storehouses which had been evacuated at the approach of the Germans. The Jewish women sang melancholy songs: “Now I leave the world and my children, and who will give them bread?”

We made a wide circle around Newel, so as not to fall into the hands of the soldiers. Evening drew on and in the bitter cold we had not even the roof of a freight car over our heads. It was the third night without sleep, the third day without hot food. We had not had dry feet for a long time. The roads were hard to distinguish in the dark and our limbs grew more tired every minute. I suggested asking for quarters in one of the houses. The sergeant objected although he was even more tired than I, and had begun to eat snow for his thirst. We could hardly drag our weary limbs along. Nothing remained for us—since we found no empty houses—but to knock at a door in a little village late at night. We stepped into the room and—saw three soldiers facing us.

The German advance beyond Dünaburg had made the people uneasy. Our late arrival aroused suspicion and the people grew even more suspicious, when we answered their questions by saying we were fugitives. A decree had just been issued from St. Petersburg concerning enemy spies, German agents, propagandists etc. The Russians thought immediately of spies, and one of them even spoke the word. I felt the ground give way under my feet. According to the decree suspicious personages were to be shot on the spot. The soldiers conferred for a moment, the women intervened: “Let them go, we do not want to be responsible if they perish.” But one of the soldiers insisted on bringing us before the committee. I rated my life at this hour not higher than a bean. The sergeant remarked: “They’ll just shoot us down now.”

The rumor that suspicious men were arrived in the village had spread rapidly. Half the village collected in the house. Frankly I told the commissioner that we were German prisoners of war and had been in captivity for almost three years. He replied that we should have said so right away, now we were only trying to talk ourselves out of it. I drew out a few papers that bore my address in German and Russian and also the stamp of the Russian censor. They all contained photographs of my wife and child, also of Mother and Father. The women all pored over the pictures and the good Russian wives were so touched that they used all their influence in our defence.

We could not be brought to the town that same evening and had to spend the night in the village. We were lodged in a room, sleeping on the floor; while round us slept three soldiers, an old couple and some women. The women gave us supper and made a soft bed for us of straw, in which we slept more comfortably than ever before in Russia.

I woke up early next morning while everybody was still asleep. Then one soldier got up, waked us, bundled our things quickly together, took his gun and led us out of the house. The sergeant remarked: “Now for the end.” We hardly noticed the fact that only one man came along to guard us. We left the village. Day dawned. After a quarter of an hour’s march the soldier stopped us to our great surprise and spoke to us about as follows: “You can now go on alone. May God go with you and may you soon find your dear ones safe and sound. Why

should we soldiers shoot each other? What have you done to me? What fault is it of yours that there is a war?”

I do not know whether the two of us could answer a word to this. We felt in Wonderland. The Russian then gave us some good advice about our farther flight, which may well have saved us from a second arrest. He recommended as the best way the frozen Duena, on whose banks it was easy to hide. Also he advised us always to ask for shelter early in the evening, and to go to houses off the beaten track.

Three days later, on Sunday, March 3, we reached the German outposts outside of Polotzk. We had come through all right, saved by a simple Russian soldier.

— Gustav Schnittger, Editor, *Bietigheim, Wurttemberg.*

AMERICAN

IN the American prison camp of Montfaucon, summer 1919. Our comrade S., an old East Prussian Landsturm man, married and the father of several children, was suffering from melancholia. We noticed how, frequently, with head sunk on chest and brooding eyes, he would tramp up and down beside the barbed wire fence. One day he was missing at roll-roll when we had fallen in for the march back to the camp. The guard was swearing, and patrols were searching the grounds for him. In vain. On the third day after the escape, a ragged figure approached the guard at the gates: it was comrade S. who had been roaming about all that time and now reported back of his own free will, famished. The officer on duty was summoned and I was called in as interpreter, and we could not believe but that our comrade would be severely punished for his escape.

The American officer asked for an account of what had happened. The sentries concerned were questioned: and I reported on my own account, and truthfully, that we had all noticed the depressed spirits of our comrade. Thereupon the American officer admonished the sinner not to attempt to escape again in future, since captivity would in any case probably end soon and he would then see his wife and children again, safe and sound: whereas in flight all sorts of things might happen to him. Then the officer gave orders that, although it was the middle of the night, our comrade was to be amply fed by the kitchen so that he would regain his strength. And with that the case was ended.

— Wilhelm Knipp, Clerk, *Frankfort on the Main.*

GERMAN

LANCE-CORPORAL LEOPOLD MATT enlisted in 1914 and was sent with the 253rd Reserve Infantry Regiment to Russia, where I was wounded during the attack on Kowno in 1915. After I had been patched up, I went in 1916 from *Frankfort on the Main* to Roumania with the 18/54 Landsturm Battalion of Bockenheim. There the following happened. I received orders to bring twenty-one prisoners, twenty-eight horses, and eighteen rifles to the town headquarters in Slatina. It was Spring 1917. Since I could not carry the rifles myself, the prisoners had to wear them. At first we went on foot, but soon this seemed too silly to me. So we mounted the horses and after we had done thirty kilo meters between Negrine and Slatina we rode into Slatina as haughty as hussars.

But alas, when I reported with my prisoners I was reprimanded and told: “Leave the guns and the horses, but you can take the prisoners along, we already have too many.” So off I went

again with my prisoners.

In the next village a few of them approached me and said: “Domule, acolo la mine a casa”—Sir, this is my home here.

So I said: “Repede a casa,”—get home quick. And they were gone in no time. This happened twice again and then I had no prisoners left. So now I reported to the lieutenant (whose name I have forgotten) “Prisoners, horses and guns handed over in Slatina.” No one wanted anything more of me and the prisoners must have got off safely to their homes.

— Written down in strict accordance with the truth by Leop. Matt, Master Weaver, *Gorwihl, Baden.*

NO. 11494

AS an English prisoner-of-war, first in Le Havre, later in Catterick (England), I went through all the sufferings and privations of prison life. Fallen from the high estate of a free human being to being no. 11494. Ordered one day to the barracks to give the full particulars about ourselves. At a table was an English officer, who asked us for our personal data in the most polite manner. “I thank you,” he said. And then with a wonderfully kind smile on his noble face: “I think we shall all be able to go home soon. I too will be glad to see my wife and children again.” This kind smile made us forget all hardships and made us feel that we were still human beings. What this good man did in those two sentences, he probably had no idea of.

— Paul Zieger, Commercial Artist, *Echichens s. Morges.*

THE OVERCOAT

THE last dying struggle of Austria, October 27, 1918! For weeks we had known that all was over, that Old Austria’s end was nigh. A front without any base; an army without a fatherland. Slavonic and Magyar troops were withdrawing in flocks, leaving great gaps in the already thinned defensive system on the Piave. Bohemia independent, Hungary in revolt, the Jugo-Slavonic state declared: finis Austriae! But still, with clenched teeth, we held the trenches. In front of us, fresh British attack units, behind us the great void. The front hung as it were severed in the air. Revolt and mutiny were demoralizing the hinterland, already no more provisions, no ammunition, came through; we were cut off from the division base; but we held on! From the mouths of the outworn cannon volleys were poured on the enemy as they made their first attempt, in the early dawn of October 27, to force a crossing over the River Piave near San Dona.

Half frozen, famished in our torn nettle linen uniforms we crouched in the trenches along the Piave embankment, ankle-deep in water. Without any hope, yet each one grimly fulfilled the duty he had become inured to in the last four years. The spats of the gunners hung in tatters, the gun squads were emaciated to skeletons, ash-gray faces under shrapnel helmets. Eight times the English attacked, eight times they were repulsed: then came the end. When, around noon, new storm companies forded the river, scarcely every tenth man in the Styrian Jager Battalion, which lay just in front of us, was alive. Those who could still grasp the red-hot gun-barrels went on firing to the last bullet, throwing the last grenades, then prepared to defend his life with his bayonet and the butt of his musket; even though each one knew it was useless. “Herr Fahnrich, they are coming from the right!” my old battery sergeant called to me. Through the misty gray I could see the stooping forms with their flat helmets rushing forward. Two, three forgotten machine guns tapped out. “With grape-shot, direct fire!” Once again they

flowed back, but not for long: The enemy batteries overpowered us entirely, and when the British attacked again the gun crews threw themselves in their aggressors' way with bayonet and pistol. A hot pain crippled my left shoulder, a blow with a butt dashed the shrapnel helmet from my head, red mist danced before my eyes, two, three more shots at the advancing wave of khaki, then I collapsed, over my dead battery comrades.

How long I lay like this I do not know. When I came to the tommies were in our trenches, and there was a sound of moaning all around. Wet, cold rain chilled me to the marrow, my blouse hung in ribbons, the left sleeve was wet with blood. With reeling head I tried to rise, and succeeded with tremendous difficulty. A few men of my battery stood behind the second cannon, almost all wounded. There was a hammering in my head. With a certain awkwardness the British were mustering us. A tall captain of the Yorkshire Fusiliers (as I saw by his shoulder knot) approached me over the trampled gun platform. "Was that all your artillery?" He spoke a tolerable German. With a circular sweep of his hand he indicated our six dismounted cannon. As I nodded in silence, he raised his gloved hand to his flat helmet: "Glorious soldiers!"

High esteem rang from the words. Feverish shivers were shaking me so that I would have sunk down, had I not supported myself on the trench wall. The Englishman came to my assistance, with a glance took in my completely tattered, soaked blouse. An ice-cold wind blew up from the Piave river-bed. With a quick movement he took his long, thick, woolen coat off and hung it on my shoulders. "You are freezing, comrade, take this." As I tried to refuse he shook his head and but toned the coat tightly round my shoulders. "You have been a courageous enemy: please keep the coat." A second officer came along and handed me a packet of cigarettes. "Take it, sir, you certainly were brave. Wait a few minutes, our sanitary squad will be here at once." It turned out otherwise; in the thick fog, which wrapped everything in a white blanket, the English must have lost their bearings, nobody came. With eight other serious casualties I had to spend the whole night in the trench. It was freezing, had I not had the coat, I would never have lived to see the next morning dawn. The overcoat of the English captain saved my life.

— Dr. Herbert V. Pater, *Vienna.*

NIX BUM-BUM!

IN the fall of 1918 a part of our regimental band was billeted for some time in the loft of a smith's house in Sainlez in Belgium, and I must say were received with somewhat grudging looks. The smith had a big family, including two grown-up daughters, to whom we paid special attention. At last we got onto a really familiar footing. Our rations, though very moderate, may perhaps have helped to pave the way to friendship, certainly the smith became friendlier and friendlier. He delighted in the music, for dancing or entertainment, which we arranged in honor of the ladies of the house, he relished the drinks we provided and in return he told us many things which should really have been kept from an enemy. We learned about the secret treasure hidden in the garden hedge which should have been handed over at the requisition. Although officially such secrets were not permitted we all maintained complete silence.

During that time the news came to us from the Luxemburg frontier nearby, that the armistice had been signed and that at last we should be allowed to go home again. Beaming with pleasure the smith came running up breathlessly, with the words, "La guerre linie, Nix bum-bum!" He was right. The guns were hushed and we got our marching orders. When we

took leave of the smith and his family, besides tears of emotion, there was only one wish between friend and enemy—Auf Wiedersehen, au revoir!

— Joh. Stimpert, Proof-reader, *Frankfort on the Main.*

ARMISTICE

ARMISTICE had been arranged, but would peace follow? This question occupied our minds as our 27th Bavarian Infantry Regiment set out on the homeward march over the Schelde and through Belgium. We were frequently detailed to do railway protection work so we usually left our quarters only just before the arrival of the advancing enemy troops. Many Belgians, whose attitude had been friendly so long as we occupied their territory, now suddenly changed towards us, A lot of ill-natured invective did we have to endure from the fanatically-minded crowd. Malicious faces loomed all around us. We passed through Brussels, now exultant, and drunk with victory; through Luven which still bore the traces of 1914.

One evening, just outside Luttich, we found quarters in a lonely group of houses off the marching route. My squad was in a little red house, such as one sees frequently in Belgium mining villages. Our hosts were simple people, a middle-aged man and woman. The very young men of my squad, mostly very raw recruits, had found the shell holes of Flanders a very bad school room. Coarse jokes were made about the woman and greeted with laughter; some even went so far as to comment on a physical defect she had in her presence.

After supper—we were just arranging our packs to sleep on the stone floor of the kitchen—the woman left us and appeared again with some bundles of straw, which she spread on the floor for us. Her husband, a strongly built man with a gloomy expression, had sat all the time in a corner; he now pushed his chair towards the stove and poked the fire. We motioned to him by signs to leave us, but he persisted, with an embarrassed smile, in refusing definitely to move.

Then something unexpected happened. The woman turned to us and in the clearest German explained that her husband would not go to bed but stay up and see that the kitchen was kept warm. Astonished silence. Fatal. “Madam, you speak German?” “As you can hear.” “Your husband too?” “A little.” General embarrassment. At last we spoke: “Madam, you must excuse what you heard earlier; we did not mean it like that.” She answered, “I am not angry, whether Belgians or Germans, soldiers are soldiers. Good night!”

The husband remained sitting like a statue before the stove, stirring the fire from time to time. No one dared to turn him out. We secretly arranged a guard, unable to trust the peace. I was on first. But fatigue can overcome even a soldier, in a warm room, when he is lying on straw. It was already early morning when I leapt up with a start. Day was breaking. Nothing we had secretly feared had happened. The man still sat awake by the hearth, watching the fire, so that for once we had had a warm sleep.

— Wilhelm Hauptmann, Locksmith, *Ludwigshafen.*

DOWN TO THE LAST SOU

TEN days after I had been wounded and taken prisoner by the Americans, during the great retreat of October 8, 1918, I was brought in a French hospital train from Paris to Bordeaux. At one o’clock at night we arrived at the central station. The wounded were unloaded and laid on the platform on their stretchers, to be brought to the several hospitals by car. The few wounded

Germans were lined up a little to the side. Naturally a great many curious people gathered round us, mostly French soldiers and sailors, but also some civilians. We were not exactly courteously treated by these spectators. Since just then the collapse of the Western front was in rapid progress these French people deemed it appropriate to greet us with shouts of “Boches kaput,” “Guillaume parti” and other more or less amiable expressions of the kind. Suddenly a lanky, negro corporal forced his way through the crowd, pushed the white Frenchmen back, drew the famous big knife from his puttee and an enormous white loaf from his haversack, cut it in slices, and distributed it among us wounded Germans. Then he even drew out his purse, emptied all his money into his palm and divided it among us down to the last sou. None of the French dared say another word. The negro stood near us with a truculent expression until we too were carried off to the hospitals.

— Oswald Schrenk, Actor, *Berlin.*

A CLOSED TOPIC

ON our way home from Egypt in November 1919 we put in at Gibraltar for a day or two, coaling. As I stood in the pouring rain, I got into talk with two sailors from English submarines that were likewise in port. One of them, a very young man, thought it appropriate to keep reminding me that we had lost the war; but the other, a somewhat older sailor, rebuked him by saying: “Why don’t you stop it: he knows it all right,” and led skillfully to another topic more agreeable to me.

— Werner von Streit, Merchant, *Stuttgart.*

THE LAST BLOODSHED

IN November of the fateful year 1918 I had the following experience in a little Rhineland town near Koblenz. Those were rough fall days and formations of the German Western army, worn by strenuous forced marches, were crossing the Rhine. It was the retreat, and the army of occupation, American, followed almost on their heels. First the quarter-master would come, then the troops to be quartered. Their reception and welcome was cold and reserved: we looked on each other, despite the armistice, as enemies still. The people with whom I boarded were ordered to take a soldier too. Our American kept in his room behind locked doors and never went out without a weapon. He gave the impression of being afraid of the Germans and regarding them as savages. So we avoided each other.

However, one day, something happened which shed a revealing light on the humane qualities of our American and put us to shame on account of our previous unfriendly attitude. An elderly man in the house had hurt himself severely and lost a lot of blood. Only a blood transfusion could help him, was the doctor’s verdict. And what was the outcome? Our American heard of this and immediately offered, of his own free will, to perform this act of pure altruism.

He was examined, found to be healthy and fortunately of the same blood category. The transfusion could be made and the old man was saved. Through the noble action of the American he was restored to life and to his family. We were all sorry when he took leave of us after a few weeks, to return to his dear mother in North Carolina.

— Willi Freisberg, Forwarder, *Neuwied.*

A PEACE CELEBRATION

I WAS a French prisoner of war and was used as interpreter. On the day the Armistice was signed I, with a high school teacher from Rostock, was supervising the work of about forty men, who were unloading a big Norwegian vessel in the port of Rouen. We had no idea of what had happened when suddenly all the sirens started hooting, the bells ringing and the French townfolk, drunk with joy, behaving like madmen. Whenever they encountered Germans they shouted “Guillaume kaput.” The English on the adjacent ship held their peace.

The captain of the Norwegian ship, who had often been in Bremen in former days, now showed himself to be a kind man. Unseen by the French he conducted us two to his cabin. “I like the English just as much as the Germans” were his words, “but I am glad that there is peace on earth again and the slaughter is over.”

A little celebration dinner was prepared, and we were actually waited on! Brown soup, broiled mackerel and ragout, with red wine and afterwards benedictine from little port wine glasses. Then the melody of “Deutschland über Alles” was played on the victrola and finally the school teacher sang a solo “Gaudeamus igitur.” Those were two wonderful hours, the first of freedom.

Soon, however, we were lying in the French straw again, in the well-guarded barracks, eating horrible broad beans. But we still had cigarettes left to hand round. May the old captain’s good deed bless him to a ripe old age.

— Adolf Freese, Salesman, *Essen.*

GRAVES

THE GRAVE IN SERBIA

THE following letter came from a little Serbian village in 1919. It was addressed to a young man whose brother had been killed in Serbia. Friends of the dead soldier had informed his brother that he had been buried in a little farm in Bratinac. The letter ran— “Dear and honored friend! You have written to ask me whether the grave in my garden is still there and how it looks. You may assure your father and your old mother that the grave is still there and that my wife cares for it as though it were the grave of my son who was killed at Salonika. I have repaired the cross but not touched the inscription as I cannot read it. I send you my sincere regards,

Zivko Peritsch in whose garden your soldier lies at rest.”

— Contributed by Max Wertheim, *Frankfort on the Main.*

A PRISONER’S LOT

IT was near Rheims after the great spring offensive, 1918. By attacking almost daily we got as far as the wooded hills of the Marne. On the night of July 8 our regiment received orders to storm on the following night the village Vitry de Rheims which lay before us, strongly garrisoned, on a slight elevation. At the end of the village we ran into a crowded enemy trench, the surprised occupants of which we drove out in a few minutes. We found out from the prisoners we made that they were the 47th Moroccan marines. With this position we had reached our goal and we tried at once to make connections to right and left but our patrols

unfortunately returned unsuccessful, reporting that the trenches to the left, behind the highway, were strongly occupied by Senegal negroes and that to our right, 500 yards off, a Moroccan reserve company was advancing towards us. We stopped up the trenches to right and left and built in our machine guns. And there we sat, completely cut off, and waited for what would turn up.

About 8 o'clock we ran out of ammunition, my last revolver shots I shared with the company-commander. We fired very sparingly and only in case of emergency at a distance of 10 yards. Closer and closer the ring pressed in upon us, and because a few daring Frenchmen pushed a prisoner of our own company in front of them, we had to stop firing. At that moment the enemy charged at us from all sides, even over the high wall of the adjacent estate they came leaping. That was the incredible end: and for weeks, leave on the beautiful Rhine had been due to me.

After our gas-masks had been taken from us, off we marched towards our destiny in the opposite direction. Senegal negroes acted as sanitary squad and looked after our casualties, bandaged them skillfully, and gave them wine and cigarettes. Then they were carefully laid on stretchers and carried to a dressing station in a cellar. This I should never have expected from Senegal negroes: I always thought of them with big knives ready to slaughter the Germans.

Our two companies had dwindled to 32 men and 2 officers. This remnant was now led, running through our own gas fumes and artillery fire, to the battalion and from there under a different escort to a great empty wine cellar. After a thorough questioning, our suspenders were removed and our trouser buttons, quite unnecessarily, cut off. From there we went under a militia guard (French) through several villages crowded with troops to our allotted division. Since we were given nothing to drink we were almost parched by the June sun. We were accustomed to quite a lot on the 304 m. heights near Verdun, but in this heat on the long shadeless routes it became well-nigh unbearable.

At last we reached the division, which was quartered in a castle-like building, and had to fall in for inspection in front of the staff. Here I could recognize all kinds of interallied troops; even American cavalry. I stood in the 2nd file and suddenly heard behind me an *American* say in German "Say, Fritz, are you thirsty?" and as I nodded he unhooked my drinking cup from my haversack, poured some liquid into it from a bottle and said "Here, have a drink." Hidden behind the man in front of me I poured the whole contents down my parched throat and found to my great surprise it was champagne, the first since 1914. I could have fallen on the American's neck when I saw how, one after another, he supplied the whole second row with the refreshing drink. Soon more Americans collected, who insisted on handing their untouched bottles to the first, the one who had called me Fritz, who dispensed it to the last drop.

With renewed strength we set out anew in the direction of Epernay. This time we had *French* cavalrymen as guards, who allowed us to smoke even on the open road. Eventually we reached a little place where we spent the night, guarded by gendarmes, and each provided with a piece of bread and a cup of water. At six in the morning we went on. For rations we had a third of a white loaf and a little can of liverwurst to every three men, which had to last all day. The guard was pleasant to us, for it was the same as the day before. Towards noon, when the heat was most powerful, we were allowed to rest in a little wood. We had eaten every scrap of the day's ration in the morning. When the cavalry commander, a first lieutenant, saw that we were not eating, he drew a loaf of white bread and a can of sardines from his saddle-bag and distributed them among those standing round. Some of the guards did the same.

Soon we neared Vitry-le-Frangois, where we were taken to a quarantine camp. There were prisoners there already and after a few days they proceeded with us to the large transit camp at Allibaudidres. This camp was reached after a strenuous march of 52 km. There were at least 50 shacks, each quartering 200 men. There were a lot of prisoners from the district of Montdidier, but also older prisoners who had been brought from the south where some of them had been employed building streets in Morocco. Among others were Alpine troops, flame projector squads, snipers, and even aviators.

Unfortunately (as it turned out) this camp lay directly on the high road and was flanked on the West by a *French* and the East by an *Italian* flying field. The camp was surrounded by a barbed wire entanglement three or four yards wide through the middle of which ran a path for the four guards. At night red lanterns were hung at the four corners. The shacks in which we slept on the bare wooden floors, were barricaded from outside at night with heavy logs, for our physical needs big pails were provided. This is a short stage-set for what follows.

It was the night between the 15th and 16th of July, 1918, in the evening about eleven; the day after the French national holiday. Because of the terrible closeness in the well-barricaded shacks, I could not sleep and just lay dozing. Then suddenly there were some loud explosions and a flare in the middle of the shack and almost suffocated, I lost consciousness. After a short time I found myself outside the shacks, among their ruins. Most of them were completely destroyed, ours had burst open on both sides, under terrific air pressure and we had landed, some of us with injuries, near the barbed wire fence. Since nothing worse had happened to me, I started, with some comrades, to rescue those that were crying for help from all over. We first thought there had been a distant range bombardment from the front, but the first French to arrive on the scene said something about *German* airplanes; and shortly afterwards we saw the French and Italian planes, with their red and green tail lights set out in pursuit of the German.

We spent the whole night dragging the dead and wounded from the ruins, among others an aviation sergeant who had slept opposite me in the shack. Two big shell fragments had ended his young life. Even today I must sing the praises of the. French sanitary squad who drove up in their cars immediately after the disaster. We carried all our dead comrades to the North side of the camp on tent canvases we had been given. Here the injured were given temporary bandages and taken off by car to the hospital at Allibaudières. At roll call next morning 98 dead and 82 seriously wounded prisoners were reckoned. Among the French there was one slight casualty, and a dead horse.

That very same day Swiss officers flew over the camp taking photographs. Later the aviators visited the camp and as a neutral commission conducted an inquiry. Since we would not believe the story about the German aviators they showed us a photograph of an unexploded bomb which had been found lying near the highroad, which bore the inscription “Bombenfabrik Spandau-Ruhleben.”

In the afternoon we dug two communal graves for our dead comrades, and carried them four at a time on tent canvases, in a long procession, and laid them in their last resting place. For days German prisoners were busy improving the appearance of the graves, as carpenters, gardeners, and painters. The village priest was there too and Sergeant H. of Württemberg, from an Alpine regiment made a moving obituary speech. In the meantime a French aviator flew over the burial place, looped, and threw a great wreath of red, white and blue ribbon onto the grave. It was unfortunate that the war should have tracked us down even to this place.

According to French newspaper accounts the German airplane had dropped bombs over Paris, been pursued and dropped his last bombs over our camp which he had taken for a French airplane hangar. From the following report of the Reichsbahn-Inspector Th. KI., Braunschweig, in the fall of 1929 one can gather how the place looks today: “During a German airplane attack on the night of July 15, 1918, 98 prisoners of war were killed behind the front lines in a prison camp at Allibaudières. The surviving comrades of the dead made two great graves in the neighborhood of the camp, fenced in the burial place with birch wood and erected a high cross in the middle. Both the mounds are still in good condition and covered over with grass, which at the time of our visit had dried up with the heat. The names on the two tablets are almost entirely erased and illegible. Instead of the old birchwood cross there is now a simple black cross which bears on a fresh white tablet the following inscription in French:

“ ‘Here lie at rest 98 prisoners-of-war, killed by German airplane bombs on the night of July 15 in the year 1918.’ ”

Unfortunately, of the seriously injured six died in hospital, so the number of dead was 104 and of wounded 76.

— Josef Hüsken, Printer, *Gummersbach.*

SNOWDROPS

AFTER I was dismissed from hospital, back I went with the battery to the Front. Quarters were in Flers, near Douai; there was still some civilian population there. On Good Friday, 1918, my good friend Heinrich Hambloch was hit by a grenade and killed as he was bringing food up to our trenches. After his body had been brought back to Flers, the Frenchwoman who took care of our laundry came and said: “The snowdrops are in flower in my garden, and when Monsieur Heinrich fetched his laundry the last time, he said to me: ‘If anything should ever happen to me, make me a wreath of those snowdrops.’ ” Whether these words were spoken in jest or in anticipation of his approaching death who can figure out? We bore our comrade to his grave. As the earth covered him, almost the entire civilian population still in Flers, came bearing wreaths and bunches of snowdrops, and with the words “He was a fine man, we want to fulfill his last request” the heap of earth was hidden in flowers, and snowdrops heaped on snowdrops, the tribute of one enemy to another.

— Robert Eckhardt, Stone-Cutter, *Breckenheim.*

THE TOMBSTONE

NOW far from Russia, my thoughts still stray back to the South, to the river Don, on whose banks I lived for half a year during the war. In the Pokrowski churchyard in Rostow lie buried some of the poor fallen soldiers. Almost two hundred well-tended graves shelter the remains of German and Austrian warriors, among them two or three officers and one ensign. How often during the summer did I make pilgrimages to this churchyard. A simple white cross especially attracted my attention: that of the Austrian ensign. On the back of this cross I had discovered an inscription, a few indistinctly written words in Russian which I deciphered only with difficulty: “Sleep well, dear Fritz, and may the Russian earth not lie too heavy on you. I will forever remember you. Your faithful Katja.” I realized what these words meant. It was the lament of a Russian girl for her slain sweetheart.

— Wilhelm Berger, *Berlin.*

A LETTER FROM ENGLAND

Wykin, Hinkley, England. May 3, 1916.

To the Commander of the Air Squadron Gutersloh, Germany.

I should like to thank you for your kindness to my son, Lieutenant Charles W. Palmer, while he was a prisoner in your hands, and for awarding him at his funeral the honors due to a brave soldier. Although our countries are unfortunately at war with each other, we can none the less esteem and reverence one another as private individuals. Would you as a generous enemy, kindly preserve everything worth remembering and have his grave marked so that I can see it after the war? My son was loved by all who knew him. He was my eldest, and the best son a man ever had.

Will you do me another favor? I do not know the address of Lieutenant Immelmann. Would you write to him and tell him that I feel no bitterness against him. It was the misfortune of war and he only did his duty to his country. I should also like to thank him for his kindness to my son while he lay in Wahn, visiting him and trying to cheer him up. I should be glad if he would have the kindness to send me all details of the fight, and whatever else concerns my son while he was in hospital at Wahn.

I can not read German but if you would prefer not to write in English I can have it translated.

Yours sincerely, George A. Palmer.

Lieutenant Berdword, who was with him, died also.

THREE DEAD MEN

THE undersigned would also like to send you an experience concerned with international reconciliation. At the end of March, I was sent from a working camp in Larkhill to a rest camp in Blandford: from there to a work camp in Devizes, a quiet friendly little town, to do farm work. One or two men were detailed to remote farms, remaining there altogether: we came back to camp each night. The last two men, one East Prussian, one Upper Silesian, were away for the day on July 1. News came, both were dead. The cause: while emptying a cesspool one fell in, became unconscious from the fumes; the other saw it, jumped in after him, lost consciousness also. The English farmer rushed to the spot and wanted, although an enemy, to save the two German prisoners; he jumped in too: before further help reached the place, all three were dead. A comrade and I volunteered to fetch the bodies. An English sergeant drove over with the two of us. The cart, on which the two coffins were placed, was draped with a German flag. On the way back to Devizes the populace threw roses and flowers at us. The cart was soon covered with flowers. When we reached the churchyard, all the prisoners, many English officers, the two clergymen, the firing party for the salute to the dead and half the population were assembled in the churchyard, many again with flowers. As we bore our two comrades to the grave, all followed and many women were in tears. First the Catholic and then the Protestant soldier were blessed; then came a short address from our camp commander in English. And last an English officer spoke in German: “Two good German comrades lie here, far from their dear ones, and from home, in foreign soil; the inhabitants of Devizes will be

proud to care for those two warriors' graves." I think our two comrades could not have had a better burial even in their own native land.

— Georg Josef Ohmeis, Bricklayer, *Ober-Erlenbach.*

DEATH IN THE DESERT OF NAMIB

HERE I should like to describe the great death among the German S.-W. African colonial force in their prison camp in the Desert of Namib in 1918. While the grippe was working havoc among mankind in Europe it tracked us down too in this hottest region of the earth. More terrible even than in Europe did this pestilence show itself among us. The deaths among our regiment were terrible, but more frightful yet among the English guard, since these men were not as hardened as we. We had to bury 84 out of 1200 men, the English about 80 out of 450. The scenes were terrible, no one wanted to die because Armistice had been declared at home. The fever was frightful, it went up to 104 and then fell away below normal quite suddenly. That was the end: after that death. I can remember that my corporal, Strube, died below eighty. The death-agony of some of our comrades was terrible. In their delirium they would cry for father or mother. Others thought themselves at home, some were driving cars, others distributing their wealth. I can remember a certain Hack who kept giving orders, and he also thought he had found diamonds. A few of our comrades even drank kreolin in their delirium. Some days we had to bury as many as five of our comrades. The biggest, strongest men were most easily laid low by the plague.

Doctors we had none, they had all been exchanged: and medical help was useless anyway. The English government finally sent us an old doctor from a rebel camp. The old man was 64, and himself so weak that during his visits he now and then had to drink a glass of water, to keep himself from fainting. He kept saying: "Children, I can't help you, I can only prescribe a shirt, or some fruit and wine for you."

I had suffered from this plague also, for nine days. By the time the doctor saw me I was a little better, he asked me whether I had any request, whereupon I said that I should like a shirt. For I lay wrapped in my woilach, without any shirt. Obviously pleased, the doctor left my Pontock (house) with the remark that I was the only sick man who had any courage left. I received the promised shirt an hour later. The biggest number of cases was 1080 at one time out of 1200 men; entire companies were seized by the plague so that comrades from other companies had to look after them. It must be counted to the credit of the English that they helped us as much as they could. The convalescent prisoners were allowed to recuperate outside the camp.

As the disease died down with us. it broke out among the English. The garrison was seized with it in such numbers, that it was impossible to place guards over us. In fact our people had to go into the English hospital to look after their men. Terrible scenes were enacted there, several of the afflicted jumped from the windows. Had it not been for our men, the English would have perished in their own filth. On account of the insanitary conditions, our men refused at last to attend to the English. By prayers, and threats of counter-measures, the commander succeeded in persuading the men to resume their work. While the disease reigned wine and spirits were allowed in the camp. The civilian population had not forgotten their Colonial regiment and we were provided with food and clothes.

I should also mention that even the monkeys were affected by the disease. Thousands of baboons lay on the cliffs, victims of the plague. And in their case too we could observe how

they did their duty by the sick, for not one remained lying on the plain or on the mountain slope. The sick and dead were carried off to the mountains by the healthy ones.

Our dead comrades found their last resting place in the Desert of Namib, in the land they had defended so courageously against the superior forces of the enemy. Conquerors and conquered were buried in one graveyard. The funerals were often in common, so that the English officer would speak over the grave of a German soldier too. His words were simple and direct: “We are no enemies, but friends. The fighting is carried on at home, we want only to alleviate each other’s lot.”

The cemetery was dedicated alike to English and Germans. The captured Colonials fired the last salute over both friend and enemy, for we were interred with arms—an acknowledgment that conqueror rendered to conquered, for a war waged against a thousand-fold superior force by a mere handful.

— Martin Horn, Police Inspector, *Frankfort on the Main.*

A QUIET SPOT

IN the course of the war I had become a Red Cross man. I was in the retreat from St. Quentin and endured great physical hardships. After we had occupied the Siegfried position near St. Quentin, three dead Frenchmen were found one morning, lying beside a hillock. Nobody bothered about them. It was impossible for me, as I passed by the dead, not to salute them; towards noon my heart was heavy; a voice within said: you must bury those dead men. So I set to work, dug a grave not far from the dead soldiers, carried them one by one to it, and with tears in my eyes filled up the grave again. Today I still think of those three dead Frenchmen and no one but me knows what became of them. I, however, would like to know whether they still lie there where I buried them. I should like to point out the spot where they rest, if I should ever come to St. Quentin again.

— Engelbert Karl Graf, Baker, *Ober-Raten, Hessen.*

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

THE third battalion of the 80th Infantry Reserve Regiment was stationed to the right of Mont Cornilet near Rheims, and the third squad of my company was in the front trench. The French had dug a sap, so that they could watch us more closely. Well-protected behind a barbed wire entanglement lay the French double sentry only about a stone’s throw away. So we had to watch out.

But one day the French waved to us, only their hands were to be seen.

We waved back.

Then, suddenly, the blue kepis and the heads looked over.

We showed ourselves too.

They called over to us: “Guerre finie—War over!”

Then: “Kahl regima?”—What regiment?

“No. 80” came back.

The French were of the 223rd regiment. They threw newspapers over to us and we brought them the German papers. They confided to us that they were tired of the war. We could assure them we felt the same.

Unfortunately the superior officers were most inconsiderate. During the night a sudden attack was made on the French position. However the French in the front lines had retreated in haste and only two militia men who had been carrying food to the men were taken prisoners. They told us the bomb attack had been terrible. They were trembling with fear and were glad that we turned out to be good people who did not do them any harm. They were glad that the war was over as far as they were concerned. For they said:

“La guerre est un grand malheur pour nous—pour vous— pour tout le monde!

meaning:

“The war is a great misfortune for us—for you— for everyone!”

— Fritz Wolf, Painter and House Decorator, *Wiesbaden.*