Part II.

My Experiences as an "Alien Enemy".

My Troubles at Ramsgate.

It was but a few days that I could fully enjoy the beauties of Ramsgate described in the first chapters of this report. Soon after my arrival there, the dark heavy clouds appeared on the political horizon of Europe and condensed to the dreadful storm that was to discharge itself over Europe with a vehemence unequalled in history of mankind.

As soon as the war had broken out, we Germans who had come to Ramsgate to attend the Holiday Course applied to the German Consulate in London by letter and in person for information about a quick and safe return. In the meantime, contrary to our expectations, England suddenly declared war on Germany. In consequence of this, the Germans of a serviceable age were no longer allowed to leave England. Many of our countrymen attempting to embark for the Continent were either refused or made prisoners of war. I made a last attempt in this respect by addressing a request to the Home Office (corresponding to our "Ministerium des Innern"), in which I asked for the permission of leaving England, explaining that I was exempt from military service in my country, that I came to England for scientific purposes, and that my school-work at home was to start again in September. A few days after, I was sent a form of application to be filled up with several particulars concerning my person, but at last my request was politely rejected.

Now it seemed obvious that there was no chance whatever of returning home before the end of the war. It was hard to see myself banished from my country in those troublous times: to live in the enemy's country without contact with my relatives,

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colleagues, and friends, many of whom I knew to be in the field. For it was most difficult to get even scanty news from home via Holland. Later on, I sent my letters to a friend in the United States, who forwarded them via Italy to Germany. It took five weeks for a letter to arrive at its destination in this way. Besides this inconvenience, I was liable to disagreeable experiences such as are incidental to war. Although these troubles, which I am going to speak about now, are nothing to the sufferings which our soldiers on the battle-field have to endure, they still made me feel, far from the theatre of war, some of the hardships involved in the words "c'est la guerre".

Just two days before the beginning of the Holiday Course Ramsgate like many other sea-side places was declared a "prohibited area" for alien enemies. The Germans were summoned to leave the town within forty-eight hours. I did so the very day this order was issued in the company of three compatriots, a school master, a student, and a lady-teacher. We went to Surrey, a village near Canterbury, where we took rooms. Meanwhile the assistant-director of the Holiday Course succeeded in getting a special permission from the police allowing the German and Austrian students of the Course to stay at Ramsgate. So we returned to our previous residence, very glad to be able to apply ourselves to our intended studies. The only thing we had to do according to the Aliens Restriction Orders of 1914, was to report ourselves at the police and to observe their orders. We were not allowed to travel farther than five miles from our dwelling-place. The other restrictions placed upon alien enemies and forbidding the possession of certain articles (fire-arms, camera, telephone, etc.) did not come into consideration for us, as none of us possessed suchlike things.

For the duration of the Course we remained unmolested. The town of Ramsgate was as quiet as before the outbreak of the war and the life and bustle on the sands was also the same. What reminded us of the war was only an unusual military activity on land, on sea, and in the air. On September 3, however, shortly after the Course was over, I met with a rather unpleasant adventure. In the afternoon, I had been out for a walk in the open country. Being by myself, I was reading a novel of Jerome's. On my way home a gentleman, the only person that I met, followed me without my taking notice of him. On arriving in a suburb of Ramsgate, I was suddenly surrounded by two policemen and

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this gentleman, and asked, if I had a map about me. Unfortunately I carried a small map of the environs of Ramsgate, taken out of a guide-book, in my note-book. In consequence of this I was arrested. Having a tall policeman on either side and followed by a group of children, I was led through the streets of the town to the police station. There the private man gave evidence that he saw me looking at a map when he met me on his walk, and suspected me of being a spy, as he knew me to be a German. I replied that he was mistaken in taking my little book for a map, that the map I carried with me was quite an ordinary one, and that I was no spy, but a harmless walker. Then my accuser confessed that he was "not quite sure" that it was a map which I was holding in my hands. Nevertheless all my pockets were minutely searched and every scrap of paper examined. But as nothing incriminating could be found, I was released.

Five days later I was to come to the police station again. The War Office had issued an order that every German of military age still residing in a "prohibited area" was to be imprisoned. So I was rearrested, although I had got a permit for three months from the police, and at once interned in the criminels cell, a dismally small and dark room, the only furniture of which consisted in a wooden bench. Fortunately I was not alone there. My two above-mentioned countrymen and another German, a merchant, were my fellow-victims. They had been here already for some hours. Soon after we were all conducted by three policemen to the Railway Station and taken to Dover by train. At Dover Castle, the aspect of which had impressed me so much on my arriving in England, we were handed over to the military authorities and interned in the detention room, a cellar-like jail. There we passed the night almost without sleep, partly on account of our excitement, partly because we were not accustomed to lie on boards. Next day each of us had to undergo an interrogation before the major of the fortress. We were questioned about our doings in England, and our papers were examined. Although nothing incriminating could be found, the major declared that it was most suspicious for us to come to England only few weeks before the outbreak of the war, and that all of us are made prisoners of war. For the rest of the day we were allowed to walk to and fro between the walls before our detention room, a space of about fifteen yards long by three yards wide. Though the weather was fine, not

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a ray of sun penetrated here. As we had nothing to do, the day seemed as if it would never end. We passed another night under lock and key. Early next morning we were to make ourselves ready to be conducted by a military escort to a concentration camp. Passing down the hill on which the Castle stands we were struck by the wonderful panorama that offered itself to our eyes. But our thoughts soon returned to the stern reality of our unenviable situation, when we were mocked at by some inhabitants in the streets of Dover. At the Harbour Station we got into a train without knowing our destination.

As a Prisoner of War in a Concentration Camp.

Late in the afternoon we arrived at Frith Hill Camp near Aldershot. There were two compounds enclosed by barbed wire entanglements and a high fence. The compound I entered was at the time populated by some two thousand people, a most mixed company. There were German, Austrian, and Hungarian subjects together; sailors saved from the "Mainz" and the "Königin Luise", which were sunk at the very outset of the war; German infantry and cavalry men captured in France. But the great majority of prisoners were civilians; men of all classes were among them — prosperous merchants, workmen, teachers, clergymen, musicians, barbers and a great many waiters. There was, however, no social distinction whatever. Every one had the same rights and duties, the same treatment and the same food. This little German community on English ground was really very much like what is said to be the dream of socialism. I need not say that we all used our mother tongue, even those who, living in England for a great many years without associating with their countrymen, spoke English better than German.

Let us now see what our life in the camp was like. We lived in small round tents, twelve men in one, who just covered the floor when lying around. Each tent had chosen a "captain", who was responsible for the order in it. The civilian prisoners had to do no other work but what was necessary for their own requirements, that is to say, they had to fetch their rations; to prepare and to cook their meals; to saw and cleave the trunks

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of trees for the latter purpose; to wash up the dishes as well as their linen; to clean their tents. The occupants of a tent used to perform the different tasks by turns. Sometimes it was hard work, especially for gentlemen who had never practised suchlike things. When it was rainy or very windy, it was extremely difficult to get a fire for cooking the meals. For there were neither kitchens nor stoves (at least at the time when I was in the camp), but only self-dug holes in the earth, where we had to make our fire by means of fresh-cut wood. The hardest job of all, however, was the cleaning of the greasy boiling-kettle, plates, knives, and forks with nothing but cold water and sandy earth. But we had not got many of these useful implements. There were four plates, three spoons, and as many knives and forks for twelve men, so that only three could dine at the same time. The number of these implements, however, gradually increased, and was almost complete when I left the camp.

Now I may be expected to say a few words about the meals themselves. Breakfast consisted in tea with some condensed milk and bread. In default of cups, we took our tea out of empty tin-boxes. At noon we dined on boiled beef with potatoes, which were sometimes replaced by peas or beans. Towards five o'clock we took a third meal composed of tea and bread with some margarine. Tea and bread were sufficient; the portion of meat was rather small, and that of vegetables practically could not be smaller. But you cannot expect a prisoner to get rich meals. On the whole, I think, our daily food was nourishing enough. Besides, at the canteen, we could get light refreshments, such as milk, cheese, biscuits, jam. In addition to that, many prisoners, who had friends in England, were sent parcels containing eatables and warm clothing.

The latter was still more appreciated than the first. As every prisoner had got but one blanket up to September 21, we often felt very cold, the nights being at this season already cool and misty. We were sleeping on the boards covering the whole ground of the tent. Two small books which I happened to have about me, served me as a pillow for the head. Contrary to my expectation I soon got used to this hard couch, although I was accustomed to sleep in feather-beds.

Another manoeuvre-like feature of our camp life was the parade. Once, sometimes twice a day, we had to form ourselves

into rank and file in the open place opposite the tents. There we were counted and inspected by the commander of the camp, and sometimes examined by the doctor. Those who had wholly worn-out clothing or shoes got fresh underwear, socks, and boots. To tell the truth, we were not at all fond of this parade. As it took place about 10 a. m., we often had to leave our cooking fire, when we had just succeeded in kindling it. As soon as the sergeant gave the signal for the parade by a whistle, we had to run away at once, or we ran the risk of being interned in a special cage in a corner of the camp. It was also most unpleasant to be exposed for about a quarter of an hour to the wind blowing almost daily over the heath and flinging the dirty sand into our faces.

Besides the cold it was the dust that made us chiefly suffer not only outside, but also inside the tent, which may be easily understood when we realise that twelve men were living, dining, and sleeping in a tent of which the floor was 3 1/2 yards in diameter.

The frightful monotony of our camp life was interrupted by bright moments, which made us forget its hardships for a while. How happy we were when the fellow-prisoner that acted as a postman, sitting on a big water tank and distributing letters, called out our names. Those who were fond of sport had an opportunity of playing foot-ball at certain times. Every Sunday, a band of four men, who had taken their trumpets with them to the prison, gave a little concert, and professional acrobates gave a performance from time to time. But what made an ineffaceable impression on me, was the singing of our well known German national songs by a mighty chorus in the heart of England. On bright moonlight nights hundreds of prisoners would assemble at a certain spot of the camp to sing "Die Wacht am Rhein" and "Deutschland über alles", "Der gute Kamerad" and "Die teure Heimat". At that time and at that place every line of these songs had its full significance. They were therefore sung with enthusiasm and fervour. The pauses between the different airs were generally filled up by soldier songs coming from the neighbouring compound, which contained about 1500 captured soldiers.

So the camp life having its romantic side, it was instructive too. There I experienced how little we can live on and what enormous comfort and luxury we are all accustomed to in modern times. The living in tents without chairs, tables, and beds, the cooking of the meals over a fire in a hole of the ground, the use

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of self-made wooden spoons and forks, and of stone hammers reminded us of the simple mode of life of mankind in the stone age. In my captivity I also learnt to appreciate the blessing of freedom. It was a depressing feeling to see oneself confined for an indefinite period. The time spent in the camp was wasted, and, moreover, one was exposed to the various dangers of camp life. Needless to say that I endeavoured to get free by all means. Having found an influential protector in my previous landlord, I succeeded in this at last. This benevolent gentleman explained my case to the authorities and stood surety for me with the result that I was released on parole on September 25.

All's well that ends well.

My heart leaped for joy, as I was passing through the barbed wire. The fortnight's imprisonment seemed very much like two months. I took the next train for London accompanied by a young Hungarian student, who was released at the same time as myself. Three hours later we were at the comfortable York Hotel near Waterloo Station enjoying a hot bath and a good dinner.

A walk about London at that time reminded one of the war at every step. Companies of recruits, partly in uniforms, partly in civil dress, were marching through the streets whistling the Marseillaise or singing the popular Irish song "It's a long way to Tipperary"; in all public parks and squares as well as in the College yards soldiers were being trained; Belgian refugees wearing a black- yellow-red badge were looking at the curiosities of London; placards calling every able-bodied man to arms abounded all over the town; every omnibus and taxi carried in front the inscription "Join the army to-day" or "Enlist for the duration of war only". In the windows of shops and public houses, instead of "Man spricht deutsch" was to be read the notice "No Germans and Austrians employed here". By night a dangerous darkness prevailed in the streets of London, and many search-lights were slipping over the sky, which was a precautionary measure against a possible Zeppelin raid.

I lived together with my Hungarian friend with a kind American family as quietly as possible, as it becomes alien enemies. We attended the public lectures at some University Colleges and

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at the British Museum. We were, however, in a constant uncertainty as to what would happen with us to-morrow. Some newspapers, Evening News before all, demanded that all alien enemies should be interned, and at that time, further wholesale arrestings of Germans really took place both in London and in coast districts. But, as a matter of fact, we did not get into any more troubles. On the contrary, the English Government at last granted me a permit to leave England, which was an exception for a man of military age. This good chance was chiefly owing to the help and influence of a Dutchman, Rev. Dr. Oberman at Flushing, who had successfully undertaken the worthy task of bringing about an exchange of aliens in England and Germany.

My passport was made out for November 27. I left Victoria Station at 8 p. m. and arrived at Folkestone towards ten. After an hour's waiting on the platform, my papers were examined, and I was allowed to go on board the Dutch steamer, where I passed the night. When I got up next morning, the ship had already left the harbour. I arrived on deck just in time to see Dover Castle once more. It was with a light heart that I bad farewell to England. During the passage, there were always four men on the outlook for floating mines. Our ship met with three of them, which could, however, easily be avoided on account of the fine weather and the calm sea. Towards four o'clock, I landed safely at Flushing. Two hours later I took the train for Germany. Not long before midnight I arrived at Goch, more than happy to be on German ground again.

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