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Title: The Escaping Club

Author: A. J. Evans

Release Date: November 23, 2010 [EBook #34421]

Language: English

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ESCAPING CLUB ***

THE ESCAPING CLUB

by

[iii]

A. J. EVANS



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Publishers New York

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[iv]

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PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

TO
MY MOTHER

[v]

WHO, BY ENCOURAGEMENT AND DIRECT
ASSISTANCE, WAS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR
MY ESCAPE FROM GERMANY, I DEDICATE THIS
BOOK, WHICH WAS WRITTEN AT HER REQUEST.

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PART I

THE ESCAPING CLUB

CHAPTER I

CAPTURE

For over three months No. 3 Squadron had been occupied daily in ranging the heavy guns which night after night crept into their allotted positions in front of Albert. On July 1st 1916 the Somme offensive opened with gas and smoke and a bombardment of unprecedented severity. To the pilots and observers in an artillery squadron the beginning of this battle brought a certain relief, for we were rather tired of flying up and down, being shot at continually by fairly accurate and remarkably well hidden anti-aircraft batteries, while we registered endless guns on uninteresting points. On the German side of the trenches, before the battle, the country seemed almost peaceful and deserted. Anti-aircraft shells arrived and burst in large numbers, coming apparently from nowhere, for it was almost rare to see a flash on the German side; if one did, it was probably a dummy flash; and of movement, except for a few trains in the distance, there was none. Only an expert observer would know that the thin straight line was a light railway; that the white lines were paths made by the ration parties and reliefs following the dead ground when they came up at night; that the almost invisible line was a sunken pipe line for bringing water to the trenches, and that the shading which crept and thickened along the German reserve trenches showed that the German working parties were active at night if invisible in the day time. For the shading spelt barbed wire. [4]

Only about half a dozen times during those three months did I have the luck to catch a German battery firing. When that happened one ceased the ranging work and called up something really heavy, for preference a nine-inch howitzer battery, which pulverised the Hun.

When the battle had started the counter-battery work became our main task. It was wonderfully exciting and interesting. Nothing can give a more solid feeling of satisfaction than when, after

seeing the shells from the battery you are directing fall closer and closer to the target, you finally see a great explosion in a German gun-pit, and with a clear conscience can signal "O.K." During the battle we were much less worried by the anti-aircraft than we had been before. For some had been knocked out, some had retreated, and some had run out of ammunition, and in any case there were so many British planes to shoot at that they could not give to any one their undivided attention.

Up to July 16th, and possibly later, for I was captured on that day, German aeroplanes were remarkably scarce, and never interfered with us at our work. If one wished to find a German plane, it was necessary to go ten miles over the German lines, and alone. Even under these conditions the Germans avoided a fight if they could.

Shortly after the beginning of the battle, Long, my observer, and I were given a special job. We went up only at the direct orders of our Brigadier and did a continuous series of short reconnaissances as far over the lines as Bapaume and as far south as Cambrai. We had several fights, of which only the last, on July 14th, when we shot down our opponent after a manoeuvring fight lasting about ten minutes, has a direct bearing on our capture. The end of this fight came when, for perhaps twenty seconds, we flew side by side, and at the same time as Long shot down our opponent, he riddled us with bullets, and I was very lucky to get home without the machine catching fire. My machine was too bad to be repaired, and they sent me a second one from the Aviation Park. This seemed a splendid machine, and I can only attribute the failure of the engine, which led to our capture, to a bullet in the magneto or petrol tank, probably the former. Whatever the cause, on July 16th, during an early morning reconnaissance, the engine suddenly stopped dead at 4000 feet. We must have been just N.E. of Bapaume, ten miles over the line, at the time, and I turned her head for home and did all I could; but there is very little one can do if the engine stops. After coming down a couple of thousand feet I began to look about for a landing-place away from houses and near a wood if possible, and told Long to get out matches. Just at that moment the fiery rocket battery near the one sausage balloon, which remained to the Germans after the anti-balloon offensive of July 4th, opened fire on us, and I had to dodge to avoid the rockets. By the time they had stopped firing at us we were about 500 feet from the ground, and I heard a good deal of rifle fire, apparently at us. As my engine showed no signs of coming to life again, I picked out an open field where I thought we should have time to set fire to the machine in comfort before the Germans came up. I was only up about 200 feet or less when I found we were landing almost on top of a German battery, of whose existence I had had no idea. I don't think the position of this battery was known to our people, but I may be wrong, as I temporarily lost my bearings while dodging those infernal rockets. As soldiers from the battery could be seen running out with rifles in their hands towards the spot where we obviously had to land, and as I much doubted whether we should have time to fire the machine, I determined when I was about 50 feet from the ground to crash the machine on landing. This I managed pretty successfully by ramming her nose into the ground instead of holding her off, and we had a bad crash. [5]

I found myself hanging upside down by my belt. I was a bit shaken but unhurt, and got out quickly. Long was staggering about in a very dazed condition near the machine, and the Germans were about 50 yards away. I got a matchbox from him and crawled under the machine again, but found, firstly, that I could not reach the petrol tap, and in spite of the machine being upside down, there was no petrol dripping anywhere; and, secondly, that Long in his dazed condition had handed me a box without any matches in it. The Germans were now about 25 yards off, and I thought of trying to set the thing on fire with the Lewis gun and tracer bullets, but I could not find the gun. I think Long must have thrown it overboard as we came down. We were then surrounded by soldiers—they were a filthy crowd, but showed no signs of unpleasantness. An officer, whose face I disliked, came up, and, saluting very correctly, asked me to hand over all my papers and maps. Rather than be searched, I turned out my own and Long's pockets for him. In doing so, I found to my horror that I had my diary on me! Why, I can't think, as I was always most careful to go up without any paper of importance, and particularly without my diary. However, I managed to keep it from the Germans, and got rid of it about an hour later without being detected. We walked with the German officer to the Gondcourt road, and I was glad to see as we went away, that the machine seemed thoroughly smashed up. The propeller was smashed and nose plate obviously bent badly; one wing and the under carriage were crumpled up. The elevator was broken, and it looked as if something had gone in the fuselage, but I could not be certain of that. Long was thoroughly shaken, and walked and talked like a drunken man. He kept on asking questions, which he reiterated in the most maddening way—poor chap—but to be asked every two minutes if you had been captured, when you are surrounded by a crowd of beastly Huns...! I own I was feeling pretty irritable at the time, and perhaps a bit shaken. It took Long several days to become anything like normal again, and I don't think he was completely right in his mind again for weeks. He was obviously suffering from concussion, and I think that he now remembers nothing of the smash nor of any events which took place for several hours afterwards. [6]

About 7 a.m., as far as I remember, a staff car picked us up and took us to Le Transloy. We were taken to one of the houses and given a couple of chairs in the yard. The place was apparently an H.Q., but what H.Q. I could not find out. I had seen about twelve English soldiers under guard as we came in, and after waiting for about two hours, we were marched off with them under escort of half a dozen mounted Uhlans. It was a pretty hot day, and we were both of us in very heavy flying kit and boots. Long was still much shaken, and walked with difficulty; in fact, I am doubtful whether he could have walked at all without my help. I amused myself talking to the guard and telling them how many prisoners and guns, etc., we had taken. After a march of several hours we [7]

reached Velu, very tired indeed. One incident which happened on the road is perhaps of interest. A woman waved to us in a field as we went by. I waved back, and this harmless action was instantly reported by one of the guard to an N.C.O., who rode back after the woman; but she, knowing the Germans better than we did, had disappeared by the time he had got there.

We had been at Velu for an hour or more when a crowd of orderlies learnt that we were officer aviators. They collected around us and assumed rather a threatening attitude, accusing us of having thrown bombs on to a hospital train a few days before. This was unfortunately true as far as Long was concerned, but as the train had no red cross on it, and was used to bring up troops as well as to take away wounded, we had a perfect right to bomb it, and anyhow could not possibly have told it was a hospital train. However, this was not the time for complicated explanations, so I lied hard for a very uncomfortable ten minutes. Just when things were looking really nasty an officer came up and took us off. We got into a staff car with him and were taken to Havrincourt to a big château—the H.Q. of the VI. Corps, I think.

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A young flying corps officer who spoke a little English came to question us. He seemed a very nice fellow, and was full of praise for the audacity of the R.F.C. and most interested to learn that Long had dropped the wreath for Immelmann. This wreath had been dropped on a German aerodrome a few days before, as an official token of the respect which the R.F.C. had felt for a great pilot.

On our journey to Cambrai we had three or four guards in the horse truck with us, but as it was a hot night the sliding door was left half open on one side, and about a foot on the other. If we had made a dash for it, we might have got clear away, but after discussing the scheme I rejected it, as Long was quite unfit for anything of the sort.

Some time before midnight we entered Cambrai fort. In Cambrai station I saw a train crammed with German wounded, and there were no red crosses marked on the train. The condition of the wounded in this train was very bad—extremely crowded and dirty.

We remained in Cambrai five or six days, and were rather uncomfortable and rather short of food, but a kind French lady in the town sent us in some of the necessities of life—tooth-brushes, shirts, socks, etc. The sleeping accommodation was not luxurious, but the blankets were not verminous, which was something to be thankful for.

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Whilst we were at Cambrai a German Intelligence officer took me to his room and had a long conversation with me. I refused to answer questions, so we discussed the war in general—who started it, the invasion of Belgium, our use of black troops, war in the colonies, about which he was particularly angry, quite forgetting, as I pointed out, that they began it by instigating rebellion in South Africa. He suggested that the Somme was an expensive failure, so I said, "What about Verdun?" Although I made one or two hits, he had his facts more at his fingers' ends than I had, and I think honors were about even!

Next day he took Long and myself off in a car and showed us over the Fokker squadron at Cambrai. The two pilots next for duty sat in their flying kit, in deck chairs, by the side of their planes and read novels; close behind them was a telephone in communication with the balloons, who notified them when the enemy aircraft ventured far over the lines. It seemed to me a pretty efficient arrangement, but of course suitable only for defensive and not for offensive tactics.

After we had been five or six days at Cambrai, and the number of prisoners had increased to nearly a thousand men and about a dozen officers, we were moved by train, the officers to Gütersloh, and the men, I think, to Münster. I cannot remember how long the journey took—about thirty hours, I believe. I am sure we had one night in the train, and I remember a good feed they gave us at a wayside station. I also remember remonstrating with a German officer, O.C. train, because he insisted on keeping shut the doors of the horse trucks in which the men were, causing them to be nearly suffocated with heat. During the journey I was rather surprised to find that we were nowhere insulted or cursed—very different to the terrible experiences of our early prisoners. Only in one station a poor devil, just off to the front in a crowded cattle truck, put his head in our carriage window and cursed the "verfluchte Schweinhunde" who were traveling second class and smoking cigars. After a reasonably comfortable journey we came to the prisoners-of-war camp at Gütersloh.

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CHAPTER II

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GUTERSLOH AND CLAUSTHAL

I believe the camp at Gütersloh had formerly been a lunatic asylum. It was composed of six or seven large independent barrack-like buildings. One of these buildings was a civilian camp, and one was a quarantine, used also as a solitary confinement or *Stubenarrest* prison; another was used as the quarters of the commandant. The ground was sandy, and I should think comparatively healthy and dry even in the wettest weather. In hot weather the heat was much accentuated, but there were patches of small pine trees in the camp which gave a pleasant shade. The camp area could not have been less than eight acres altogether, enclosed by two rows of barbed wire, with arc lamps every seventy yards or so. The prisoners comprised some 1200

officers—800 Russians, over 100 English, and the rest French or Belgians. We were marched up to the camp through a quiet village, and were put into the quarantine, where we remained for about a week. The morning after our arrival, we were medically inspected and questioned as to our name, rank, regiment, place of capture, age, where taught to fly, etc., all of which questions evoked a variety of mendacious and romantic answers. We were then put to bed in the quarantine and treated with some beastly anti-lice powder—most disagreeable! The food was insufficient in quarantine. We had no opportunity of taking exercise, and were all much bored and longed to be sent into the main camp, which we were told was the best in Germany. This was not far off the truth, as subsequent experience proved the administration and internal arrangements of this camp to be admirable.

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Originally English, Russian, and French prisoners had lived all mixed up together, but now the nationalities were mainly in separate buildings, and always in separate rooms. In the English building there was a common room in which there was a daily English paper and two monthly magazines, all typewritten in the camp. From an artistic point of view the magazines were excellent, rather after the style of *Printer's Pie*, and the daily paper consisted of leading articles, correspondence, and translations out of German papers.

The canteen was very well run by a Russian on the co-operative share system, but when I was there it was becoming more and more difficult to buy goods in Germany. I don't think any food could be bought in the canteen, but wine, and, I think, whisky also, could be obtained, as well as tennis racquets, knives, books, pencils, boxes, and tobacco of all sorts.

The feeding in the camp was very bad indeed, the quantity quite insufficient, and most of it almost uneatable. However, we were hungry enough to eat it with avidity when we first came in.

Most wisely the Germans gave us ample facilities for playing games in the camp. There were ten tennis courts, and two grounds large enough for hockey and football, so we spent our time in playing tennis and exchanging lessons in modern languages, for which of course there were unique opportunities. We had two roll-calls a day, which lasted about ten minutes each, but otherwise the Germans interfered with us very little, and I think most of us found the first month or two of captivity a real rest cure after the strain and excitement of the Somme battle. I did, at any rate.

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Long and I had been less than three weeks in this place when all those flying officers who had been captured on the Somme were removed from Gütersloh to Clausthal. Looking back on the life at Gütersloh, one thing strikes me more now than it did whilst I was there, and that is the fact that all the officers, with the exception of a small section of the Russians, had apparently abandoned all hope of escaping. The defenses of the camp were not strong enough to be any reason for this lack of enterprise, and I can only attribute it to the encouragement and opportunities given by the Germans for game-playing, which successfully turned the thoughts of the prisoners from escaping.

Of the journey to Clausthal, in the Harz Mountains, I only remember that it was quite comfortable, and that we arrived at night. The camp was about a mile up from the station, and we were let through a barbed wire fence and into a wooden barrack. For the next eight days we remained shut up in this place, and it was only with difficulty that we were allowed to have the windows open. There were three of these wooden barracks and a hotel or Kurhaus inside the barbed wire. This was the best German camp for food that I was in, and I think it would be possible to live on the food the Germans gave us. After eight days' quarantine we were let out into the camp. Long and I, and a captain in the R.F.C. who had been lately captured, called Nichol, had a little room together in the wooden barrack. On the whole, life was pleasant at Clausthal. The Germans were very polite, and the sentries were generally friendly.

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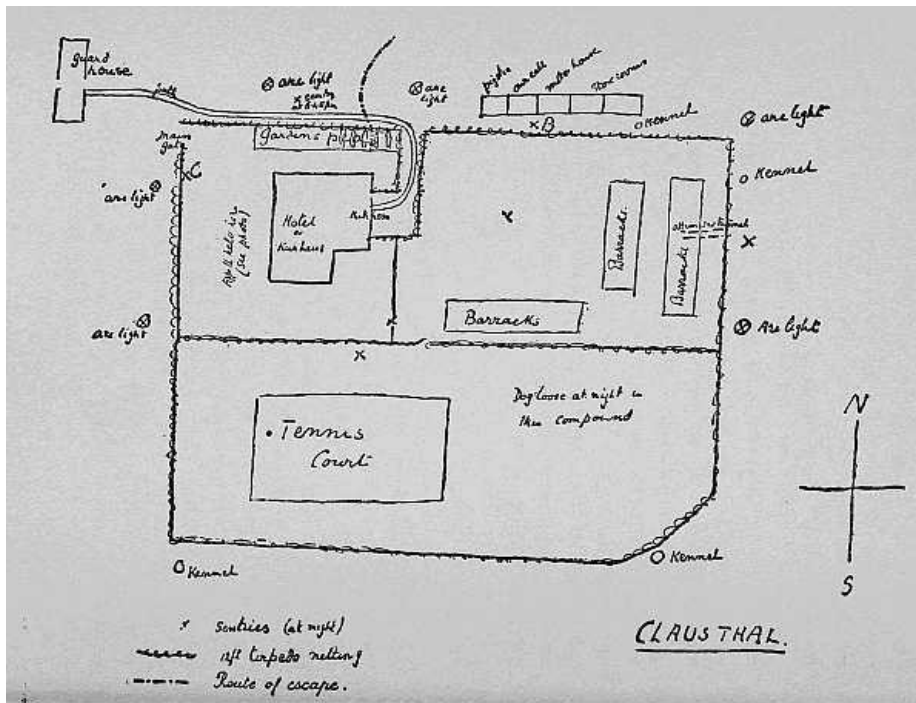
We passed the time at Clausthal in much the same way as we had done at Gütersloh. If anything, it was more peaceful and pleasant, and the country surrounding the camp, where we sometimes went for walks, was beautiful. The Harz Mountains are a well-known German health resort, so that by the middle of September I was feeling so remarkably fit, and was getting such an overpowering aversion to being ordered about by the Germans, that, encouraged by a young Belgian called Kicq, I began to think very seriously of escaping. When I had been about six weeks at Clausthal I was given details by one of the conspirators of a scheme for escaping from the camp by a tunnel. Apparently two of the party had struck work, and owing to this I was offered a place. I was not surprised that some one had downed tools, when I saw the unpleasant and water-logged hole which was to be our path of freedom. The idea was rather a good one, but it was too widely known in the camp for the scheme to have any chance of success, and after working it for three weeks we abandoned it. In the first place because the tunnel became half full of water, and secondly, because we had reason to believe the Germans had learnt of its existence and were waiting to catch us red-handed—a suspicion which was afterwards confirmed. I was very glad, for there were never less than two inches of water when I worked there, and it was a horrible job, as all tunneling is.

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About this time Kicq suggested that we should escape by train, which he felt sure was possible if we were suitably dressed. I was of the opinion that there were too many difficulties in the way to make it worth while trying, but he eventually talked me over and told me that long train journeys had already been done by Frenchmen. We then decided that we would go for Switzerland, the general opinion being that it was impossible to cross the Dutch border, as it was guarded by electric wire, dogs, and several lines of sentries. It was absolutely necessary to our plans to have a clear start of seven or eight hours without an alarm, and when our tunnel had to be abandoned

I despaired of getting out without being seen or heard. Kicq, as always, was ready to try anything, and produced scheme after scheme, to all of which I objected. The real difficulty was the dogs round the camp, and though there were numerous ways of getting out of the camp, in all his schemes it was heavy odds on our being seen and the alarm being given. We both thought it was too late in the year to walk (nonsense, of course, but I did not know that then); and where should we walk to, since the Dutch frontier was impossible? As an English major said to me, "The frontier is guarded against spies who have friends on both sides and know every inch of the ground; how can you, tired prisoners of war, with no maps worth having—no knowledge and no friends—hope to cross?" I was further discouraged by a rumor that there were new railway regulations about showing passes which would make it quite impossible for us to travel by train. About that time I got into conversation with one of the German sentries, and bribed him with half a pat of butter to allow me to speak to a prisoner who was supposed to be in solitary confinement. At the end of a week the sentry had agreed to help me to escape, as long as the plan did not in any way implicate him. He told me that, speaking German as well as I did, I should have no difficulty in going by train, and that there were no passes to be shown or anything of that sort. I agreed to send 500 marks to his wife if I got away by his help. A day or two later I suddenly saw the way to get out. I was walking round with one of the tunnel conspirators at the time, and pointed it out to him. Then I found Kicq and told him we would depart on Monday. He, of course, was delighted, and ready to fall in with anything I might suggest. For some time our plans and preparations had been completed as far as possible; money had been no obstacle, as there were many men in the camp who had 20 or 30 marks, German money, and I managed to collect 80 and Kicq 120 marks. He had already got a civil outfit, and I had got a cap from an orderly. We decided not to take rucksacks but a traveling-bag, and I bought just the thing in the canteen. I was going to take an empty rucksack in the bag so that we could divide the weight afterwards, as we intended to walk the last 40 kilometres. We knew we could catch a 2.13 a.m. train at Goslar (a small town about 15 kilometres due north of Clausthal), and after that we had to trust to luck to find trains to take us *via* Cassel to Rotweil, a village near the Swiss frontier. The one difficulty remaining was a suit of civilian clothes for me. There was an English flying officer in the camp whose uniform had been badly spoilt when he had been brought down. In consequence, he had been allowed to buy a suit of civilian clothes in Cambrai. He was still wearing these; in fact, he had nothing else to wear. The Germans had been most unwilling to let him continue in possession of these clothes, and always had their eye on them and of course intended to confiscate them as soon as his uniform turned up from England. This fellow agreed to allow me to steal his clothes. It was a most courageous thing to do, as he would certainly have got fourteen days' imprisonment for it, in spite of the evidence which would be produced to prove that the clothes were stolen quite unknown to him. As it happened, this theft was not necessary, as I was able to buy a new suit in the camp for 20 marks. It was green, and of the cheapest possible material; the jacket was of the Norfolk type with a belt, and buttoned up high in front at the neck. A black naval mackintosh, some German boots, a pair of spectacles, and a cloth cap completed my equipment. The suit had been bought over a year before from a German tailor who had been allowed to come into the camp to do ordinary repairs. This fellow had brought with him a number of civilian suits, which had been bought up in a very short time. A few days afterwards the Germans got to hear of this, and gave orders that all civilian suits in the camp were to be confiscated and the money would be returned. Needless to say, no one owned to having a suit, and a mild search failed to unearth any of them.

We intended to escape on Monday, because Tuesday morning roll-call was at 11.30 a.m. instead of 9.30 a.m., and if we could get out unseen it would give us two hours more time before we were missed. On Friday I found out that two good fellows, Ding and Nichol, also intended to escape by the same method. We decided that all four of us would try. Naturally it was necessary to go on the same night, and Monday was selected. We tossed up who was to cut the wire and go first, and fortune decided for Ding and Nichol.



CLAUSTHAL.

CHAPTER III

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THE FIRST EVASION

A brief study of the plan of the camp and its defenses will make our plan of escape quite clear. The sentries are represented by \times , the arc lights by \odot , and the dogs in kennels by "O." All round the camp was iron wire torpedo netting, with two-inch mesh, about 12 feet high on iron poles. The gardens offered a very suitable hiding-place close to the wire-netting. At "G" was the German guardhouse, and "K" was the kitchen, and Germans used to pass frequently between the guardhouse and the kitchen along a footpath close to the wire. At 6.45 an extra sentry was placed outside the wire at "S," and it was not sufficiently dark to make the attempt till 6.30, so that we had a quarter of an hour to cut the wire and to find an opportunity to cross the path and reach the darkness behind the glare of the arc lights.

By far the greatest danger came, not from the sentries, but from stray Germans who used the footpath at frequent but irregular intervals. We agreed to give the other two five minutes' start so as not to interfere with their escape if we were caught getting out, and also to avoid being caught red-handed ourselves if they were seen and chased in the immediate vicinity of the camp. Longer we could not allow them, and even five minutes' delay would give us very little time before the extra sentry was posted at "S." On Monday night all went excellently up to a point. The sentries marched with commendable regularity up and down their beats. At 6.30 the four of us were changed and ready. There were so many different uniforms in the camp, and so many officers habitually wore garments of a nondescript character, that in the dusk we were able to mingle with the other prisoners without drawing attention to ourselves. A minute later Ding entered the peas and began to cut the wire. He had scarcely started when a German walking on the footpath passed a few inches from his nose. Ding felt sure he had been seen and retreated hurriedly. We waited anxiously for a minute or two, prepared to rush to our rooms and change and hide our kit if there were any signs of alarm. Then Nichol went round to investigate, and taking the pincers entered once more into the garden and prepared to cut the wire. The German had certainly not seen Ding in the garden, but how he had escaped being seen coming out, considering the commotion he made, passes my comprehension. Kicq and I had a rapid consultation, and decided that it was too late to escape that night, so we sent a friend round to tell Nichol not to cut the wire, and we all retreated and changed, feeling rather crestfallen. At 6.45 Ding suddenly remembered that he had left his greatcoat in the peas close up by the wire. This was most gallantly rescued by Nichol under the nose of the sentry. The attempt had been a failure, but not a disaster.

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Kicq and I decided to wait another week, for we wished to make certain that the Germans were not keeping an eye on the place in order to catch us red-handed, and Monday was the most suitable day. Ding dropped out; and Nichol, who did not speak German and consequently could not come with us, said he would not get another partner, firstly, because Kicq and I would have a better chance without a second party following us, and, secondly, because it was getting rather late in the year for walking. Nichol offered to cut the wire for us, and this offer we were only too pleased to accept, for we knew he was absolutely reliable, and it would save us from dirtying our clothes. During the week Kicq and I changed our plans and determined to go straight by the through train which left Goslar at 2.13 a.m. to Düsseldorf, and then try to find a Dutch bargee on

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the Rhine, who could be bribed to take us as far as the frontier and could probably give us information as to the best method of crossing if he could not take us through himself. This plan was obviously better than the long and complicated train journey to Switzerland.

The only result of last Monday's failure was to convince us that, unless real bad luck or unforeseen circumstances intervened, we were certain to get clear away. We revised and perfected details and equipment, raised some more money for the purpose of giving a larger preliminary bribe to the bargee, got some tracings of maps for the night march to Goslar, and began to feel pretty confident. I don't think there is anything that I have ever done quite so exciting as escaping from prison. It may not be the same for other men who have tried both fighting in the air and escaping, but I know that for me the "nervous tension" before the latter is much greater than anything I have experienced at the front. Once in the middle, one has not time to be nervous in either case. It is the necessity of walking and talking and acting as if nothing were about to happen, right up to the moment of going, which is such a strain.

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I think there were only half a dozen people in the camp who knew that Kicq and I were going, though many knew that Ding and Nichol had tried a week before. It was very necessary to keep the knowledge, not only from the Germans, but also from the foreign members of the camp, as one can never be quite certain that there is not a spy or some one in German pay among them. For obvious reasons it would be very much more difficult to introduce a spy amongst the English, but it is a good rule that the fewer who know the better.

On Monday night at 6 o'clock Kicq and I had a good feed with Nichol on sardines and jam, and then changed into our civilian clothes. At 6.30 Nichol was timed to go in and cut the wire. We walked round the hotel, and I deposited the bag in a dark spot by "M." We then took a turn or two up and down. We had only to wait about five minutes, when Nichol appeared and said, "The wire is cut, but I am not sure if the hole is large enough to get through; take the cutters" (a pair of sharp nail pincers which had been stolen off the German electrician), "as you may have to enlarge it." The sentry at "C," a fat old Landsturmer, chose to stand still instead of going up and down his beat, but he only glanced very occasionally towards "M," and we thought the moment favorable. This time we made no mistake about it. Kicq and I walked round to "M," stood a moment on the path, and had a look round. "C" had his back turned—"B" was at the far end of his beat. I took the bag and put it among the peas. Then in went Kicq, and I after him—he was through the hole in no time. I passed the bag through to him and came through myself, and we were across the lighted-up strip and into the darkness behind the arc lights inside six seconds. We went at full speed for a hundred yards or so, then, as there was no alarm, we stopped and looked back. Everything was quite quiet and we could see the sentries walking up and down on their beats under the electric lights, so we shook hands on the success of the first phase. Meanwhile Nichol, having seen us off and done his best to close the hole, strolled back round the building and there met Kicq's friend and confidant, a Belgian captain, an excellent fellow but rather an excitable conspirator. "C'est bien l'heure," said the Captain, "ils doivent partir tout de suite ou il sera trop tard." "Ils sont déjà partis," said Nichol. With a cry of joy, the captain fell on his neck and kissed him.

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CHAPTER IV

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WHAT HAPPENED TO KICQ

We now felt pretty safe from immediate pursuit, and turning off to the right we made a semicircle round the camp and crossed the causeway between the two lakes. There was a good chance that our absence would not be discovered for another sixteen hours, that is, till the 11.30 roll-call next morning. We had about 16 to 20 kilometres to go to Goslar station, but as it was not yet 7 o'clock, and as our train left at 2.13 a.m., we had heaps of time. Besides this, Kicq knew the first 6 miles or so, having been that way on a walk. The walk to Goslar was almost without incident. We had two compasses, which had been made in the camp by a Belgian, and we had a sketch map of the way, which was mostly through pine forests. We were really overcautious and made wide detours round houses and took great pains not to meet any one on the road. All this was most unnecessary, as our civilian kit was quite good as I afterwards proved, and we both spoke German well enough to pass off as Germans for a few words. After walking fast for a couple of hours we found we were much ahead of time and so halted for half an hour at the foot of the Brechen, a huge tower built for sight-seeing purposes on the highest hill in the neighborhood. Soon after half-past one we entered Goslar and walked boldly through the town, saying what we had to say to each other in German; but we only saw one man, who took no notice of us. The station was easily found, and as there were twenty minutes before the train started we sat on a bench at the side of the road and waited till 2.05 a.m. before entering the station. Kicq wished to buy tickets for both of us, but I insisted on our having nothing to do with one another during the journey. We decided that Kicq was to go in first and buy a ticket for Düsseldorf if the train went as far, and if not, for Elberfeld. At 2.05 a.m. I followed him at about 150 yards distance into the station, and found that the booking office was not yet open, and that some dozen people were waiting to take tickets. Our appearance apparently caused no suspicion, and we both of us examined the time-tables on the walls in the hope of finding out if the train went to Düsseldorf. I should very much like to have known how much the ticket would cost, but could get no

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information on either point. Kicq looked a proper Hun in knee-breeches, dark puttees, brown boots, a German cape, and no hat. The fashion of going bareheaded had scarcely come in then, though hat cards had been lately introduced. Kicq told me afterwards that my own mother would not have known me. I wore a pair of gold-rimmed glasses and walked with a bit of a stoop and a limp. My clothes were green, with a collar that buttoned right up to the neck. I wore an ordinary black cap, and carried a black mackintosh over my arm. We both of us had our hair cut short, and our moustaches had been training for some time and curled up a bit at the ends. At last the ticket office was opened and we got into the queue. I could not hear what ticket Kicq took, so I said, "Dritte nach Düsseldorf Schnellzug" when my turn came. The clerk made some remark which I did not catch, so I added another 5 marks to the 20-marks note which I had put down. He had apparently asked if I had any small change, as he pushed back my 5-marks note and gave me a lot of change and my ticket. I pretended to count it and then stuffed it into my pocket and was jolly glad to get that business over. After I had taken my ticket I lost sight of Kicq, but the man who clipped my ticket at the barrier told me from what platform the train for Düsseldorf went. I put my bag down and sat in a dark corner on one of the benches and lit a German cigar. Kicq was walking up and down, and I did so too, though we took no notice of each other. The train was rather late, and I dared not go near my bag as an officer and a girl were standing close to it. When the train came in and I picked up the bag the girl gave me a suspicious look, but she did not have time to say anything, as I grabbed the bag and scrambled into a third-class coach. I did not see Kicq again till we met once more in prison.

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Before I go any farther with my story, I will tell you how Kicq was caught. He told me about it in prison, but I cannot be certain that I have remembered all the details accurately. He got into a third-class coach and stood in the corridor. After he had been there a short time an officer came up and talked to him, and as the train rocked about a good deal they had to shout to make themselves heard. The officer did not seem to suspect anything wrong with the accent. Kicq talked German perfectly fluently, but in my opinion he has rather a curious accent. In answer to a question he told the officer that he had been on a walking tour, during his holiday, in the Harz Mountains, and numerous other lies. When asked if he had served in the army he said he had been paralyzed in the arm from infancy, and then was forced to tell more lies of a complicated nature. Kicq swore the fellow did not suspect anything, but was merely a conscientious ass. Evidently the officer asked to be allowed to look at Kicq's passport. Kicq said he was sorry he had not got it on him; he had never found it necessary to carry a passport, and he had never been asked for it before. The officer said that any letters he had on him would do, just to prove his identity. Kicq answered that for the last few days he had been walking and he had received no letters. The Bosche, apologizing, said he was sorry he would have to ask him to identify himself by telephone from the next station, but that he was officially bound to do so under the circumstances. Kicq said that of course he would be delighted to do so, and went to the lavatory, where he got rid of everything by which it would be possible to identify him as a prisoner of war. At the next station he intended to bolt as soon as the train stopped, but for some reason he had no chance of doing so. At the next station he said he was a Swiss deserter, and refused to give his name for the sake of the honor of his family. During the next twenty hours he told the most amazing number of lies, and at the end was very nearly sent to a civilian camp to be interned there pending investigations. Of course that was just what he wanted, as he had managed to hide money on his person and was quite confident that he would have no difficulty in escaping from any civilian camp. Unfortunately he was identified by an Unteroffizier sent from Clausthal for the purpose. But if he had not succeeded in his main object, he had at any rate concealed his identity for twenty-four hours, and thereby greatly increased my chances.

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To return to my story. After getting into the third-class coach I made my way along the corridor, looking for a seat. The train was rather crowded, and the first carriage I tried to get into was half full of soldiers. I asked if there was a seat free, and was told, "Nur militärisch." By this time I had completely got over all feelings of nervousness, and was thoroughly enjoying the whole situation. A little farther on a young fellow saw I was looking for a place, and coming out into the corridor said he was getting out next station and I could have his corner place. This suited me very well, as I got a seat next to a woman. So I sat in the corner, pulled the curtain over my face, and went to sleep. I did not wake up again till we got to Elberfeld about 6 a.m. At Elberfeld a number of people got in, and the carriage was crowded with business men. A pretty lively discussion started, and I was afraid of being asked for my opinion, so I buried myself in the paper I had bought at Elberfeld and soon pretended to be asleep again. We got to Düsseldorf between 8 and 9, I think. I could see no signs of Kicq as I got out, and not caring to loiter about too much on the platform I went through the barrier and waited about in the main hall, through which he would have to pass to leave the station. After waiting for ten minutes I became anxious about him, and turned over all the probabilities in my mind. (1) He might have been recaptured in the train. (2) He might have taken a ticket to Elberfeld, under the impression the train only went as far as that. In this case he would come on soon, and I searched the time-tables without much success to find out when the next train from Elberfeld to Düsseldorf came in. (3) He might be waiting for me in some other part of the station, but as it was obviously easier for him to come out through the barrier than for me to go in, I decided that I was waiting in the most suitable place and had better stay there for a bit. In the meantime, according to our scheme, I asked for a plan of the town from a bookstall. The old man who sold it to me had to get it from the main bookstall, and then chatted very pleasantly to me on the weather, the war, and the increase of paper money with every new war loan. I confined my remarks to "Ja wunderschön," "Da haben Sie recht," "Ja wohl, es geht nicht so schlimm," "Kolossal," etc., but nevertheless began to get enormous confidence in my German. I also bought a local time-table. After waiting for about half an hour I

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did not like the way an old fellow in uniform, a sort of station official, was looking at me, so with the help of my plan I made my way to the river. I spent the next four hours in Düsseldorf, going to the station at intervals to see if Kicq had turned up. Our plan was to get hold of a Dutch bargee, so that I thought I had almost as good a chance of meeting him on the riverside as at the station, besides which the aforesaid old man at the station had got a nasty suspicious look in his eye. I bought some apples from an old lady in the market-place by the river, and then went to a quiet spot and ate some sandwiches and considered the situation. As far as I could see, there was nothing at all promising in the way of bargees on the river. I knew that an English officer had escaped from Crefeld, and that from Crefeld to the frontier was only about twenty or thirty miles. I soon saw from my time-table that I could get a tram to Crefeld across the Rhine, so I inspected the bridge over the Rhine, and as far as I could see no passes were asked for, from those going over in the tram. Before I did anything more, it seemed to me absolutely necessary to have some sort of map of the frontier, so I determined to try to buy one. I walked back once more along the riverside, and, as it was hot, tried to buy some milk in a milk shop. The woman said something about a milk card, so I said, "Ah, I forgot," and walked out. I went back once more to the station by tram (I was getting tired of lugging my bag about, and used the trams pretty freely). On the way there I went into a bookshop and bought a map of Nord Deutschland and then asked for a Baedeker. The woman said she did not think she was allowed to sell that, and called her husband, who turned out to be a German N.C.O. He said that, owing to the number of suspicious persons, spies, prisoners of war, etc., he had to be very careful to whom he sold maps. I said, "Natürlich, das verstehe ich wohl" (Naturally, I can well understand that). Just then I caught sight of a map marked "Umgebungen von Krefeld" (The Neighborhood of Crefeld), and asked to look at it. It was just what I wanted, an excellent map of Crefeld to the frontier, about 1:100,000. I bought this and cleared out, without, I think, arousing any suspicion. My confidence in my German was now "kolossal"! There was, of course, no sign of Kicq at the station, so I took the tram for the park in order to have lunch and a quiet look at my map. After I had been there a short time and had made up my mind as to my plan of campaign, I noticed an old gentleman observing me in a suspicious manner. He was obviously stalking me and trying to get a better look at me and my map. I waited till he had gone round a bush and then packed up rapidly, walked round another bush, and going through a sort of shrubbery got out of the park and boarded the first tram I saw. After traveling I know not where on this, I got out, and making my way to the river, strolled once more along the docks, keeping a lookout for Kicq, and then walked up the main street (always carrying my bag) to Prince Afold Platz, from where my tram to Crefeld started. A pointsman showed me the place from which the trams left every half-hour, so after one more visit to the station I caught the one o'clock tram. The girl conductress on the tram said I was on the wrong tram when I asked for my ticket. She gave me the ticket, however, and told me to get out at the first station over the Rhine and get into the next tram. At the first station over the Rhine I got out, and seeing a Bierhalle asked for a glass of beer. I had just given the woman a mark when my tram came in, so without waiting for the change I grabbed my bag and made off. She ran after me, but I pointed to the tram and called, "It does not matter, I have no time," and boarded the tram.

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CHAPTER V

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THE FRONTIER

When we got to Crefeld I saw that the station was on the east side of the town, but after my experience at Düsseldorf I thought it would be much safer to walk boldly right through the middle of the town than to skirt round the edges. My brother was at this time interned at Crefeld, and I thought how amusing it would be if I were to meet him in the town and wondered if he would keep a straight face when I winked at him. The walk through the town was without incident. One fellow, in Landsturm uniform, a prison guard I should think, turned round and looked at me in a nasty way, perhaps recognizing my likeness to my brother, but I walked quickly on and nothing came of it. It must have been just after 2 p.m. when I got through into the open country on the southwest side of Crefeld, and a more horrible country I have never seen; it was absolutely flat, no trees and no signs of cover of any sort. There were one or two disused factories, which I inspected, but did not like the look of them as hiding-places. I passed several parties of French soldiers working in the fields, but did not dare to speak to them. The day was very hot and my bag was very heavy, and I could not help feeling I was rather a suspicious figure wandering about through the fields with a heavy traveling-bag within 20 miles of the frontier. It was a most unpleasant walk, and at times I thought of just throwing myself down in the middle of a field of roots, but the country was so flat that I could never be quite sure that someone would not see me crawling into them. It was not till 3.30 that I found a small alder copse with thick undergrowth, which I thought would do. There were a number of people working in the fields quite close to it, but I walked by them and round the copse, and putting the copse between them and me I doubled back into it. It was quite a small copse, about 50 by 20 yards, with thick rank grass in between the clumps. The people outside were only about 50 yards from me, and I could hear them talking and laughing. Still I was very comfortable and there were no tracks, and when I had made up some yarn to tell them if I was discovered, I went to sleep. Later on I opened a tin of Oxford sausages and had a good meal. Once a dog came through hunting rabbits, and once a man and a girl came quite close, but neither disturbed me. I began to find things very tedious and

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looked forward to the night's walk. Soon after 10 p.m. I started out from my hiding-place and walked hard with very few rests till 5.30 next morning, when I found a good place to lie up in. Considering the amount of energy expended, I made very little progress. Many detours were necessary to avoid the villages and houses, and for the most part I walked across country by small paths which were very clearly shown on my excellent map. However, my bag and the going were both heavy, and three-quarters of an hour's halt between 1 and 2 a.m. and some hot cocoa were most refreshing. At one place where there was a level crossing a man came to open the barrier, so I took the initiative and said, "Nach Anrath gerade aus?" (Straight on to Anrath?) He said, "Ja wohl," and opened the gate. (After that I always kept the name of the next village of which I was sure of the pronunciation in my head, so as to be able to ask my way there.)

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At about 5 o'clock I was pretty tired and found myself with the large village of Süchteln in front of me, through which I had to pass, as it is on a river. I funked it, as the bridge over the river was such an obvious place to have a sentry. After thinking it out, I decided it would be less suspicious to go through just after daylight when there were a few people about, so I lay up and went to sleep in a bush in the middle of a water meadow. When I woke up, shivering with the cold, it was about 5.30 and still dark, so I crossed the road and found a splendid warm spot in the middle of a haycock, which completely covered me up. Still, I thought, they might cart the hay that day; so at 6.15 a.m., when it was just getting light, I walked boldly through the village. There were one or two people about, but they took no interest in me. At 6.30 I had found an excellent hiding-place on the far side of the town. It was rather hot all day, and I had no water-bottle and suffered from thirst a good deal, but otherwise it was very pleasant, being up in the thick bushes on the top of an old gravel pit. The time seemed very long, and in the afternoon I very foolishly wandered about a bit in the woods. I was seen by one man, but I don't think he was suspicious, and so making a short detour I got back to my hiding-place. That is the worst of being alone; it is almost impossible not to do foolish things.

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I started off again about 9.30 p.m., hoping to cross the frontier that night. I was about 10 miles from the frontier, but reckoned that it would be necessary to walk nearly 15 miles if I wanted to avoid all the villages, as the country was very thickly populated. There is nothing much to say about this night's walk—it was much like the other, though I suffered rather more from thirst. At all the places where there was water there were also houses, and I did not dare to stop. I managed to quench my thirst to a certain extent by chewing roots from the fields. Unfortunately, after crossing the canal, I took a wrong road and went many miles southwest instead of west, and found myself in a long straggling village. Fortunately for my nerves there were very few dogs (very different, as I found afterwards, from Bavaria), and after walking through about two miles of village I extricated myself and got into the big wood on the frontier at about 4.30 a.m. It was a very wild spot, and rather like some thickly wooded parts of Scotland. It was also very hilly, with ridges of thick heather or long grass between almost impenetrable fir woods. I had an extremely pleasant sleep in the heather, and at 6.30 a.m. decided that I would move on cautiously. It was an ideal place for stalking, and I thought I would try and locate the frontier in the day time and if possible find out what obstacles I had before me. From my map it appeared that I had about 3 kilometres of forest between me and the frontier, but of course I did not know whether the guards would be placed exactly on the frontier. It seemed to me at the time absolutely essential, and even now I think I was quite right, to try to find out by day exactly where the sentries' line was. For all I knew there might be electrified wires, and on a dark night in the forest one was more likely than not to walk straight into them without ever seeing them at all. The rides would almost certainly be guarded, and the woods were so thick that it was impossible to crawl through them without making an awful noise. I know now that a forest is not only the most obvious place to try and cross the frontier, and for that reason the best guarded, but under any conditions, and for many reasons, the open country is the best place to try. However, I felt pretty confident that I should see the sentries before they saw me, so I went forward cautiously, examining every ride before I went down it. I went slowly through the woods for about three hours, in a west or northwest direction, steering by compass, and then began to think I must be getting pretty near the frontier. I was confirmed in this idea by finding a well used path down one of the rides, so I crawled into the wood at the side and lay down to think it out and have lunch. While I was sitting there a soldier wheeling a bicycle came down the path. When he had gone I crawled out to the edge of the ride and had a good look around. Almost north of me I could make out the roof of a house through the trees with a flagstaff and flag beside it. Like a fool, I never grasped that that was the frontier blockhouse—and then I suddenly saw a figure half a mile away, with something on his shoulder, cross the end of the ride—a soldier with a rifle, I thought, but could not be sure.

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After resting till about 10.30 I retraced my steps to look for a bit of map which had fallen out of my pocket, but was unable to find it. However, it did not matter, as the map was no longer of much use to me. Once on the move I felt very restless and not a bit tired, and as the cover was so good I determined to try and find out a bit more about the frontier. I found a ride leading in the right direction and followed that along very cautiously, mostly on my hands and knees, crawling through thick heather. I crossed two more rises without seeing anyone, and still crawled on. It was really madness to go any farther now, but it all seemed so safe and the woods were so thick that the necessity seemed to me greater than the danger. It only shows the great advantage of having a friend with you when you escape—if Kicq had been there I am sure we should both of us have got across; alone, it is almost impossible to refrain from taking undue risks. It is partly overconfidence and partly boredom with doing nothing, and partly a sort of reckless and restless feeling which comes over every one, I think, at times. Buckley and I, when we got away some six months later, nearly always adopted the more cautious of two plans. The occasions on which the more cautious advice was abandoned in favor of the more reckless, though few, three times

nearly led to disaster. On this first expedition of mine I had no rules and regulations for escaping prisoners, such as one learned at Fort 9, and no experience of escaping. I had to carry on by the light of nature. However, instead of making further excuses for what I did, I had better go on with the story.

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After crossing a ride, I climbed a steep bank and came out on to a sort of plateau, about 100 yards across. The undergrowth was thick but there were only a few trees about, though there was a wood on the far side again. I was crawling through this undergrowth when I suddenly stopped short and held my breath. There, 15 yards from me, was a low wooden hut and I caught sight of a German soldier through the open door. I stymied myself from the hut by a bush and looked over my shoulder for the best line of retreat. Just as I was about to crawl off, a German sentry walked by me from the right, walking towards the hut. He was only about 10 yards off and was unarmed, and was buckling up his belt as he passed. I was not very well under cover from that direction, as my legs were sticking out of the bush, but I thought he would not see me if I lay quite still. When he was 5 yards from me, he stopped to adjust his belt and turned towards me, and as he looked up he saw my legs. He was a big heavy built fellow, and as he walked quickly up to me he said, "Who are you? What are you doing here?" I crawled out of the bush and stood up. "I am a papermaker from Darmstadt out on a holiday," I said.

"Have you got any papers?"

"Yes," I lied.

"Well, you must come and show them."

I took no notice of this hint, but said, "Could you kindly tell me if this is the Dutch frontier just here?"

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"That has nothing to do with you," he answered; "you just come along with me."

I took no notice, and repeated the question. "Mit mir kommen—so fort," he roared out, and gripped me by the shoulder. He took me across the plateau and towards the wood on the opposite side, and as we were stepping out of a sort of pit I suddenly bolted from him. I dashed into the wood and he was after me yelling "Posten" at the top of his voice. We were running steeply down hill through the woods, consequently it was difficult for me to double back into the thick woods behind without being cut off. I turned as much right handed as I could, but he was only about 10 or 15 yards behind me, and I had not much time to think. About 50 yards ahead at the bottom of the slope there was a road which I could not avoid crossing as I saw it curling around to my right. As I was crashing through the last few yards of wood before the road, the fellow behind still yelling "Halt!" like a madman, I suddenly saw a sentry on the road who put up his rifle at 10 yards' range and called "Halt," and I halted as abruptly as possible. The fellow behind came up cursing and panting, and I was marched along the road to the left. On the road I saw there was another sentry leading a dog about 100 yards north of us. As we went along I saw the sentry who had held me up slip a clip of cartridges into his magazine, so that I am not sure that his rifle had been loaded after all. We passed another sentry (they seemed to be stationed about every 150 yards or so), and then came to the wooden hut which I had seen earlier in the day. There were about ten men in the hut (it was the guardroom for the frontier posts on that sector), and they treated me quite well. I asked for some tea and tobacco, and sat down in a corner near the window to consider the position. Rather foolishly I told them who I was. A "Flieger Hauptmann" was a bit of a capture, and they were very pleased about it. They searched me very mildly, and took away my map and compass but nothing else. From where I was sitting I could see out of a window. There I was—20 yards from the Dutch border. I had only to get across the road and I should be in thick undergrowth on the far side. It seemed to me most unlikely that there were any further obstacles than this one line of sentries. I believed at the time that I was actually on the very border, but I am not quite so sure of that now—anyhow, I am nearly sure I should have got clear away if I could have got out of that hut with a few yards' start. I could see the sentry outside the door, and he had his rifle slung over one shoulder by the strap. As I was afraid that he would get rather too good a shot at me if I ran straight, I determined that if I could get out of the hut I would double round it and get back into the thick woods behind and get across the following night. There seemed to be no obstacle of any sort in the way of wire. While I was sitting there several girls came into the hut who presented papers, which were checked by the N.C.O., and laughed and joked with the soldiers in a lingo which I could not follow. I found also that I could not understand the German soldiers when they talked among themselves.

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I must have sat there for an hour or more—pretending to doze most of the time, but keeping a pretty sharp lookout for a chance of getting out of the door. Several people had come in, and I noticed exactly how the latch worked. There was an oldish fellow who annoyed me a good deal by standing with his back to the door the whole time. I thought it was accident at first, but I soon saw that he had his suspicions of me and would not be enticed from the door for anything. The only thing to be done was to pretend to fall fast asleep. This had the desired effect, and when half an hour later he left the door to glance at a paper which a soldier had brought in, I made a dash for it. There was a fellow sitting by the side of the door who must have seen me turn and, so to speak, gather myself together to make the dash; for, as I went out, he made a desperate grab at me and by ill-fortune caught the belt at the back of my coat. It tore in his hand as I struggled, but it stopped me just long enough to give the sentry outside the time to fall on my neck, and then they all fell on me and every one tried to hit me at once. For some minutes there was a horrid scene. Ten furious men hit, kicked, punched, and cursed me all at once. I did my best to ward off the blows with my hands, and luckily there were so many of them that they all got in each other's

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way and I was scarcely hurt at all till one of them cut my head open with a bayonet. After a bit they calmed down and I was led back into the hut, with much kicking and cursing. For a long time they continued to curse me, and I think I must have gone temporarily mad, for I started to argue with them and made matters worse. About an hour later, preparations were made to remove me to Brügggen. They undid my braces—they undid all the buttons of my trousers, which I had to hold up with one hand whilst I carried all my belongings in the other. The walking was very rough, mostly through thick heather, and I was escorted by five men and an N.C.O. The five men carried their rifles in a most explosive state of readiness and the N.C.O. kept a revolver handy. Once, when I fell, I was very near being shot on the spot. Of course there were thick woods on either hand most of the way, and once in them they would never have caught me again. However, they never gave me a chance. I was feeling extremely fit and well, and managed the hot walk over heavy ground much more easily than most of my guards, who were fat old chaps.

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Although I was bitterly disappointed, I did not feel it so much at the time as afterwards, and really enjoyed the whole experience more than now seems to me possible. I was an object of curiosity in the village of Brügggen, and was eventually brought into an office, on the second story of a house, where several soldier clerks were working and given a chair in a corner, where I went to sleep. I was awakened by the entrance of a fat, unhealthy looking German lieutenant, to whom I took the most intense dislike at sight. He brought me into the next room, placed a loaded revolver on the table beside him, and ordered me to strip nude. I suppose I must have laughed at him, as he got very angry and told me it was no laughing matter. After my clothes had been searched he allowed me to dress, and then with intense deliberation began to write an account of me. I told him my camp, name, rank, etc., but when one of the guards (the brute who had first caught me) said that I had hit about me with my fists, I protested and said that, on the contrary, I had been brutally man-handled and my head had been cut open. My coat collar and head were all covered with blood, but the cut, though deep, was clean and gave little pain. He called a medical orderly, who dressed my head quite efficiently.

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After waiting for an hour or two more in the clerks' office, I was solemnly warned by a nasty little N.C.O. that I would be shot immediately if I made a further attempt to escape, and was marched off with a couple of guards. One happened to be the fellow who had originally caught me and the other was the old fellow who had made such a point of guarding the door in the hut. They were both, rather naturally, very suspicious of me and never gave me half a chance. After a march of three miles or so, we came to a big factory which was used as barracks, and I was put into the guardroom. When feeding time came round, I was given a very good plate of excellent vegetable soup, of which they gave me a second helping when I asked for it, and as much hot water, colored to look like coffee, as I could drink. On the whole, considering they were a rough lot of soldiers, I was treated very decently indeed. One young fellow, in fact, went out of his way to be nice to me and to make me comfortable. He passed me a packet of tobacco when no one was looking, and later in the evening there was quite an amusing discussion on the war, aeroplanes, etc. I think it rather astonished them that an English officer, a "Hauptmann," was prepared to talk and be more or less friendly with them. I think they also rather appreciated the fact that I seemed to bear no grudge against them for hitting me over the head with a bayonet; one of them in fact almost apologized for it by saying that they had been so enraged because they would have been heavily punished if I had escaped. They gave me some blankets, and I had an excellent night on a bench. One or two of them were thoughtful enough to warn me not to attempt to escape the next morning. Precautions had been taken, they said, and I would not have a chance.

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CHAPTER VI

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PAYING THE PIPER

Next morning I was marched off with my two old guards, and during the march, by orders from the Company H.Q., a third was added. We went by train to Gladsbach, and I was locked up in a strong room in the citadel. There was a spy-hole in the door, and a number of people came and had a look at me through it. Several plates of vegetable soup and a large hunk of very satisfying brown army bread were given to me later. An exhaustive search of the cell disclosed a book hidden in the straw mattress (which was verminous, by the way) on deeds of valor in the German army, so I passed a peaceful and not unpleasant day.

Next day I was given a ration of bread and cheese, and a pleasantly fat German, an Offizier Stellvertreter, with a humorous face, informed me that he had to conduct me to Clausthal, and then (in an aside) that he did not like the job a bit. There was a sentry with us, a tall, good looking man of fifty or so, who slung his rifle over his shoulder instead of carrying it at the "ready," as all my sentries had done for the last twenty-four hours. We got into a third-class reserved carriage at the station. The officer asked me some questions about my escape, and said that he had been told I was a desperate character. "Are you going to try to escape again from me?" he said. I laughed, and said it depended on what sort of opportunity he gave me. "It will be a most uncomfortable journey," he said with a resigned sigh. Then he brightened up and said, "Why not give me your parole not to escape till Clausthal; it will be so much more comfortable?" "All right," I said, and we shook hands on it. The soldier immediately put his rifle, and the officer his revolver, on the rack. Then the latter got down a hand-bag, which was packed with food and a

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couple of bottles of wine, and we had a fine feed. We continued to have good feeds about every two hours all the way to Clausthal. During the lunch, I explained to him that if I had wanted to escape from him, he had given me several opportunities before I gave my parole. "Ah, what!" he said, "when you went to the lavatory?" "Yes," said I, "that was one of them; there was a door on the far side opening into the far carriage." "Ah, but that was guarded," he said, obviously rather startled. I knew that it had not been guarded, but it had not been worth my while attempting to escape, for many reasons. My clothes were badly torn and covered with blood, and it was broad daylight, so that I don't think I should have had any chance at all. My head was all bandaged up, and, if I had taken off the bandage to put my cap on, the wound would have started to bleed again. Also, I was beginning to feel the effects of my exertions, and had no map or compass, and very little idea of where I was. Consequently I was very glad to give my parole, and never regretted it. All my money had been taken from me, but in the most generous way he insisted that I was his guest and bought literature, beer, and food for all three of us on all possible occasions.

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He said he could not understand how I managed to pass myself off as a German, as he would have known me by my accent for a foreigner immediately. Soon afterwards a pretty shop-girl got in (up to that time we had kept people out by saying it was a reserved carriage), and to my guard's surprise she had no suspicion of my accent. Eventually he told her that I was an Englishman, which she refused to believe till I owned that it was true, and then she edged away into the far corner and got out at the next station.

We got into Clausthal late at night and had a very dark walk up to the camp. My old fat officer and I parted the best of friends. He was a vulgar fellow but a good sportsman, and I am very grateful to him for his kindness. The fact of the matter is that he had been nearly two years at the front, and it was most noticeable that any German who had been at the front for any length of time became quite a decent fellow. It is the swine who has never been near the front who is intolerable. Very much the same contrast is noticeable in peace time between those Germans who have lived abroad (especially in England) and those who have always stayed at home. I suppose that an Englishman who has never traveled is a pretty intolerable sort of person to a foreigner!

The little lieutenant met me and showed me into a room in the German guardhouse, and told me to change into my uniform, and then to take any clothes I should want for the night. I was put into a very nasty, bare, whitewashed brick room, next the pigsties. A Russian orderly brought me my food, and through him I had no difficulty in secretly exchanging notes with Nichol and others in the camp. I was allowed to have any food they sent me, so, being very hungry, I naturally overate myself. Exercise consisted of half an hour's walk morning and afternoon, and I found that quite insufficient. My cell was next the pigs on one side and next the motor for making electricity on the other, and was consequently both smelly and noisy, besides being dirty. I asked to be allowed to have a bath, but it was not granted me for some days—four, I think. There were no windows to the place, but there were two doors and one doorway; that is to say, when they shut me in, they first locked an iron cage in front of the doorway, and outside that a wooden door. The wooden door, however, did not quite come to the top of the doorway; there was a gap of about nine inches, and through this gap light and air were supposed to enter. There was a bed, a basin, and a horrible stove, which either got red hot or went out. Books and tobacco were sent in to me; but, even so, I spent a fairly uncomfortable fourteen days.

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After I had been in there for a week, Kicq was brought in and we shared the room, which was only about 10 feet by 6 feet. We had to put one bed on top of the other to fit the beds in at all. I was beginning to feel the disappointment of failure very bitterly, and should really have preferred to have been left alone to brood over it in peace. Kicq, however, did his best to make an exchange of Spanish and English lessons a regular occupation, and we eventually spent a good deal of our time like that. It was a disgusting sort of existence, and for several days it was extremely dirty and uncomfortable. Eventually, after repeated complaints, some improvements were made. We were not allowed to have a bath in the main building, as we would have been liable to come in contact with the other prisoners; so Nichol sent us in a tin hip-bath. We also got leave from the lieutenant to have our outside door open for half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the afternoon. As the sentries changed every two hours, it was a simple matter to tell each sentry that we had not yet had it open for half an hour that morning, so by this *ruse de guerre* we got a certain amount of light and air into the place.

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One morning about 9.30, whilst we were in the middle of washing and shaving and having breakfast all at once, a General, an A.D.C., the Camp Commandant, and the lieutenant all suddenly appeared outside our "grill" and were admitted by the sentry. I was in pyjamas and a tunic, and Kicq even more undressed, with his face covered with shaving soap, but we gave the General as military a "stand to attention" as we could under the circumstances. He answered our salute very politely, taking no notice of our undress uniform, and turning to the Commandant, said, "Sie waren in dem Tunnel gefangen?" "Nein, nein," said the lieutenant, saluting violently, and Kicq and I grinned, whilst the lieutenant and the Commandant showed obvious signs of anger! For a long time we had believed that the Germans knew of our tunnel and were trying to catch us red-handed in it, and this of course confirmed our suspicions. The General was told that we both spoke German, and asked us if we had any complaints. We objected to the place in which we were imprisoned, but otherwise had not much of which to complain. I then said that we should like to receive our punishment, since at present we were just under arrest "pending investigation." The General turned to his A.D.C., who, saluting between each sentence, said that

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the General had signed our punishment the day before and that we were sentenced to fourteen days' *Stubenarrest*, and that our punishment started from the day he had signed it. We thanked him, and said that was just the thing we were particularly anxious to know, and felt delighted that we had got off so lightly.

Two days later we went over into the old room in which Long, Nichol, and I had originally lived in No. 3 Barracks. The windows of the room were whitewashed, and there was a sentry in front of our door, the idea being, of course, to prevent us communicating with the other prisoners. This was quite absurd and nothing but red tape, as we were allowed to have the top part of the window open and we were separated only by thin wooden walls from the rooms on either side of us. It was only necessary to bang on the wall and shout anything you might wish to say. If we wanted anything, such as books, some one just threw them through the window to us. One day when the lieutenant was in the room, a book came hurtling through the window and hit him full in the chest. The German kept his temper very well and merely remonstrated with us, saying that it was unnecessary to break the rules when we could have anything we wanted by asking him. He was quite right, and I put it down to his credit that he kept his temper, but the amusement of disobeying rules slightly relieved our very monotonous existence. I have already explained that the whole camp was divided into two by torpedo netting. For the rest of our imprisonment at Clausthal, we used to take our exercise in this lower or southern section, all the other prisoners being cleared out of it for half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the afternoon for that purpose. The weather was beautifully fine, and, as the tennis-court was in this section, we decided we had better play tennis during our half an hour's exercise. We just banged on the wall and asked the people next door to leave two racquets and some balls outside our door. This was a great success. Kicq was not much of a player, but he improved fast.

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The sentries were on the whole quite friendly. They were ostentatiously officious when another sentry was near, and did not care that an officer of any nationality other than English should see them talking to us. Most of them were physically unfit or badly wounded, and, though all seemed to be sick of the war, they did their duty in as inoffensive a way as possible. The old chap whom I had bribed was several times our sentry, and when he was on at night he would allow us to go into the room next door and see Nichol and Long. We in return gave him some good things to eat and hot chocolate and coffee when the nights were cold. When I was alone in the pigsty we had had a long talk in which he said that the N.C.O. of the guard had told him that I was actually over the frontier when I was caught. I am sure that this was not the case, however.

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A few days before we expected to be released, the lieutenant came in and told us that the General had made a mistake and that our *Stubenarrest*, as opposed to our *Untersuchungsschaft*, did not start when the General signed our *Bestrafung*, but when the warrant was received by the Camp Commandant. Consequently, we should not get out till November 12th. I was extremely angry, as I was weary of the confinement, but Kicq took it very philosophically.

CHAPTER VII

[56]

REMOVAL TO A STRAFE CAMP

About this time I wrote home for the first time in code. The last time I had been home on leave from France before being taken, I had made up, with the help of the rest of my family, a very rough sort of code depending on the formation of the letters. I wrote a longish message, very small, on a piece of cigarette paper, and stuck it to the flap of the envelope, and then wrote a code message in the letter saying, "Tear open flap of envelope." The letter got through all right, but they failed at home to see that it was in code. The other letters I wrote in code, and I wrote many from Fort 9 (and much more important ones), all got through successfully.

At midday on November 12th we came out of prison. We had already been told that we were going to be sent to Ingolstadt; but, though Nichol made inquiries in the camp, no one seemed to know what sort of place it was. We had to leave Clausthal camp about 2 o'clock and walk to the station, so that we had about half an hour in the camp to say "good-bye" and pass on all we had learnt. Both Kicq and I did a good deal of talking during the last hour we spent at Clausthal, and when the sentry came to fetch us we were given a very cheery send-off, nearly all the camp turning out. We had a two or three mile walk to the station, and were escorted only by an N.C.O. with a revolver. In fact, during the whole of this journey we were, quite contrary to our expectations, so badly guarded that I swore I would be properly prepared to escape the next time I had a train journey at night. The little lieutenant met us at the station, and proved to be the most incompetent traveler. Although he asked every one he saw, he never seemed to know how or where to catch any train. In fact, Kicq, who had studied the matter when we had had intentions of trying for Switzerland, knew much more about the route than he did. We had a pretty uncomfortable and very dull journey.

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At Halle, after we had waited an hour or two in a Red Cross dormitory, the lieutenant made some bad muddle about the trains, and there was also a difficulty because prisoners-of-war were not allowed to travel on a "Schnellzug" (fast train). However, eventually we got into a third-class coach, and after pushing along the corridor, to the surprise of a crowd of peaceful travelers, we got into a third-class wooden-seated compartment. The lieutenant was perfectly hopeless and

helpless, and I several times felt inclined to take command of the party and give the conductor a few marks to get us a decent carriage. I had a longish talk that night with him, but he would insist on smoking strong cigars with the window tight shut, and his breath stank so that I was nearly sick. He gave me rather an interesting picture of the Russian front during the big German advance. He said the dirt and discomfort were absolutely horrible. The usual Polish village consisted of huge barn-like buildings where several families lived together with a swarm of children and some half-dozen adults of both sexes. They usually slept, as far as I can make out, on top of the stoves, which were of the big tiled variety. A large number of animals and chickens lived in the same house, or rather room. For billeting purposes as many men as possible were crammed in these places—half a company or more. The whole place was indescribably filthy, and he assured me that every soldier, from a Tommy to a general, was simply covered with lice, and never got rid of them during the whole campaign. He was wounded very seriously early on in the advance. He got a bullet through his "Herzbeutel" (the bag which contains the heart), he said. The lot of the wounded was a terrible one, as they had to be transported on carts, over the worst possible roads, for very big distances to the rail-heads. Altogether he looked back on the Russian campaign with horror. [58]

We got to Nüremberg about 2 or 3 a.m. and were put in a room above the police station or guardhouse in the station. We were allowed to buy some coffee and bread, and later got a wash and shave. We got to Ingolstadt some time about midday without further incident, and walked up to the central office of the prisoners-of-war camp. Here the lieutenant said good-bye, and I can't pretend I was sorry to see the last of him. He was quite a good, honest fellow, but one of those hopelessly conscientious people, with no initiative and no sense of humor.

After waiting in the bureau for some time we were told we were bound for Fort 9, but could elicit no information as to what sort of place it was. We were told that we should have to sleep the night at the men's camp, as the fort was about 7 kilometres out of the town, and it was either too late or inconvenient to send us out that night. [59]

Ingolstadt is a town of some 30,000 or 40,000 inhabitants and is built on both banks of the Danube. The prisoners-of-war camp consists of half a dozen or more old forts, some of which lie on the north and some on the south bank. Fort 9 has the date 1870 above the gateway and as the others are on an almost identical plan, I expect they are much the same date. Besides these forts, which form a ring around Ingolstadt with a radius of about 7 kilometres, there is a camp for men on the outskirts of the town itself. As far as I know, all the forts except one, which is a *strafe* camp for N.C.O.'s who have attempted to escape, are used for officer prisoners-of-war. Fort 9, as we soon learnt, is the fort where the black sheep go. On our way to the men's camp we passed several working parties, mostly of French soldiers. As far as I could see, they showed no signs of ill-treatment, though I thought some of the Russians looked rather hungry and ill-kept. All we could see of the men's camp was a palisade with several strands of barbed wire on top. An extremely dirty, unsoldierly Bavarian sentry was sloping about outside, apparently having a beat of 200 or 300 yards long. He was merely typical of all Bavarian sentries. They are all, with rare exceptions, filthy and slovenly, and an incredibly large proportion have most unpleasant faces. Before I went to Bavaria as a prisoner, I had always looked on the South German as a kindly man—"gemütlich" is the word they like to use about themselves—but it did not take long to completely change these ideas. I had no longer any difficulty in believing that the Bavarians are justly accused of a very large share in the Belgian atrocities. [60]

While I am on the subject I might mention here Kicq's story of how the sack of Louvain was started. The account is supported by what Major Whitton says in his book *The Marne Campaign*, and makes some excuses for the Germans, though it by no means frees them from blame. The Germans entered and occupied Louvain with little or no opposition, and pushed a fairly strong advance guard through the town in the direction of Antwerp. This advance guard was heavily attacked by a portion of the Belgian army, was defeated, and fled in panic and complete disorder back towards Louvain. The Germans in Louvain took these fugitives for a Belgian attack and fired on them, and they fired back. Very soon there was a general mix-up on a large scale. The defeated advance guard was being fired into by the Belgians on one side and by their own comrades on the other. The civilians in the town also thought that Louvain was being attacked and was about to be retaken by the Belgians. They were determined to do their bit, so they added to the general confusion by firing off all the guns they had left, and, if they had none, throwing furniture, hot water, and anything else handy on the heads of the Germans in the streets. A certain number of Germans were killed and injured in this way, and the German soldiers, furious not only at this but, when they found out their mistake, at having massacred their own comrades, got completely out of control and sacked and burnt the greater part of the town. Kicq, at the time when this happened, was in a hospital at Antwerp, so that his is only a second-hand account, but I think that most intelligent Belgian officers believe this to be a fairly true explanation. [61]

To return to our story again—just inside the palisade was a group of wooden huts which I imagine were the offices of the camp. We were led through the guardroom, a filthy place with wooden benches running all down the middle, on which still filthier Bavarians were sleeping, drinking beer, or playing cards, and were locked into a small room at the end. We had some food left, and with the help of some nasty looking soup which the Germans brought us we made quite a good meal. There were wooden beds and mattresses in the room, and luckily not sufficient light to allow us to examine them too closely, so we passed quite a good night.

Next morning I asked to see the Commandant, who seemed quite a nice old fellow, and requested permission to go over the camp, so that I could testify to other officers that our prisoners were

well treated. He answered that to grant my request was impossible. "In that case," I said, "I can only draw the conclusion that you will not let me see the camp because our prisoners are not treated as they should be." The old man said he was very sorry, but it was absolutely "verboten," but he assured me that the prisoners were well treated. An hour or so later an N.C.O. with a rifle turned up, and we were marched off to Fort 9. The whole country round Fort 9, which lies due south of Ingolstadt, is very flat and uninteresting. In fact, it is one of the few really ugly places I remember seeing in Bavaria. There are a few small woods and clumps of trees about, but as there is very little undergrowth in them, they afford only a very temporary shelter to an escaping prisoner—as Medlicott and I found out later. The fort, as you approach it from the north, has the appearance of an oblong mound of earth, some 350 yards long and about 60 feet high. There is a moat 4 to 6 feet deep all around the place, but a small rampart on the outer side of the moat prevents the latter being seen from the south till the outer gate into the first courtyard has been passed. [62]

We tramped along the main high road which leads over the Danube directly south out of Ingolstadt, and after walking for well over an hour we began looking about for some signs of a camp, but could see nothing resembling our previous ideas of one. The guard informed us, however, that we had only 200 metres to go, and soon we turned sharp to the right towards the mound before mentioned. We then saw a sentry on one of the two battery positions which flanked the fort, and another on the top of the mound. In another minute or two we came to an iron door in a half-brick, half-earthen wall. Our guard looked through a peep-hole in this and said we could not go in yet, as *Appell* was taking place. I had a look through the peep-hole. Some 40 yards across a sort of courtyard was a moat, about 15 yards broad, over which there was a roadway with a heavy iron and wire gate, guarded by a sentry. The road led over the moat into another courtyard, at the back of which was a brick wall about 20 feet high with half a dozen large iron barred windows in it. On the top of the wall was some 40 feet of earth sloping backwards and upwards to the center "caponnière," the highest part of the mound, where a sentry stood. In the center of the wall was an enormous iron door leading, to all appearances, into the heart of the small hill in front of us. Through the peep-hole I could follow the moat for 50 or 60 yards in either direction. On the far side of the moat the ground sloped up slightly for 15 metres to a brick wall about 15 to 20 feet (surmounted by 4 or 5 metres of earth) with heavily barred windows at regular intervals all the way along it. The windows in this wall were the windows of our living rooms, and on the strip of grass between the windows and the moat sentries walked up and down. [63]

In the courtyard about 200 prisoners-of-war of various nationalities appeared to be mixed up in a very irregular manner; in fact, a good deal of movement was noticeable among them, and from the confused shouting which went on I gathered something exciting must be happening. Suddenly the whole mob broke up and began to stream back into the fort through the main gate. A German from the inside opened the outer gate, and we were marched across the moat, a sentry unlocking the gate for us, into the inner courtyard. Suddenly I saw Milne, whom I had last seen at St. Omer in 25 Squadron. He was wearing an old flying coat and was bareheaded. He greeted me with enthusiasm and surprise. A sentry tried to stop us from meeting, but Milne took no notice of him, and we shook hands. Several other Frenchmen and Englishmen came crowding round us, and then some one began roaring out orders in German at the top of his voice about 10 yards off. I looked up and saw a German captain, who looked like a middle-aged well-to-do shopkeeper (which in fact he was), in a furious rage, gesticulating like a windmill. I gathered that Kicq and I were to be prevented from talking to the other prisoners. I thought that we had probably better obey him, but none of the other prisoners paid any attention whatever to the noise he was making till several sentries hustled us through the main door and into the Commandant's bureau. As we were going in, an Englishman in a beard passed by the side of me saying, "Have you anything to hide?" My compass, which had been given me by a Belgian at Clausthal, was hidden in my big baggage, so I shook my head. [64]

A young French officer was in the bureau, and a furious discussion took place between him and the Commandant, who immediately began to shout and gesticulate. As far as I could make out, the Frenchman had been arrested at *Appell* for refusing to stand still. The Frenchman answered that his feet got cold because, owing to the total incompetency of the Germans, they took much longer than was necessary at *Appell*. "Aus dem Bureau!" (Leave the office immediately!) yelled the Commandant. The Frenchman tried to speak again, but was drowned by the shouts of "No, no, go out at once, you must not speak to me like that." "Pourquoi non, il n'est pas la manière d'adresser un officier Français," answered the Frenchman; and as he spoke the door behind me opened and another Frenchman entered who, pointing his finger at the Commandant, said, "Oui, oui, je suis témoin, je suis témoin," and went out again. The first Frenchman bowed in a formal manner to the Commandant, who had started to yell "Posten, Posten," and went out of the door just as the sentry entered. The Commandant mopped his brow and seemed almost on the verge of collapse, when Kicq protested against the way he had spoken to us when ordering us into the bureau. This raised another small storm, in which Kicq easily held his own. The Commandant calmed himself with an effort. [65]

We were then asked the usual questions by an Unteroffizier and told that we should be in Room 45. Our hand baggage was then searched, and my rucksack was taken from me. To reach No. 45 we went along a very dark underground passage dimly lighted by an oil lamp. At the end of the passage there were some enormous iron doors. These led to one of the two inner courtyards of the fort, and were then shut, as they always were during *Appell*. A few yards before coming to the door we turned sharply to the right into an extremely dark arched opening. The whole passage

was built of solid blocks of stone and had a vaulted roof. After groping our way round a turning, we came suddenly into another passage some 70 yards long, and also of stone. On the left hand was a bare stone wall running up 15 feet to the roof; on the right there were doors about every 4 yards with numbers on them ranging from 39 to 56. Light and air were brought into the passage by square ventilator shafts in the roof which ran up through the 15 feet of earth to the pathway above. At the top of the ventilators glass frames on very strong iron supports prevented the rain from coming in and the prisoners from getting out. Needless to say, the passage was the coldest and draughtiest place it is possible to imagine. Owing to the mound of earth on top, no heat but much dampness found its way into the passage. At the far end were the latrines. These were very insanitary, and the smell of them pervaded the whole passage, into which our living rooms opened. In certain winds they became almost intolerable. A detailed description of them will have to be given later, as they played an important part in many attempts to escape. [66]

Room 45 was about half-way along the passage, and we found Captain Grinnell-Milne, R.F.C., Oliphant, Fairweather, and Medicott, R.F.C., already installed there. The dimensions of the room were, at a guess, about 12 yards by 5 yards. The floor was asphalt and the walls were whitewashed brick. The walls and the ceiling were both curved and together formed an exact semicircle. In fact, the room was very much of the shape and size of a *Nissen* hut. This is an excellent shape from the point of view of strength, but not very convenient for hanging pictures or putting up shelves. The end of the room farthest from the door was mainly occupied by two large windows looking out over a strip of grass which sloped gradually down to the moat, 15 yards away. These windows were heavily barred with square one-inch bars, three to a window, and sentries passed along the strip of grass from time to time and glanced suspiciously in. If they saw anything that interested them they stood at the window and stared in. There was obviously no such thing as privacy. In each of these rooms five or six men lived and cooked and fed and slept.

CHAPTER VIII

FORT 9, INGOLSTADT

In the early days of the war Fort 9, Ingolstadt, had been, according to the oldest inmates of the prison-house, a quiet, well-behaved sort of place, but for the past six months the Germans had collected into the fort all the "mauvais sujets" from the German point of view, and all those prisoners-of-war who had made attempts to escape from other camps. There were about 150 officer prisoners in the place, and of these at least 130 had made successful attempts to escape from other camps, and had only been recaptured after from three days' to three weeks' temporary freedom. [67]

When Kicq and I arrived, 75 per cent. of the prisoners were scheming and working continually to this end. Some had tramped to the Dutch or Swiss frontiers and had been captured there; some had taken the train (those who could speak German) and had been eventually caught by some mischance; and all firmly believed that it was only the blackest misfortune which had prevented them from crossing the frontier, and were convinced that, if once more they could get clear of the camp, they would reach neutral territory and freedom. Escaping, and how it should be done, what to beware of and what to risk, what food to take, what clothes to wear, maps, compasses, and how to get them, how to look after your feet and how to light a fire without smoke, where to cross the frontier and what route to take, and a hundred and one things connected with escaping, were the most frequent subjects of conversation and rarely out of the thoughts of the great majority of the prisoners at Fort 9. Each man was ready to give the benefit of his experiences, his advice, and his immediate help to any one who asked for them. In fact, we pooled our knowledge. The camp was nothing less than an escaping club. Each man was ready to help any one who wished to escape and had a plan, quite regardless of his own risk or the punishment he might bring upon himself. For courts-martial no one cared twopence, and nearly every one in the fort had done considerable spells of solitary confinement. [68]

There were in the camp, mainly among the Frenchmen, some of the most ingenious people I have ever come across. Men who could make keys which would unlock any door: men who could temper and jag the edge of an old table-knife so that it would cut iron bars: expert photographers (very useful for copying maps): engineering experts who would be called in to give advice on any tunnel which was being dug: men who spoke German perfectly: men who shammed insanity perfectly, and many, like myself, who were ready to risk a bit to get out, but had no parlor tricks. One had escaped from his prison camp dressed as a German officer: another had escaped in a dirty clothes basket, and another had been wheeled out of the camp hidden in a muck tub: another sportsman had painted his face green to look like a water-lily and had swum the moat in daylight under the sentry's nose. It is impossible to recount all the various means that were tried, and successfully tried, in order to escape from camps. Forgery, bribery, impersonation, with an utter disregard of risks of being shot, all found their advocates in Fort 9. In spite of the fact that every man was ready to do his utmost, at whatever personal risk, to help a friend who was trying to escape, each man was advised to keep his own plans of escape strictly to himself. It was not that we were afraid of spies among ourselves, but it was impossible to be quite sure of all the orderlies, who were either Frenchmen or Russians. There was one French orderly of whom we [69]

had serious suspicion but could never prove anything against him.

It can be readily understood that the Germans, having herded some 150 officers with the blackest characters into one camp, took considerable precautions to keep them there. From the moat on one side to the moat on the other, the fort at the broadest part measured about 300 yards. On the southern side, as can be seen from the sketch map, the moat ran around the fort in a semi-oval, and steep grass banks sloped from the top of the ramparts to the edge of the moat, beside which was a narrow footpath patrolled by sentries. On the southern side the ramparts were higher than on the northern, and the top must have been 50 feet above the moat. Along the top there was a narrow footpath where the prisoners were allowed to walk. From this path we got a good view of the surrounding country, which was completely under cultivation and very flat, with small wooded downs in the distance to relieve the monotony. From the path, we were able to see the moat, but, owing to the shelving of the bank, not the sentry in the path below. Just inside the parados there were at regular intervals heavily built traverses, and between the traverses glass ventilators poked up from the rooms and passages which lay under the southern ramparts. From the parados a grass bank sloped down to a broad gravel walk, and from this another steep bank dropped some 20 feet into the inner court. The barred window from the orderlies' quarters, the kitchen, and the solitary confinement cells looked out from this bank into the courtyard. On the northern side a similar bank, but without windows in it, sloped up to the gravel path, which ran all round the fort. Only a 7-foot parapet, over which we were forbidden to look, bounded the gravel path on the north side; but the rules did not forbid us looking into the outer courtyard, where *Appell* was usually held. On the south side the moat was about 40 yards broad and on the north only about 16 yards, and though we never found out the depth accurately we imagined it to be about 5 feet at the deepest part. The whole space inside was formed into two courtyards by a very broad central passage leading from the main door to the center "caponnière" on the south side. The earth ridge on the top of the passage formed the highest point in the fort. On it was a flagstaff where flags were hoisted at each German victory, imaginary or otherwise. A sentry was always posted there. In the day time there were eighteen sentries posted in and around the court, and at night time twenty-two posted as I have shown them on the sketch map.

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It was obvious that there were only two possible ways of getting out: one was to go out by the main gate past three sentries, three gates, and a guardhouse and the other was to go through the moat. It was impossible to tunnel under the moat. It had been tried, and the water came into the tunnel as soon as it got below the water level. An aeroplane was the only other solution. That was the problem we were up against, and however you looked at it, it always boiled down to a nasty cold swim or a colossal piece of bluff.

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All the members of Room 45, where I now found myself, had previously escaped from other camps. Milne and Fairweather, with Milne's brother, then at Custrin, had walked out of the main gate of a camp of which I forget the name, the brother dressed as a German officer, Fairweather as a soldier, and Milne as a workman. The scheme had worked well. They had walked into the commandantur as if to see the commandant, and then had pulled off their British uniforms in the passage and, leaving them on the floor, had calmly walked out of the other door of the commandantur and passed all the sentries without any difficulty. Milne's brother spoke excellent German, and they said that their "get-up" had been very good and had been the result of some months' hard work. Oliphant and Medicott^[1] had been caught together within a mile or two of the Dutch frontier. Poole and these two had escaped together from a camp by an audacious bit of wire-cutting in full daylight, suitable side-shows having been provided to keep the sentries occupied. After doing the march on foot to the frontier at an almost incredible speed, they lay up in a wood a couple of miles or so from the frontier sentries, intending to cross that night. Most unluckily for them, the day being Sunday (always the most dangerous day for escaping prisoners, as there are so many people about), a party of sportsmen came upon them. Oliphant had his boots on and managed to get away, but Poole and Medicott were collared. A sentry marched them along to a sort of barn, opened the door, and entered before them. They slammed the door on him and bolted. Poole got clean away and crossed the frontier that night, but Medicott was caught after a short, sharp chase. Oliphant took a wrong compass-bearing during the night, lost his way, and was caught the following morning. They really had very bad luck. All three ought to have crossed, as they were very determined fellows, and all of them had had considerable previous experience in escaping.

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We used to talk bitterly of prisoners' luck at Ingolstadt, and one of the things which induced us to keep on trying was the belief that our luck would turn. Medicott especially had had four or five attempts before he came to Ingolstadt. One of these was most spectacular, and I must give a short account of it. I am not sure out of which camp the escape was made, but one-time inmates will perhaps recognize it. A road ran alongside one of the main buildings of the camp. On the far side of the road was a steep bank with a barbed wire fence on the top, and from there terraced gardens sloped steeply up a hill and away from the camp. The building was several stories high, and Medicott and a companion decided that it would be possible to fix up a drawbridge from the second-story windows, and from there jump over the road and the wire on to the terrace. Every detail was fully thought out. They had a 9-foot plank, the near end of which they intended to place on the window-sill, and the far end would be supported by a rope from the top of the window. This would form an extremely rickety bridge, but though they would have a considerable drop, 12 feet or so, they had only quite a short distance to jump forward, as the road was quite narrow. Arrangements had been made to put out the electric light and to cut the telephone wires simultaneously, as a sentry was posted in the road and they had to jump over his head. The most suitable room was occupied by a Belgian general, and they decided to make the attempt from

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there. When they entered the Belgian's room on the selected night and informed him of what was about to happen, he absolutely refused to allow his room to be used for such a purpose. Medlicott explained to him (in bad French) that they were going from that room at once, whatever the general said, and that if he made a noise, they would be compelled to use force to keep him quiet. The general started shouting "Assassin!" and "A moi!" "A moi!" but they sat on him and gagged him and tied him to the bed. They then got out their plank and successfully jumped over the road and got clean away. They were recaptured, however, about four days afterwards, I don't remember how. At their court-martial they were complimented by the President on their escape, and were given the lightest possible punishment (about two months apiece, I think) for the numerous crimes they had committed. The Belgian general was brought up as a witness against them, but could say nothing without making himself a laughing-stock or worse!

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The other Englishmen at Fort 9 all lived in Room 42. They were Major Gaskell, Captain May, Captain Gilliland, Captain Batty Smith, Lieutenant Buckley, together with Lieutenant Bellison, a Frenchman, who spoke English with complete fluency, though with a bad accent. I know that when I first went to Ingolstadt they had some scheme on for tunneling out of the inner court through the rampart so as to come out half-way up the bank above the moat on the south side. It was a good idea, but never got very far, as the beginning of the tunnel was discovered by the Germans—without Room 42 being incriminated, however. I do not remember any time in Fort 9 when there was not some scheme or other in the English rooms for escaping, and we all occupied some hours nearly every day in perfecting our arrangements for escaping. There were several excellent maps in the fort, especially amongst the Frenchmen, and very many laborious hours were spent in copying these in different colored inks. Several people even made two or three copies, so as to be ready to try again immediately in the event of their being recaptured with a map in their possession. A certain amount of map copying was done by photography. Cameras were strictly prohibited, but there was at least one in the fort, which had got in I don't know how, and which did a lot of useful work.

The Frenchmen in the fort were, as a whole, a most excellent lot of fellows, and the English and French were the very best of friends. Colonel Tardieu, the senior French officer, was one of the old school. "He thanked whatever gods there be for his unconquerable soul," and would have no truck with the Germans. He asked no favors from them, and would show no gratitude if they offered him any. He protested formally but vehemently against such insults as being asked to sit at the same table as the German officer who was guarding him on a railway journey. He said that eating at the same table was in a way a sign of friendship, and to ask a French colonel to eat with a German was an insult. I hear he was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment for this and many similar offenses. How could we all help having the greatest admiration for the unbending spirit of this man, who had his own rigid ideas of honor and lived up to them to the letter, in spite of a feeble body by no means fit to withstand the strain of continuous antagonism and physical discomfort? Commandant de Goys, who escaped from Germany a few months after I did, was in the French Flying Corps, and a very well-known man in it, I believe. At one time he had been sent by the French to reorganize the Turkish aviation corps, and told some amusing stories of his meetings with Germans there who were simultaneously reorganizing the Turkish army. He had escaped from some other camp in a clothes-basket, and had very nearly got across the Swiss frontier. He had a perfect mania for attempting to escape in baskets, and tried twice more at Ingolstadt. He was a good-looking, strongly made, athletic fellow of forty or thereabouts, and a great friend of Major Gaskell's. Through Major Gaskell I very soon got to know de Goys very well. Then there was Michel, a big fat man, whose father had been in a very high position in the French army but had retired just before the war. He was an extremely nice fellow, and very keen and quite good at games. He and Desseaux, also a charming fellow, were the best French hockey and tennis players in the fort. One of the most interesting people in the fort, and certainly the best read in French literature, was Decugis, the son of Colonel Decugis, who took some considerable part in the invention of the French 75 mm. gun. I gathered that he had led a pretty fast life before the war. He was a small dark fellow, very strong and wiry, and French to his finger-tips. He used to give me French lessons, and he learnt to talk English very quickly. Le Long, La Croix, and de Robiere and several others were nothing but children, and they were always in irrepressibly good spirits. They were great men at our fancy-dress balls, when they usually came marvelously got up as ladies of no reputation, with immense success. They were ready to attempt to escape, play the fool, or be a nuisance to the Germans at any time night or day with equal good humor. Room 39, where they lived a sort of hand-to-mouth existence, was always untidy and always noisy. They preferred it like that.

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Then there was a French colonial colonel and Moretti, both Corsicans. The colonel had been in command of the disciplinary battalion of the "Joyeux," that is to say, the French criminals who do their military service in Africa in a special military organization. You can well imagine that the colonel of the battalion, to which the most incorrigible cases are sent, is likely to be a pretty hard case himself. The French used to say that all Corsicans, as soon as they get a command of any sort, imagine themselves to be budding Napoleons. This was rather the case with the colonel. He had been badly hit on the head by a bit of shell, and was not always quite sane. He was a middle-sized man, very strong and active, with close-cropped hair and rugged face, and I am sure he would stick at absolutely nothing to gain his ends. He considered himself a great strategist (with regard to escaping at any rate), but it was Moretti who had the brains and ingenuity, as well as the skill to carry out the plans.

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Moretti was very short but wonderfully well made, with a round cheerful face and a funny little flat nose. He was always laughing or ragging some one. He and Buckley were inseparable

companions in crime and stole oil, potatoes, coal, or wood together, keeping up a continuous flow of back-chat all the time. He had been an adjutant chef (sergeant-major) in a "Joyeux" battalion at the age of 28, which is extraordinarily young, considering that only the very best N.C.O.'s can be used for such work, and had won his commission in France. Having been employed for the eight years previous to the war in managing and outwitting the most ingenious criminals that exist when they tried to escape, he knew just about all there was to be known about stealing, cutting iron bars, picking locks, etc. He told wonderful stories of the doings of his "Joyeux" in France. He used to say they were the best troops in the world, and I believe they were extraordinarily good as *troupes d'assaut*. He told us how in the early days of the war 450 of his "Joyeux" had stormed a trench system and killed 600 Germans with their knives alone. That was at Maisonette, I think. He had some wonderful stories of the second battle of Ypres, where the Germans were driven back into the canal which they had crossed at Bixschoote, and were killed almost to a man. He saw more corpses there, he said, than at Verdun. When his "Joyeux" were billeted behind the lines, a special warning had to be sent to the inhabitants to lock up all their belongings.

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There were, of course, a number of other Frenchmen who helped us, and whom we helped at various times, and who practically without exception were our very good friends, but I think I have mentioned those with whom we came most in contact. Among the Russians there were several excellent fellows, but as a whole we did not find them very interesting. Curiously, few of them spoke any language but their own really well, and except for Oliphant, and afterwards Spencer, none of us spoke much Russian. They were very generous fellows, and whenever they did have any food, which was seldom, they used to give dinners and sing-songs. With regard to escaping, if you needed anything such as a leather coat or a greatcoat (the Russian greatcoat can, with little alteration, be turned into a very respectable German officer's greatcoat), you could be sure to get it as a gift or by barter from the Russians if they could possibly spare it. The difficulty of saying anything about them is added to by the fact that I cannot recall their real names.

"Charley" was a very rough diamond, but as generous and kind-hearted a fellow as one could meet anywhere; he and Buckley were good friends. He spoke German perfectly and played hockey, so I also got to know him a bit better than most of the others. Lustianseff was a Russian aviator. He spoke French well, and used to teach me Russian. So did Kotcheskoff, a regular Hercules of a fellow, but mentally an absolute babe—a sort of Joe Gargery. He was universally liked, and continually had his leg pulled by the Frenchmen in de Goys' room, where he and Lustianseff lived. Kotcheskoff could talk English not much better than I could talk Russian; he also talked French and German very badly; consequently he and I could never manage much of a conversation with one another without the help of all four languages. There were, however, several Russians, real good fellows, whom I never got to know well. One of them had escaped from a camp with some friends, and had reached the frontier after walking for over thirty days. His friends had got across, but he had been recaptured. I heard a short time ago that he had escaped and had crossed the Swiss frontier at the same place as Buckley and I did.

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Our day at Fort 9 was regulated to a certain extent by *Appells* or roll-calls. When I first went to Ingolstadt there were three *Appells* a day—at 7 a.m., at 11.30 a.m., and between 4 and 7 in the evening, according to the time of year. After I had been there a month or so a fourth *Appell* was added at 9 o'clock at night. After this fourth *Appell*, the door leading from each wing to the center of the fort was locked and bolted, so that the two wings were cut off from communication with each other. The 7 a.m. *Appell* took place whilst we were still in bed. A German N.C.O. came round and flashed a torch in each of our faces or satisfied himself that we were all there. Immediately afterwards the great iron doors leading into the inner courtyards were opened. It was in these inner courtyards that we played hockey and tennis and football, and did our exercises, etc.

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The rules of the fort stated that the 11.30 *Appell* should take place either in our rooms or in the outer courtyard, the place where it was being held when Kicq and I first arrived, at the discretion of the Commandant. As the feeling between the Germans and the prisoners became more and more bitter, the *Appell* outside became really very exciting, and from the German point of view an almost intolerable performance. We always used to object to this outside *Appell* owing to the nuisance of turning out and to the waste of time, as the Germans never managed to count us in less than half an hour. I will say that they had a pretty difficult task; we never stood still and gave them a fair chance, as the general spirit of Fort 9 was to be insubordinate and disobedient whenever possible, so the Germans more or less dropped this outside *Appell* and only had it when the C.O. had some order or *Strafe* to read out to the prisoners as a whole. If the Germans wished the 11.30 *Appell* outside, they gave one ring on an electric bell which sounded in our passage, and if inside, two rings. As 11 a.m. was our usual time for breakfast, we used to listen for the second ring with some impatience. About ten minutes after the bell had rung for outside *Appell* the greater part of the prisoners would congregate in the outer courtyard. They turned up in any sort of costume, smoking cigarettes and talking and shouting and laughing. In the courtyard on the far side of the moat a guard of some twenty or thirty Hun soldiers was drawn up, and on either side of the main gate stood eight or nine more villainous looking Bavarian soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets.

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The C.O. usually kept us waiting for a minute or two, being perhaps under the delusion that we might get into some sort of order if we were given time. He came from the bureau through the main gate followed by his *Feldwebel* (sergeant-major) and several N.C.O.'s, and, though the majority used to take no notice of him whatever, he was usually greeted by some confused

shouting in four languages. By this time nine-tenths of the officers had ranged themselves very roughly five deep on the right-hand side of the main gate, which was immediately closed by a cordon of sentries. Several officers would continue to stroll about behind the ranks or wander from one part to another to talk to friends; and in several parts of the line, and especially at the English and French end of the line, little knots of men would hold animated discussions of the latest news. The front ranks stood firm, but the rear ranks paid little or no attention to the Germans. On the left of the gateway the orderlies were drawn up and stood in a fairly regular and silent mob, highly amused at the disorder in the ranks of the officers. The C.O. would stand in front for perhaps a couple of minutes, hoping vainly that things would calm down. He then saluted us formally. A few Frenchmen, and most Englishmen and Russians, who happened to be looking in that direction answered his salute. Then a scene something as follows used to take place.

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The C.O. called out, "Meine Herren," then louder, "Meine Herren, etwas Ruhe bitte." This had some small effect, though there would be one or two cries of "Comprends pas," "Parle pas Bosche," of which the Germans took no notice. One or two Englishmen whose breakfasts were getting cold would try to make the Frenchmen shut up, but only added to the noise. Two N.C.O.'s were then sent off to count us. One went along the front and one along the rear of the ranks trying to get the officers to stand in files of five. As the prisoners were continually moving about this looked an impossible task, but they eventually used to manage it, though they sometimes had to give up in despair and start again. As soon as this was over the numbers were reported to the *Feldwebel*, and two more N.C.O.'s were sent into the building to count the sick who had remained in their rooms, while we stood stamping our feet in the cold and waiting for them. Perhaps some Frenchman would call out to an Englishman, "Savez-vous combien de prisonniers Bosches les Anglais ont pris hier?"—"Onze mille trois cent quatre vingt deux Bosches." A certain amount of laughter followed, and the ranks would break up more or less and start walking about and talking. After ten minutes' wait, the N.C.O.'s who had been counting the sick would return and give their counts to the *Feldwebel*. Sometimes the tally was right and sometimes wrong—if the latter, the whole thing had to be done over again, accompanied by cries of derision, contempt, and impatience from the prisoners.

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Very often the riot got so bad that the C.O., after glancing anxiously over his shoulder, beckoned the guard to come in to overawe us. The old Landsturm, as they came pouring through the gate over the moat, were greeted with hoots and yells. At the order of an N.C.O. they loaded—this had no effect on the Frenchmen, who laughed and ragged the C.O. and sentries in French and bad German. But why did the Germans never shoot? It is not difficult to understand. We had no reason to suppose that the Commandant was tired of life, and we knew that his *Feldwebel* was an arrant coward; and the one thing quite certain was, that if the order to fire on us was given, the first thing we should do would be to kill the Commandant and the *Feldwebel*, and they knew it very well—and that was our safeguard.

Many times during those outside *Appells* at Fort 9 I was sure we were pretty close to a massacre—and the massacred would not have been confined to the prisoners. There were in that small courtyard only about forty armed Germans, all oldish men, and there were of us, counting the orderlies, nearly 200 extremely active men. We should have won easily—and the Germans knew it. At any time we wished, we could have taken that fort and escaped, though if we had, none of us would have got out of the country alive. You must understand then that the Germans did not tolerate this insubordination because they liked it or because they were too kind-hearted to fire, but because for the sake of their own skins they dared not give the order to fire. The prisoners, on the other hand, were prepared to risk a good deal for the sake of demonstrating how little they cared for German discipline, and for the sake of keeping up their own spirits, but most especially just for the fun of ragging the hated Bosche.

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Towards the end of my time at Ingolstadt, the Germans, as I have already said, only had *Appell* outside when they had something to announce to the prisoners. In the momentary hush which usually occurred when we were expecting the Commandant to dismiss us, the *Feldwebel* would step forward, produce a paper, and start to read in German. This was always the signal for a wild outcry—"Comprends pas!" "Assassin!" "Assassin!" (for, as I will show later, the *Feldwebel* had good reason to be unpopular), "Parle pas Bosche!" "Can't understand that damned language," "Ne pomenaio!" (Don't understand) from a Russian, etc. The *Feldwebel* would carry on, white with funk, till the end, when the C.O. would seize the first moment in which he could make himself heard to dismiss us with the words, "Appell ist fertig, meine Herren." If the cordon of sentries in front of the main gate happened to hear the dismissal, they got out of the light quickly; if not, they were brushed aside before they knew what was happening. Why no one ever got stuck with a bayonet I never could make out.

So much for the 11.30 *Appell*. Very much more often than not it took place in our rooms. We carried on with our breakfasts or whatever we were doing, and an N.C.O., after giving a tap at the door, came in, made certain that every one was present, and went out again. Five minutes or so later the electric bell would ring, and *Appell* was over. The doors into the inner courtyard were then opened again—they were always closed during *Appell*—and everything was done with the minimum of inconvenience to ourselves. The time of the next *Appell* varied with the time of the year. It took place about half an hour before dark, and after it the doors into the inner courts were shut for the night, but the two wings were not locked off from one another till after the 9 o'clock *Appell*, when we were visited in our rooms in just the same way. Between 4 and 9 a sentry was left in the long passage in each of the wings. Poor chap! He used to have an uncomfortable

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time trying to stop us from stealing the lamps in the passage. After 9 o'clock he was withdrawn, and, as I have already said, the doors at the end of the passage were locked and we were left to our own devices.

The above description of an outside *Appell* is by no means an exaggeration. Certainly they were sometimes less rowdy, but not often. I remember one *Appell* was taken by General Peters in person. General Peters was the C.O. of all the camps of Ingolstadt and appeared one morning with some special *Strafe* or reprisal to read out to us. If I remember right, it had something to do with alleged ill-treatment of German officers in France. The General was not popular, and even more noise was made than usual. Just before the cordon was drawn across the door, a French captain walked down the whole front line carrying a chair and sat down throughout the *Appell*. When the *Feldwebel* stood forward to read his document, he was greeted with the usual cries of "Assassin!" and "Parle pas Bosche!" and finished in a storm of howls which completely drowned his voice. The interpreter then proceeded to read a French translation, which was listened to with attention, the reading being merely punctuated by cheers and laughter and hoots at the interesting points. After the Russian shooting affair, which happened towards the end of our time at the fort, one Russian always used to turn up with a large Red Cross flag on a pole. When things began to get really exciting, I own I used to edge away from the flag, as I felt sure the Germans would fire their first volley into the group round it.

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FOOTNOTES:

- [1] Lieutenant Medlicott, R.F.C., was later murdered by the Germans on his tenth attempt to escape.

CHAPTER IX

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CAPTORS AND CAPTIVES

One morning just before *Appell*, a Frenchman came along the passage and announced in each room that Colonel Tardieu was not going out to *Appell* that morning, and would be obliged if other officers would remain in their rooms when the bell went. We did not know exactly what the reason was, and I don't know now, but I think the Colonel had some right on his side—as much right as we usually had in Fort 9. Soon after this announcement a deputation of Russians waited on Major Gaskell to find out what the English intended to do. I may as well say here that Gaskell and most of the other Englishmen (myself included) did not altogether approve of this rowdyism on *Appell*, as we thought it might lead to serious restriction of our exercise and consequently of our chances of escaping, which was of course the only thing worth considering.

As the Russian colonel insisted on acting as interpreter for the deputation, the discussion lasted a quarter of an hour before we understood that the Russians thought it would be better to go out, as they considered it probable that the Germans would treat our refusal as an organized mutiny. But they were, they said, prepared to follow our lead.

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Gaskell and I then went off to see Colonel Tardieu. The Colonel said that, though it was best for us to stick together, this case was a purely personal matter, and we could please ourselves—he could only say that he was not going out, and that the French would follow his lead. Gaskell and I determined to compromise by leaving the matter unsettled, but to go out ourselves to *Appell* very late. In this way it was quite impossible for the Germans to prove organized mutiny against us, and equally impossible to hold *Appell* outside—and the whole thing could easily be put down to mismanagement and the lack of clear orders on the part of the Germans. This was, in fact, just what happened. The Germans were furious, but we pointed out that they had given so many contradictory orders about *Appell* that no one knew what they wanted. They soon saw that there was no case against us for organized mutiny and let the matter drop. The real trouble was that the Commandant was a man who was simply made to be ragged.

A more unfortunate choice for a C.O. of a *strafe* camp can scarcely be imagined. He was a short, thick-set, dark man, about fifty years old, with a large drooping moustache and an inclination to stoutness. His hair was rather long, and he wore pince-nez for reading. I think he had only been C.O. of Fort 9 for a few months when we first went there, but some of the prisoners had known him when he had been in command of another camp, and he then had the reputation for being a kindly and sympathetic commandant. But when we first knew him constant badgering had already soured his temper. He was rather like a schoolmaster whose form has got quite out of control, uncertain whether his boys were intending to be insolent or not. He never pretended to stand on his dignity—his appearance and behavior stamped him as an amiable shopkeeper cursed with occasional fits of violent temper. Then he laid himself open to be ragged so dreadfully. Although he knew little about the business of the fort and had to appeal to his *Feldwebel* on almost every point, yet he insisted on attending personally to nearly every officer who came into the bureau. The *Feldwebel* and two extremely efficient N.C.O.'s, known as Abel and the "Blue Boy," really managed the fort.

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This reminds me of a most amusing caricature of the *Feldwebel* ordering the C.O. about, which

was pinned up in a conspicuous place. I think a *Reclamation* or official letter was sent in to General Peters, protesting against this state of affairs, for which the author got a few days' "jug." A few days' "jug" was just a farce. The cells were always full, and when you got your *Bestrafung* you were put on a waiting list and did your period of solitary confinement from three to five months later. One angry Frenchman wrote a furious *Reclamation* talking of justice and favoritism because Oliphant had been allowed to do a "slice of four days' jug" out of his turn on the list. A sheaf of *Reclamations* (the word was pronounced in either German or French way) used to go in daily to General Peters on every conceivable subject, from serious grievances to humorous insults, from a protest against the filthy habits of Bavarian sentries to an accusation of poisoning a pet rabbit.

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Some men used to spend a great deal of their time writing *Reclamations* conveying veiled insults to the Germans. It seemed to me rather a waste of time, but they caused a great deal of amusement. It was just like composing a sarcastically offensive letter to a Government department. Some of the results were really very humorous and witty, but I am afraid they were wasted on the Bosche, and I have no doubt they all went straight into Peters' wastepaper-basket—at any rate, I never heard of a *Reclamation* having any effect except three days' "jug" for the author of the most offensive ones.

When we first came to the fort we were told that some of the French had sworn an oath to drive the Commandant off his head. He was pretty far gone. Some of the Englishmen, chiefly Oliphant, Medlicott, and Buckley, with these Frenchmen, used to get an enormous amount of amusement by baiting the old fool.

I remember once a conversation something as follows:—

Frenchman.—"The German food you give us is very bad."

Commandant.—"Es tut mir sehr leid, aber——"

Frenchman.—"And it is impossible for any one but a Bavarian to eat it without wine."

"Was meinen Sie, das dürfen Sie nicht sagen," answered the Commandant furiously.

"Why won't you give us wine?" shouted the Frenchman.

"You have got no right to speak to me like that."

"And you don't know how to speak to a French officer; it's disgusting that when you give," etc.

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"Sofort aus dem Bureau gehen?" (Will you go out of the bureau?)

Both start shouting simultaneously:

"Why won't you give us wine?"

"Aus dem Bureau ... I will report you to General Peters."

"Je m'en fous de General Peters—I won't go out till you speak politely to a French officer."

"Go out of this bureau immediately when I tell you to."

"I won't go till you learn to speak politely to me."

The Commandant then rushed at the telephone and pretended to wind the handle violently, but without really calling up at all. He put the instrument to his ear and said:

"Herr General Peters. Are you there? I am Hauptmann L'Hirsch. There is a Frenchman in the office who won't go away. What shall I do?"

Slight pause for Peter's reply. Then to the Frenchman in French:

"The General says that you must leave the bureau immediately."

"Did the General speak politely?"

"Yes."

"Eh bien je sors."

I have already given a description of a scene which took place the first time I ever entered the bureau—and these sort of scenes used to happen daily and hourly. Whenever the Commandant lost his temper, which he did without fail every time, he threw his arms about, clenched his fists, gesticulated furiously, and shouted at the top of his voice. Soon after the Bojah affair, which I will describe later, when rows of this sort multiplied exceedingly, he was removed from the fort nothing less than a raving maniac with occasional sane intervals. In the court-martial which followed the Bojah case, the witnesses for the defense attempted to prove that the insane behavior of Hauptmann L'Hirsch was the main cause of all trouble in Fort 9. In an impartial court of justice, which this court-martial was not, I have not the smallest doubt that they would have succeeded in proving this, owing to L'Hirsch's behavior during the trial.

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The food given us by the Germans was not only very nasty, but there was not enough of it to keep a man alive. Perhaps this is an exaggeration, as I know that a man can keep alive, though weak, with very little food. But lack of food to this extent, combined with the hardships of a winter at

Fort 9, would, I am sure, be enough to kill most strong men. Every day each man received a loaf of bread, shaped like a bun, about 4-1/2 inches across the bottom and 2 inches in depth. It was of a dirty brown color and, though unpleasant, it was eatable. Some even said they liked it. I don't know what it was made of, but I should think from the taste that rye, sawdust, and potatoes formed the ingredients, the latter predominating. It was sometimes very stodgy, and sometimes sour, but on the whole was better bread than we received either at Gütersloh or Clausthal. Later on, the size of the loaf was reduced by more than a third and the quality deteriorated very much, the percentage of sawdust and other unpleasant ingredients being much increased. We never ate it unless we were very hard up, but, if left for a few days, it became as hard as a brick and was most useful as a firelighter. I remember an officer telling us that when he was a prisoner at Magdeburg in the early days of the war, the English prisoners had started playing rigger in the exercise yard with a piece of bread that had dropped in the mud. There was a terrible scene of indignation and excitement among the Germans. The guard turned out—fixed bayonets—charged—rescued the loaf—arrested every one, and I don't remember what happened after that, but all the criminals were severely punished. It must have been terrible to have been a prisoner in those early days. I heard hundreds of stories from the poor devils who were caught in 1914. Some of these stories were funny, some were filthy, that is to say, funny to a German mind, and some were enough to make a man swear, as many have sworn, never to speak to a German in peace time and never to show mercy to one in war.^[2]

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Besides this ration of bread, we were given a small basin of soup daily—it was just greasy hot water with some vegetable, nearly always cabbage, in it. The amount of meat we received used to provide each of us with one helping of meat once every ten days. Two or three times during my stay at Ingolstadt I remember the meat was quite good, and, if it was eatable at all, we enjoyed it enormously, as fresh meat was such a welcome change after the tinned food which we ate continually. Usually, however, it was impossibly tough, and sometimes merely a piece of bone and gristle. We tried keeping it for several days, but it always got high before it got tender. At the end of my time there, when Moretti had been elected chef of Room 42, we always used to make soup from it. Moretti used it five times for soup before he would throw it away, and announced, as he put the soup on the table, "La première," or "La troisième séance," or "La cinquième et dernière séance," whichever it was. The Germans also gave us a certain amount of perfectly undrinkable acorn coffee, and sugar at the rate of about two lumps per man per day. Sometimes they gave us some very nasty beans and sometimes some really horrible dried fish—I think it was haddock. It was very salt, and stank so that we used always to throw it away immediately—we simply could not stand it in the room. Room 39 used to hang all their fish outside the window during the cold weather—a revolting sight. It was their reserve rations, they said. Some of the Russians managed to eat their fish, and I believe there was a French room which had a special method of treating it, but it was generally voted uneatable throughout the fort. About one moderate sized potato per day per head concluded the food rations. This may seem a fairly generous allowance of food, even if it was not of very high quality, but in reality it was very little indeed. A day's rations would work out something as follows: one potato, one small plateful of hot-water soup, one cup acorn coffee, one lump of sugar, two mouthfuls of fish, one mouthful of meat, four or five beans, and the loaf of bread. If any one thinks he can live on that, I should like him to try for a few months in cold weather. We had not many luxuries and comforts in Fort 9, and we did look forward to and enjoy the good things to eat that came from home. It is only people who have never been hungry who can pretend to be indifferent about food—that is to say, if they are well and in hard training as we were. The arrival of the parcel cart was hailed with enormous enthusiasm. I think our people at home would have been well repaid for all the trouble they took in packing the parcels if they could have seen the pleasure it gave us receiving them. Excitement reached a high pitch when we knew that a map or compass was hidden in one of the parcels.

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All the work of the fort—cleaning, cooking, emptying dust-bins, etc.—was done by French and Russian orderlies under the orders of German N.C.O.'s, and when our parcels came they were taken out of the cart and wheeled in on a hand-cart from the outside courtyard to the packet office. There they were sorted by Abel, a German N.C.O., with the help of a French orderly. When this had been done, usually the day after the arrival of the parcels, a list was put up of those who had received any, just inside the main gateway, on the official notice board. The giving out of the *paquets* was a pretty lengthy process, as each was opened by Abel or an assistant Hun and carefully searched. Each wing alternately was served first, and an orderly warned each room when the parcels for that room would be given out. This prevented there being a long queue of officers waiting outside the *paquet* office. A sentry stood outside the door and admitted three officers at a time. A couple of yards inside the door there was a counter right across the room, and on the far side two German N.C.O.'s stood, each armed with a knife and a skewer—the first for opening the parcels, the latter for probing the contents for forbidden articles. You signed for your parcels and paid 5 Pf. or 10 Pf. for the cost of carting them up.

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The Germans, after showing you the address on the outside, cut them open and examined the contents, sometimes minutely and sometimes carelessly. Abel was an oily little brute, very efficient; we hated him and he hated us with a bitter hatred—not without reason on both sides. I think he hated the French more than he did the English, but he hated Medlicott more than all the rest put together. About two months before I left Fort 9 a rumor went round, to the intense joy of every one, that Abel was under orders for the West Front, and we all wished him luck, and he knew what we meant. Abel was just a bit too clever, and consequently got done in the eye sometimes; but I must own that he had a tremendous amount of work to do and did it very

quickly and efficiently. His very capable assistant was the "Blue Boy," whose chief job was to lurk about the fort and try and catch us out. He was always standing in dark corners and turning up unexpectedly. It was his job to tap the bars of our windows with a sledge hammer every three days, and he took an active part in the pursuit if any one escaped.

He was not so clever as Abel, but he had more time for spying and was more persistent. It always seemed to me to be worth keeping on fairly decent terms with these two. It was only necessary to refrain from being offensive to be on better terms than most people in the fort. [97]

It was very different with that swine of a *Feldwebel*. He never walked about without a revolver in his pocket, and he never came alone down any dark passage; "et il avait raison," as the French said, as he had several pretty narrow shaves with brickbats as it was. At one time those tins and jars, such as butter, jam, quaker-oats, which had been packed and sealed in a shop, were passed over to us unopened, and only home-made and home-packed articles were examined. Later on, however, everything had to be turned out on a plate and the Germans kept the tin.

Although very nearly all our parcels arrived eventually, they used to come rather irregularly, and several times as many as twenty to thirty parcels would arrive for the six of us who were in one room. Consequently, if all the food had been opened immediately, much of it would have gone bad before we could eat it. To obviate this difficulty, the Germans made shelves in the parcel office, and each room or mess could leave there the food which it did not need for the moment.

At first sight it would seem that this arrangement would make the smuggling through of forbidden goods almost impossible, or at any rate that our difficulties would be greatly increased. In reality the business was simplified. As long as we knew in which tin or small package the map, compass, or what-not was coming, we could make fairly certain, by methods which I shall describe later, of getting it without it ever being opened by the Germans. [98]

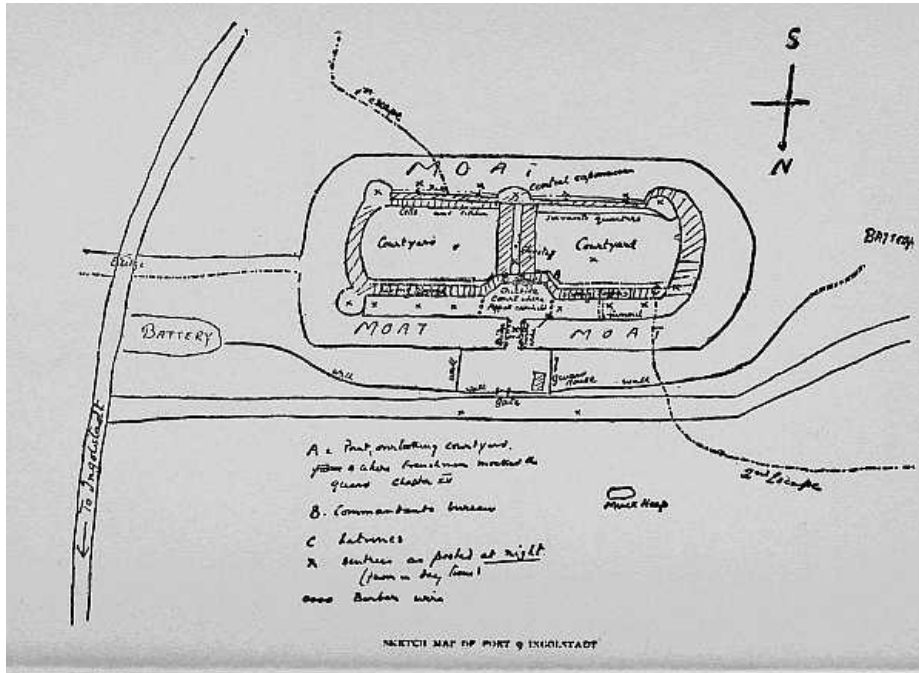
After *Appell* all the fort except the English had dinner. This was the hour when the potato, wood, oil, and coal stealing fatigues did their duty. For some weeks our French orderly used to steal potatoes for us as we needed them. He knew the ropes very well, as he had been in the fort for more than a year. One day, however, he said that this stealing in small quantities was a mistake, and that it would be safer to have one big steal once a month or so. Four of us, under the leadership of Carpentier, stole eight small sacks without much difficulty. It was just a matter of knowing the habits of our jailers and timing it accurately. The Germans were not so suspicious in those days as they became later. There was a small trap-door 6 feet up the wall in the central passage, which Carpentier knew how to open. He got in, filled the bags, and passed them out to us. To carry the full bags back to our rooms we had to pass under the eyes of a sentry. But that is just the best of a German sentry. He had had no orders to spot prisoners carrying bags, and he had also no imagination, so he took no notice.

Between the hours of twelve and two we did our lessons. From two till four we played hockey or tennis. Tea was at four, when some Frenchmen usually came in to see us. *Appell* took place and the doors of the courtyards were shut about half an hour before sunset. After this *Appell*, till the evening *Appell* at nine o'clock, a sentry was left in our passage; but we could still communicate with the other wing. Bridge, reading, lessons, lectures, and preparation for dinner took place during this period. The great amusement was lamp-stealing. During the winter the Germans allowed us, as we thought, a totally insufficient supply of oil, which only enabled us to burn our lamps for four hours out of the twenty-four. This meant going to bed at nine, which was of course ridiculous. The gloomy passages of the fort were mainly lit by oil lamps, and from these we used to steal the oil systematically. After a month or two the Germans realized that this was going on and reduced the number of lamps, and in the long passage where it was obviously impossible to stop us stealing oil they put acetylene lamps. Two lamps to a passage 70 yards long was not a generous allowance. [99]

Between 5 and 9 p.m. the sentry in the passage had special orders, a loaded rifle, and a fixed bayonet, to see that these lamps were not stolen. As all the sentries had been stuffed up by the *Feldwebel* with horrible stories about the murderous and criminal characters of the prisoners, it is not surprising that each sentry showed the greatest keenness in preventing us from stealing the lamps and leaving him, an isolated Hun, in total darkness and at the mercy of the prisoners. As any man came out of his room and passed one of the lamps, which were on brackets about 7 feet from the ground, the sentry would eye him anxiously and hold himself in readiness to yell "Halt!" and charge up the passage. The lamps were about 30 yards apart, and someone would come up, walk up to a lamp, and stop beneath it—the sentry would advance on him, and when he was sufficiently attracted, the officer would take out his watch and look at it by the light of the lamp. Meanwhile a second officer would come quickly out of his room and take down the other lamp. As soon as the sentry perceived this he would immediately charge, with loud yells of "Halt! Halt!" but as he turned both lamps would be blown out simultaneously, and the officers would disappear into their respective rooms, leaving the passage in total darkness. The amusing part was that this used to happen every night, and the sentries knew it was going to happen; but against tactics of this sort, varied occasionally, of course, but always ending with the lights being blown out simultaneously, they were quite powerless! [100]

The evening, after the sentry had been withdrawn at 9 p.m., was spent in the ordinary occupations of gambling, reading, tracing maps, making German uniforms and pork-pie caps, with occasional fancy-dress balls or impromptu concerts. Sometimes mysterious lights would be seen in odd corners of the passage, where someone was industriously working at making a hole through the wall, removing the blocks of stone noiselessly one by one; and sometimes one would

run up against a few men round a wonderful structure of tables and chairs in the middle of the passage, where someone was climbing up the skylight to inspect the sentries on their beats on the top parapet, but usually all was peace and quiet till about 11 p.m. At that hour the sentries were supposed to make us put out the lights in our rooms, but when they found that we paid little or no attention to repeated cries of "Licht ausmachen," and as there was no method, short of firing through the bars into a lighted bedroom, to make us put them out, they eventually gave up these attempts, and, except for an occasional very offensive or conscientious sentry, we put out our lamps or candles when we wished. [101]



SKETCH MAP OF FORT 9 INGOLSTADT

FOOTNOTES:

- [2] The Germans varied their treatment of their prisoners inversely with their prospects of victory. When things were going badly with them—during most of 1916, for instance—much unnecessary harshness towards their prisoners was relaxed. When once more their hopes of final victory were raised by the invasion of Roumania and the checking of the Somme offensive, the poor prisoners had a rough time. Such is the way with bullies.

CHAPTER X

ATTEMPTS TO ESCAPE

When we had been a few days at the fort, and had had time for a good look round, Room 45 formed themselves into an escaping club. That is to say, our ideas and discoveries would be common property. If possible, we would all escape together; but if the way out was only for two or three, the rest would help those selected to go to the best of their ability. It was universally agreed that Fort 9 was the toughest proposition that any of us had yet struck. The difficulty was not so much the material obstacles, but the suspicious nature of the Germans. [103]

Medlicott and Oliphant, as the most experienced prison-breakers, came to the conclusion that it was absolutely necessary to have more accurate knowledge of the numbers, positions, and movements of the sentries on the ramparts and round the moat at night than we already possessed. For this purpose it was decided that one of us must spend a night out. It was no job to be undertaken lightly. It meant a fifteen-hours' wait on a freezing night. For the first three and the last three hours of this time it would be almost impossible to move a muscle without discovery. And discovery meant a very excellent chance of being stuck with a bayonet. Besides this, there were two *Appells* to be "faked"—the *Appell* just before sunset and the early morning one. There was no *Appell* at 9 o'clock in those days. Our rooms were separated from one another by 3-foot thick walls, but in these walls were archways leading from one room to the other. These archways were blocked up by boarding, and formed recesses in each room which were usually employed as hanging-cupboards for clothes, coats, etc. Under cover of these we cut a couple of planks out of the wooden barrier and made a hole so a man could slip through quickly from one room to the other. These planks could be put back quickly, and it would have needed a pretty close examination to have discovered where the board was cut, once pictures had been pasted over the cracks and coats had been hung up in front. There was some difficulty at first in [104]

obtaining the necessary tools for the work. The first plank we cut through with a heated table-knife, but for the second one we managed to steal a saw from the German carpenter who was doing some work in one of the rooms, and return it before he missed it. It must not be forgotten that there was absolutely no privacy in the fort, and that a sentry passed the window and probably stared into the room every minute or two. A special watch had to be kept for him, and you had to be prepared at any moment to look as if you were doing something quite innocent. Room 43 was inhabited by Frenchmen, but as usual in Fort 9 they were quite willing to help us. We practiced the trick many times till every one was perfect in his part. The rehearsals were most amusing. One of us pretended to be Abel doing *Appell*. First he tapped at the door of 43 and counted the men in the room, shut the door and walked about 7 paces to the next door, tapped and entered. Between the time Abel shut one door till the time he opened the next, six to eight seconds elapsed. During those seconds it was necessary for the Frenchman to slip through the hole, put on a British warm (we lived in coats in the cold weather), and pretend to be Oliphant. Abel knew every man by sight in every room; but, as long as he saw the requisite number of officers in each room, he did not often bother to examine their faces. After we had done it successfully, several other rooms adopted the method, and the "faking" was done a very large number of times before the Germans discovered it four months later.

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The early morning *Appell* was really easier. For several mornings the fellow in the bed nearest the hole made a habit of covering his face with the bed-clothes. Abel soon got used to seeing him like that, and, if he saw him breathing or moving, did not bother to pull the clothes off his face. The Frenchman had simply to run from his bed, bolt through the hole and into the bed in our room, cover up his face, and go through the motions of breathing and moving his legs sufficiently but without overdoing it. All this had been practiced carefully beforehand. We had, of course, enormous fun over these preparations, stealing the saw and cutting the planks, pretending to be Abel doing *Appell*, and all the time dodging the sentry at the window. This sort of amusement may seem childish, but it was the only thing which made life tolerable at Fort 9.

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We cast lots as to which one of us was to sleep out. It fell to Oliphant. I own I breathed a sigh of relief, as I did not relish the job. The next thing to do was to hide him outside on the ramparts. The place was selected with great care, and was behind one of the traverses up on the ramparts on the south side, for our idea was for some or all of us to hide up there and swim the moat on the south side one dark night. Medlicott and Milne dug a grave for him, whilst Fairweather and I kept watch. Just before the *Appell* bell went we buried him and covered him with sods and grass. Of course he was very warmly clad, but he had a pretty beastly night in front of him, as it was freezing at the time. It was about 4.30 p.m. when he was covered up, and he would not get back to our room and comparative warmth till 8.15 next morning, when the doors were opened. The evening *Appell* went off splendidly, but the night was brighter than we had hoped, and we were rather anxious about him.

There was some anxiety also about the morning *Appell*, as we could not be quite certain which way Abel would take the *Appell*, up or down the passage: that is to say, which room, 42 or 43, would he come to first? It made all the difference to our arrangements. By careful listening we found out which way he was coming, and when he poked our substitute, who groaned and moved in the oft-rehearsed manner, we nearly killed ourselves with suppressed laughter.

About an hour afterwards, just as we were going out to cover his retreat, Oliphant suddenly walked in, very cold and hungry but otherwise cheerful. He had had quite a successful night, and had gained pretty well all the information we wished for. The bright moon had prevented him from crawling about very much, but he had seen enough for us to realize that it would be a pretty difficult job to get through the sentries and swim the moat even on a dark night.

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Although we temporarily abandoned this scheme, owing in the first place to the difficulties which we only realized after Oliphant's expedition, and secondly because "faking" *Appell* was a very chancy business for more than two people, we nevertheless made the most careful preparations to escape at the first possible opportunity. Several schemes were broached. One of these schemes I always considered a good one. In the low and flat country in which the fort was situated very thick fogs used to come down quite suddenly. As soon as it became foggy all the prisoners had to come into the fort and the doors of the courtyards were shut. Our idea was either to wait outside carefully hidden when the order was given to come in, or to have some method of getting into the courtyard in foggy weather; in either case we thought it would not have been a difficult business to cross the narrow moat on the north side during a fog in the day time. At night time there were sentries in the courtyards and on the ramparts, as well as three in front of our windows. In the day time there were none in the courtyards or on the ramparts, and only one in front of our windows. The difficulty was to get into the courtyards after we had been locked up. I climbed up a ventilator several times to see if it were not possible to cut our way out there, but the more one went into the details the more difficult it seemed.

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In the meantime we went on with our preparations: map-copying (which was Fairweather's department), rations and equipment (of which Medlicott and Oliphant were in charge), intelligence department as to movements of sentries and habits of Huns (which was my job). Boots, socks, grease, home-made rucksacks, concentrated food and the correct amount of meat and biscuits for a ten days' march, maps, compasses, the route to follow, and numerous other details were carefully prepared, and the material hidden. We thought that it was unlikely that a larger party than four would be able to go, and Medlicott, Oliphant, Fairweather, and myself were selected to be the first party to try if anything turned up.

The next bit of excitement was the escape of Kicq and party. This happened when we had been in the fort about a month. Early on Kicq had left Room 45 and gone into a French room, 41. One afternoon he asked me if I would help him to escape, which I agreed to do. His idea was to dress up as a German N.C.O., and with six Frenchmen and a Belgian named Callens to bluff themselves out of the main gate at about 6.30 in the evening. The scheme seemed to me almost impossible—but Kicq was enthusiastic about it, and persuaded me that it would probably come off, if only because it was so improbable that any one would attempt such a thing. There were three sentries and three gates and a guardhouse to pass, and the real danger was that, if they passed the first sentry and gate and were stopped in front of the second, they would be caught in the outer courtyard at the tender mercy of two angry sentries, and in my opinion would stand an excellent chance of being stuck with a bayonet. However, Kicq realized that as well as I did; and, as it is for every man to judge the risks he cares to take, I promised to do my part, which was quite simple.

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About 6 p.m. I went into Room 41, and there they were all dressing up and painting their faces, etc., as if for private theatricals. Kicq was excellent as a German Unteroffizier. He had made a very passable pork-pie cap, of which the badge in front is very easy to imitate by painted paper. He had a dark overcoat on to which bright buttons, which would pass in the dark as German buttons, had been sewn, and he had a worn-out pair of German boots which had been given to one of the orderlies by a German. Some of the others had on the typical red trousers—but any sort of nondescript costume will do for a French orderly. They were timed to go as soon after 6.30 p.m. as the road was clear, and it was my job to give the signal. I was pleased to be able to report that I had never seen the sentry, who was on duty at the main gate, before, and it was most unlikely that he knew any of their faces. I stood about opposite the packet office, and Abel came along the passage and went in. Looking through the keyhole I saw that he was busy in there near the door and might come out at any moment. I reported this, and the whole party came and stood in the dark turning of the passage by the bathroom, from where they could watch me peering through the packet office keyhole. At last I saw Abel sit down at his table and begin writing, so I gave the signal. Immediately a whole troop of French orderlies, carrying mattresses, blankets, and bedding on their heads, came clattering down the passage, laughing and talking to one another in French. A German N.C.O. was among them, and as he went along he collided with a German-speaking Russian, a great friend of ours known as Charley, who naturally cursed his eyes out in German. Kicq took no notice, but going just ahead of his orderlies he cursed the sentry at the main gate for not opening the door more quickly for them, and stood aside counting them as they went out. One fellow came running down the passage a bit after the others—Kicq waited for him and then went out after them, and the door closed.

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I waited most anxiously for any noise which would show that things had gone wrong. But after ten minutes it seemed certain that they had got clear away.

After half an hour of subdued rejoicing in the fort, for by that time the story had gone round, we suddenly heard an awful commotion among the Huns. The guards were turning out at the double, clutching their rifles amid a regular pandemonium of shouts and orders, and the roar of the Commandant could be heard above the tumult. We turned out into the passages to see the fun. The C.O. was raving like a maniac. The minute he caught sight of us laughing at him he brandished his fists and shouted at us to go to our rooms. Oliphant and I started to argue that the bell had not gone and therefore we need not go to our rooms, but he told off a sentry, who drove us back at the point of the bayonet, Oliphant protesting in his worst German, "Sie dürfen nicht so sprechen mit ein English Offizier."

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We cheered like mad and sang the Marseillaise and "On les aura"—in fact, celebrated the occasion to the best of our ability.

What happened as soon as the party got outside the first door, Kicq told me afterwards. The second obstacle they had to pass was the gate which barred the roadway over the moat. This the sentry opened for them without a word, whilst Kicq trod on his toes to distract his attention. As they passed the guardhouse in the outer court several men came out and shouted at them, but they were unarmed, and Kicq & Co. paid no attention. The outer gate consists of a double door which they knew would pull open without being unlocked, once the bar was removed. They got the bar off and tore open the gate, and found a sentry waiting for them with a rifle and fixed bayonet outside. "Wer kommt dann hier?" said he. Kicq was out first, and holding up his hand said, "Ruhig, einer ist los!" (Be quiet, a prisoner has got away), and rushed past him into the darkness. Without giving the sentry time to recover his wits, the rest pushed past, throwing their mattresses, etc., on the ground at his feet, and disappeared. Kicq and Decugis went on together for a bit, thinking that the rest must have been held up and expecting to hear shots. Then they saw other figures moving near them in the darkness and thought at first they were Germans searching, but found they were the rest of the party. It was not for some minutes afterwards that the alarm was given; but the whole party, after nearly running into a sentry on a neighboring fort, managed to get away from their pursuers. After a terribly hard eleven days' march they were all caught near the frontier. It was in the middle of winter, and they suffered most dreadfully from cold and bad feet. All of them, with the exception of Kicq and Callens, had gone out (according to English ideas of escaping) very badly prepared for such a journey at that time of year. They had quite insufficient food (though they had opportunities of carrying out any amount), insufficient socks, grease, and numerous other things. They also lost their way rather badly the first two nights. Then Kicq took charge, and the latter part of the journey they went by the same route which Buckley and I afterwards followed. None of them had thought of going into proper training, and to have reached the frontier under such conditions was a wonderful feat of

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endurance. They were in a terrible condition when they were caught. When within 70 kilometres of the frontier, just north of Stockach, they separated, the Frenchmen going on together and making a forced march of 60 kilometres in one night, and the Belgians coming on in their own time. Both parties were caught on the same day and about the same time; the Frenchmen because they got into a country close to the frontier where they could find no decent place to lie up, and, as there was a light fall of snow, their tracks were traced. The Belgians were caught in a very unlucky manner. Their hiding-place was excellent, but on a Sunday the Germans usually go out shooting, and a shooting party came on them. A dog came up and sniffed at them, and then an old German with a gun stared into the bush and said, "Es ist ein Fuchs" (It's a fox).

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They soon found it was not a fox, and Kicq and Callens were hauled out. The Württembergers treated them very well indeed, and said they were almost sorry they had captured them, as they had made such a sporting effort, or words to that effect. They were escorted back to the fort by a very decent Württemberg officer, who was furious with the Commandant when he laughed and jeered at them for being recaptured. "Well," said Kicq in excellent German to the Commandant, "if you leave all the gates open, how are prisoners to know that they are not allowed to go out that way?" The Württemberg officer remarked, as he said good-bye to them outside, that "the Prussians were brutes, but the Bavarians were swine." Which remark seems to me very much to the point. All the party, with the exception of a very young Frenchman called La Croix, had painful and swollen feet, and all without exception were ravenously hungry for a week or more after they had been returned to prison. One of them retired to hospital for several weeks, and I believe that there was a danger at one time that he would lose his feet owing to frost-bite. However, they healed in time.

As far as I remember they received no special punishment for this escape. They probably got five days' "jug," each, but, as I have explained before, this was a mere farce. Each of the three sentries whom they had passed got three months—and I don't imagine that was any farce at all for the unfortunate sentries.

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During the spell of fine weather which we had before the winter set in, Medicott and Buckley joined forces and made an attempt to escape by a method which, in my opinion, was as unpleasant and risky as any which was attempted in Fort 9. With the help of the Commandant de Goys they persuaded some French orderlies to wheel them out concealed in the muck and rubbish boxes. We buried them one afternoon beneath potato peel and muck of every description, heaved the boxes on to a hand-cart, and then from the top of the ramparts watched four orderlies escorted by a sentry wheel them out to the rubbish-heap about 200 yards from the fort. In the boxes they were lying on sacking, so that when the box was upset the sacking would fall over them. We saw the first box upset apparently successfully, but as they were about to deal with the second, which contained Medicott, there was a pause. The sentry unslung his rifle, and it was obvious to us that they had been discovered. Buckley's account of what happened was as follows:

"At about 4.45 Medicott and I proceeded to where the boxes stood, and after some of the rubbish had been taken out we were thrust into its place by the willing hands of Evans, Milne, Fairweather, and Oliphant, and covered up again with rubbish. In due course the orderlies arrived, the boxes were loaded on to the cart, and the 'procession' started. All seemed to be going extremely well as far as I could judge from my uncomfortable position; the sentry was picked up at the guardhouse, and I heard with joy the gate of the fort being unlocked to let the party out. The orderlies stopped the cart at the rubbish-heap (or rather some hundred yards short of it, as we found out afterwards, our combined weight having made farther progress in the snow impossible), and started to unload the box in which I was concealed. As instructed, they unloaded us as far away from the sentry as possible. I felt my box taken off the cart and turned over. I lay still, and seemed to be well covered with rubbish and to be unnoticed. I heard Medicott's box unloaded alongside of me, but just as this was being completed I felt some one tugging at the Burberry I was wearing, a corner of which was showing from under the rubbish.

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"It had been arranged previously that if either of us was discovered the one discovered first was to give himself up at once and endeavor to conceal the presence of the other. I lay still for a few seconds, but as the tugging continued, I concluded the game was up and I stood up, literally covered in sackcloth and ashes. I must have looked a fairly awe-inspiring sight, and I evidently caused some alarm in the noble breast of a German civilian who had come to hunt the rubbish heap for scraps of food and clothing, and who evidently thought he had discovered a gold mine in the shape of a Burberry which he had been trying to pull off my back for the last few minutes. Anyway, he retired with some speed to a safe distance! The sentry, who up to the time of my getting up had noticed nothing wrong, at this point began to perform rifle exercise in the close proximity of my person, and generally to behave in an excited and dangerous manner. Then followed for the next few minutes the unpleasant and, alas! far too frequent experience of staring down the muzzle of a German rifle, held as it seemed with remarkable steadiness in spite of the excitement of the man behind it. The guard, whose attention had been attracted by the combined shouts of the civilian and the sentry, next appeared on the scene at the double. They were cold, hungry, and excited, to say the least of it.

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"Having failed to convince my sentry that I was alone and that there was nobody under the other heap of rubbish, I warned Medicott of the guard's approach and advised him to get up. This he did, and was at once set upon by the oncoming Landsturm, who really looked as if they meant to do him in. After a considerable show of hate, in which I received a hefty clout over the knee with the butt of a rifle, we were marched back to the fort. A wild and disorderly scene followed

between Medlicott, the German Commandant, and myself, of which I have a very vivid recollection. It ended by my being ejected by force from the Commandant's office, but not before both Medlicott and I had either concealed our valuable maps and compasses or had passed them unobserved into the hands of the willing friends who had come to see the fun."

Soon after the recapture of Kicq and party, the moat froze over, and though the Germans for several days were able to keep it broken by going round in a boat every day, they at last had to give it up. It was rather hard to get any conclusive proof as to whether the ice would bear or not, but one evening, after testing the ice with stones, we decided that if there was a frost that night we, that is to say, Oliphant, Medlicott, Milne, Fairweather, Wilkin, and myself, would run over the south rampart and across the ice just before the evening *Appell*. We made complete preparations, and every one had ten days' rations and everything else necessary for a march in winter to the frontier.

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However, it never came off, as at morning *Appell* next day the Commandant informed us that the doors into the inner courtyards would not be opened again until the moat thawed. This was rather a blow, because I felt sure that if we had only had the courage to try, the ice would have borne us the evening before.

About this time, or perhaps rather earlier, there were one or two attempts to escape on the way to the dentist. Du Sellier and another Frenchman and Fairweather were all booked to go one afternoon to the dentist at Ingolstadt. They went under escort, and if they could delay matters so as to return in the darkness it would be the simplest thing in the world to get away. However, they made an awful mess of things, and though they came back in the dark, owing to good procrastination by Fairweather, only Du Sellier got away, and the other Frenchmen knocked up the sentry's rifle as he fired. This was a badly managed business, as all three men ought to have been able to escape from a single sentry in the dark. Du Sellier did not get very far, as the weather was very cold and he was insufficiently prepared. Being alone too was a great handicap. His feet got very bad and he had practically to give himself up, or at any rate to take quite absurd risks after being three or four days out, and was recaptured. The real risks were taken by Fairweather and the other Frenchman, and I don't quite know how they failed to get "done in" by an enraged sentry.

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Another rather ingenious but still more unsuccessful attempt was made on the way to the dentist by Frenchmen. The idea was to go into one of those large round urinals which are fairly common in French and German towns. Inside they did a very rapid change, put on false beards, spectacles, etc., and walked out at the other end. Unfortunately the sentry recognized them.

In what I have written and intend to write it must not be imagined that I am giving an exhaustive account of all that happened at Fort 9. I can give a fairly detailed account of the main incidents of my own prison career, but even this is not chronologically correct. Otherwise, I can only note a certain number of incidents and stories which will help to illustrate the sort of life we led in this prison. Most of these incidents have to do with escaping or attempting to escape. But it must not be imagined that this is the only thing we ever did or thought about. It was our work, so to speak. Just as at the front, whilst fighting is the main business, soldiers nevertheless manage to amuse themselves pretty well behind the line in rest billets by sports, gambling, sing-songs, and dinners, so with us, whilst escaping was the main object in life, a large part of our time was taken up with lessons in languages, most vigorous games of hockey and tennis, poker and bridge, cooking and eating food, dancing and music, reading the German papers and discussing the war news (we were pretty good at reading between the lines), and attending lectures which were given nearly every night on subjects varying from aviation to Victor Hugo.

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After a week or so of hard frost a thaw set in, the ice melted on the moat, and we were again let out into the courtyards. Hockey started once more, and we had some very good games. Some time before this Oliphant's sentence had come through, and he was sent off to Wesel for six months' imprisonment in a fortress; as a punishment, I believe, for attempting to escape, and for things incidental to escaping, such as cutting wire and having maps and other forbidden articles in his possession. When it started to freeze again, I thought of the last time and determined not to miss another opportunity. One morning after testing the ice by throwing stones from the top of the bank I determined to make the attempt that evening. The *Appell* bell went about 5 p.m., and about 5.30 it became dark. My idea was to start as the *Appell* bell went, believing that they would not be able to catch us before the darkness came down. We had to run down a steep bank on to the ice, about 40 yards across the ice, and then 200 yards or so through one or two trees before we could put a cottage between ourselves and the sentries. There was certain to be some shooting, but we reckoned that the sentries' hands would be very cold, as at 5 p.m. they would have been at their posts for just two hours, and they were armed with old French rifles, which they handled very badly.

Wilkin agreed to come with me, and Kicq, when he heard what was up, said he would like to come too. He had always a surprising faith in me. He had scarcely recovered from his last escape, but although he was not very fit, he was, or would have been, a great asset to the party, as he knew the way. This was especially valuable as our maps at that time were only copies of copies, and consequently not very accurate. The plan was to carry out rucksacks and other equipment nearly to the top of the south bank and hide behind one of the traverses just under the path. From there we should be hidden from the prying eyes of the sentry on the center "caponnière." The 5 p.m. *Appell* bell was the signal for two parties, one headed by Major Gaskell and one by Captain Unett,^[3] to distract the attention of the two sentries by throwing stones on to

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the ice. We would then seize our opportunity and rush down the bank, and we hoped to be most of the way across the ice before the firing began.

The question which really was causing us some anxiety was, "Would the ice bear?" I felt confident it would. Wilkin said he was beastily frightened, but he had made up his mind to come and he would go through with it. Kicq said that, if I thought it would bear, he was quite content, and I really believe that the matter did not worry him in the least. It would have been a very unpleasant business if the ice had broken, as, with the heavy clothes we had on, I doubt if we could have got out again. Still, any one who lets his mind dwell too much on what may happen will never escape from any prison in Germany.

Our equipment was pretty complete. I had very thick underclothes, two sweaters, a thick leather flying coat and a tunic, and socks over my boots so as not to slip when running across the ice. The others were dressed much the same, except that Kicq had a cap which had been stolen by Oliphant from the Commandant. He said it might come in useful in impersonating a German N.C.O. conducting two English prisoners. [121]

In our rucksacks we had ample rations for a ten days' march and enough solidified alcohol for at least one hot meal per diem. We managed to get our bags and coats up into the jumping-off place without being seen by the sentry and without much difficulty. I remember walking across the courtyard about 4.30 with Gilliland, picking up stones for him to throw at the ice. I think he was more nervous about it than we were: as is often the case, this sort of thing is more of a strain on the nerves for the onlookers than for those actually taking part. We were all in our places and in our kit, with our sacks on our backs, a few minutes before five. Whilst we were waiting for the bell to go, there were several prisoners walking up and down the path in front of us, along the top of the rampart. Of course they took absolutely no notice of us, except one Frenchman who spoke to us without looking round and assured us that the ice would not bear—a cheerful thing to say under the circumstances. "Mais oui, vous allez voir," we answered.

It was a bad five minutes waiting there. Then the bell went, and almost immediately I heard laughter and shouting and the noise of stones falling on the ice. Then we jumped up and bolted over the path and down the slope. I was slightly ahead of the other two, and when I got to the bottom of the steep bank I gave a little jump on to the ice, hoping it would break at the edge rather than in the middle if it were going to break at all. But it bore all right, and I shuffled across at a good speed. About half-way over I heard repeated and furious yells of "Halt!" followed soon afterwards by a fair amount of shooting, but I have no idea how many shots were fired. I was soon up the bank on the far side, through a few scattered trees, and over the frozen stream by a plank bridge. Then I looked back. The others were only just clambering up the bank from the moat and were a good 100 yards behind me. What had happened was this. I had made a small jump on to the ice, thus avoiding the rotten edge. The other two did not, but stepped carefully on to the edge, which broke under their weight and they fell flat on their faces. For the moment they were unable to extricate themselves. Wilkin says he got somehow upside down and his heavy rucksack came over his head so that he was quite unable to move. Then Kicq got himself free and pulled out Wilkin. At first he thought of beating a retreat up the bank again, believing naturally that the ice would not bear, but then he saw me three parts of the way across and heard the sentries shooting apparently at me, so he and Wilkin, keeping a bit separated so as not to offer too large a target, ran across after me. The sentry in the center, who had been well attracted by Gaskell and the stone-throwing party, only caught sight of me when I was well on the ice, but then he started yelling "Halt!" and loading his rifle as fast as possible. He then ran to the edge of his "caponnière" and dropping on one knee fired and missed. Cold fingers, abuse, and perhaps a few stones too, which were hurled at him by the gang on the pathway just above his head, did not help to steady his aim. After one or two shots his rifle jammed. Yells and cheers from the spectators. He tore at the bolt, cursing and swearing, and then put up his rifle at the crowd of jeering prisoners above him. But they could see that the bolt had not gone home and only yelled the more. The other sentry had started firing by this time, but he was out of sight of the prisoners in the fort, and Unett and Milne, who had been distracting his attention (Unett said the sentry nearly shot him once), ran off to prove an alibi. I don't know how many shots were fired altogether. Not a large number, as owing to the appearance of some civilians they stopped firing when once Kicq and Wilkin had got well on to the far bank of the moat. When I was half-way across the space between the moat and the cottage, I saw on the main road on my left a large four-horse wagon with a knot of gesticulating men in civilian clothes. We learnt afterwards that they were carters from a munition factory in the neighborhood, and were fairly strong and healthy fellows. They were only about 150 yards away, and started after us led by a fellow with a cart-whip. The going was very heavy, as there were two or three inches of snow and heavy plough underneath, so we made slow progress, as we were carrying a lot of weight in clothes and food. They quickly overtook me, and the fellow who was leading slashed me across the shoulders with his whip. I turned and rushed at him, but he ran out of my reach. The rest of them then came round and I began to see that the game was up, especially as at that moment I saw some armed soldiers coming on bicycles along the road from the fort. [122] [123] [124]

The next thing to do was to avoid being shot on recapture. I stood still, whilst they all snarled round me, and beckoning the smallest man said to him in German, "Come here and I will give myself up to you." The fellow with the whip immediately came forward. "Not to you, you Schweinhund," I said; "you hit me with that whip." The little fellow was quite pleased, as I think there is 100 marks reward for the recapture of an officer, and caught hold of my coat tails, and we started off towards the fort. Wilkin had given himself up to two or three others by this time,

but I saw that Kicq was trying to sneak off without being noticed while the mob was occupied with us. However, a few seconds later they saw him. Two or three gave chase, and he was brought in soon after us. We had not gone more than a few steps towards the fort when I saw the *Feldwebel* running across the snow towards us. He came up in a furious rage, cursing us and brandishing a revolver. We waved him aside and told him not to make such a fuss, as it was all over now, and he soon calmed down. Some soldiers then came up and marched us in, the Frenchmen cheering us as we came through the gate. Before we came to the fort we had to cross a bridge over the stream; and, as we walked along, I tore up my map and dropped it into the stream. I forgot to say that Kicq, when he went off by himself just before being taken, had managed to get rid of the Commandant's hat by stuffing it down a hole. As Kicq crossed the bridge he took out his map to throw it into the water, but was seen by his guard, a horrid little fellow who used to help with the clerical work in the bureau. Kicq dropped the map, and a scuffle ensued. Kicq got much the best of this and kicked the map into the stream. [125]

There was quite an amusing scene in the bureau. We all of us had to take off most of our clothes and be searched. I had nothing I could hide, but both Kicq and Wilkin had compasses, which they smuggled through with great skill. Kicq had his hidden in the lining of his greatcoat, and Wilkin kept his in his handkerchief, which he pulled out of his pocket and waved to show there was nothing in it, at the same time holding the compass, and then put it back into his pocket. All our foodstuffs and clothes were returned to us, with the exception of my black flying-coat. I complained about this, and appealed to a German general who come round to inspect the fort a few days later, and it was returned to me, but was eventually confiscated when I tried to escape in it a week or two later. We had several tins of solidified alcohol with us for smokeless cooking purposes. These were taken, though we protested. For all the things taken off us we were given receipts by the Germans and told, rather ironically, that we could have them back at the end of the war.

Just as we were going out I saw my tin of solidified alcohol, which was valuable stuff (we used to manufacture it in the fort from paraffin and soap), standing almost within my reach, and very nearly managed to pocket it as I went out. However, I found Decugis outside, and explained to him the position of the tin, and suggested that he should take in one or two pals, have a row in there, and steal it back for me. This is the sort of expedition that the Frenchmen loved and were absolute masters at. Within ten minutes I had my solid alcohol back all right and kept my receipt for it as well. [126]

FOOTNOTES:

[3] Captain Unett had been sent to Fort 9 as a punishment for escaping from Clausthal.

CHAPTER XI

AN ESCAPE WITH MEDLICOTT

For the next six weeks life was rather hard. It froze continuously, even in the day time, in spite of the sun, which showed itself frequently, and at night the thermometer registered as often as not more than 27° of frost. The Germans, who had made many efforts to keep the ice in the moat broken by punting round in a steel boat kept for the purpose, now abandoned the attempt, and in consequence of this and of our escape across the ice we were denied the use of the inner courtyards. For the next six weeks the only place in which we could take exercise was the little outer court where *Appell* was sometimes held. It was only about 50 yards by 25, and was really an inadequate exercise ground for 150 active men. Still we kept pretty fit. Every morning all the English had an ice-cold shower-bath. Of the Frenchmen, Bellison, who lived in Gaskell's room, and one other, I think, had been used to take a cold bath every morning, but it was really astonishing what a number followed our example at Fort 9. When it was so cold that the water in the tubs above the shower-sprays was frozen solid, thirty or forty officers, by pumping the water from the well, used to take a bath regularly every morning. It was only when coal became so scarce that it was not possible to keep a fire going all day in the living-rooms, and when, if you took a bath cold you would never get warm again the whole day, that attendance dropped to some half-dozen men who, having before them the possibility of a ten days' march to the frontier in the dead of winter, looked upon the bath in the morning more as a method of making themselves hard and fit than as an act of cleanliness. [128]

Every day a good many of us took exercise by running round and round the small court, to the astonishment of the sentries. Müller's exercises were introduced, and Medicott and Gaskell, Buckley and I, and many other Englishmen and Frenchmen, did them regularly every day for the rest of the time we were in Germany. As a result of this strenuous life, though we were often very cold and very hungry, we were, with few exceptions easily traceable to bad tinned food, never sick or sorry for ourselves the whole time.

Unett, poor fellow, suffered severely from boils, and Buckley from the same complaint during his two months' solitary confinement. From this onwards, for all the winter months, the coal and

light shortage became very serious. We stole wood, coal, and oil freely from the Germans, and before the end nearly all the woodwork in the fort had been torn down and burnt, in spite of the strict orders to the sentries to shoot at sight any one seen taking wood. So long as the Germans continued to use oil lamps in the many dark passages of the fort, it was not very difficult to keep a decent store of oil in hand, but after a month or so the Germans realized they were being robbed, and substituted acetylene for oil.

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We all wrote home for packets of candles, and considering the amount of oil we were officially allowed, the length of time we managed to keep our lamps burning remained to the end a source of astonishment to the Germans.

As it was Christmas time, and as Room 45 was well supplied with food, we decided to give a dinner to the Allies on Christmas night. A rumor had been passed round, with the intention, I have no doubt, that it should come to the ears of the Germans, that a number of prisoners intended to escape on Christmas night. The Germans were consequently in a state of nervous tension, the guards were doubled, and N.C.O.'s made frequent rounds. No one had any intention of escaping on that night as far as I know.

A piano which had been hired by a Frenchman was kept in the music-room, a bare underground cell of a place at the far end of the central passage, and we applied to be allowed to bring this into our room. To our huge indignation this was refused, on the grounds that we might use it as a method of attracting the sentries' attention.

However, we were determined to have the piano and a dance on Christmas night, so a party was organized to bring it from the music-room in spite of the German orders. I don't know exactly how it was managed, but I think a row of some sort was begun in the other wing of the fort and, when the German N.C.O.'s had been attracted in that direction, the piano was "rushed" along to the "ballroom." The dinner was an undoubted success. Room 45, with Medlicott as chef, spent the whole day cooking, and that evening about twenty of us sat down to dinner—the guests being all of them Frenchmen or Russians. After dinner we all attended a fancy-dress dance which some Frenchmen gave in the adjoining room. They had knocked down a wooden partition between two rooms, and had a dance in one and the piano and a drinking bar in the other. The French are a most ingenious nation, and the costumes were simply amazing.

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There were double sentries all round the fort that night, and some of them stood outside the windows and enjoyed the dancing and singing. It was an extremely cold night outside, and I am not surprised that some of them felt rather bitter against us. I offered one a bit of cake, but he merely had a jab at me through the bars with his bayonet.

About midnight we sang "God Save the King," the "Marseillaise," and "On les aura," with several encores. This turned out the guard, and a dozen of them with fixed bayonets, headed by the *Feldwebel*, crashed up the passage and, after a most amusing scene in which both sides kept their tempers, recaptured the piano.

A few days after this, Medlicott and I learnt that four Frenchmen were cutting a bar in the latrine with the object of escaping across the frozen moat. We offered them our assistance in exchange for the right of following them at half an hour's interval if they got away without being detected. They agreed to this, as they needed some extra help in guarding the passage and giving warning of the approach of the sentry whilst the bar was being cut. At the farthest end of his beat the sentry was never more than 40 yards away from the window where the operation was being carried out. Under these circumstances a very high degree of skill was necessary for the successful cutting of an inch-thick bar. Here Moretti was in his element. No handle to the saw was used; he held the saw in gloved hands to deaden the noise, and in four hours made two cuts through the bar.

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Repeated halts had to be made, as the sentry passed the window every three or four minutes, and, as he was liable to examine the bars at any time, they sealed up the crack between each spell of work with some flour paste colored with ashes for the purpose. This made the cut on the bars invisible. I examined the bars carefully myself after they had been cut, and was quite unable to tell which one was only held in place by a thread of metal at each end.

The removal of one bar would leave only a narrow exit through which a man could squeeze and, thinking that this might delay them, the Frenchmen, rather unwisely I consider, decided to cut a second bar.

Now whether they were really betrayed, as we believe, by one of the French orderlies who for some time had been under suspicion as a spy, or whether some one on the far bank of the canal had happened to see or hear them, we never knew, but it is certain that the Germans learnt, without getting exact details, that one of the bars in the latrines was being cut. The "Blue Boy" visited the latrines four times in a couple of hours and examined the bars with care, but without finding anything wrong. At last the Commandant and the *Feldwebel* walked up outside our windows, and the latter taking each bar in turn shook it violently. About the fourth one he shook came off in his hands and he fell down flat on his back.

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The Germans brought up barbed wire and wound it round and round the bars and across the hole. Besides this, they put an extra sentry to watch the place. It seemed at first hopeless to think of escaping that way. The Frenchmen gave it up, but I kept an eye on it for a week or so, and as a precaution obtained leave from the Frenchmen to use it if I saw an opportunity.

One very cold night about a week later I was standing in the latrines and watching the sentry stamping backwards and forwards on his 20-yard beat, when it seemed to me just possible that the thing might be done. I fetched Medicott and Wilkin, who had some wire-cutters. Medicott took the cutters and, choosing a favorable moment, cut the tightest strand of wire. It seemed to us to make a very loud "ping," but the sentry took no notice, so Medicott cut eight more strands rapidly.

Leaving Wilkin to guard the hole Medicott and I rushed off to change in the dark, because if we lighted a lamp any sentry passing our window could see straight into the room. It was half an hour after midnight when we started to change, but by 1.15 a.m. we were ready—our rucksacks, maps, compasses, and all were lying packed and hidden. Over our warm clothes we wore white underclothes, as there were several inches of snow on the ground outside; and over our boots we had socks, as much to deaden the noise as to prevent our slipping as we crossed the frozen moat. [133]

Outside, the reflection from the snow made the night seem bright, but there was a slight haze which prevented white objects such as ourselves being seen at a greater distance than about 100 yards.

In the latrines it was as dark as pitch, so that, though we stood within a few yards of the sentry, we could watch him in safety. It was only safe to work when the sentry was at the far end of his beat; that is to say, about 15 yards away. Medicott cut the wire, whilst Wilkin and I watched and gave him signs when the sentry was approaching. Owing to repeated halts, it was a long job. The sentries glanced from time to time at the wire, but all the cuts were on the inside of the bars and invisible to them. Removing the bits of wire when they had all been cut was like a complicated game of spillikins, and it was not till nearly 4.30 a.m. that Medicott had finished. It was a long and rather nerve-racking business waiting in the cold to make a dash across the moat.

Medicott and I tossed up as to who should go first, and he won. It was not easy to choose the right moment, for almost our only hope of getting across without a shot was when the two sentries were at their beats farthest from us, and one of these sentries was invisible to us, though we could hear him stamping to keep warm as he turned at the near end of his beat.

At last a favorable moment came and Medicott put his head and shoulders through the hole, but stuck half-way. He had too many clothes on. We were only just in time to pull him out of sight as the sentry turned. He took off some clothes and put them in his sack and tried again, though we had to wait some time for an opportunity. Again he found he was too fat—and what was worse got hung up on a piece of barbed wire. We made what seemed to us a fearful noise hauling him in and disentangling him, but the sentry took no notice. Then Wilkin rushed off and got a second sack, into which Medicott packed several layers of clothes. Another long wait for a suitable moment. We heard the sentry on our left come to the end of the beat, then it sounded as if he had turned and his steps died away. The man on our right was at the far end of his beat. Now was the moment. With a push and a struggle Medicott was through the hole. I went after him instantly, but stuck. A kick from Wilkin sent me sprawling on to the snow on the far side. In a few seconds we were crossing the moat, I a couple of yards behind Medicott, as fast as our heavy kit and the snow would let us. We were almost across when "Halt! Halt!! Halt!!" came from the sentry on our left. He had never gone back after all, but had only stamped his feet and then stood still. On the far side of the moat was a steepish bank lined with small trees; we tore up this and hurled ourselves over the far bank just as the first shot rang out. We were safe for the moment—no sentry could see us, but shot after shot was fired. Each sentry in the neighborhood safeguarded himself against punishment by letting off his rifle several times. Milne, who knew we were escaping and was lying in bed listening, told me afterwards that he had felt certain that one of us had been hit and that they were finishing him off. For several hundred yards we went northwards across the fields, only halting a moment to pull off the socks from our boots. Then we turned left-handed, intending to make a big circuit towards the south so as to avoid passing too close to the battery which flanks the fort. [134]

When we had gone about 400 yards we saw behind us lights from several moving lanterns and realized that some one was following on our tracks. It was very necessary to throw off our pursuers as soon as possible, because there was little more than a couple of hours before the daylight, so we changed our plan and made towards a large wood which we knew was about a mile and a half northwest of the fort. [135]

Just before entering the wood we saw that the lights behind us were still about 300 yards away, but now there seemed to be ten or a dozen lights as well, in a large semicircle to the south of us.

The wood proved useless for our purpose. There was scarcely any undergrowth, and it was just as easy to follow our tracks there as in the open field. There was only one thing to be done. We must double back through the lights and gain a village to the south of us. Once on the hard road we might throw them off. Choosing the largest gap in the encircling band of lanterns we walked through crouching low, and unseen owing to our white clothes. Once in the village we felt more hopeful. At any rate they could no longer trace our footsteps, and we believed that all our pursuers were behind us. Choosing at random one of three or four roads which led out of the village in a more or less southerly direction, we marched on at top speed. After walking for a quarter of an hour, we were about to pass a house and a clump of trees at the side of the road when we heard a noise from that direction, and suspecting an ambush we instantly struck off across the fields, putting the house between ourselves and the possible enemy. Then we heard footsteps running in the snow, and then a cry of "Halt! Halt!" from about 15 yards behind us. The position was hopeless; there was no cover, and our pursuer could certainly run as fast as we [136]

could in our heavy clothes.

"It's no good," said Medlicott; "call out to him."

I quite agreed and shouted.

"Come here, then," the man answered.

"All right, we are coming, so don't shoot."

When we got close we saw it was the little N.C.O. who looked after the canteen. His relations with the prisoners had always been comparatively friendly. He was quite a decent fellow, and I think we owe our lives to the fact that it was this man who caught us.

He only had a small automatic pistol, and, as we came back on to the road, he said, "Mind now, no nonsense! I am only a moderate shot with this, so I shall have to shoot quick." I said we had surrendered and would do nothing silly. He walked behind us back to the village, on the outskirts of which we met the pursuing party, consisting of the "Blue Boy" with a rifle and a sentry with a lantern.

The lantern was held up to our faces. "Ha ha," said the "Blue Boy," "Herr Medlicott and Hauptmann Evans, noch mal." Then we walked back to the fort under escort, about a 4 mile march. As we entered the outer door of the fort the sentry at the entrance cursed us and threatened me violently with a bayonet, but our N.C.O. stopped him just in time. [137]

In the main building just outside the bureau we had a very hostile reception from a mob of angry sentries through whom we had to pass. For a few moments things looked very ugly. I was all for conciliation and a whole skin if possible, but it was all I could do to calm Medlicott, who under circumstances of this sort only became more pugnacious and glared round him like a savage animal. Then the *Feldwebel* appeared and addressed the soldiers, cursing them roundly for bringing us in alive instead of dead. I have treasured up that speech in my memory, and, if ever I meet *Feldwebel* Bühl again, I shall remind him of it. He is the only German against whom, from personal experience, I have feelings which can be called really bitter. The *Feldwebel* wished to search us, but we refused to be searched unless an officer was present; so we waited in the bureau for an hour and a half till the Commandant arrived. This time they took my flying-coat away and refused to give it back. They also found on me the same tin of solidified alcohol which had been taken off me before and restolen by the Frenchmen. They recognized it, but of course could not prove it was the same. "I know how you stole this back," said the senior clerk as he searched me. "You shall not have it again." He was a Saxon, and the only German with a sense of humor in the fort. We both laughed over the incident. I laughed last, however, as I got the tin back in about a week's time, as I will tell later. [138]

The search being over, we were allowed to go back into our rooms, and had breakfast in bed.

Perhaps it may seem rather extraordinary that we were not punished severely for these attempts to escape, but the explanation lies not in the leniency of the German but in the fact that there were no convenient cells in which to punish us. The cells at Fort 9 were all of them always full, and there was a very long waiting list besides. They might have court-martialled us and sent us to a fortress, but our crime, a "simple escape," was a small one. They might have sent us to another camp; but the Germans knew that we would ask nothing better, as no officers' camp was likely to be more uncomfortable or more difficult to escape from. Any way, it would be a change. Sometimes, when there was a vacancy, they sent us to the town jail, but, as had been demonstrated more than once, it was easier to escape from there than from Fort 9. The Germans' main object being to keep us safe, they just put us back into the fort and awarded us a few days' *Bestrafung*, which we did in a few months' time when there was a cell vacant.

CHAPTER XII

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SHORT RATIONS AND MANY RIOTS

The weather became colder and colder, and for the next month we seldom had less than 27° of frost at night, and in the day time anything up to 20° in spite of the fairly frequent appearance of the sun. The countryside was covered by a few inches of snow, now in the crisp and powdery condition seldom seen except in Switzerland and the colder countries. After the experience of Medlicott and myself it was generally agreed in the fort that escape was almost impossible, unless a very considerable start could be obtained; so the greater number of us settled down to face the not altogether pleasant domestic problems of Fort 9.

Our allowance of coal was found to be quite insufficient to keep the room tolerably warm. It was the same in every room in the fort. Repeated requests for an increased allowance having as usual had no effect, we proceeded to tear down all the available woodwork in the fort and in our rooms and burn it in the stoves. We lived literally in a solid block of ice. Just before the long frost had set in, the ground above and round our rooms had been soaking wet, and the walls and floors had been streaming with moisture. Then came the frost, and everything was frozen solid, and outside in the passage an icy blast blew continually, and in places beneath broken ventilators a few [140]

inches of frozen snow lay for weeks unthawed inside the fort. That passage was, without exception, the coldest place I have ever known.

Down the walls of each of our rooms ran a flue in the stonework, intended to drain the earth above the rooms. For over six weeks there was a solid block of ice in it from top to bottom, in spite of the fact that the flue was in the common wall of two living-rooms.

We lived continually in our great coats and all the warm underclothes we possessed; we ourselves seldom, and our allies never, opened windows, and we pasted up cracks and holes; but still we remained cold, and crouched all day round our miserable stoves. Müller's exercises, skipping, and wood, coal, and oil stealing were recreations and means of keeping warm and keeping up our spirits. On top of this came the famine. For the last few months we had been so well and regularly supplied with food from home that we had never thought of eating the very unpalatable food given us by the Germans, and had at length come to an agreement whereby they gave us full pay—in my case 100 marks per month—and no longer supplied us with food. Up to the time of this agreement they had deducted 42 marks monthly, and this extra money was quite useful. Some time before Christmas we were warned that there would be a ten days' stoppage of our parcels in order to allow of the more rapid delivery of the German Christmas mail to their troops. In consequence we had all written home asking that double parcels should be sent us for the two weeks preceding Christmas. However, Christmas passed and parcels came with almost the same regularity as they had always done. Christmas festivities, and the knowledge that double parcels were on their way, induced us to draw rather heavily on our reserve store. Then came the stoppage. Daily we looked anxiously for the parcel cart which never came. Reduced to our last half-dozen tins of food among six men we went onto quarter rations, helped out from a large supply of stolen potatoes. At length we had nothing whatever to eat but our daily ration of bread and almost unlimited potatoes. No butter, no salt, no pepper. It would not have mattered very much in warm weather, but in those conditions of cold and discomfort in which we were living, hunger was rather hard to bear.

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A diet consisting entirely of butterless and saltless potatoes in various forms became after three or four days extremely tedious. It is quite impossible to eat enough of them to satisfy one's hunger. After a gorge of potatoes one is distended but still hungry. I forget how long the famine lasted—about ten days, I think, though I remember very well the arrival of a cartload of parcels which relieved the situation just when things began to get serious. It arrived on a Saturday, and the Germans said that they would be given out on Monday, as a certain time was necessary for sorting and registering the parcels. To starving men this delay was quite intolerable, and the prisoners adopted such a threatening attitude that the Commandant considered it wisest to give out a small portion of the parcels to keep us going till Monday.

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Of course we might have asked the Germans to supply us with food when we were short, but I don't think such a course was contemplated seriously by anybody.

Perhaps it may be considered that the kindly Germans, knowing that their prisoners were nearing starvation, should have insisted on supplying us with food. But the Germans of Fort 9 were not accustomed to confer favors on us—if they had offered them we should have refused—and I have no doubt that they considered a little hunger very good for us.

So much for the famine; our parcels for the rest of the time I was in Germany arrived in large quantities.

About this time, on the strength of the convention agreed to between the English and the German governments, we obtained from the very unwilling Germans the privilege of going on walks for an hour or two a week on parole.

For the rest of the time I was at Fort 9 the parties of English and Russian prisoners, but not French, as I believe they had no such convention with the Germans, exercised this privilege once and sometimes twice a week, accompanied by an unarmed German N.C.O., who under these circumstances sometimes became quite human.

The walks were very dull indeed, as the country round the fort is very uninteresting. However, it was certainly a relief to get out of the place every now and then. The only other way in which we ever got out of the fort legitimately was when we were sent for from Ingolstadt for preliminary inquiries concerning a court-martial, or to make a statement concerning the vigilance of the sentry past whom we had escaped. We always did our best to defend the unfortunate sentries, but I am afraid that they almost invariably were heavily punished.

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The next incident of any interest was a turbulent affair which has become known to the one-time inmates of Fort 9 as the Bojah case. As I was not involved to any great extent in this storm in a teacup, I have rather a confused idea of what happened and why it happened.

I am not even sure how it started, but I believe the original cause was a very mild and commonplace theft by Medlicott. A German carpenter was putting up some shelves in one of our living-rooms when Medlicott and I entered the room. Quite on the spur of the moment Medlicott picked up the carpenter's pincers when his back was turned and handed them to me. I put them in my pocket and walked out of the room and hid them. Before the pincers were missed Medlicott also followed me out of the room. No one else in the room had noticed the theft, and naturally denied it indignantly when accused by the carpenter. Apparently the carpenter, being very angry, instantly informed the Commandant. About ten minutes later we heard a fearful row in the passage outside, and we all came out of our rooms to see the fun. In the doorway of one of the

rooms was a seething, shouting mob consisting of several sentries with fixed bayonets, the *Feldwebel* and half a dozen prisoners, mostly French, and the Commandant. They were all shouting at the top of their voices and pushing, and the Commandant was brandishing his arms and generally behaving like an enraged maniac. What the Frenchmen were doing in that room I am not quite clear, but I believe they had come into the room in which the carpenter had been after the latter had departed to report the loss of the pincers to the Commandant. When the Commandant arrived with his guard he insulted them and accused them of stealing the pincers and then ordered them back to their rooms. The Frenchmen—Kicq, Derobiere, Bojah, and a few others of the younger and more violent sort—were the last people in the world to take this sort of thing lying down; besides which they loved a row at any time for its own sake, and for once in a way they had right on their side. They denied the accusation and protested against the insults with some violence, and when ordered to their rooms by the Commandant refused to go unless they first had an apology. It is quite impossible to imagine the scene unless you realize the character of the Commandant. The one outstanding feature was his conspicuous lack of dignity and total inability to keep his temper. In his quiet moments he was an incompetent, funny bourgeois shopkeeper; when angry, as at this moment, he was a howling, raving madman. When the Frenchmen refused to move, the Commandant apparently ordered the *Feldwebel* to arrest them, and confused shouting followed, in the midst of which the Commandant hit the *Feldwebel* and, I believe, though I did not see it, also hit Bojah. There was a complete block in the doorway, and the passage was also blocked by a hand-cart, which happened to be there, and a large and cheering crowd of spectators. The sentries could not get in, and the *Feldwebel* and the Commandant, who were blocked in the doorway, could not move, and every one continued to shout. Medlicott, who loved this sort of thing, tried to barge into the scrimmage, and I only just prevented him being struck by a bayonet. Then Kicq managed to get close to the Commandant and call him a "cochon." Two sentries effected his arrest. After that, I really don't know how things got disentangled without bloodshed, but eventually the Germans retreated amidst yells of derision, with Bojah, Kicq, and Derobiere in their midst.

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The English and French prisoners who had seen this affair decided that, as the Commandant's conduct had been unbecoming that of an officer, we would hold no further communication with him. Most of us were content to act up to this passively, but when Batty Smith was summoned to the office he informed the Commandant of the decision and walked out. Buckley and Medlicott also took the earliest opportunity of doing the same thing.

As soon as they entered the office, Buckley delivered the following ultimatum. "Nous n'avons rien à faire avec vous parce que nous ne pouvons pas vous considérer comme un officier." They then right-about turned and marched out in military fashion, leaving the Commandant, as he himself said in his evidence at the trial, "sprachlos" with astonishment. Buckley's reason for speaking in French instead of German was that he did not wish him to be able to call any of the office staff as witness of what he had said. Soon afterwards Batty Smith was called again to the bureau, arrested, and sent to prison in another fort, where he remained in solitary confinement for over two months without any sort of trial. Buckley and Medlicott were kidnapped in exactly the same way and thrown into improvised cells in the fort. Medlicott had only been in his cell for ten seconds, when he began, as usual, to think how to get out of it. Above the door was a glass window by which light entered the cell. The glass was already partially broken, so Medlicott standing on a chair smashed the rest of it and somehow managed to climb out through it. Soon afterwards Buckley also got out, and both returned to their rooms. Five minutes later the Germans placed sentries in front of the cell doors, but it was not till several hours afterwards that they found to their intense surprise that the birds had already flown.

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We got a good deal of amusement out of this incident; but a few days later Medlicott was sent to another fort and Buckley was shut up in Fort 9. Both remained in close solitary confinement without any sort of trial for over two months.

We never saw either Derobiere or Kicq again, though I have heard from the latter since the armistice was signed. He had a series of perfectly amazing adventures and hardships, and eventually escaped successfully, after the sixth or seventh attempt, about the time of the armistice.

Of all the unusual happenings in Fort 9, that which I am about to describe is perhaps the most remarkable. To steal a large iron-bound box from the Commandant's bureau would be at any time a difficult feat, but when it is considered that the only opportunity for the theft occurred in the middle of the day, and also that the box contained compasses and maps by the dozen, several cameras, solidified alcohol, censored books, in fact all those things which we were most strictly forbidden to possess, it must be owned that it was an extraordinary performance. It was organized and carried out mainly by Russians with the help of a few Frenchmen.

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About 11.30 one morning, just after *Appell*, a Russian came into every room along the corridor and informed us that there would be a general search by the Germans at 12.15. We thanked him and hid all our forbidden property, for a hint of this nature was not to be taken lightly at Fort 9. We had no idea what was going to happen, and only heard a detailed account of it afterwards.

When a prisoner attempts to escape and is recaptured, he is taken by the Germans into the bureau and searched, and for those articles—maps, compasses, etc.—which are taken off him he is given a receipt and the articles themselves are deposited, carefully ticketed with the owner's name, in a large iron-bound wooden box which is kept in the depot outside the fort.

When, however, prisoners are removed from one camp to another, the articles belonging to those

prisoners are handed to the N.C.O. in charge of their escort and are deposited in the depot of the new camp.

This time two Russians were being sent to another camp, and the iron-bound box in question had been brought into the bureau so that the senior clerk could check the articles as they were handed over. The theft of this box was carried out in the following manner. Just before midday a party of Frenchmen, I believe, went into the bureau and had a violent row with the Commandant—not an unusual occurrence, as I have already explained. As the row became more and more heated, other Frenchmen and Russians crowded into the bureau. A fearful scrimmage and a great deal of shouting ensued, in the midst of which a party specially detailed for the purpose carried the box unobserved out of the bureau and into our "reading room," which was only a few doors away. There men were waiting with hammers and other instruments. The lid was wrenched open and the contents turned out on to the floor. Some then fell on the box and broke and tore it into small pieces which others carried to the different rooms and burnt immediately in the stoves. Others again distributed to their owners or hid in previously prepared places the contents of the box, so that within five minutes the box itself had utterly disappeared and all its incriminating contents were in safe hiding-places. The row, which had been gradually dying down, now dissolved, and very soon afterwards the Germans discovered their loss. The bells went and we were all ordered to our rooms. Then, amid shouts of laughter from every room, two rather sullen and shamefaced Germans searched vainly for an enormous box which had only been stolen five minutes before and for which there was no possible hiding-place in any of the rooms. [148]

Most of us got back some valuable belongings. I got a compass and some maps which had been taken off me at my first escape, but the most amusing prize was my box of solidified alcohol, for which I now held two receipts from the Germans as well as the article itself!

CHAPTER XIII

A TUNNEL SCHEME

In the earlier chapters of this book I have mentioned the fact that some months previous to my capture my people at home and I had invented a simple code which would enable us, to a very limited degree, to correspond, if ever I were unlucky enough to fall into the hands of the Germans. [149]

This may seem to have been morbid anticipation of a lamentable occurrence, but I assure you it was only a most obvious precaution. Not only did I belong to the R.F.C., in which the chances of capture were unavoidably greater than in any other service, but my brother had been badly wounded and captured at the second battle of Ypres, and for over a year we had received no news of him that had not been most strictly censored. Soon after my arrival at Ingolstadt I wrote home several sentences—it was difficult to write much more—in our prearranged code, and received answers in the same way. But to obtain my mother's efficient coöperation in plans of escape some more detailed instructions than could be compressed into our code were necessary. We desired accurate maps about 1:250,000 of the country between Ingolstadt and the Swiss frontier, a luminous compass, saws for cutting iron bars, cloth which could be made into civilian hats, condensed and concentrated food of all sorts, and in addition detailed instructions must be sent as to how these things were to be hidden in the parcels. As we were only allowed to write one letter a fortnight and one post card a week, to send the information home by my code would have been an almost endless task, so I took the risk of writing a couple of letters in sympathetic ink, merely using my code to say "Heat this letter." [150]

The results were successful beyond my wildest hopes, for not only were instructions obeyed, but my family showed very great ingenuity in packing the required articles. In due course two luminous compasses and two complete sets of excellent maps were received safely. Each set of maps consisted of about six sheets each a foot square. The letters came from England quicker than the parcels, so that, at the same time as my mother sent off the parcel containing the maps or compass, she sent me a post card to say in what parcel it was coming and in what article it was concealed. After that it was my job to see that I obtained the article without it being examined by the Germans. Watching a German open a parcel in which you knew there was a concealed compass is quite one of the most amusing things I have ever done. Most of the maps came baked in the middle of cakes which I received weekly from home, and as I was on comparatively good terms with the Germans who searched our parcels, they used to hand these over to me without ever probing them.

One of the compasses came in a glass bottle of prunes, and I was not surprised when the Germans handed this to me without searching it, as it looked impossible that anything could be hidden in it. A second compass came in a small jar of anchovy paste, and, as I dared not risk asking for it, I told the German to put it among our reserve store of food and found an opportunity of stealing it about a fortnight later. [151]

I remember decoding one post card from my mother, and making out the message to be "Maps in OSWEGO." But what was Oswego? No one had any idea.

When the Hun opened my parcel, I was feeling rather nervous. Almost the first thing he picked

up was a yellow paper packet. He felt this carefully, but passed it to me without opening it, when I saw with joy that "Oswego" was marked on it. There was a large bundle of maps in the middle of the flour. Another "near thing" was when the whole of the crust on one of my cakes was entirely composed of maps, though the baking had browned the oilpaper in which they were sewn so that it looked exactly like cake. Altogether there is no doubt that I was extraordinarily lucky to get all the things I did without being detected.

Many other Frenchmen and Englishmen in the fort had maps and compasses smuggled through to them, though owing to the energy of my people at home, and sheer good luck on my part, I doubt if anyone was more successful than I was. However, in one way or another, by bribery, stealing, and smuggling, I am pretty sure there was an average of at least one compass per man throughout the fort, and traced maps in any quantity, though originals were scarce. [152]

There was rather an amusing incident which happened when Moretti was chef in Room 42. Buckley was in the habit of receiving dried fruit from home, which, for purposes of his health, he kept for private use. One day Moretti raided this store, in order to give the mess stewed fruit for dinner, but, when he was cooking them, messages from home were found floating about in the stew. Examination showed that the prunes had been cut open very cleverly and a small roll of paper substituted for the stone. I have given the above description of one of the methods by which maps and compasses were obtained, not only because the possession of the things was of immense importance in our ultimate escape, but because it illustrates a fact, which many people believed with difficulty, namely, that the Germans are extremely inefficient when the use of the imagination is necessary to efficiency. They believed they were searching with the greatest possible thoroughness: every tin, for instance, was opened by them and the contents turned out on to a plate, but it was obviously impossible to examine every small packet in every small parcel, so that a certain discretion had to be used as to what to examine and what to pass, and it was quite extraordinary how they invariably spotted wrong. I have often wished to know whether the German prisoners in England smuggled forbidden goods into their camps with the same ease as we did.

One set of maps I cut down and sewed into the cuff of my tunic, and the smallest compass I stowed away in the padding on the shoulder. The rest of the stuff I divided between Moretti and Decugis, both of whom had been very good friends to me. It was from the latter indeed that I received information as to the position of the sentries on the Swiss frontier at Riedheim, where Buckley and I ultimately crossed into Switzerland. [153]

Towards the end of our strict confinement in Fort 9, while the moat still remained frozen, the prisoners became very restless and a large number of abortive attempts to escape were made. These mainly consisted of attempts to burrow through the walls or in some way to obtain access to the inner courtyards during the night. Once in the courtyard it was thought that it would be easy to run between the sentries across the moat if the night were only reasonably dark. Three Frenchmen actually did get out, and, owing to successful "faking" of *Appell*, their absence was not discovered, but they were caught in the courtyard before they had crossed the moat. On another occasion some Frenchmen, by piling tables and chairs on top of one another, had managed to get up to one of the ventilators in the passage outside our rooms. Unfortunately they were seen by the sentry on the ramparts, who crept up to the ventilator, without apparently being observed, and fired two shots down through the glass into the crowd below. By some extraordinary chance no one was hit, and before the *Feldwebel* and about a dozen soldiers with fixed bayonets could arrive, the temporary structure beneath the ventilator had been cleared away and everyone was looking as innocent as possible, especially the culprits. Several men, including myself, who were gambling or walking quietly in the passage, only escaped being bayoneted by displaying considerable activity at the critical moment. Some of the Frenchmen spent three weeks of most skilful labor in making a hole through 4 feet of masonry into the inner courtyard. As these walls were inspected daily by the Germans the stones had to be replaced every day so as to leave no trace of the work. I inspected this place myself several times in the day time, and am prepared to swear that it was impossible to tell which stones were solidly imbedded and which were loosely held together by imitation plaster. Somehow or other this also was discovered when it was almost finished. A sentry was placed outside the hole. In spite of the sentry, however, the Frenchmen removed and threw down the latrine all the stones which they had loosened, leaving in their place a placard on which was written, "Représailles pour le Château de Chauny." In France the Germans had wantonly destroyed, only a few days before this, the beautiful Château de Chauny. Bar-cutting was also attempted by several Frenchmen and Englishmen—Bouzon, Gilliland, and others; but somehow unforeseen circumstances always turned up at the last moment to prevent an attempt to escape being made. [154]

On one work, a tunnel,^[4] in which Gaskell and I were assisting, an immense deal of labor was spent in vain. In Room 49 the Corsican colonel and Moretti and about four other Frenchmen had sunk a hole in the corner of their room close under the window. This shaft was about 6 feet deep—that is to say, to the water level of the moat. Farther one could not go, as the water came in. From here a gallery was bored through the foundations of the wall—4 or 5 feet of very solid masonry. This alone took them three weeks. For the next few yards the tunnel made better progress until, owing to the nature of the soil, they found it necessary to revet the tunnel with wood as they advanced. The gallery was so small—only 20 by 24 inches as far as I remember—that it was impossible to crawl along it. You had to drag yourself along on your stomach, and soon the conditions under which the work was carried on became so unpleasant that two Frenchmen gave it up. Gaskell and I came in as the new recruits. It was a horrible job. Most of [155]

the time one lay in water and worked in pitch darkness, as the air was so bad that no candle would keep alight. Gaskell was so large in the shoulder that he could not work down the tunnel, and I am so long in the arms that I could only do it with the greatest difficulty and exertion. After a time it was found necessary to pump air to the man at work by means of a home-made bellows and a pipe, and this made the work slightly more tolerable. From the window, the ground, starting at about the same level as the floor of our rooms, sloped down to the bank of the moat, dropping about 3 feet 6 inches, and from there there was a sharp drop of about 2 feet 6 inches to the water or, at the time we started the tunnel, to the ice.

Our object was to come out in the steep bank of the moat on a level with the ice and crawl across on a dark night. With the ice there I think the idea was an extremely good one, and as nearly certain of success as anything could be in Fort 9, but it is obvious from the dimensions given that the tunnel towards the end must necessarily come within a few inches of the surface of the ground. Actually for the last 3 or 4 yards we were within 6 inches of the surface, and were able to drive a small tube up through which we could breathe. Working in the tunnel was a loathsome task, and one hour per day, in two shifts, was as much as I could stand. You had to lie 12 yards or more under ground, in an extremely confined space, in total darkness and in a pool of water. The atmosphere was almost intolerable, and sometimes one had to come out for a breath of fresh air for fear that one would faint. But we did this unwillingly, as it took quite two minutes to go in and about four minutes to get out, and so wasted much time. By getting into an excruciatingly uncomfortable position, it was possible to shovel earth into a wooden sledge made for the purpose, and when this was full, at a given signal it was dragged back by a man at the pit-head, whose job it was also to work the bellows. To your left wrist was tied a string, and when this was twitched you stopped work and lay still waiting for the sentry to tramp within 6 inches of your head, and wondering when he would put his foot through, and if he did whether you would be suffocated or whether he would stick you with a bayonet. Our safeguard was that the top 8 to 12 inches of ground were frozen solid, and as long as the frost lasted we were fairly safe, and later on we revetted the tunnel very thoroughly with wood.

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All the earth had to be carried in bags along the passage and emptied down the latrines. This was Gaskell's self-appointed task, and he must have emptied many hundreds of bags in this way. Considering that there was a sentry permanently posted outside the windows of the latrines it needed considerable skill and judgment to avoid being detected. We soon found that we needed more labor, and two more Frenchmen, de Goys being one of them, joined our working party. Moretti was not only chief engineer, but also the most skilful and effective workman in the tunnel, and it was entirely owing to him that it came so near to being a success. I was a mere laborer, and not entrusted with any skilled work.

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Unfortunately before the work was finished, the thaw came, and we had to make other and much more complicated plans for crossing the moat.

It was generally agreed that we could not afford to get our clothes wet through in crossing the moat. Moretti, the Colonel, and the two other Frenchmen in their party decided to wade through the moat naked, carrying two bundles sewn in waterproof cloth, one containing their clothes and the other their food and other necessaries for a ten days' march and life in the open in the middle of winter.

Gaskell and I and de Goys and his partner disliked the idea of being chased naked in the middle of winter carrying two bundles, each weighing 20 pounds or more, so we decided to make ourselves diving-suits out of mackintoshes. After waterproofing the worn patches on them with candle grease, and sewing up the front of the neck, where a "soufflet" or extra piece was let in to enable one to enter the garment from the top, and binding the legs and arms with strips of cloth, we felt pretty certain that little or no water would enter during the short passage of the moat. Whether or not this would have been successful I cannot say, for thank Heaven we never tried. As the ground gradually thawed, and as the tunnel approached the moat, the question of revetting became ever of greater importance. In some places the earth fell away and left cavities above the woodwork, which we blocked up to the best of our ability. There still remained a 6-inch layer of frozen earth above us, but for the last week of the work we could never be sure that a heavy-footed sentry would not come through if he trod on a tender spot. Towards the end, the difficulty of obtaining sufficient wood became very acute, for a large part of the woodwork of the fort had already been burnt in our stoves during the winter. We all of us reduced the planks in our beds to the minimum, and Moretti, by means of a false key, entered some unused living-rooms which were kept locked by the Germans, and stole and broke up every bit of wood he could find—beds, furniture, stools, shelves, partitions and all. He was one day occupied in this way in one of the empty rooms when the sentry outside the window saw or heard him, and shot into the room at him from about 3 yards' range but missed, and Moretti retreated with the wood. At last, after three months' work in all, the tunnel was finished, and a night selected for the escape. As the sentry who walked between our windows and the moat was never, even at the far end of his beat, more than 30 yards from the exit of the tunnel, we considered it essential that there should be sufficient wind to ruffle the surface of the moat, and not too bright a moon. To a certain extent by skill, but mainly by good luck, we had come to the exact spot on the bank at which we had aimed. The place was close under a lantern which was always hung at night near the edge of the moat, but owing to the way in which the shadows fell we reckoned that the light would dazzle rather than help the sentry to see the mouth of the hole when it was opened. In the day time the open hole could not fail to attract immediate attention, so that we intended to cut through the last few inches of earth only an hour or so before the escape.

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The Colonel and Moretti were to go first, and then the two Frenchmen in their room, as these had done five weeks' more work than the rest of us. Gaskell and de Goys played baccarat to decide which team should be the next, and we won. Then Gaskell and I played to decide who should go first of us two, and I won. De Goys and his partner lived in the other wing of the fort, so that it was necessary for them to fake *Appell* and remain over in our rooms after 9 o'clock at night. This was carried out successfully by help of most lifelike dummies in their beds, which breathed when you pulled a string, and when the German N.C.O. came round on our side de Goys and partner just hid under the beds. We got a great deal of innocent amusement out of this sort of thing.

During the afternoon preceding the night on which we intended to go, I had a bad fit of nerves, and for half an hour or more lay on my bed shaking with funk at the thought of it. However, I completely recovered control before the evening. [160]

The night was not a particularly favorable one; we should have preferred a good thunderstorm, but considering the thaw which had set in we could not afford to wait. An hour before the time for starting someone went down to open the species of trap-door which we had made at the far end, which would enable us to close the exit after our departure. In the meantime the Colonel and Moretti got ready. I really felt sorry for them. We, the non-naked party, would be reasonably warm, whatever the result might be. The Colonel stripped nude and greased himself from head to foot, and then wound puttees tightly round his stomach, as a "precaution against a chill," as Moretti said. There was good need for precautions, it seemed to me, as there were still large lumps of ice floating in the moat, and it was nearly freezing outside. Moretti just got out of his clothes and picked up his bundles and was apparently looking forward to the business, but I think he was the only one who was.

As soon as they were ready to go, Gaskell and I went back to our rooms to put on our diving suits, and in the passage were standing three German soldiers. Close inspection showed that they were Bellison, May, and another Frenchman excellently got up.

They felt perfectly certain, and we were inclined to agree, that it was impossible for eight of us to get across the moat without someone being seen and shot at by the sentry. We knew from Buckley, who had special opportunities of observing this whilst in solitary confinement, that when the alarm was given, all the guard turned out at the double from the guardroom inside the fort and rushed in a confused mob to the outer courtyard. These three, dressed as Germans, after having opened all the intervening doors by means of skeleton keys, intended to join the guards and rush out with them. I think the idea was quite excellent, and that their chances of escape were much greater than ours. [161]

When we returned to Room 49 we found consternation among our party. The man who had been down to open the trap-door said that it could not be done, owing to unexpected roots and stones, under two hours' work, and by that time the moon would have risen. After a hurried consultation we agreed to abandon it for that night.

The next three nights were still and calm and clear without a ripple on the water; an attempt would have meant certain failure. On the fourth morning a pocket about 6 inches deep and a foot in diameter appeared in the ground above the tunnel. All that day the sentry did not notice it, and that night was stiller and clearer than ever. It was impossible to go.

The next day the N.C.O. whom we knew as the "Blue Boy" came round to tap the bars of our windows, and the sentry drew his attention to the place where the earth had sunk. He tested it with a bayonet, and later a fatigue party came along with picks and dug the whole thing up, and all our labor was in vain. It was rather sad; but, as I said before, looking back now, I feel rather thankful that we never made the attempt. The only result, as far as I know, was that the members of Room 49 were split up among other rooms in the fort, and a sentry was put on guard over the mouth of the hole. Moretti came into Room 42 and was instantly appointed chef. He also started to dig another tunnel somewhere else, which was also discovered. Personally I had had enough of tunnels, and swore I would never try and escape that way again, so I returned with renewed energy to my Russian lessons. [162]

FOOTNOTES:

- [4] I have given the story of this tunnel at some length, not because it was in any way exceptional, but rather because it shows the labor and ingenuity involved in attempts to escape of this type, of which there were innumerable examples in Fort 9. A most wonderful tunnel, 80 yards long I believe, was made by the prisoners at Custrin.

CHAPTER XIV.

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THE BOJAH CASE

Soon after the failure of our tunnel scheme several Englishmen, among whom were Gilliland, Unett, and Batty Smith, who had not been convicted by the Germans of any evil deeds during the last four or five months, were warned that they were going to be removed to Crefeld. Great

preparations were made for escaping on the way, and Gaskell and de Goys seized the opportunity to try on the basket trick. Officers who have been prisoners for two or three years accumulate quite a considerable amount of luggage, and it was thought to be more than possible that the Germans would not trouble to search all of it as it left the fort, as it was quite certain to be searched carefully before it entered any new camp. Two large clothes-baskets were procured, of which the fastenings were so altered that they could be opened from the inside. Gaskell and de Goys packed themselves into these, and were carried by the orderlies into the parcel office in the fort with the rest of the heavy luggage. Unfortunately a week or two before this someone had been caught entering this room by means of a false key, and since then a sentry had been posted permanently outside the door. When Gaskell and de Goys, who had already spent nearly four hours in an extremely cramped position, attempted to get out of their baskets to stretch their legs, the wickerwork creaked so much that the suspicion of the sentry outside the door was roused. He called an N.C.O., and the culprits were discovered and led, rather ignominiously, back to their rooms.

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From Fort 9, where the Germans were so very suspicious, this method of escaping would need, I think, more than an average amount of luck to be successful, though from a normal prison camp it was to my knowledge successfully employed on several occasions.

The party under orders for another camp left the next day and without further incident, and some weeks later we heard that six or eight of them got out of the train in the neighborhood of Crefeld, and four of them—Gilliland, Briggs, and two others—crossed the Dutch frontier after three or four nights' march and after overcoming considerable difficulties and hardships. Gaskell and I applied personally to the General to be transferred to another camp, and I think most of the remaining Englishmen did the same, but our request was received with derision.

The two officers who escaped gave, I think, rather an unnecessarily harrowing description of the life at Fort 9; for if in what I have written I have given a true picture, I think it will be realized that the feeling of bitterness was, under the circumstances, except in particular instances and with certain individuals, remarkably small.

Attempts to escape, although thoroughly earnest and whole-hearted, were undertaken with a sort of childish exuberance, in which the comic element was seldom absent for long. However, the feeling between the prisoners and their guard gradually grew worse, and several incidents intensified this bitterness to such an extent that towards the end of my time at Fort 9 it seemed scarcely possible that we could continue for much longer without bloodshed, which up to that time, by pure good fortune, had been avoided.

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The Germans had been very irritated when we tore down and burnt in our stoves nearly all the woodwork of the fort, and the repeated attempts to escape got on their nerves. In addition to this, a store of blankets and bedding caught fire—or perhaps was set on fire by the prisoners, as the Germans believed. The place burnt for three days, and numerous fire-engines had to be sent out from Ingolstadt. Also a large pile of paper and boxes from our parcels, of considerable commercial value at that time in Germany, was deliberately set on fire by a squib manufactured for that purpose, although the pile was guarded by a sentry. These and other pinpricks undoubtedly led the Germans, as we learnt from one of the sentries, to issue most stringent orders to the guard to use their rifles against us whenever possible.

I have already recorded some of the occasions, mostly justifiable, when shots were fired at prisoners in the fort, but now there occurred an incident which roused the most bitter feelings amongst the prisoners.

We were allowed to walk on the broad path along the ramparts, but we were not allowed on the grass on the far side. Two Russian officers, newly arrived at the camp I believe and ignorant of this rule (for there were no boundary marks of any sort), lay on the grass one hot afternoon in the forbidden area. Without a moment's hesitation a sentry about 100 yards from them fired two deliberately aimed shots without giving them any warning whatever. Fortunately he missed them, though they presented an enormous target. But the fact that he was an exceedingly bad shot did not in any way detract from the damnableness of this wholly unjustifiable attempt at murder—for that is the way we looked at it.

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About a month before this last event, Buckley, Medlicott, and Batty Smith finished their spell of "two months' solitary" and were welcomed back to the society and comparative freedom of Fort 9. The Germans said that they had only been under arrest (*Stubenarrest*) pending investigations, and indeed ever since the row which I have called the "Bojah" case the most searching inquiries had been carried out by the Germans.

Every one who had been in any way concerned or had been a spectator of the scene was summoned to Ingolstadt to be cross-questioned and his evidence taken down in writing. The Germans took the matter very seriously and did their utmost to establish a charge of organized mutiny against us. We, on the other hand, took the whole business as a joke and laid the blame for the affair on the fact that the Commandant lost his temper; and we brought, or could have brought, if the trial had been a fair one, unlimited evidence to prove that this was not only possible but an everyday occurrence at Fort 9.

At last the case was brought before a court-martial at Ingolstadt. As a first-hand account by one of the accused of a German court-martial on prisoners-of-war may be of real interest, I have asked Buckley, who took a leading part, to give an account of it in his own words.

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By Lieut. S. E. Buckley

On the day fixed for the court-martial a large party of Allied officers, consisting of witnesses and accused, were paraded and left the fort under a strong escort. The French contingent consisted of about eight officers, and the British, of Medicott, Batty Smith, and myself.

We left the fort at about 8 a.m. and arrived at the Kommandantur, to which was also attached the military prison, at about 9.15. Here we were all shown into a room to await proceedings, and were shortly joined by poor old Bojah, the chief accused, and Kicq, both of whom had been kept in solitary confinement since the day of the row. They both looked awfully "low" and ill, especially Kicq, who had been short of food for some time owing to the confiscation of his parcels.

The trial started at 10 a.m., and consisted in the examination of Du Celié and Batty Smith. Unfortunately, only the officers whose cases were being examined at the time were allowed to be present, so that we were only able to judge of the temper of the court by the sentences imposed. Du Celié, a Frenchman, who had been charged with complicity and who conducted his own defense, was acquitted. As a matter of fact all he had done was to translate a letter written by Batty Smith to the Commandant, at the former's request, in which Batty Smith was alleged to have slandered the Commandant. Batty Smith was awarded one and a half year's imprisonment, and appealed against his sentence. [168]

Bojah himself and Kicq were next examined, and as far as I can remember they were still before the court when the luncheon interval arrived.

We had brought lunch with us, and we had made it as sumptuous as possible in order to impress the Germans with the lack of success of their submarine campaign. After lunch Medicott and I had a little quiet amusement to ourselves. We had both made fairly elaborate preparations for an escape, should an opportunity arise during the proceedings. We had a large quantity of food in our pockets, and portions of civilian clothing, including mufti hats, concealed on our persons. During lunch the sentries had been withdrawn from the waiting-room and only one remained standing in the doorway.

The room was on the ground floor and looked out on to the courtyard of the military prison; it seemed but a simple matter to jump out of the window into the courtyard, whence, by turning a corner round the building, a clear exit could be made on to the main road. We got some French officers to start an animated conversation in the doorway in order to hide us from the sentry, and we had previously arranged with Kicq (who had returned to his cell during lunch and whose window overlooked the room in which we were collected) to give us the signal when all was clear.

At the given signal from Kicq, Medicott jumped on to the window-sill, and was just about to drop into the courtyard below, when to my amazement I saw him scramble back into the room again and burst into fits of laughter. On looking out of the window I discovered the cause. There, leaning up against the wall, immediately below, was "Fritz," the canteen man from the fort — "Fritz," fat and forty, with an ugly leer on his face and brandishing a fearsome looking revolver in his hand. He had apparently been stationed round the corner, where Kicq could not see him, and had only just arrived below the window as Medicott was about to jump out. [169]

I might remark that this was the only occasion during my whole stay in Germany that I ever came across a really intelligently posted guard.

The examination of Bojah, Kicq, and later De Robiere, continued till late in the afternoon. Kicq received a sentence of two years, De Robiere one year, and Bojah nine months. As an instance of the gross injustice of the whole affair, during De Robiere's trial the public prosecutor stated that Kicq's action did not receive the support of his brother officers, either British or French. This, of course, was quite untrue, and De Robiere, who tried to protest, was immediately "sat upon" by the president of the court. De Robiere made frantic efforts to get a hearing, and failing in his attempt endeavored to waylay the public prosecutor on his way out of court. This brave functionary was unfortunately able to elude De Robiere's wrath by escaping from a side door.

Medicott and I entered the court-room and stood side by side facing the officers who composed the court and who were seated on a raised platform at the far end of the room. The court consisted of about eight officers presided over by an old colonel covered with a multitude of parti-colored ribbons. Our two cases were taken together. We were accused of insulting the Commandant, escaping from arrest, disobedience to orders, and a few other minor offenses; Medicott, in addition, was accused of having broken the ventilator over the door of his cell. [170]

The proceedings opened in a lively manner by Medicott, who was in his usual truculent mood, refusing to answer any questions. This immediately brought down the wrath of the president upon him, and he was told that if he persisted in his attitude he would be put in solitary confinement for contempt of court. As this didn't suit Medicott's book at all (he was at the time planning a fresh escape), I took it upon myself to accuse the interpreter of having falsely interpreted what Medicott had said. I explained that Medicott wished to ask if he had the right to refuse to answer questions. This luckily satisfied everybody (except the interpreter, who didn't count).

After the Commandant and *Feldwebel* had given their evidence, the former with some anger and more excitement, I got up and read a long speech in German in Medicott's and my own defense.

It is my greatest regret to-day that I have no copy of this classic document, which had been carefully prepared for me by an Alsatian officer. In it I "let myself go" and accused both the Commandant and the *Feldwebel* of cowardice and of shirking going to the front. In fact, I thoroughly enjoyed myself at their expense; so also, I think, did Medlicott, who turned round during my speech and grinned openly in the faces of the Commandant and the *Feldwebel*, who were sitting directly behind us. After I had read our defense, the public prosecutor summed up the case against us, and, if I remember rightly, asked that we might be sentenced to two years' solitary confinement each. I think he was rather annoyed at the time because we had been able to get hold of a German military law book in the fort in which I found that we had been accused under the wrong paragraph, and this mistake I had enlarged upon in our defense.

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We were then marched out of court, and returned a few minutes later to hear the verdict of six weeks' solitary confinement for Medlicott and six and a half months for myself. Against these findings we both naturally appealed.

The whole affair had been unjust in the extreme. In the first place, the proceedings had been conducted in German, of which Medlicott understood next to nothing. We were allowed no defending lawyer; and, finally, our request to call witnesses in our defense was disallowed.

CHAPTER XV.

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THE LAST OF FORT 9

One day at the beginning of May 1917 an incident occurred in the fort which ultimately led to the removal of the English and Russian prisoners to other camps and to our escape *en route*. I never saw or knew exactly how it started, as I was playing tennis in the court below. But it appears that some thirty or forty men of mixed nationalities were walking on the pathway which ran round the rampart above us, and everything seemed quite normal and peaceful, when a shot was heard from outside the fort. This was not such an unusual occurrence as to cause us to stop our tennis; but when a few seconds later we heard another shot, and there seemed to be considerable excitement among the other prisoners on the rampart, we left the tennis with one accord and ran up the steep stairway on to the rampart. The first thing I saw was a group of excited Frenchmen, some apparently furiously angry, but all laughing, gesticulating, and cursing in French and German in the direction of the outer courtyard of the fort, which was 30 or 40 feet below them and perhaps 70 yards away. Just as we arrived on the scene, they ducked behind the parapet and a bullet whistled over our heads. They jumped up like Jack-in-the-boxes, and the cursing broke out anew. I had a cautious look over the parapet, and saw the German guard with the *Feldwebel* drawn up in the outer court. There seemed to be a good deal of excitement and shouting going on, but as they did not appear to be going to shoot again, the Frenchmen and I and several others who had crowded to the parapet, after shouting out to the Germans what we thought of them, moved away. Just at that moment Dessaux, a French artillery lieutenant, strolled up with his hands in his pockets and walked towards the parapet. At the same moment I caught sight of the sentry on the center "caponnière," who was less than 30 yards off and standing on the mound above us, making preparations to shoot. He had his hand on the bolt of his rifle, and glanced towards the courtyard below, whence it seemed he was being urged to fire. Then he came forward a few steps in a sort of crouching attitude and snapped a cartridge into his rifle. I was about 5 yards from Dessaux at the moment, and yelled at him to look out as the fellow ran forward. Dessaux looked up and, seeing the sentry putting up his rifle, crouched behind a traverse of the parapet as the fellow fired. The bullet crashed into a chimney-pot just behind. Dessaux sat there laughing. The sentry reloaded his rifle and glanced about him at a crowd of angry men, who were threatening and cursing him in four languages from every side. For a moment it looked as though the sentry would be rushed, when a German N.C.O. came running up the stairway, amid a hail of curses, and stopped the man from firing again. I remember one Russian pointing his finger and shrieking "Schwein!" "Schwein!" at the N.C.O. as he went by. At that moment a Frenchman, Commandant Collet, rushed up to me and said, "Did you see what happened?" I gave a brief account of it. "Come to the bureau," he said, "and we will tell them what we think of them;" and we ran down to the bureau together. In the bureau there was already a small crowd of excited Frenchmen in front of the barrier. The bureau was a small, narrow room with a barrier like a shop counter about one-half of the way down it. There was only one door to the room, and at the far end, on the clerks' and office side of the barrier, was a huge, heavily barred window, typical of all the windows in the fort. Collet pushed his way to the barrier through the other Frenchmen, and addressed the sergeant-clerk (a Saxon, and the only decent German in the place). At that moment the *Feldwebel* pushed his way in, white in the face and fingering his revolver; it was no place for him outside, and he was met by a storm of curses and threats. "If one of our officers is touched," said Collet, "if one is wounded, I swear to you that we will come immediately and kill every man in this bureau." Both the sergeant-clerk and the *Feldwebel* understood him, and he repeated it several times to make sure that they did. The sergeant-clerk tried to pacify him, but we pushed our way out of the bureau.

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One result of this row was that the bars were taken out of the big window at the back of the bureau to provide a back means of escape for the bureau staff. A second important result was that, when we came to compare notes, we found we had a very good case against the *Feldwebel*,

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the charge being, "Instigating his men to murder."

There was a prisoner in the fort, an Alsatian, Stoll by name, who spoke German perfectly, German being his native language, though I doubt if he would allow that. At the time when the guard was being changed and the row started, he was sitting in our reading-room, of which the window was not more than 40 yards away from where the *Feldwebel* was making a speech to the guard. The Alsatian overheard and was able to take down nearly every word of the speech, which was something as follows: "The prisoners you have to guard are criminals—you are to lose no opportunity of using your arms against them—be suspicious of everything they do—everything is an attempt to escape; therefore you must shoot to kill whenever possible."

At that moment the *Feldwebel* caught sight of a group of Frenchmen standing on the parapet above, who were laughing among themselves (they swore afterwards that they were offering no provocation whatever). The *Feldwebel* thought they were mocking the guard, and gave orders to the sentry in the courtyard to fire. The first shot the man fired over their heads without taking careful aim. After that, when the Frenchmen bobbed up again from behind the parapet, both sides cursed and shouted. Two more well-aimed shots followed; then the *Feldwebel*, seeing, I think, that there was small chance of hitting any one when there was a parapet to duck behind, shouted repeatedly to the man on the center "caponnière" to fire, with the result I have already described.

Fourteen of us made out accurate affidavits in German of what we had seen, and sent them in to the general in charge of the camp, demanding an inquiry, if there was such a thing as justice in Germany.

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About a fortnight later, a rumor went round, which was confirmed after a few days, that all the Russian and English prisoners were to be moved to other camps. The news caused a great sensation, as most of us had considered that we were fixtures in Fort 9 till the end of the war, or till we could escape. Some of the Russians and all the English were most suspicious characters, and we could scarcely expect to be insufficiently guarded on our railway journey. Nevertheless, we all went into strict training. Two days before we went, we were informed that we were being sent to Zorndorf. Buckley had been a prisoner there before coming to Fort 9, and said that it was a most intolerable place, and that the change we were making was distinctly for the worse. Nothing would induce him to go back there, he said, without making an effort, however hopeless, to escape *en route*. He and I joined forces, having no very definite plans. The train would take us directly away from the Swiss frontier. It was to our advantage, then, to get off the train as soon as possible; for, besides the extra distance every moment in the train put between us and the frontier, we had no maps of the country north of Ingolstadt. From Ingolstadt to the frontier was about 130 miles, or rather more, and for all that part I not only had excellent maps which had been sent out to me from home, but from other prisoners who had attempted to escape in that direction we had accurate and detailed knowledge of the whole route from Fort 9 to the frontier.

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Buckley and I decided to get off the train at the first opportunity, and then, if the distance were not too great, to walk. If it was too far to walk, we should have to risk jumping or taking a train. All the details we had to leave to circumstances. We had this in our favor, that we both talked German fairly fluently and well enough, with luck, to pass for Germans if only a few words were needed. Against us was the fact that, as we were going officially by train, we had to be in almost full uniform. By dint of continually wearing grey flannels, the English had induced the Germans to believe that gray flannels was part of the English uniform. I struck a bargain with a Frenchman for a Tyrolese hat, and Buckley very ingeniously made himself a very German-looking hat out of an old straw hat and some cloth. For food, we both stuffed the pockets of our tunics full of chocolate and condensed foods. Besides this I carried a home-made haversack full of biscuits and raw bacon, and Buckley had a small dispatch-case in which he had mainly condensed food—oxo cubes, Horlick's malted milk, meat lozenges, etc. Thus equipped, and with Burberrys to cover our uniforms, we thought we should pass as Germans in the dark. Our outfit was far from being all that could be desired; but it is hard to see how we could have carried more food, or more suitable clothes, even if we had possessed them, without raising suspicion as we left the fort. We were not the only party which was making preparations to escape. Medlicott and Wilkin certainly had something on—I don't know what the scheme was, though I have a sort of idea they intended to try and get off near an aerodrome in the neighborhood of Berlin. Gaskell and May had some ideas of a bolt on the way up from the station at the other end. Buckley and I also intended to bolt there, if we could not get off before. Then there were the Russians. There were several parties among them, good fellows too and reliable, but perfectly certain to make a mess of any scheme they went for. It was most important to see that they did not spoil any good chance that might come along by prematurely doing something absolutely mad. As a general rule, however, they placed great reliance on our superior judgment, and we thought we could keep them in hand. The general opinion was that we should never have the ghost of an opportunity, and when we saw our guard on the morning of May 22nd we almost gave up hope. Our heavy luggage had been sent on early. Wilkin, by the way, had an enormous wooden box with secret hiding-places all over it which were stuffed full of maps and tools for cutting iron bars, etc., all of which latter he had made and tempered himself. He was also an expert locksmith and had a large assortment of skeleton keys. As our names were called, we passed through the iron gate over the moat and stood in the outer courtyard, surrounded by a guard of fifteen efficient-looking Huns who were to escort us. There were only thirty of us going, so we considered fifteen guards and an officer rather excessive. One amusing incident happened before we marched off. One of the Frenchmen took a Russian's place, dressed in Russian uniform, and came out when the Russian's name was

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called. He was recognized, however, by the sergeant, who was no fool, and pushed back into the fort amid shouts of laughter. After some delay the Russian was found and brought out.

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We had a 7-mile walk to the station and, as always in Germany, a two hours' wait there. We spent those two hours infuriating the officer in charge of us by taking as little notice as possible of any orders that he gave us, and by talking or shouting to all the French, Russian, or English Tommies who passed us in working parties from the large soldier prisoner-of-war camp at Ingolstadt. At last we were rather tightly packed into quite decent second-class carriages. Six of the English got together in one carriage, and a sentry was put in with us. We edged up and gave him the corner seat next the corridor, and another sentry marched up and down the corridor outside. At the first review the situation seemed rather hopeless. The only chance was a large plate-glass window of the normal type, which we were compelled to keep closed. There was not much chance of our fellow going to sleep, with the sentry in the corridor continually looking in. German sentries always work in pairs like that, and usually one would report the other without hesitation. There was no door in the side of the carriage opposite to the corridor. Just before we started, the officer came in; he had been fussing round a great deal, and was obviously very anxious and nervous. Prisoners from Fort 9 had a bad reputation. He asked if we were comfortable. I answered yes for the party, and told him that we strongly objected to being shouted at, as he had shouted at us in the station. He apologized. It was only his way he said. We had disobeyed orders and he had got angry and then he always shouted. He hoped that now we would have a comfortable quiet journey and no more trouble. I said he would not help matters anyhow by shouting—as it only made us laugh. He took this rebuke quite well and went off. I am afraid he had a good deal of trouble ahead of him, and I have no doubt he shouted at frequent intervals most of that journey.

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As we got into Nüremberg, the first large town, about 70 miles north of Ingolstadt, it was beginning to get dark. There we waited for two hours or more.

Up to that time no incident of any interest had occurred, and the chance of escape had been very small. It was hardly worth it in the daylight, and we were now a devilish long way from the frontier. However, Buckley and I decided that if we got an opportunity any time during the night we would take it. After leaving Nüremberg we went slowly through a fairly dark night. It was not too dark to see that we were traveling through a well-wooded and rather hilly country, and our hopes began to rise. On leaving Nüremberg, Buckley and I took the two corner seats near the window. It had been decided in the carriage that as Buckley and I were best prepared, both in the matter of food and by the fact that we alone talked German, the others should give every assistance in their power to get us away. They were a good lot of fellows in that carriage, and the spirit of self-sacrifice which existed in Fort 9, where three nationalities were crowded together, was beyond anything which one could possibly have anticipated. Escaping came before everything, and was an excuse for any discomforts which one or two members might bring on the rest of the community. If you wished for help, almost any man in the fort would have helped you blindly, regardless of consequences.

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CHAPTER XVI

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WE ESCAPE

Towards midnight, after we had shut our eyes for an hour to try and induce the sentry to go to sleep, I hit on a plan, which I believe now to have been the only possible solution of the problem. There were six of us and a sentry in a small corridor carriage, so that we were rather crowded; both racks were full of small baggage, and there was a fair litter on the floor. When the train next went slowly, and when I considered the moment had come, I was to give the word by saying to the sentry, in German of course, "Will you have some food? we are going to eat." Then followed five or ten minutes of tense excitement, when we tried to keep up a normal conversation but could think of nothing to say. Medicott had the happy thought of giving me some medicine out of his case, which came in most useful; but all he could say was, "It's a snip, you'll do it for a certainty." Suddenly the train began to slow up. "Now?" I said to Buckley, and he nodded, so I leant across and said to the sentry, "Wir wollen essen; wollen Sie etwas nehmen?" Then every one in the carriage with one accord stood up and pulled their stuff off the racks. The sentry also stood up, but was almost completely hidden from the window by a confused mass of men and bags. Buckley and I both stood up on our seats. I slipped the strap of my haversack over my shoulder—we both of us already had on our Burberrys—pushed down the window, put my leg over, and jumped into the night. I fell—not very heavily—on the wires at the side of the track, and lay still in the dark shadow. Three seconds later Buckley came flying out of the window, and seemed to take rather a heavy toss. The end of the train was not yet past me, and we knew there was a man with a rifle in the last carriage; so when Buckley came running along the track calling out to me, I caught him and pulled him into the ditch at the side. The train went by, and its tail lights vanished round a corner and apparently no one saw or heard us. Whether the sentry saw us get out, neither Buckley nor I ever knew, but anyhow I think Medicott had him pretty well wedged up in the corner. There must have been an amusing scene in the carriage after we left, and I am ready to bet that the officer shouted a bit.^[5] As soon as the train was out of sight, Buckley and I walked back down the track for a couple of hundred yards and cut across country in a southwest direction. There was no danger from any pursuit from the train. It was a darkish

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night, and there were pine forests in all directions. A hundred men chasing us would not have caught us. Besides, if they sent any of our guard after us, more prisoners would escape. Under a convenient hedge we made the few changes which were necessary in our clothes, threw away our military caps, and got out our compasses and a very poor sketch map of Buckley's, which was to serve us as a guide for the next hundred kilometres and more, till we could use our proper maps. [184]

We were, we reckoned, between 10 and 15 miles almost due north of Nüremberg. We would have to skirt this town—though we discussed the advisability of walking straight into Nüremberg and doing a short railway journey from there before any alarm or description of us could have reached the place. We had such a long way to go, and so little food considering the distance. But we could not bring ourselves to risk so much so soon after getting our liberty. "It is doubtful anyhow," we said, "whether it would be a judicious move; let's have a week's freedom at any rate before we take so great a risk." Considering the nature of the country, we thought we had an excellent chance of not being caught till our food ran out, if we took every precaution and had no bad luck. It was so extraordinarily pleasant to be free men once more, if only for a short time.

First Night.—This was entirely without incident; we marched by compass, mainly by tracks through pine forests, and frequently caught sight of the lights of Nüremberg on our left. Just before dawn we lay up in a pleasant coppice a hundred yards or so from the edge of a quiet country road. We took the precaution of sprinkling some pepper on our tracks where we entered the wood, and thus, to some extent guarded against stray dogs, we felt pretty secure. The day seemed intolerably long from 4.30 a.m. till 9.30 p.m.—seventeen hours; the sun was very hot and there was very little shade, and we were impatient to get on. Our water-bottles too held insufficient water: we only had about one and a quarter pint between us, Buckley having a small flask and I a watertight tobacco tin. Throughout the journey I think it was the weariness of lying up for seventeen hours, rather than the fatigue of the six to seven hours' march at night, which wore out not only our nerves but our physical strength. At no time of any day could we be free from anxiety. The strain of passing through a village where a few lights still burnt, or crossing a bridge where we expected to be challenged at any moment, never worried me so much, under the friendly cover of night, as a cart passing or men talking near our hiding-place. [185]

The general routine which we got into after about the third day out was as follows:—We went into our hiding-place at dawn or shortly after, that is to say, between 4.30 and 5.15, and after taking off our boots and putting on dry socks we both dropped asleep instantly. This may seem a dangerous thing to have done. One of us ought always to have been awake. But the risk we ran in this way was very small indeed, and the benefit we got from that first sound sleep, while we were still warm from walking, was so great that we deliberately took whatever risk there was: it was almost non-existent. Nothing ever seemed to stir in the countryside till after 6.30. During the rest of the day one of us always remained awake. After half an hour's sleep we would wake shivering, for the mornings were very cold, and we were usually wet from the dew up to our waists. Then we had breakfast—the great moment of the day. At the beginning rations were pretty good, as I underestimated the time we should take by about four days. To begin with, I thought we should come within range of our maps on the third night, but we did not get on them till the fifth. Half a pound of chocolate, two small biscuits, a small slice of raw bacon, six oxo cubes and about ten tiny meat lozenges and a few Horlick's malted milk lozenges—this was the full ration for the day. We never had more than this, and very soon had to cut it down a good deal. We varied this diet with compressed raisins, cheese, or raw rice instead of the meat or chocolate. The oxo cubes and half the chocolate we almost always took during the night, dissolving the former in our water-flasks. Later on, when things began to look very serious from the food point of view, we helped things out with raw potatoes, but I will come to that later on. On the first day we took careful stock of our food, which we redistributed and packed; and then decided— [186]

(1) that we had at a guess about 200 miles to walk;

(2) that we would make for the German Swiss and not the Austrian Swiss frontier;

(3) that we would walk with the utmost precaution and not take a train or try to jump a train till we were at the end of our tether;

(4) that by walking round Nüremberg we should be sure to hit a good road taking us south or southwest;

(5) that we would not start to walk before 9.30 in the open country, or 9.45 if there were villages in the neighborhood (we broke this rule twice, and it nearly finished the expedition each time); [187]

(6) that we would never walk through a village before 11 p.m. if we could help it;

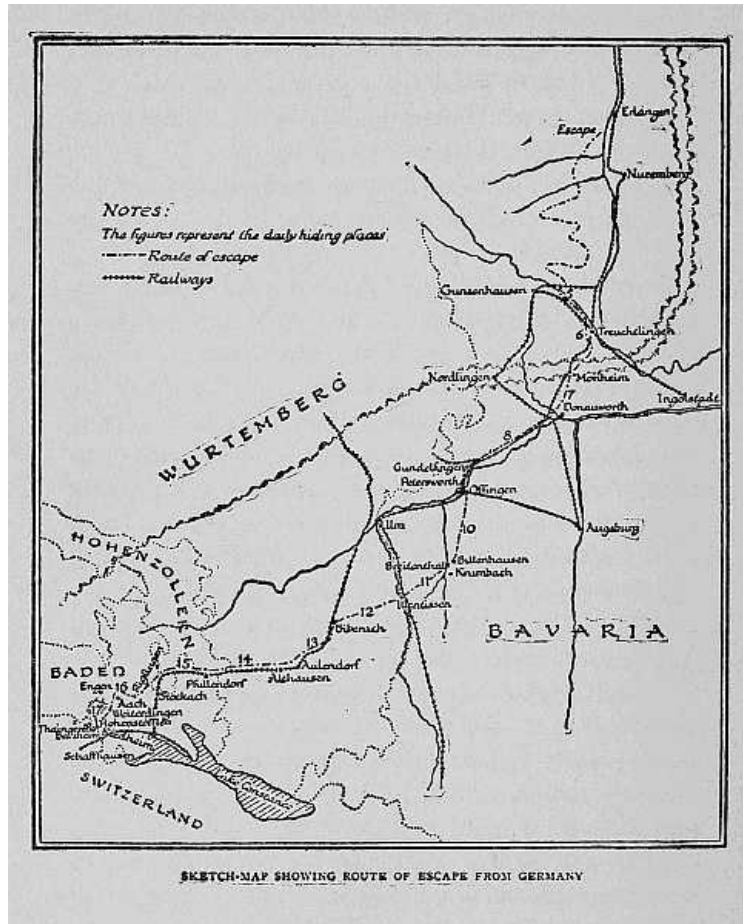
(7) last, but not least, that we would always take the counsel of the more cautious of the two at any moment.

A very large percentage of the officers in the fort where we had been prisoners for the last six months had made attempts and had marched through Germany towards different frontiers for periods varying from a few hours to three or four weeks, so that we had a great quantity of accumulated experience to help us. For instance—contrary to what one would naturally suppose—it was safest and quickest to walk along railways—especially if you could answer with a word or two of German to any one who shouted to you. And there was the additional advantage that the chance of losing the way along a railway was very small.

Second Night.—We started from our hiding-place about 9.30 p.m. and made our way for a mile or

two across country and through woods, going with quite unnecessary caution till we hit a decent road going south, soon after ten o'clock.

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SKETCH-MAP SHOWING ROUTE OF ESCAPE FROM GERMANY

After walking fast along this for an hour or so we were going up a steepish hill when Buckley complained of feeling very tired. This was a bad start, but after resting a few minutes he was strong enough to go on and gradually got better towards the end of the night. From there onwards it was Buckley who was on the whole the stronger walker, at least he had most spare energy, which showed itself in those little extra exertions which mean so much—such as climbing a few yards down a river bank to get water for both, and being the first to suggest starting again after a rest. Of course we varied, and sometimes I and sometimes he was the stronger—and there is no doubt that between us we made much better progress than either one of us could have done alone. About 11.30 we got rather unexpectedly into a large village and had to walk boldly through the middle of it. There were one or two people about, but no one stopped or questioned us. A little later we crossed a railway which ran slightly south of west, and hesitated whether to take it on the chance of hitting a branch line leading south, but we decided to stick to the road. An hour or so later, however, the road itself turned almost due west, and we were forced to take a poor side road, which gradually developed into a track and then became more and more invisible till it lost itself and us in the heart of a pine forest. We then marched by compass, following rides which led in a south or southwest direction.

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I afterwards found out by studying the map that there are no main roads or railways leading in a south or southwest direction through that bit of country. Time after time during the first five nights we were compelled to take side roads which led nowhere in particular, and we found ourselves tripping over hop-poles and wires, or in private property, or in the middle of forests. Towards 5 o'clock we were getting to the edge of this piece of forest, and lay up in a thick piece of undergrowth, and heather—a very pleasant spot, though we were rather short of water, not having found any in the forest. The day, a very hot one, passed without incident, though several carts and people passed within 25 yards of our hiding-place.

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Third Night.—About 9 o'clock we were absolutely sick of lying still, and very thirsty. As the whole place seemed deserted we decided to start walking. We soon found a stream, and after quenching our thirst walked by compass and hit a main road leading slightly east of south about half a mile farther on. We found ourselves on the northeast side of a valley about a mile broad which had the appearance of a marsh or irrigation meadow covered with rank grass. On either side were hills covered with thick pine woods. The only thing to do was to go along the road, even if it did lead slightly east of south. I may say here that we badly miscalculated the distance the train had brought us north on my maps. We hoped during this third night to see on a sign-post the name of a town mentioned on the map which would tell us where we were, and for this purpose we had learnt by heart the names of all the towns and villages along the northern border of the map. It was all a question of time and food, and progress through pine forests by compass was very slow work. It was therefore essential to hit a main road going south as soon as possible, and we determined to ask our way. As we were filling our water-bottles from a rivulet at the side

of the road a man and a boy came by on bicycles. I hailed them and asked what the name of the village was which we could see in the distance. They got off their bicycles and came towards us, and the man answered some name which I did not quite catch. Then he looked curiously at us and said: "Sie sind Ausländer" (You are foreigners). "No, we aren't," I said; "we are North Germans on a walking tour and have lost our way." "Sie sind Ausländer," he answered in a highly suspicious voice. Buckley said he did not care a damn what he thought, and I added that just because we did not speak his filthy Bavarian dialect he took us for foreigners, "Good evening"—and we walked off down the road. He stood looking after us, but we both had thick sticks and he could not have stopped us whatever he may have thought. We walked till we were out of sight round a bend and then, perforce, as the open valley was on our right, turned left-handed and northwards into the pine forest.

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During the next hour and a half we made a huge left-handed circle, always with the fear upon us of being chased. Several times we thought we heard men and dogs after us, and in several different places we covered our tracks with pepper. It was a thoroughly unpleasant experience, but about 11.30 we felt sure we had thrown off any pursuers and determined to walk in the right direction. We should have done this before, only the valley lay right across our path. We struck a high road leading almost south, and soon afterwards found ourselves entering a village. It was a long, straggling village, and before we were half-way through dogs began to bark. We hurried on and got through without seeing any men. After a mile or two the road turned almost east, and we suddenly found ourselves on the same old spot where we had spoken to the man. We kept on down the road and avoided the next village by an awful detour through thick pine woods and over very rough country, and then hitting the road again we crossed to the southwest side of the valley and made good progress along pathways and tracks in an almost southerly direction.

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At every sign-post Buckley used to stand on my shoulders, and with the help of a match read out the names and distances whilst I took them down for comparison with my map in the day time. About 2 o'clock we cut at right angles into a main road going east and west. I insisted on taking this, arguing that we had already marched too much east and that our only chance of hitting a south-leading road lay in marching west till we hit one. After a short time the road turned south and we made excellent progress till 5 o'clock, when we passed through a village in which we dared not stop to examine the sign-post, and lay up on a wooded hill on the south of it. Only one incident frightened us a good deal. It was getting towards morning when we saw a man with a gun approaching us along the road. However, he passed with a gruff "Good morning," which we answered.

We found ourselves when morning came, in an almost ideal spot for "lying up," and could sit in safety at the edge of our coppice and see the country for miles to the east of us. I was lying there studying the map, hoping, in vain as it proved, to find on it some of the names which we had taken down from sign-posts, when it suddenly occurred to me that the valley at which we were looking fitted in very well with one of the valleys on the northern edge of the map. After prolonged study we were unable to decide for certain—there were some annoying discrepancies; but "the wish is father to the thought," and we thought we were right. The next night's march would decide, anyhow. If we marched southwest through a pine forest for about an hour we would hit a road and a railway and a river all together, and then we would know where we were; and if we did not hit them, we should know we were still lost.

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Fourth Night.—We started about 9.45, having learnt our lesson from the previous night, and after walking through a forest for over an hour, without coming across the desired road, river, and railway, we found ourselves falling over things like hop-poles with wires attached, and running up against private enclosures, and still in the middle of an almost trackless forest. Several times we had anxious moments with barking dogs. When we got clear of these my temper gave way and I sat down, being very tired, and cursed everything I could think of—forests, hop-poles, dogs, the roads, and Buckley. Buckley recovered himself first, telling me "not to be a fool," and we struggled on once more. From that night on we swore we would stick to the roads and have no more cross-country walking. I seem to remember that we zigzagged all over the place that night, always keeping to the roads, however, and walking fast. After midnight we came through several villages and started the dogs barking in each one. Once a man came out with a light and called after us; we said "good night" to him and pushed on, but it was most trying to the nerves. My God, how we loathed dogs! Later we came on a valley in which was a river 20 yards, or more broad. Our road passed through a village at a bridge-head, from which came sounds of revelry and lights were showing; so we turned off, and instantly got into the middle of a perfect network of hop-poles. Eventually we found a bridge lower down near an old mill. There was a road running parallel with the river on the far side, and something above it which on investigating turned out to be a railway. The question was, "Is this the valley we are looking for?" It soon turned out that it was not. The direction which the line took after we had followed it eastwards for several miles decided the question, and after going a mile out of our way back to the river to get water, we took a good road leading south. We were both very tired, and struggled on, with great difficulty and several rests, up a steep hill through the longest village I have ever seen. It seemed miles and miles, and dogs barked the whole way. The villages about here had drinking-troughs for horses at the street sides, which were a great boon to us.

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Soon after dawn we got into an excellent hiding-place without further adventures. We were very exhausted, and were beginning to feel the lack of food. The cross-country marches of the last two nights had been a heavy tax on our strength. We were not yet on our maps, and the most moderate estimate of the distance from the Swiss frontier, when considered in relation to our

food supply, made it necessary to cut down our ration very considerably from this time onwards. We were much worried during that day by shooting which went on in the wood round us. It is the German habit to go out shooting for the pot on Sundays, and many escaping prisoners had been recaptured in this way. We had to lie consequently most of the day with our boots on, prepared to bolt at any moment. However, our hiding-place was good, and though men and carts passed close to us, I don't think we ran much risk of being found. [195]

Fifth Night.—The first village we came to lay across a stream in the middle of a broad and marshy valley. It was about 11 o'clock, and as we approached we heard sounds of music, singing, and laughter coming from the village. It was Sunday night, and I suppose there was a dance on or something of the sort—it was too much for us at any rate, and as there seemed no way round owing to the river, we sat down in a clump of trees outside the village and waited. About 11.30 the sounds died down and just before 12 o'clock we got through the village without mishap, though we passed two or three people. We were making excellent progress along a good straight road which ran, for a wonder, in the right direction, when suddenly we heard a whistle from the woods on our left and ahead of us—the whistle was answered from our rear. We are fairly caught this time, we thought, but we walked steadily on. We had big sticks and the woods were thick at the sides of the road. There were more whistles from different sides, and then just as we were passing the spot where we had heard the first whistle a line of men came out of the woods in Indian file and made straight for us. There were ten or twelve of them trotting in a crouching attitude. They passed a yard or two behind us, crossed the road, and disappeared into a corn field on the other side. "Boy scouts, begorra," said Buckley. "I wish we were well out of this," I said. "I hope to heaven the little devils won't make it part of the night operations to arrest every one coming down that road. If we have to knock out some of them, the villagers would murder us; and we should never shake them off, once they had an inkling of what we were; I would rather tackle men any day." Buckley agreed heartily, and we walked on fast. Several times afterwards those cursed whistles sounded, but we gradually left them behind. [196]

At last we hit a railway, running east and west, of course. Our road here took a right-angle turn and ran beside the railway, and we were compelled to take a much worse road leading uphill among trees. The road gradually got worse. We soon recognized the symptoms. How often in the last few days had we followed roads which degenerated by slow degrees and ended by entangling us in hop-poles and private gardens in a forest! A quarter of an hour later this one proved itself to be no exception to the rule. Buckley was all for pushing on by compass through the forest. I absolutely refused, and after some argument we decided to retrace our steps to the railway and follow it westwards. This we did, and after walking several miles along the railway we took a good road which ran north and south, cutting the railway at right angles. After walking for an hour or more along this road we came to a milestone which, as usual, we inspected carefully. On it were the words: *Gunzenhausen, 8 Kilometres*. We could have shouted for joy. Gunzenhausen was marked on the northern edge of my map. We knew where we were. [197]

It is impossible to describe what a difference this knowledge made to us. For the last three days we had been oppressed by the feeling that we were lost, that we were walking aimlessly, that we were continually on the wrong road and using up our food and strength in making detours. For the future we would know that every step we took would be one step nearer the frontier, and during the day we could lie and plan out our route for the following night—we could make fairly accurate calculations with regard to food—in fact, the whole problem of distance and food supplies was now clear and simple, and we had some chocolate to celebrate the occasion. At the next village we saw by a sign-post that the road to Gunzenhausen turned almost due west. I wished to go straight on southwards down a decent road, but Buckley wished to go for Gunzenhausen, the only name which we knew as yet. After a rather heated argument I gave way. Our tempers were rather irritable, but we were never angry with each other for more than five minutes, and as soon as we had recovered our tempers we used to apologize. We almost walked into a sentry in Gunzenhausen before we knew we were in the town. However, we retreated, and making a short detour lay up in a small oak wood about 3 miles south of the town, having accomplished that night a very good march. The place where we were hiding was by no means an ideal spot, as the undergrowth was not very thick. It was rather an anxious day, as we again heard shooting in the woods in the neighborhood, but no one disturbed us. After a careful study of the map we found that, by cutting across in a southwest direction about five miles of flat, low-lying country, we would hit a railway which went due south to Donnauwörth, about 60 miles away. [198]

FOOTNOTES:

- [5] I have learnt since from Major Gaskell that nearly a minute elapsed before the sentry realized that we had departed. After the discovery there was a good deal of ill-feeling, which was accentuated by two Russians escaping in much the same manner an hour later, but they were recaptured.

THROUGH BAVARIA BY NIGHT

Sixth night.—The walk across the plain took us nearly two hours. Much of it was very marshy, and it was all sopping wet with dew, so that, before reaching the railway, we were wet to the waist. There was also a nasty obstacle in the shape of a canal. The only bridge was almost in a village, and as we approached, all the dogs in the place began to bark, so we tried to cross in an old punt which we found. Getting this afloat, however, made so much noise that we desisted and made for the bridge, which we crossed without mishap in spite of a regular chorus of dogs. Thank Heaven, they appeared to be all chained up. All the rest of the night we walked along the railway. Twice men in signal-boxes or guard-houses called after us. We always answered something in German and then made a short detour round the next building, small station, guardhouse, or signal-box which we came to. In every one of them there was a dog which barked as we passed. The detours wasted much time and were very tiring, so we deliberately took more risks and walked straight on, in spite of the dogs, as long as we neither saw nor heard a human being. That day we lay up in a lonely spot in a thickish wood on one side of a railway cutting overlooking the town of Treuchtlingen. Treuchtlingen was only marked as a small village on our maps, but it turned out to be a huge junction with an enormous amount of rolling stock and many sidings—all quite newly built, we thought—almost certainly since the war started. [200]

Seventh Night.—As we thought we should run less risks, this apparently being a line of military importance and therefore possibly guarded, we decided to take a main road rather than follow the railway. We marched all night without incident and towards morning at the village of Monheim we turned back to the railway in order to reach some woods which were marked on the map. The woods turned out to be most unsuitable for our purpose. They were mostly well-grown oak or pine with no undergrowth whatever. Daylight found us still hunting for a decent hiding-place. At length we decided the best we could do was to lie between the edge of a wood and a barley field, a most exposed position if anyone should come that way. Soon we had no chance of changing our position if we would, as women at a very early hour began to work in the field within 100 yards of us. About 4 o'clock in the afternoon we heard a movement in the woods behind us. We had rigged up a sort of screen of boughs on that side, but we could scarcely hope that anyone would pass without seeing us if they came close.

For an hour or more we lay not daring to move, and at length saw an old woman gathering sticks. She came nearer and nearer, and suddenly looked up and saw us. We were pretending to be half-asleep, basking in the sun, so we just nodded to her and said "Good-day." She said something in patois which I did not quite catch, about sheep or shepherds. I said "Ja wohl," and she moved off rather quickly we thought, but it may have been that our guilty consciences made it seem so, and soon afterwards we heard her speaking to someone way off. As soon as she was out of sight we thought it best to move. There was no possible hiding-place to go to, so we walked farther into the wood and selecting the largest tree sat down one each side of the trunk. Our idea was to play hide-and-seek round the tree if anyone came by or if the old woman came back; and if there was a systematic search to trust to our legs. We had over four hours to wait before it would become dark and before we could feel at all safe. I think the old woman came back to the spot where we had been lying, but finding us gone did not trouble to search for us. [201]

Eighth Night.—We got away from the wood about 9.30, and all that night we walked along the railway. I have rather a hazy recollection of the night's march, but as far as I remember it was quite without incident. Just north of Donnauwörth we had to cross an iron bridge over a tributary of the Danube, 100 yards or more long, and thinking it might be guarded we stalked it with the utmost care. There was no one there, however, but when half a mile beyond it, we thought we ought to have taken a branch line farther back; so we crossed the bridge again, each time making noise enough to wake the dead with our nailed boots on the iron. After another prolonged study of the map, I found we had been right after all, and for the third time we crossed that beastly bridge. Studying the map at night was no easy matter. The method was for me to sit down in a convenient ditch or hollow, and for Buckley to put his Burberry over my head. I then did the best I could by match-light. A few miles north of Donnauwörth we turned off to the right and marched at a distance of a few miles parallel to the north bank of the Danube. Just before morning it began to rain and we got into a good hiding-place in thick undergrowth, wet through and very tired. It was a miserable morning, but about 9 the sun came out and dried us and cheered us up. [202]

For the last few nights my feet had been gradually getting worse. The backs of both heels seemed to be bruised, and from this night onwards the first half-hour's walk every night caused me intense pain. Once I was warmed up, the pain became less acute, but every step jarred me and sent a shooting pain up my legs. I was wearing boots I had bought in Germany and the heelings had sunk into a hollow, so that the weight of every step came on the very back of the heel. I am sure this made the marching very much more fatiguing for me than it would otherwise have been. We were not disturbed that day, and as we had a lot of bare country to walk over, we started rather earlier the next night.

Ninth Night.—The problem before us was how to cross the Danube, which about here was 200 to 300 yards broad. We thought it was only too probable that all the bridges would be guarded. Fifteen miles or rather more from where we were, the light railway, which we had been following for the last two nights, crossed the Danube. Within a mile of that railway bridge another foot or road bridge was marked on our map, but the insignificance of the roads or rather tracks which appeared to lead to this bridge made us doubt the existence of a 300-yard bridge in such an out-of-the-way bit of country. However, if it did not exist, we could always try by the railway. Some 8 [203]

miles from our hiding-place the light railway turned gradually south and crossed the Danube about 7 miles farther on. If we followed the railway and branched off from it when we were within a mile or two of the river it seemed impossible that we could lose our way. The night was a very dark one as there was a thick mist, but we made excellent progress, walking sometimes on the road and sometimes along the railway.

About midnight we began to think it was time that the line should take the southerly bend as marked on the sketch map, and every ten minutes or so we took compass bearings of its direction. However, we knew by experience how easy it is for tired men to overrate the distance they have walked. I got into a ditch and looked at my map, and there was no other railway shown on it. At 1 o'clock we found ourselves walking north of west, and realized definitely that we were wrong somehow. Some arc lights showed dimly through the mist on our left. We walked on cautiously, and as so often happens in a thick mist found ourselves with extraordinary suddenness within 150 yards of some huge sheds each surrounded by five or six electric lights. What they were we neither knew at the time nor found out later. I had another look at the map and came to the correct conclusion that we had followed an unmarked branch line. We had just started back, when we caught a glimpse of a man. He was coming from the direction of the sheds, in a crouching attitude, and had a gun in his hands. He was about 100 yards away and it was certain that he could see us very indistinctly, because of the mist. So we ran. Once out of range of the arc lights he had no chance of finding us. From there we cut across country by compass, and half an hour later hit the railway east of Gundelfingel. At one time we had hoped to cross the Danube that night, but losing our way had made this out of the question. It was even doubtful now whether we should reach the woods on this side of the Danube, but we were most anxious to get to them, as it looked from the map as if the country between would be rather bare of hiding-places. For this reason we took rather more risks and walked boldly through the dark stations. At one place two men were about to cross the railway, but when they saw us coming they turned and ran. It was quite comforting to think that we had frightened someone. [204]

At dawn we were still on the line, and the country seemed most unpromising for lying up. The mist was still pretty thick, and during the next hour it got thicker. One could see about 100 yards, and we never knew from one moment to another what we might run into. After half-past five, for instance, we suddenly found ourselves in the middle of a village, probably Peterswörth, and as we hurried down a street we had no idea whether we were walking farther into a small town or through a small village. The mist, though it hid us to a certain extent, at the same time made it quite impossible to see what sort of country it was and to select a hiding-place. We knew there were woods ahead, and the only thing to do was to push on till we came to them. The thick mist had the curious effect of making it appear that there were woods on all sides of us. We several times turned off only to find that the imaginary woods retreated as we advanced. The worst of it was that, as can well be imagined, we were quite unfit to be seen, and a single glimpse of us must inevitably arouse suspicion. Clad in filthy khaki, filthy ourselves, limping along with ten days' growth of beard on our faces, and thick sticks in our hands, we were figures such as might well cause anxiety in a quiet neighborhood. [205]

It was after 6 o'clock and broad daylight when we reached the woods. The undergrowth was thick and rank, and most of the ground almost a swamp. It was a most unpleasant spot, though pretty safe as a hiding-place. The day was a hot one, and we were pestered all day by stinging insects. Our faces and hands, and, when we took off our boots, our feet too, became swollen and pimpled all over from the bites. The bites on my feet came up in blisters which broke when I put on my boots and left raw places. As the insect bites did not seem to affect Buckley's feet to the same extent, he lent me his slippers. Slippers of some sort are almost an essential part of one's equipment. You can neither rest your feet nor dry your boots if you keep your boots on in the day. In this and every other way Buckley showed himself the most unselfish and cheering companion imaginable. That day we tried boiling some rice, using as fuel some solidified alcohol which we had; but it was not a success, as we had not sufficient fuel and all the wood in the place was wet. After a miserable day we started to hunt for our bridge, with faces, feet, and hands swollen and aching and clothes and boots still damp from the night before. [206]

Tenth Night.—After a two hours' walk we found the bridge. It was a wooden one, with a broad road and a footpath on it. It was the biggest wooden bridge I have ever seen. There seemed to be no guard on it, so we walked across. As we were in the middle we suddenly saw a man coming to meet us, and thought we were fairly collared. Bluff was the only hope, so we walked straight on. The man turned out to be a young peasant, who took no notice of us, and we reached the other bank with a sigh of relief. After passing through Offingen we had to thread our way through a network of country lanes and small villages. We walked straight through them, for we now realized more clearly than ever that, if we were to reach the frontier on the food we had, we could afford very little time for detours. Sometimes we would get half-way through before a dog would bark and start all the rest, but usually we marched through to a chorus of barking dogs. It was a terrible strain on the nerves, but not, I think, so dangerous as one might imagine, as the dogs barked too often and too easily for their masters to be roused at one outburst of barking. Still, it effectually prevented us from ever trying to break into a house to get food. In one village we walked into five or six young men, soldiers on leave perhaps. There was no avoiding them, so we walked straight on through the middle of them, and said good evening as we passed. What they thought we were I don't know, but they did not try to stop us or call after us. [207]

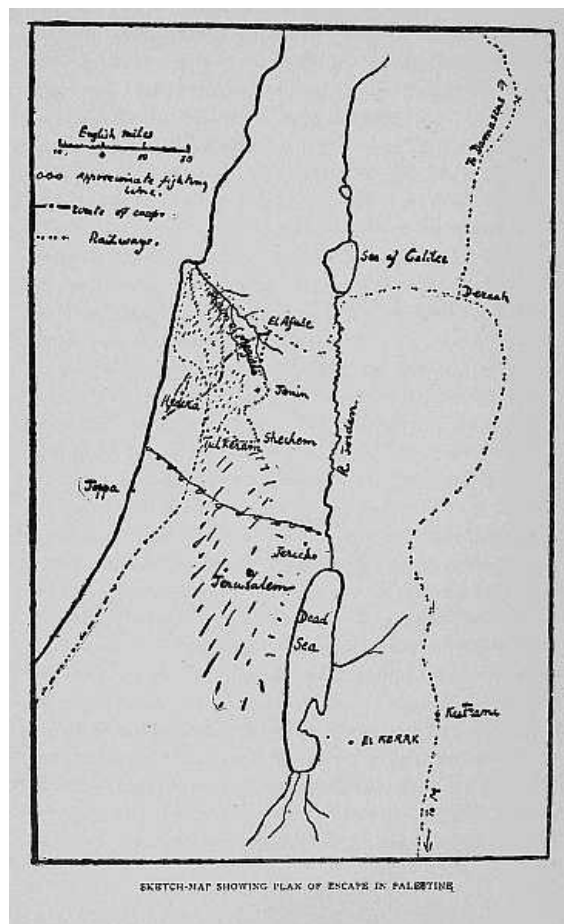
At the next village, Goldbach by name, there were sounds of shouting and singing, so we made a long and difficult detour and most unfortunately came back on the wrong road on the far side—a

very easy thing to do. We only discovered this an hour later, when the compass bearing of the road was found to be wrong. This necessitated a long and tiring cross-country march to reach the right road; and, very wet and tired, we got into an excellent hiding-place in a small spruce fir wood just after dawn. If ever we had to walk through standing crops—and this was unavoidable in any detour of cross-country march—we were always wet through to the waist from the dew. One notable thing happened just before we got into our hiding-place, which was to prove our salvation. We came across a field of potatoes. The haulm was on the average only 6 to 8 inches high, and no potatoes were as yet formed; but in most cases the old seed potato had not yet gone rotten, so we used to pick these out and replant the haulm. Much cheered by this addition to our rations, Buckley and I tramped on for another mile or so before selecting our hiding-place for the day. We ran little risk, as up the hill to our left were thick woods, on the edge of which we were walking, while on our right the ground sloped away over ploughed fields to a rich valley. Soon after dawn we found an almost ideal place in which to spend the day. It was a thick copse of small pine trees with thickish undergrowth, about a mile northeast of the village of Billenhausen —on the whole, about the pleasantest place we found during the expedition. Here Buckley, who has something of the boy scout in him, started to make a fire without smoke. I went outside to veto the fire if much smoke appeared above the tree-tops. It was most exasperating. On that still morning a thin column of smoke rose perpendicularly high above the trees. Buckley came out and had a look at it and agreed to abandon the fire, and to eat our potatoes raw. It was a warm, sunny day, and we remained quite undisturbed; so, at the usual hour, feeling much fresher and cheerier, and thanking God for the raw potatoes, we started off on our eleventh night's walk.

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Eleventh Night.—We had another reason for feeling more hopeful, for the last two nights we had been walking south, and this night we expected to cut into the direct route from Ingolstadt to the frontier—a route which we had studied for months with the greatest care and almost knew by heart. Many other escaping prisoners had passed that way, and those who had been recaptured (much the greater part of them, unfortunately) had given us the benefit of their experiences. After a short walk we came to Billenhausen, where many lights were showing, but through which it was necessary to pass, as we wished to cross the stream to the west bank, and the only bridge was in the middle of the village. After a council of war we decided to march boldly through at 10.30. This we did without attracting undue attention. It was always nervous work walking through a village when lights were showing and dogs barking. The risk, however, was not so great as it seemed, so long—and here was the danger—as we did not lose our way in the village and turn into a blind alley. After an hour or more along a good road we came on a light railway and followed that for some time, standing aside, I remember, at one place, to let a train pass. About midnight we saw the town of Krumbach ahead of us.

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SKETCH-MAP SHOWING PLAN OF ESCAPE IN PALESTINE

Krumbach was on the route that we knew, so, leaving it on our left, we cut across country to our right, through some extremely wet crops, and hit the main road west of Krumbach. For the rest of the night, after crossing the river at Breienthal, we made excellent progress, the road leading us through huge pine forests, and it was not until half an hour before dawn that we came out into more open country. It was then somewhat after 4.30. There was a steep hill in front of us with the

village of Nordholz on a river at the bottom of it. There was an excellent hiding-place where we were, but on the far side of the village my map showed that there should be extensive woods. A village close in front of your hiding-place means a late start on the next night; but then we might find no suitable hiding-place on the far side—for not only had we little time to spare before people would be about, but also there was a thick mist, which, as we knew from our experience just before crossing the Danube, added greatly to the difficulties of finding a hiding-place. Buckley was for going on. I was for staying where we were, my vote being influenced by the fact that my feet had been more than usually painful that night. However, we went on, and half an hour later saw large woods through the mist on our left. On investigation they proved quite useless for hiding-place purposes. It was now becoming dangerously late, and when we had spent another ten minutes in a futile search we decided that we must return to the first place. At this hour in the morning it would be most dangerous to go back through the village, so we tried to go round it. After getting wet to the waist going through some meadows, we came to a river 5 yards broad, which looked very deep. Swimming was not to be thought of, as it was a very cold morning and we were exhausted, so we went back through the village the way we had come. It was 5.30 when we passed through and several people were about, but we met no one, and the mist hid us to a certain extent. At last, very tired indeed (for an hour we had been walking at high pressure), we threw ourselves down in our hiding-place. [211]

We were awfully wet and cold, and after we had lain shivering with our teeth chattering for a couple of hours, the sun rose and drove away the mist. No sunlight reached our hiding-place, it was too thick, so we crept out to an open space in the wood and sunned ourselves. A little-used footpath ran close by us, and we soon considered the position we were in to be too dangerous, and retreated to the edge of the wood to a spot which was more or less screened by bushes from the path. I slept and Buckley watched. As we were lying there, a man with a gun, a forester probably, came along the path, and passed without seeing us. He could not have missed us if he had glanced our way. Buckley woke me, and we crept back into the dank wet undergrowth, feeling much annoyed with ourselves for the unnecessary risk we had taken. As the day got warmer we revived, and passed it not unpleasantly, and without further disturbance. [212] Unfortunately, the night before we had been unable to collect potatoes, but we promised ourselves that in future one of our most urgent duties would be to collect a pocketful each. We believed then, but I don't know how true it is, that there were some very savage laws against the stealing of seed potatoes. If we were caught with potatoes on us, we could scarcely expect to be leniently treated, and our reception by the villagers was also doubtful; so we made arrangements to throw our potatoes away immediately if chased.

CHAPTER XVIII

THROUGH WURTEMBERG TO THE FRONTIER

Twelfth night.—Owing to a village in front of us, we had to make a late start. It was nearly 10.30 before we marched through without incident. Later on that night, between 1 and 2 a.m., we crossed the Iller at the large town of Illertissen, and though there were many street lamps burning, we met no one. This night's march and the next one were very weary marches for me, as my feet hurt me most abominably. Buckley was perfectly splendid, and though he must have been very tired, he was cheerful and encouraging the whole time. He allowed me to grumble, and did nearly all the dirty work, the little extra bits of exertion, which mean so much. We both of us found walking uphill rather a severe strain, even though the gradient was slight; still, we kept at it with very few rests all night. Early in the night we stole some potatoes and peeled and munched them as we marched.

About this time we took to singing as we marched. Singing is, perhaps, rather a grandiloquent term for the noise—something between a hum and a moan—which we made. However, it seemed to help us along. Buckley taught me some remarkable nursery rhymes. One was about Jonah in the whale's belly, I remember; and we sang these and a few hymn tunes which we both happened to know. There was no danger in this—the sound of our feet on the road could be heard much farther than the song, and no one could possibly have recognized the words as English. [214]

After collecting a good supply of potatoes, we found a comfortable place to hide in some small fir trees and heather at the edge of a wood.

For some hours we were made rather miserable by a heavy shower of rain, but when the sun came out towards midday we soon dried ourselves, and then, as usual, lay gasping and panting for the rest of the day. In undergrowth it is hard to find shade from a sun which is almost directly overhead. Our day's ration of water was very small, and I am sure that lying in the sun for eight or ten hours took a lot of strength out of us. I know that we started each night's march parched with thirst. I was, at this time, able to make a fairly accurate calculation of the time it would take us to reach the frontier, and found it necessary to cut down our rations once more. We hoped to make this up by eating largely of potatoes, for it was only too obvious that both of us were becoming weaker for the want of food. Food—that is to say, sausages, eggs, beef, and hot coffee—was a barred subject between us, but I remember thinking of several distinct occasions on which I had refused second helpings in pre-war days, and wondering how I could have been such a fool. We realized now that it would be necessary to lose no time at all if we were to reach the [215]

frontier before we starved.

Thirteenth Night.—Accordingly, the next night we walked through the village ahead of us at an earlier hour than that at which we usually entered villages. We saw and were seen by several people, but we walked at a good steady pace, when necessary talking to each other in German, and were past before they had had time to consider whether we looked a queer pair. We must have looked pretty good ruffians, as we had not washed or shaved, and had been in the open for close on a fortnight. About 3.30 a.m. we came to the large town of Biberach, and in the outskirts of the town we climbed down to the embankment from a bridge over the railway, and then followed the railway in a southwest direction till nearly 5 a.m. We lay up in a small copse about 60 by 40 yards, at the side of the railway. It proved to be a damp, midgy, and unpleasant spot, but we were undisturbed all day.

Fourteenth Night.—The next night we made an early start, walking parallel with the railway, on which we considered it dangerous to walk before 10.45, across some bare cultivated land, and thereby gained half an hour. For the rest of the night we followed the railway, passing through Aulendorf and Althausen. This railway runs east and west and is some 30 miles from Lake Constance. From here, for the first time, we caught sight of the mountains of Switzerland on the far side of the lake. A great thunderstorm was going on somewhere over there, and their snowy peaks were lit up continually by summer lightning. I suggested, though I never meant it seriously, that we should cut south and try and cross or get round the east end of the lake. Buckley was all for the Swiss border, and though we argued the pros and cons for a bit, we neither had the slightest doubt that Riedheim, where we eventually crossed, was the place to go for. Along the railway at intervals of 2 or 3 kilometres were small houses, inhabited apparently by guardians of the line, and always by dogs. Sometimes we could steal by without arousing attention, but usually the dogs barked whilst we were passing and for ten minutes after we had passed. I have never really liked dogs since—the brutes.

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Once a man with a dog, and what looked like a gun, came out after us and chased us for a bit, but it was all in the right direction, and he soon gave it up. Once or twice men called after us—to which we answered "Guten Abend," and marched on. One of these threw open a window as we were passing, and asked us who we were and where we were going—"Nach Pfullendorf? Gerade aus," I called back. "All right," he shouted, "there are so many escaping people (Flülingen) these days that one has to keep a lookout. Guten Abend." "Guten Abend," we shouted, and marched on.

Though, unfortunately, we were unable to find potatoes that night, we were so cheered by the sight of Switzerland, the promised land, and by our tactful methods with the watchmen, that we made wonderful progress. Unfortunately a bit of my map of that railway was missing. I thought the gap was about 10 kilometres, but it turned out to be nearer 20. We had hoped to pass Pfullendorf that night, but did not do so. When we got into our excellent hiding-place at the side of the railway, careful measurements on the map showed us that it would be quite impossible to cross the frontier on the next night, as we had at one time hoped to do. We intended to get within 10 or 15 kilometres of the frontier the next night, and cross the night following. We did not wish to lie up close to the frontier, as we knew from other prisoners that the woods close by were searched daily for escaping prisoners. During the day, which was most pleasant, we once more divided our rations to last two more days. It was a pretty small two-day ration for two men already weak from hunger.

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Our eagerness to get on, and the unpopulated country in which we were, induced us to start walking at a still earlier hour the next night.

Fifteenth Night.—Soon after starting we saw a gang of a dozen or more Russian prisoners escorted by a sentry. They were about 100 yards off and took no notice of us. After walking for about half an hour an incident occurred which was perhaps the most unpleasant one we experienced, and the fact that we extricated ourselves so easily was entirely due to Buckley's presence of mind. Coming round a corner, we saw ahead of us a man in soldier's uniform cutting grass with a scythe at the side of the road. To turn back would rouse suspicion. There was nothing for it but to walk past him. As we were opposite to him he looked up and said something to us which we did not catch. We answered "Good evening," as usual. But he called after us again the same words, in some South German dialect, I think, for neither of us could make out what he said, so we walked on without taking any notice. Then he shouted "Halt! Halt!" and ran down the road after us with the scythe. It was an unpleasant situation, especially as we caught sight at that moment of a man with a gun on his shoulder about 50 yards away from us on our right. There was still half an hour to go before it would be quite dark, and we were both of us too weak to run very fast or far. There was only one thing to do, and we did it. In haughty surprise we turned round and waited for him. When he was only a few yards away, Buckley, speaking in a voice quivering with indignation, asked him what the devil, etc., he meant by calling "Halt!" to us; and I added something about a South German pig dog in an undertone. The man almost let drop his scythe from astonishment, and turning round walked slowly back to the side of the road and started cutting grass again. We turned on our heels and marched off, pleased with being so well out of a great danger, and angry with ourselves that we had ever been such fools as to run into it. We passed one more man in the daylight, but ostentatiously spoke German to each other as we passed him, and he took no notice.

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Before dark we saw other gangs of Russian prisoners.

About 11 p.m. we got on the railway again, and walked without incident for the rest of the night. Owing to the gap in our maps, previously referred to, being longer than we expected, it was not

till well after midnight that we passed through Pfullendorf and realized that we still had another two nights' march before we could hope to cross the frontier. It was not so much the walking at night which we minded though we were both weak and weary, it was the long lying up in the day time which had become almost unendurable. For eighteen long hours we had to lie still, and were able to think of little else but food, and realize our intense hunger.

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When I saw the name Pfullendorf written in huge letters in the station, I felt a very pleasant thrill of satisfied curiosity and anticipated triumph. We had always called this railway the "Pfullendorf railway," and in the past months I had often imagined myself walking along this railway and passing through this station, only a day's march from the frontier. For the last two nights and for the rest of the journey my feet had become numbed, and the pain was very much less acute. This made a vast difference to my energy and cheerfulness. So much so that for the last four nights I did the march with less fatigue than Buckley, who seemed to be suffering more than I was from lack of food. I have already mentioned that we divided up the food, and each carried and ate at his own discretion the food for the last three days. When Buckley opened his last packet of chocolate, it was found to contain less than we had expected. I offered a redivision. Buckley, however, refused. I think myself that the quantity of food in question was too small to have affected in any way our relative powers of endurance. Ever since we found potatoes Buckley had eaten more of them than I had, and when we were unable to find any, he felt the lack of them more than I did. Just before dawn we climbed off the railway embankment to a small stream. Here I insisted on having a wash as well as a drink. Buckley grumbled at the delay, but I think the wash did us both good. Soon afterwards, about 4.30 a.m., we came on an excellent hiding-place. Buckley wanted to push on for another half an hour, but I considered that a good hiding-place so close to the frontier was all-important, and he gave in. As we were just getting comfortable for our before-breakfast sleep I found that I had left my wrist compass behind at the place where we had washed. I determined to walk back and fetch it, as it was an illuminate compass and might be indispensable in the next two nights. That I was able to do this short extra walk with ease and at great speed—I even got into a run at one point—shows how much fitter and stronger I was now that my feet had ceased to hurt me. Our hiding-place was in a very thick plantation of young fir trees, and we were quite undisturbed. The place was so thick that when I crawled off 10 yards from Buckley I was unable to find him again for some time, and did not dare to call to him.

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Sixteenth Night.—Starting about 10.15 we followed the railway as it turned south towards Stokach near the west end of Lake Constance. Just before midnight we struck off southwestwards from the railway. We soon found that we had branched off too early, and got entangled in a village where a fierce dog, luckily on a long chain, sprang at us and barked for twenty minutes after we had passed. Later we passed a man smoking a cigarette, and caught a whiff of smoke, which was indescribably delicious, as we had been out of tobacco for more than a fortnight.

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A couple of hours' walk, steering by compass by small paths in thick woods, brought us into the main road to Engen. Some of the villages, such as Nenzingen, we avoided, walking round them through the crops, a tiring and very wet job, besides wasting much time. At about 4.30 we were confronted with the village of Rigelingen, which, being on a river, was almost impossible to "turn," so we walked through it, gripping our sticks and prepared to run at any moment. However, though there were a few lights showing, we saw no one.

About 5 o'clock we got into an excellent and safe hiding-place on a steep bank above the road. A mile or so down the road to the west of us was the village of Aach, and we were less than 15 kilometres from the frontier.

We determined to eat the remains of our food and cross that night. I kept, however, about twenty small meat lozenges, for which, as will be seen later on, we were extremely thankful. During our last march we decided that we must walk on the roads as little as possible. Any infantry soldier knows that a cross-country night march on a very dark night over 10 miles of absolutely strange country with the object of coming on a particular village at the end, is an undertaking of great difficulty.

We had an illuminated compass, but our only methods of reading a map by night (by the match-light, with the help of a waterproof, as I have previously explained) made it inadvisable to use a map so close to the frontier more often than was absolutely necessary. I therefore learnt the map by heart, and made Buckley, rather against his will, do so too. We had to remember some such rigmarole as: "From cross roads 300 yards—S. W. road, railway, river—S. to solitary hill on left with village ahead, turn village (Weiterdingen) to left—road S. W. 500 yards—E. round base of solitary hill," etc., etc. Our anxieties were increased by two facts—one being that all the sign-posts within 10 miles of the frontier had been removed, so that if once we lost our way there seemed little prospect of finding it again on a dark night; secondly, the moon rose about midnight, and it was therefore most important, though perhaps not essential, to attempt to cross the frontier before that hour. We left behind us our bags, our spare clothes and socks, so as to walk as light as possible, and at about 9.30 left our hiding-place.

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Seventeenth Night.—The first part of our walk lay through the thick woods north of Aach, in which there was small chance of meeting anyone. For two hours on a pitch-dark night we made our way across country, finding the way only by compass and memory of the maps. There were moments of anxiety, but these were instantly allayed by the appearance of some expected landmark. Unfortunately the going was very heavy, and in our weak state we made slower progress than we had hoped. When the moon came up we were still 3 to 4 miles from the

frontier.

Should we lie up where we were and try to get across the next night? The idea of waiting another day entirely without food was intolerable, so we pushed on.

The moon was full and very bright, so that, as we walked across the fields it seemed to us that we must be visible for miles. After turning the village of Weiterdingen we were unable to find a road on the far side which had been marked on my map. This necessitated a study of the map under a mackintosh, the result of which was to make me feel doubtful if we really were where I had thought. It is by no means easy to locate oneself at night from a small-scale map, 1:100,000, examined by match-light. However, we adopted the hypothesis that we were where we had thought we were, and disregarding the unpleasant fact that a road was missing, marched on by compass, in a southwest direction, hoping always to hit the village of Riedheim. How we were to distinguish this village from other villages I did not know. Buckley, as always, was an optimist; so on we went, keeping as far as possible under the cover of trees and hedges.

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Ahead of us was a valley, shrouded in a thick mist. This might well be the frontier, which at that point followed a small stream on either side of which we believed there were water meadows. At length we came on a good road, and walking parallel with it in the fields, we followed it westwards. If our calculations were correct, this should lead us to the village.

About 1.30 we came on a village. It was a pretty place nestling at the foot of a steep wood-capped hill, with fruit trees and fields, in which harvesting had already begun, all round it. Was it Riedheim? If it was, we were within half a mile of the frontier, and I knew, or thought I knew, from a large-scale map which I had memorized, the lie of the country between Riedheim and the frontier. We crossed the road and after going about 100 yards came on a single-line railway. I sat down aghast. There was no doubt about it—we were lost. I knew there was no railway near Riedheim. For a moment or two Buckley failed to realize the horrible significance of this railway, but he threw a waterproof over my head whilst I had a prolonged study of the map by match-light. I was quite unable to make out where we were. There were, however, one or two villages, through which railways passed, within range of our night's walk. I explained the situation to Buckley, who instantly agreed that we must lie up for another night and try to make out where we were in the morning. It was impossible that we were far from the frontier. Buckley at this time began to show signs of exhaustion from lack of food; so leaving him to collect potatoes, of which there was a field quite close, I went in search of water. After a long search I was not able to find any. We collected thirty to forty potatoes between us, and towards 3 a.m. made our way up the hill behind the village. The hill was very steep, and in our exhausted condition it was only slowly and with great difficulty that we were able to climb it. Three-quarters of the way up, Buckley almost collapsed, so I left him in some bushes and went on to find a suitable place. I found an excellent spot in a thick wood, in which there were no paths or signs that any one entered it. I then returned and fetched Buckley, and we slept till dawn.

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At this time I was feeling fitter and stronger than at any time during the previous week. I am unable to explain this, unless it was due to the fact that my feet had quite ceased to hurt me seriously.

At dawn we had breakfast on raw potatoes and meat lozenges which I divided out, and then, sitting just inside the edge of the coppice, tried to make out our position from a close study of the map and the surrounding country. In the distance we could see the west end of Lake Constance, and a compass bearing on this showed us that we were very close to the frontier. Through the village in front of us there was a railway. There were several villages close to the frontier through which passed railways, and two or three of them had steep hills to the north of them. We imagined successively that the hill we were sitting on was the hill behind each of these villages, and compared the country we could see before us carefully with the map. That part of the country abounds in solitary hills capped with woods, and the difficulty was to find out which one we were sitting on. There was one village, Gottmadingen, with a railway through it, and behind it a hill from which the map showed that the view would be almost identical with that we saw in front of us. Buckley thought we were there. I did not. There were small but serious discrepancies. Then I had a brain wave. We were in Switzerland already, and the village below us was Thaugen. It explained everything—or very nearly. Buckley pointed out one or two things which did not seem to be quite right. Again then, where were we? I think now that we were slightly insane from hunger and fatigue, otherwise we should have realized without difficulty where we were, without taking the risk which we did. I don't know what time it was, but it was not till after hours of futile attempt to locate ourselves from the map from three sides of the hill, that I took off my tunic, and in a gray sweater and in gray flannel trousers walked down into the fields and asked a girl who was making hay what the name of that village might be. She was a pretty girl in a large sun-bonnet, and after a few preliminary remarks about the weather and the harvest, she told me the name of the village was Riedheim. I must have shown my surprise, for she said, "Why, don't you believe me?" "Naturally, I believe you," I said; "it is better here than in the trenches. I am on leave and have walked over from Engen and lost my way. Good day. Many thanks." She gave me a sly look, and I don't know what she thought, but she only answered "Good day," and went on with her haymaking. I walked away, and getting out of her sight hurried back to Buckley with the good news. "But how could a railway be there?" I thought. "It was made after the map was printed, you fool." On the way back I had a good look at the country. It was all as clear as daylight. How I had failed to recognize it before I can't think, except that it did not look a bit like the country that I had anticipated. There was the Z-shaped stream, which was the guarded frontier, and there, now that I knew where to look for it, I could make out the flash of the sun on

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a sentry's bayonet. Everything fitted in with my mental picture of the large-scale map. The village opposite to us in Switzerland was Barzheim; the little hut with a red roof was the Swiss Alpine Club hut, and was actually on the border between Switzerland and Germany. Once past the sentries on the river we should still have 500 yards of Germany to cross before we were safe.

The thing to do now was to hide, and hide in the thickest part we could find. The girl might have given us away. Anyhow, we knew that the woods near the frontier were usually searched daily. [227] Till 4 o'clock we lay quiet, well hidden in thick undergrowth, half-way up the lower slopes of the Hohenstollen, and then we heard a man pushing his way through the woods and hitting trees and bushes with a stick. He never saw us, and we were lying much too close to see him, though he seemed to come within 15 yards of us. That danger past, I climbed a tree and took one more look at the lie of the land. Then Buckley and I settled down to get our operation orders for the night. For half an hour we sat on the edge of the wood, waiting for it to become quite dark before we started.

Eighteenth and Last Night.—It was quite dark at 10.15 when we started, and we had one and three-quarter hours in which to cross. Shortly after midnight the moon would rise. "I can hardly believe we are really going to get across," said Buckley. "I know I am, and so are you," I answered. We left our sticks behind, because they would interfere with our crawling, and rolled our Burberrys tightly on our backs with string.

A quarter of an hour's walk brought us to the railway and the road, which we crossed with the greatest care. For a short distance in the water-meadow we walked bent double, then we went on our hands and knees, and for the rest of the way we crawled. There was thick long grass in the meadow, and it was quite hard work pushing our way through it on our hands and knees. The night was an absolutely still one, and as we passed through the grass it seemed to us that we made a swishing noise that must be heard for hundreds of yards. [228]

There were some very accommodating dry ditches, which for the most part ran in the right direction. By crawling down these we were able to keep our heads below the level of the grass nearly the whole time, only glancing up from time to time to get our direction by the poplars. After what seemed an endless time, but was actually about three-quarters of an hour, we reached a road which we believed was patrolled, as it was here that I had seen the flash of a bayonet in the day time.

After looking round cautiously we crossed this, and crawled on—endlessly, it seemed.

Buckley relieved me, and took the lead for a bit. Then we changed places again, and the next time I looked up the poplars really did seem a bit nearer.

Then Buckley whispered to me, "Hurry up, the moon's rising." I looked back towards the east, and saw the edge of the moon peering over the hills. We were still about 100 yards from the stream. We will get across now, even if we have to fight for it, I thought, and crawled on at top speed. Suddenly I felt a hand on my heel, and stopped and looked back. Buckley pointed ahead, and there, about 15 yards off, was a sentry walking along a footpath on the bank of the stream. He appeared to have no rifle, and had probably just been relieved from his post. He passed without seeing us. One last spurt and we were in the stream (it was only a few feet broad), and up the other bank. "Crawl," said Buckley. "Run," said I, and we ran. After 100 yards we stopped exhausted. "I believe we've done it, old man," I said. "Come on," said Buckley, "we're not there yet." For ten minutes we walked at top speed in a semicircle, and at length hit a road which I knew must lead to Barzheim. On it, there was a big board on a post. On examination this proved to be a boundary post, and we stepped into Switzerland, feeling a happiness and a triumph such, I firmly believe, as few men even in this war have felt, though they may have deserved the feeling many times more. [229]

We crossed into Switzerland at about 12.30 a.m. on the morning of June 9th, 1917.

CHAPTER XIX

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FREEDOM

The moon had risen by now, and a walk of two or three hundred yards brought us into the village, which we entered without seeing any one. It was quite a small place, and though nearly 1 o'clock there were several houses in which lights were showing. "I suppose we really are in Switzerland," said Buckley. I felt certain about it, and we determined to knock up one of the houses in which we saw lights burning, as food we must and would have without delay. We were standing in a small cobbled square, and just as we were selecting the most likely looking house we caught sight of two men who were standing in a dark spot about 30 yards away. I called out to them in German, "Is this Barzheim?" "Jawohl" was the answer. "Are we in Switzerland?" Again, "Jawohl." "Well, we are escaping prisoners-of-war from Germany and we are very hungry." The two fellows, whom we saw to be boys of sixteen or seventeen, came up. We were very much on our guard and ready for trouble, for we believed then, though I do not know with what justice, that the Germans have agents on the Swiss side of the border who misdirect escaped prisoners so that they walk back into Germany, or even forcibly deliver them to the German sentries. "Escaped prisoners, are [231]

you?" said one of the young men. "Yes," I said, "Englishmen." They showed some interest. "We are English officers, and we want food very badly." "Come on," they said, and led us to a house at the corner of the square. Then we sat on a wooden bench, and they lit a candle and had a look at us.

We repeated our desire for food, and they cross-questioned us and tried us with a word or two of English. They were much interested in the fact that we were English officers, as no Englishmen had crossed before at that place.

Concerning the rest of that night my memory rather fails me, but soon the whole household was roused—father, mother, and daughter. Wine, beer, and milk were produced; also bread, and cold bacon and three fine eggs each. We ate everything there was, and I think cleaned out the family larder, whilst the family sat round and questioned us, and were much surprised to find that two English officers could speak German. They could not possibly have been kinder or more friendly, and absolutely refused to take money from us. They were delighted to be our hosts and show themselves good neutrals, they said. As we had visions of hot baths, sheets, and breakfast in bed, we expressed our intention of going on to Schafhausen that night, but the father rather shocked us by saying that we must be handed over to the Swiss frontier post. The girl, however, tactfully added that, if we went on, we might easily lose our way and walk back into Germany, and that with the Swiss soldiers we should be perfectly safe. [232]

That decided us, as we were both beginning to feel very sleepy after the food and wine.

Soon afterwards one of the boys took us across to the guardhouse, where soldiers provided us with mattresses and we fell asleep instantly.

At an early hour next morning the soldiers brought us hot water and shaved us and bound up my feet. They were extraordinarily good to us, and, after we had had coffee and bread, they filled our pockets with cigars and cigarettes and sent us off with the best wishes and a guide to the station about 2 kilometres away. The road passed quite close to the German frontier, and we felt glad that we had not tried to pass that way the night before. We soon found that our guide was really a plain-clothes police officer, and that, though the fact was tactfully concealed, we were still under arrest. However, "What does it matter?" we said. "Food is the main thing now, and we'll escape from any old prison in Switzerland, if it comes to that." Our "guide" seemed a very decent fellow, and told us that we were about to travel on a German railway. We halted abruptly whilst he explained at some length that, though it was a German-owned railway, the Germans had no rights over the Swiss traffic on the railway, and that under no circumstances could we be arrested by the Germans when on that bit of their railway which ran through Switzerland. More or less satisfied, we went on again. In the village we entered a pub, rather against our guide's will, and had some more coffee and bread. It was wonderful how much stronger we felt owing to the food. Buckley, when he had stripped to wash that morning, had shown himself to be a living skeleton, and I was not much fatter. [233]

Whilst in the pub a fat dirty fellow came and congratulated us, and questioned us in bad English. I have no doubt now that he was a German agent, and I think we were rather injudicious in our answers, but we had sense enough to hold our tongues about the important points—when we crossed, and how, etc.

The railway journey to Schafhausen was rather amusing. It was so very obvious that we were escaped prisoners, as we still had on service tunics, and, except for that portion of our faces which had been scraped with a razor, we were filthily dirty from head to foot. Our clothes were covered with mud, with thick pads of it on our knees and elbows where we had crawled the night before, and our faces and hands covered with sores and swellings from unhealed scratches and insect bites.

Several German railway officials gave us a first glance of surprise and indignation, and thereafter were careful not to look in our direction. Considering the temptations of the situation we behaved on the whole very decently, but even the mildest form of revenge is sweet.

At Schafhausen our guide or keeper took us to the police and secret service headquarters and introduced us to a Swiss Lieutenant who spoke alternately German and French, with a preference for the former. He told us that we would be lodged at Hotel something or other, and would be sent down to Berne on Monday, that day being Friday. I thanked him, and said that we wished to get on the telephone to a friend in the English Embassy at Berne, and we should much prefer to go down that afternoon. As for waiting in Schafhausen till Monday, it was out of the question. [234]

He had a great struggle to put it with the utmost politeness, but his answer came to this. He did not see how it could be arranged, and we had no option in the matter; we should be extremely comfortable, etc. We answered firmly, but politely, that we had not got out of Germany to be confined in Schafhausen, and that there was a train at 3 o'clock which would suit us.

Just at this moment a Swiss major came in. The lieutenant introduced us, and I appealed to him to allow us to go to Berne that day. After some argument he suddenly gave in, and ordered the lieutenant to take us to Berne by the 3 o'clock train. Then turning to us he said, with a charming smile, "Come and lunch with me before you go." We then walked round the town with the lieutenant, bought some things, and Buckley telephoned to H. at the Embassy. We got back late for lunch, only ten minutes before the train started. However, we managed to bolt four courses and half a bottle of champagne apiece, and just as the lieutenant, who had been prophesying for

some minutes that we should miss the train, finally stated that it was hopeless to try and catch it now, we got up and ran for it, with him lumbering behind. We just caught it. At Berne we were met by H., who threw up his hands in horror at the sight of us and bundled us into a closed taxi.

At one of the most luxurious hotels in the world, we had a most heavenly bath, and changed into beautiful clean clothes lent to us by H. That night H. gave a dinner in our honor. Buckley and I were ravenously hungry, and in fact for the next fortnight were quite unable to satisfy our appetites. But besides the good food the dinner was otherwise most amusing, because the German Embassy inhabited the same hotel and dined a few tables from us, and no secret was made of what we were and where we had come from. The next morning we had the oft-anticipated breakfast in bed. I ordered, by telephone from my bed, the largest breakfast possible, and was disgusted to see the moderate-sized feed which arrived, the waiter explaining that the amount of one breakfast was limited by law. I instantly ordered a second breakfast exactly like the first, and ate all that too. I found out afterwards that Buckley had employed exactly the same ruse for obtaining more food! [235]

That day we were invited to lunch by the English Minister, who was extremely kind, but I think rather astonished at our appetites. After lunch, Buckley and I strolled about for a bit, and then by common consent made for a tea-shop, where we had another good feed. In fact, we made pigs of ourselves in the eating line, and for the next fortnight or three weeks ate as much and as often as possible, without ever being satisfied, and, which is still more astonishing, without any ill effects. I suppose we were safeguarded by the fact that we ate good food, and as we were in civilized society it was scarcely possible to eat more than a limited amount at any one meal.

H. lent us money, and in Berne we bought expensive watches and ready-made clothes, and then obtained leave to visit my brother and sister at Mürren. This was the same brother to whom I have already referred as a wounded prisoner-of-war. A few months before our escape he had been invalided out of Germany, and my sister, who was a trained masseuse, went out to Switzerland to look after him, and I believe did much useful work among the exchanged prisoners. H. sent us over to Mürren in the embassy car, a most beautiful journey all along the edge of the lake. At one point our car was stopped by a party of exchanged English officers, who, poor fellows, mostly keen regular soldiers, were condemned to spend the rest of the war in Switzerland. They wanted to hear our story, and were full of enthusiasm because we had scored off the Germans. [236]

At the foot of the funicular railway we met my brother and sister, and at Mürren itself which I had no idea was a camp for exchanged English soldiers, all the men turned out, and, headed by a wild Irishman with a huge placard "Welcome back from Hun-land" and a bell, gave us a tremendous reception, for which Buckley and I were entirely unprepared.

This brings to an end all that is of any interest in my German experiences. After two very pleasant days at Mürren we traveled *via* Berne to Paris, and then by car to General Headquarters (where I fear we were unable to give much information that was of value), and so home to England.

There is one other thing I should like to say before I bring this story to a close. Although Buckley and I are among the few English officers who have escaped from Germany, there were many others who tried to escape more often, who took more risks, who were at least as skilful as we were, but who had not the luck and consequently never tasted the fruits of success. Several died or were murdered in their attempts. [237]

In my opinion no prisoner-of-war has ever escaped without more than a fair share of luck, and no one ever will. However hard you try, however skilful you are, luck is an essential element in a successful escape.

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PART II

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CHAPTER I

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ARABS, TURKS, AND GERMANS

The interval between my escape from Germany, June 8th, 1917 and March 1918, when I had been for a couple of months in command of a squadron of bombing aeroplanes on the Palestine front, had been taken up with matters of great personal interest, of which I can give here only the barest outline. Things move so fast in modern war that after a year's absence I was as much out of date as Rip Van Winkle after his hundred years' sleep. There were new organizations, new tactics, new theories, and in my own department, new types of aeroplanes, of power and capabilities of which we had only dreamed in 1916. I had to learn to fly once more, and went through a course of artillery observation, for I had every reason to hope that I should be given command of an artillery squadron in France. However, this was forbidden. The powers that be decreed that no escaped prisoner might return to the same front from which he had been

captured. This ruling was afterwards altered, but not before I had been captured by the Turks.

After some months spent in teaching flying in England and in Egypt at Aboukir, I was sent up to Palestine early in the year in command of a bombing squadron. I hated bombing, and knew nothing about it; and, though I was very pleased with my command, the fact that I had to deal in bombs and not wireless rather took the gilt off the gingerbread. However, after the experiences of a German prison, the spring weather of Palestine, the comparative peacefulness of our warfare, and an almost independent command were very, very pleasant. [242]

The story opens on March 19th, 1918 with a flight of aeroplanes flying eastward on a cloudy day, at a height of some 4000 feet, over the Dead Sea. Our objective was the station of Kutrani, on the Hedjaz Railway. There were five or six single-seater aeroplanes, in one of which I was flying, escorted by a couple of Bristol fighters. It was a very unpleasant day for formation flying, for not only was it very bumpy as we came over the mountains, which border the Dead Sea, but the very numerous patches of cloud made it both difficult and dangerous to keep at the right distance from one's neighbor. We lost our way once, but eventually found the station which was our objective. A train was just leaving. So I came down rather low and let off two of my bombs unsuccessfully at it, and in doing so lost the rest of the formation. Close by the station there was a German plane standing on an aerodrome which I had a shot at, and I then unloaded the rest of the cargo on the station itself without, as far as I could see, doing much damage. By this time I was far below the clouds, and could see no signs of the rest of the squadron. After cruising about for a few minutes I headed for home, keeping just below the clouds, and very soon caught a glimpse of a Bristol fighter. He saw me at the same time, and for the next twenty minutes we flew side by side. The country below us was of a greeny-brown color in the sunlight, and had the appearance of a great plain bounded on the west by the mountains of the Dead Sea, which we had to cross. In reality it was far from flat, as could be guessed from the occasional zigzags in the white tracks which connected the widely scattered villages. Here and there were small brown patches which represented plough land, and black mounds, which were the tents of the desert Arabs. [243]

I hated these long bomb raids, for the fear of recapture was always on me whilst I was over enemy territory. My nerves had suffered from the events of the previous three years, and it had been only by a great effort of will that I had forced myself to take part in expeditions far over the lines. Perhaps the majority of men are more afraid of being afraid than of anything else—and it may have been partly for this reason, but mainly for another more weighty reason, that I found myself alone in an aeroplane on the wrong side of the Dead Sea. However, in ten minutes we would cross the mountains and the Dead Sea, and be over comparatively friendly territory. I say "comparatively," because it was always a matter of some uncertainty whether the temptation to murder you and steal your kit would overstrain the good wishes of our noble allies. Through the clouds on my left I had just caught a glimpse of the ancient city of El Karak, when my engine sputtered badly, picked up again, and then banged and sputtered once more and half stopped. Owing to the clouds we were flying rather low, and would not cross the hills ahead by more than 1000 feet or so. I checked the instruments and pressure, closed and then slowly opened the throttle, dived with the throttle opened; but all to no purpose, for the engine banged and backfired, and we lost height and revolutions in an alarming way. It was an airlock or water in the petrol, and must be given time to clear itself. How I longed for a little more height. It seemed that the engine might pick up again at any moment, because, for a few seconds, it would give full power and then cut out again completely. Then I found myself a few feet from the ground, and had to land willy-nilly. The place was a ploughed field, almost flat and comparatively free from boulders. We did not sink in very much, but unfortunately the wheels came to rest in a little ditch a few inches deep. [244]

For a moment or two I sat in the machine altering the throttle, for the engine had not completely stopped. Then I heard a roar, and the Bristol fighter came by, flying a few feet from the ground, and I could see the observer waving to me. I jumped out and tried to wave them away. It was possible, but risky, for a machine to land and get off from that ground, and, with the hope that my engine would pick up again, I did not think the risk was justifiable. However, they had no intention of leaving me in the lurch, and after another turn round landed on the plough about 50 yards away. I got into my machine once more, and as they ran across towards me my engine started once more to give its full power; but I saw that I should have great difficulty in getting out of the ditch. When they came up I recognized them as two most stout-hearted Australians, Captain Austin and Lieutenant Lee, who had both gained the Military Cross, and made a considerable reputation for themselves on the Palestine front. They hauled on the machine whilst I roared the engine. All in vain, however; we could not shift her. I shouted to them that we must set this plane on fire and try to get away on theirs. "Ours is useless," they answered. "We broke a wheel on a boulder in landing." "Is it quite hopeless?" I said. "Yes, quite." [245]

Leaving them to set my machine on fire, I took a revolver and a Verrey's pistol and ran over to the Bristol. As I went I saw that, from some rising ground about 100 yards away, thirty or forty Arabs were covering us with rifles. Hoping they would not shoot, I went on and fired first the revolver and then the Verrey's right into the petrol tank, and it burst into flame. We soon had the other machine on fire by the same means, and threw into the flames our maps and papers. A brief consultation decided us that escape was quite hopeless. The Arabs could travel over that country much faster than we could. There were very rugged hills between us and the Dead Sea, with possibly or probably an impassable precipice. We thought there was just a chance that the Arabs were friendly as they had not yet fired. At any rate, it was highly probable that they would be

open to bribery. If they were definitely hostile it was a bad lookout, and a speedy death was about all we could hope for. It was disturbing to recall, as Lee did, in a grimly humorous tone, that we had dropped bombs on El Karak and done considerable damage there only the week before. However, to run was certain death, so we waved to the Arabs and walked towards them.

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The Arabs rose with a shout, and brandishing their rifles rushed towards us. Several of them taking hold of us led us or rather dragged us along. Filthy, evil-looking, evil-smelling brutes they were. They were mostly clad in dirty white linen garments, with bandoliers and with belts stuck full of knives and revolvers. Some had German rifles, but most of them had old smooth bores which fire a colossal soft-lead bullet. To be man-handled by these savages was most repulsive. We kept together as far as possible and Lee, who knew a few words of Arabic, tried to make them understand that we could give them large sums of gold if they would take us to the English. Whether they intended to help us and whether they were friendly we could not make out, for they jabbered and shouted and pulled us along, so that we had little opportunity for making ourselves understood, though Lee kept hard at it. He gave a hopeful report, however, based on their constant repetition of the word "Sherif," and the fact that they had not yet cut our throats nor robbed us to any great extent. Lee had his wrist-watch stolen, and I think Austin lost a cigarette case. I produced a very battered old gun-metal case, and after lighting a cigarette handed the rest round to our escort, hoping this would help to create a benevolent atmosphere. After walking a couple of miles in this way, the Arabs keeping up a ceaseless and deafening chatter the whole time, we came to a tumbledown deserted mud and stone village. I found myself separated from the other two, and I and my escort came to a halt before a half-underground mud hovel with a black hole for an entrance, through which it would have been necessary to crawl. It was conveyed to me by signs that I was to enter, and they dragged me forward. I resisted, and heard Lee, who was about 30 yards away with his crowd of ruffians, shouting to me, "Don't let them get you in there, Evans; try and get back to us." The attitude of the brutes round me became very threatening, and one fellow made preparation to encourage me with a bayonet. Suddenly a horseman came galloping over the brow, and the horse putting his foot on one of the large flat stones which abound in this country came down with a crash and horse and rider rolled over and over like shot rabbits. As the horse rose the rider mounted him and again came on at full speed. Whether it was the appearance of this horseman, or whether, as I believe, a report of the approach of the Turks from El Karak, which caused the Arabs to change their tactics, I don't know, but they suddenly ceased trying to force me into the black hole, and we joined the others. I have never been quite sure whether they had intended to murder me for my kit, or to save me for ransom to the English. Lee had no doubts as to what my fate would have been, and thanked God for my escape.

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After we had walked for another mile or two we were met by two Turks, who had the appearance of military policemen, and another crowd of Arabs. In answer to a question, one of the Turks who spoke French said that we were prisoners of the Turks, and added that we need not now be frightened. From what the Turk said then, and subsequently, we began to realize how lucky we were still to be alive. However, there was still considerable cause for anxiety. All the Arabs and we three sat down in a ring, and one of the Turks addressed the assembly at length. There was a good deal of heckling, but at last they arrived at some decision, though by no means unanimously. We were mounted on horses, and, with the two Turks also mounted and a bodyguard of some thirty Arab horsemen, proceeded towards El Karak. All around were a mob of unpleasantly excited Arabs yelling and shouting and letting off their rifles. The Turk who spoke French told us to keep close to him, and hinted that we were not yet out of the wood.

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El Karak is built on a pinnacle of rock which rises abruptly from the bottom of a deep gorge. To reach the town from any side it is necessary to descend nearly 400 feet into the gorge down a most precipitous path of loose stones, and then climb by a track even steeper and stonier in which there are seven zigzags to the citadel, which is almost on a level with the rim of the gorge. In the valley, at the foot of the pinnacle, there was a very heated dispute between the Turks and the Arabs. For ten minutes or more, whilst our fate hung in the balance, we sat on a boulder and watched. Once more the decision appeared to be in our favor; and, after a further dispute, this time rather to our dismay, between the two Turks, we climbed the path in the midst of a strong bodyguard of the least excitable of the Arabs. At the gates of the town we were met by a dense and hostile crowd and, at the bidding of one of the Turks, linked our arms and pushed our way through. One fellow clutched me and but for our linked arms would have pulled me into the mob, but with the help of Lee and Austin I got free from him, and with a push and a scramble we got into the citadel—the only solidly built building in the place. Here the two Turks heaved sighs of relief, mopped their brows, and congratulated us heartily on being in safety. It had been a very close thing they said.

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To my astonishment we were treated with the greatest consideration. Food and coffee and cigarettes were brought to us, and shortly afterwards we were brought into the presence of Ismail Kemal Bey, the Turkish commandant and military governor of El Karak. In my life I have met with few people with whom, on so short an acquaintance, I have been so favorably impressed as I was with Ismail Kemal Bey. He was a finely built man, with a most intelligent face and a charming smile. He had been wounded thirteen times he told us, seven times in the Balkan wars and six times in this war, and had been a prisoner in the hands of the Greeks, by whom he had been disgracefully maltreated. His right arm was completely paralyzed. As had been agreed between us, I gave my name as Everard, for I feared that, if it was discovered that I had escaped from a German prison, a closer guard would be kept upon me, and life otherwise made more intolerable. I realized that this would lead to certain difficulties with regard to informing my

people that I was still alive, and obtaining money by cheque or otherwise, as I selected a new name quite on the spur of the moment; but I had to take that risk, and henceforth for the rest of my captivity I was known as Everard. [250]

Whilst we were Kemal Bey's prisoners we were his honored guests, and he treated us with the tactful courtesy of a well-educated gentleman. That evening we dined with him, and were given under the circumstances a most remarkably good dinner. He spoke both German and French fluently, and I talked with him for two hours or more on a great variety of topics. He told us we owed our lives to two things. Firstly, a reward of 50 gold pieces which was offered by the Turkish Government to the Arabs for live English officers, and secondly, to the fact that the Arabs knew that he (Kemal Bey) would certainly have hung half a dozen of them if they had murdered us. Even so, although he had sent his men with all speed he had scarcely hoped to bring us in alive.

That afternoon we watched two of our aeroplanes searching for us. Kemal Bey was much impressed by the loyalty of the Flying Corps to one another, especially when I told him that Lee and Austin had been captured only because they had descended, most gallantly, to rescue me.

Next morning we left El Karak with a small escort and rode to Kutrani, the town which we had bombed the day before. The distance is about 45 kilometres. It was a most tedious and boring journey, and we were very tired when we got in. We slept that night in a tent, and next day departed by train for Aman. We were traveling in a closed cattle truck, and, as it was a hot night, our guards left the door open a foot or two. From the time it was dusk till midnight, when the opportunity had passed, I waited in a state of the highest tension for a reasonable chance to jump from the train and make my way to our forces in the neighborhood of Jericho. Though several times I was on the point of going, a real chance never came. Although I pretended to sleep, one or other of my guards, usually only one, was always awake and watching me. We reached Aman in the early morning. During the day we were cross-questioned by a German Intelligence officer. I had told Austin and Lee what to expect, and I don't think he got much change out of any of us. I was surprised at his knowledge of our forces, and especially when he showed that he knew or guessed of the presence of two divisions which had lately come from Mesopotamia. [251]

That night the Turks took special precautions to prevent us from escaping, but nevertheless treated us quite well, giving us overcoats and at our request a pack of cards.

At Aman we learnt that we were to be sent to the German aerodrome at El Afule. The journey lasted, as far as I remember, four or five days, as the route is a most circuitous one and brought us across the Jordan to within about 40 miles from our lines and the same distance from the coast. As soon as we learnt where we were going we made up our minds that it must be from Afule we would make our attempt to escape. We left Aman in a comparatively clean cattle truck, but the conditions gradually became worse, and we finished the journey in a truck filled to the roof, all but 2 feet, with vermin-infested maize. We were consequently covered with lice. The food consisted of a very small portion of poor bread, olives, and semi-raw meat which the Turkish N.C.O. who was in charge of us tore in pieces for us with his dirty hands. Owing to the food and to lack of exercise we suffered severely from indigestion and diarrhoea, so that when we arrived at El Afule we were a pretty miserable trio. [252]

In the red crescent tent, where we were deposited with a sentry to guard us, there were 6 inches of liquid mud on the floor, for there had been heavy rain lately, and it started to rain again once more. So we sat on the beds to keep out of the mud; and in that dripping tent, for it leaked in innumerable places, cursed the Turks and their damnable inefficiency. We had been sitting there half an hour or so, very miserable, when several German flying officers entered the tent. After rather formal salutations we told them what we thought of their allies the Turks, and of our treatment by them. One of the Germans then told me that they were going to try and rescue us from the Turks and take us up to their mess for a feed and a bath, and we felt much cheered at the thought. Through an interpreter they tackled the Turkish sentry; but, as he had had his orders that we were not to move, arguing with him was just waste of time. The next move amused us a great deal. One of the Germans wrote a note and, without the sentry noticing, gave it to his orderly, who departed. Ten minutes later the orderly reappeared and, saluting violently, handed the note to our would-be rescuers. The note purported to come from the German Headquarters, I think, and was an order for us to be handed over to the Germans. This was explained at great length to the sentry, but made no impression on him whatever. Quite rightly he refused to let us go. However, the Germans motioned us to come too, and we all moved out of the tent in a body. The sentry was in two minds as to whether to shoot or not, but he could not hit us without shooting a German, so he just followed after. From the station we walked about 2 miles up to a farmhouse, and were introduced into the mess, the faithful sentry taking up his watch outside the door, disregarding the jeers of the German orderlies and hints that his presence was undesirable. I still feel a great admiration for that sentry. His blind adherence to the letter of his orders under most testing circumstances is typical of the best breed of Turkish soldier. In the mess, the Germans, who were mostly quite young and seemed a very nice lot of fellows, were extremely hospitable and kind. We begged for a bath, but they said a bath would be no use to us. We were "verloust," and would be introduced to a de-lousing machine the next day. The commander of the squadron was Hauptmann Franz Walz, who for a long time had been a fighting pilot on the West front and had been O.C. Boelche's circus after the latter's death. He had a great admiration for the R.F.C., but thought that we had lost a great many machines from recklessness, and owing to mad expeditions on bad machines. In answer to a question as to which was the most dangerous front on which to fight, he said that the English front was vastly more dangerous than any other. The English and French were alone worth consideration as enemies in [253]

the air. The French fought well, with many tricks, but it was seldom that a Frenchman would fight if outnumbered or at a disadvantage, or over German lines. For an Englishman to refuse a fight, however, was almost unknown. If a German wished for a fight he had only to approach the British lines, when he would be attacked by any and every British pilot who happened to catch sight of him.

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At dinner that night Walz asked us whether we would mind giving our parole not to escape for so long as we were actually guests of his mess, as, if we would do so, it would be much more comfortable both for them and for us. We agreed to this, and consequently were not guarded in any way whatever. As we were having dinner an orderly told Walz that the Turkish officer who had brought us from Aman, and from whom we had been stolen, was waiting outside for us. Walz, to our great amusement, told the orderly to give the Turk a glass of wine and a seat in the corner. After dinner Walz spoke to him and refused to give us up; so the Turk retired, taking the faithful sentry with him. As we had given our parole, I asked the Germans as a matter of courtesy not to try and "pump" us on military subjects, and on the whole they were very decent about this. They left me alone, but put a certain number of leading questions to Lee and Austin. These two, however, either referred the question to me for interpretation, or drew without stint on exceptionally fertile imaginations. They found there were several of the Germans with whom Lee or Austin had had encounters in the air during the preceding twelve months, and this led to some most interesting and friendly discussion of these fights.

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The next day was spent in bathing and having our clothes completely disinfected. Lee and Austin were suffering from stomach trouble and were rather weak, and it was many days before they recovered. Two days of good food and rest with the Germans put me quite right again, and when on the afternoon of the third day we left the German mess and became once more wretched prisoners in the hands of the Turks, I felt quite fit for anything and made up my mind to escape on the first opportunity.

Whilst in the German mess we had written notes which the Germans promised to drop over the lines for us. In them we merely stated that we were safe and well, and asked that small kits might be dropped over to us, and signed them Lee, Austin, and Everard. Some months later, while prisoners at Afion-Kara-Hissar, we all three received bundles of clothes and necessaries, which were dropped from British planes and they forwarded to us. How valuable those clothes were to us when they came, only those who have been prisoners in Turkish hands can understand.

The night after leaving the German mess we were imprisoned in one room of a wooden hut, in which were three beds, a table, and a couple of rickety chairs. The window was barred, and outside the door three Turkish sentries squatted over a small fire and smoked cigarettes. Our hut was one of several which stood in a large compound bordered with prickly pears. There were several tents dotted about, and here and there little groups of men sitting or sleeping round fires. Around us was that untidiness and irregularity which is characteristic of a Turkish encampment. Austin, Lee, and I had already discussed the direction in which to escape, and we decided that it would be best to make for the coast in a southwest direction. Once on the coast we believed there would be little difficulty in making our way either through the lines or round them by means of wading or swimming. If we went by the more direct route south it would be necessary to cross several very precipitous ranges of hills, and the going would be very bad. Towards the coast there was only one range to cross, if we hit the right route, and after that it would be more or less flat walking—a great consideration for tired men.

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CHAPTER II

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ONE MORE RUN

The night after we had left the German mess, both Lee and Austin were so ill from stomach trouble that it was impossible for them to think of escaping. It was, however, in all probability the last night on which we should be within walking distance of our lines, so I determined to make the attempt by myself. Owing to the nature of their illness, both Lee and Austin were compelled to make frequent visits to the latrines, which were little wooden huts about 50 yards away in the middle of the compound. I also pretended to be ill, and went out each time accompanied by a sentry, who usually came with us the whole way; but Austin reported that one sentry had allowed him to get 20 yards ahead, so I made what preparations I could to escape. We had no map, no compass, and very little food between us, but it was a starlight night, and I thought I could scarcely fail to hit the coast. The first three times I went, the sentry kept too close to me to permit me to escape without considerable risk of an immediate alarm, and as I hoped with luck and by a skilful manœuvre to be past the outside sentries, if there were any, before my escape was noticed, after due delay I returned each time.

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The fourth time I went out, the more careless of the three sentries came with me, and as he stopped for a moment to say something to his mates, I walked on quickly and got 20 yards ahead of him. When I came to the latrine, I pretended to enter the door but actually stepped behind the hut, and walked rapidly away, keeping the hut between the sentry and myself. However, I had not gone 30 yards when he saw me. I heard him shout, so I ran. I think he threw a stone after me, but he did not fire. As a matter of fact, I must have been a very dim target in that light by the time he

had unslung and cocked his rifle. I passed through a gap in the prickly pear hedge, and just outside saw a small tent near which several men were sitting round a fire. One of the camp pickets I thought; but I passed without being seen and struck out, walking and running alternately, across the marshy valley of the Kishon, making to hit the coast somewhat south of Cæsarea. At times I thought that the alarm had been raised behind me, and twice the barking of dogs made me think that I was being followed. Imagination plays one strange tricks under circumstances of this sort when one's nerves and senses are strung to the very highest pitch, for this escape had been by far the greatest strain on my nerves that I had ever experienced. It was so much worse than any escape in Germany, because of the long, tense hours while I waited for an opportunity, because I had to go alone, and because the risks were greater and the dangers and chances less calculable than in any previous adventure. "Omne ignotum pro magnifico est."

It had been just about midnight when I left the camp, and it was very little after 1 o'clock when I reached the rising ground on the west side of the valley, near the valley of Megiddo, after over 6 miles of very bad going. All that night I pressed on at top speed, avoiding the villages and meeting no one in that wild and desolate country. Though I had to cross several small valleys, most of the time I was climbing, and dawn found me on rather a bare exposed part on the top of the ridge from which, when day came, I saw the sea. It had been most difficult to pick a good hiding-place, as there were no trees and very few bushes; and some thickish heather behind a small boulder was the best cover I could find. The country had appeared so desolate at night that I hoped to find it quite uninhabited in the day time, but I soon saw my mistake. From about 6 o'clock onwards shepherds with their flocks wandered on many of the distant hills, and a quarter of a mile away down in the valley there were many small patches of cultivation, where men were working. I made up my mind that if chased by Arabs in that country in daylight the chances of escape were nil, so I took off my boots and went to sleep. About 8 o'clock I woke up and saw an Arab with a rifle standing about 10 yards off looking at me. His appearance in every sense was most unexceptionally unpleasant. I nodded to him as he came up, and said *Guten Tag*, and motioned to him to sit down beside me. He sat down and made some unintelligible remarks to me, to which I answered in German, and offered him a cigarette. He smoked for a bit, and things seemed to me to be going rather well. Then he started talking again, and kept on repeating some words which I suddenly recognized as Jenin, the name of the German aerodrome about 4 miles away. I jumped at that and said, "Ja ja, Deutscher—Jenin tiara (Turkish for aeroplane) boom, boom," and pointed to myself, by which he was supposed to understand that I was a German flying man from Jenin aerodrome, and my natural habits were bomb dropping. He seemed to grasp this, and after smoking another cigarette went away over the brow of the hill, to my great relief. Soon after his departure I selected another hiding-place, about 100 yards away, and crawled into it on my hands and knees. Even if he had come back to look for me (for I thought he might put two and two together if he learnt during the day that a prisoner had escaped), I doubt if he would have found me without the help of a dog. [259]

All that day—and the day seemed endless—I lay in the broiling sun and suffered very greatly from thirst; for I had had nothing to drink since about 2 o'clock on the previous night. The only food I had with me was half a pound of bread and about the same amount of dried greengages, a food much eaten by the Turkish soldiers and quite nourishing. However, I was far too thirsty to eat. During the day I saw some German aeroplanes flying low over the countryside, and thought that perhaps they were looking for me, as I found out afterwards was the case. Being an airman myself, I knew that their chance of finding me if I lay still was just nil, and watching them helped to pass the time. During the day I almost changed my mind and decided to go due south to our lines, but the sight of the sea was so attractive that I determined to keep on in that direction. [261]

The next night's walk was the most terrible experience that I have ever had. All night, till 4.30 the next morning, I found no water, and without water I could scarcely eat. Towards morning I could only breathe with difficulty, my tongue and throat seemed to have swollen, and I made a harsh whistling noise when I breathed. I tried sucking various herbs, and eventually tried the leaves of the cactus, which seemed to give momentary relief, so I put some bits of it in my pocket. The loneliness was oppressive past all belief and I longed for a companion, but the only noises were the occasional bark of a dog from an Arab village and the almost continual wailing of the jackals. The going was for the most part very bad, always up or down hill, and was made more difficult by the clouds which obscured the moon for a good part of the night. In one valley which I had to cross, the ground, for a mile or more, was strewn thickly with loose boulders, varying in size from a football to a grand piano. The boulders lay on loose shingle so that they slipped or moved if you stepped on them, and in the cracks and crevices between the boulders were thick thorn bushes. In my exhausted state and in the dim light, it was a nightmare getting through this place. I fell repeatedly trying to jump from one boulder to another, and my clothes were much torn and my face and hands were bleeding freely before I got out of that dreadful place. Once I collapsed, and as I lay on the ground I fell asleep. Half an hour later I woke and, feeling rather better, pushed on again. About 3.30 a.m. I got through the hills and on to the flat country which borders the coast. If I could have found water earlier I believe I should have reached the coast that night, but it was not till about 4.30 a.m. that I found a square hole in a rock half full of water. I drank that dry. A few hundred yards farther on I heard men talking, and going forward cautiously saw Turkish soldiers seated round a small fire. Making a detour, I marched on for half a mile and then heard a man call out on my right. There was only a dim light, as the moon was half hidden by clouds, and I could not see the man. Another man answered him on the left, and I realized that I was passing through a line of sentries. But if I could not see them they could not see me, so I pushed on till I suddenly saw a troop of cavalry advancing on me. I dropped to the ground and curled myself round a small bush about 2 feet high and lay quite still—it was the only [262]

possible thing to do. The cavalry came straight towards me, and it was not till they were 10 yards off that I saw that there was only one horseman and that he was driving half a dozen cattle before him. The cattle passed a yard or two to my right and left, but the horse actually stepped over my head without touching me. I felt most thankful when they had disappeared from sight, and realized that I must now be in the middle of a Turkish military area. However, as there was no hiding-place of any sort to be seen, I walked on once more, keeping a very careful lookout both for the Turks and for a hiding-place. I soon found the latter. It was a patch of corn about an acre in size, so I crawled into it and lay down in the middle, feeling fairly secure. It was a great pity to lose half an hour of darkness, but I knew that an hour or two's walk would bring me to the coast, and it might be difficult to find a better hiding-place in that flat country. Once more I suffered a great deal from heat and thirst, for I found to my surprise that corn stalks give no shade from a sun which beats almost straight down.

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That evening it began to rain, and as soon as the sun set it became pitch dark. When it was so dark that a man could not be seen at 5 yards' distance I left my cornfield and marched due west. I had taken my bearings from the sun during the day, so that even if there were no stars I should know by landmarks in which direction I was walking. Soon all landmarks were blotted out by the inky darkness and pelting rain, and I began to realize that it might be possible to lose my way even when within one hour's walk of the sea. Owing to the rain the going was rather heavy, being mostly over cultivated land, and when I had been walking for half an hour I began to feel fearfully tired. I staggered rather than walked, and could scarcely put one clay-laden foot before the other. Quite suddenly I collapsed, and lay on the ground totally unable to move. I managed to put my hand over my heart and could feel that it was running most irregularly and misfiring in the most extraordinary way. After about a quarter of an hour it got much better, so I had a few mouthfuls of bread and went on again. Before long I came on a field of things that looked like beans. I tried eating them, but they seemed to clog up my throat and made me feel worse than before. For the next hour I guided myself by the croaking of the frogs in the marshes, which I knew ran parallel to the sea and only a few miles away from it. When I reached the marshes it had stopped raining, but the clouds were so dense that I could see no moon or stars. I had rather a struggle crossing the marshes, and in some places was up to my waist in mud and water. Once my feet almost stuck, and as I dragged them out the soles of both my shoes tore off the uppers. I bound them on again as well as I could, and then walked on again in the direction I thought was right. For the next four hours I pushed on at a good pace, hoping against hope that every step would show me the sea. But it was not to be. My shoes were so uncomfortable that much of the time I went barefooted, but there were many stones and thistles about and I hurt my feet and made poor progress. At about 3 a.m. I got a glimpse of the moon and saw that I was walking northeast instead of west. Heaven knows where I was or for how long I had been walking in a totally wrong direction. For all I knew I might have walked 10 miles from the sea in the last four hours. Then the moon went in again and the rain came on. Soon after that I ran into an encampment of some sort and was chased by dogs; they followed me some way barking, but did not attack me. Then I got tangled up in more marshes, and in the darkness lost my direction again hopelessly.

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As it began to get light I found myself near some quite nice-looking stone buildings, and sitting down in an orchard in the pouring rain I debated what to do. I was very exhausted, and most dejected at my ill luck. Our lines could not be less than 18 miles away, so that even if I hit the coast very early the following night I should not cross the lines without two more nights' marching and still worse two more days of lying hid. I was desperately hungry and my food was almost exhausted. If recaptured I could only expect very rough treatment, and I wished to keep a little strength in hand to stand that. Added to this, my feet were in such a condition that walking was most painful. But that which finally made me decide to give myself up was that for the last two hours I had come across no spot which would serve as a hiding-place. How I longed to have Buckley with me! If he had been there I think we should have encouraged each other to carry on for one more night at any rate. However, I can't blame myself too much, as I was in a pretty hopeless position. The remembrance of the whole adventure annoys me beyond words. I was so near success. That last night is to me a tragedy. What is to come is sheer comedy.

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The house where I had made up my mind to give myself up was a square stone two-storied building with a wooden veranda along one side. It was surrounded by a high wall in which there was an iron gate. Finding the gate shut, I turned my attention to a wooden outbuilding, in one of the windows a faint light was showing. I banged on the door, and after a minute or two it was opened by a small dark man in trousers and shirt and bare feet. He appeared rather frightened, and said some words which I did not understand. I tried him in German, saying that I wanted shelter and food. As I had had practically nothing to eat for sixty hours, and was drenched to the skin, he had no difficulty in guessing what I wanted, if he did not understand. He went back into the room and put on some boots and a coat. The room seemed almost completely bare except for a number of people who were sleeping, rolled in blankets, on the floor or on very low beds. Soon the man came out again and shouted towards the house in a language which I guessed to be Hebrew, as there was no mistaking his nationality. After much shouting a man of a most pronounced Jewish type came to the gate. We had some difficulty in understanding each other, as he spoke a thick and almost incomprehensible German. He wanted to know who I was and what I wanted, and when he learnt, much to his surprise, was most unwilling to have anything to do with me. The prospect of immediate food and shelter made me quite callous about the more remote future, so I said he could send for the Turks in the morning if he would only take me in for the night. At that he opened the gate and beckoned to me to follow him. After mounting some wooden steps outside the house to the balcony he brought me into a room which stank most horribly of stale humanity and garlic. The room was quite bare except for two beds and a sort of

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couch, on which men were lying rolled in blankets. They gave me some incredibly disgusting cold rissoles, mainly made of garlic, which nearly made me sick; but I managed to eat two or three of them. In this extraordinary household they all appeared to go to bed in their day clothes, and looked and smelt as if they had never washed from the day they were born. I think they meant to be kind to me, but they were very frightened and miserably poor in food and utensils of every sort. They made signs to me to lie on a bed which one of them vacated, so I took off most of my wet clothes and fell asleep instantly.

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I was awakened from my sleep abruptly by the blankets being torn off my bed. A nasty-looking Arab, in a uniform of a Turkish officer, was standing close to me brandishing a revolver. A few feet away was a Turkish sentry, and in the background the Jews huddled together in the corner. The Arab took hold of my wrist and tried to pull me out of bed. That made me mad with anger, so I shook him off and damned his eyes, whereupon he presented the revolver at my head. So I took hold of myself and, obeying signs from him, got out of bed and began to dress into my wet things. Seeing me more docile he lowered the revolver and, seizing his opportunity, patted me on the head to show there was no ill feeling. My resentment at this was so obvious that he produced the revolver again, but thereafter kept his distance. My feet and my shoes were in such a condition that it was clear that I should have great difficulty in walking. I pointed this out to him and, whether at his order or out of kindness—the latter, I think—one of the Jews brought me a pair of old boots. Though the Jews had immediately sent word to the Turks, I feel no violent resentment towards them, as they were obviously frightened out of their skins at my presence in the house. In other ways I think they did their best for me, and were sorry for me; owing to their extreme poverty they could not do much. I suppose they just had licence to live from the Turks, and that's about all. Even at the time most men would have preferred infinitely to take my chances of life and treatment rather than live under the conditions in which these Jews were living. Poor brutes! But then I had the same feeling about every Turkish soldier. Perhaps that is why the Turks are so callous of life. They live so close to the borderland where life becomes intolerable that it can mean little to them to die. Just before we marched off the Jews gave me some more of their disgusting meat, and, when I reproached them for sending for the Turks so soon, they answered that they were terrified and could not help it. When we had gone a few hundred yards from the house I saw suddenly that my wrist-watch was missing. I made the Arab understand this by signs, and let him know that I wanted to go back and fetch it. He refused, and when I showed signs of obstinacy began to finger his revolver. So we continued the march. I made sure then that the brute had stolen it.

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It was a beautifully fine morning, very fresh and pleasant after the rain, and though my feet hurt me I was much refreshed by the food and sleep. As I knew from experience, alas! it was not till later that I should feel the full bitterness of failure.

When we had gone about a mile we came on a sentry standing beside the path. The Arab called to him and he came up, a poor miserable underfed brute, and stood stiffly to attention. Apparently the soldier had failed to arrive in time to assist in my arrest. A few words passed, and then the Arab hit him half a dozen blows in the face with his hand. The man winced at each blow but remained at attention, and then fell in behind. To see an unresisting man hit in this way is a horrible and demoralizing sight, and I felt quite literally sick with rage. A little farther on a second sentry was treated in exactly similar fashion. A walk of a little over half an hour, through comparatively well-cultivated country, brought us to the Jewish colony, the village of Hedéra. There were many evidences that this colony had been a flourishing and pleasant little place in times of peace. The houses were of wood or stone, pretty and well built, and most of them stood in their own gardens and there were many signs that a more civilized race than the Turks or Arabs had been in occupation. In an airy bungalow I was introduced to Ahmed Hakki Bey, Turkish commandant of the place. He gave me a seat as well as coffee, brandy, and unlimited cigarettes. A Turk, who spoke French, acted as interpreter, and seemed particularly anxious to impress upon me that the Turks were not barbarians. First of all, I had to be identified. There was some difficulty about this, as the description of me which apparently had been circulated did not tally in the slightest degree with the original. However, they had little difficulty in accepting me as the "wanted" man, though the commandant said he felt a little aggrieved that I had no points of resemblance whatever to my official description. I was treated by him with great consideration and, after he had questioned me, more from curiosity than for official reasons, he asked me if I wanted anything. I answered that I wished to sleep and then to eat.

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I was led by the interpreter to a very small room in which there was a bed and blankets. He was most anxious to impress me with the generous and civilized way in which I was being treated. "And yet," he said, "all Englishmen say that Turks are barbarians, don't they?" "Ah no," I answered, "only those who have not come into close contact with the Turks may have a false opinion of them." "Then you do not now think the Turks barbarians?" "Since I have been a prisoner in their hands I have completely changed my mind." As a matter of fact, in pre-war days I always imagined the Turks to be rather good fellows. I had already changed my mind, and I was soon to be quite converted. The Turkish official is as corrupt, cruel, unscrupulous, and ignorant as any class on earth. That some of them have a thin or even fairly thick coating of European civilization only makes them in my opinion the more odious. I came across a few—a very few—who seemed notable exceptions, but that may have been because I did not have time or opportunity to penetrate the outer coating of decency.

During this conversation I took off most of my clothes, which were still very wet, and got into bed and soon fell asleep. When I awoke the room was crammed with people, who had come to look at me. I counted sixteen at one time in that tiny room. Women came as well as men, and I was subjected to a hail of questions, either through the interpreter or by those who could speak German or French. One of the Jews who had been my host a few hours before came in and, seizing an opportunity, whispered to me in German, "We did not take it; he did," indicating the Turkish officer who had captured me. I knew he was referring to my watch, and determined to complain to the commandant. The whole position was most undignified, but I did not see how I could help it. After all, I was being treated with a crude and barbarous generosity which was rather astonishing.

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About midday I was given food, and then brought once more before the commandant. He was standing outside his bungalow surrounded by a number of Turks and half the population of the village, and made a speech to me, which appeared to be most pleasant, and I gathered that he was complimenting both himself and me on the signal proof that had been afforded me that the Turks were not barbarians. Both he and his interpreter had "barbarian" on the brain. When he had finished I took the opportunity of stating that someone had stolen my watch, and added, very unwisely as I soon discovered, that I rather suspected his officer. This was something of an anti-climax. However, he soon recovered himself, and gave me a hasty promise that he would investigate the matter. I abandoned all hope of seeing my watch again.

The journey from Hedéra to Tulkeram was made on horseback. To my disgust I found that the same Turk who had arrested me, and whom I had just accused publicly of stealing my watch, was to be my escort. The officer and I were mounted, but we were accompanied by two Turkish soldiers on foot, and I was astonished at the way these men kept up with us. In spite of rifles and ammunition and heavy clothes, and in spite of the heat, these men kept up a speed of quite six or seven miles an hour for the first six miles of the journey. After that the Turk deliberately left them behind; keeping just behind me he urged my horse into a canter, which we kept up till we were well out of sight. By this time I had made absolutely certain that the brute intended to murder me, and my anxiety was not lessened when he drew a large revolver and had pot shots at various objects by the wayside. Of course he would have a simple and satisfactory excuse for shooting me, by saying that I had attempted to escape. About half a mile ahead, in the otherwise flat plain, were two very low ridges which hid the path we were following from almost all sides, and I felt that it would be here that the deed would be done, and I began to think out a plan for attacking him first and then escaping in earnest. At the best, however, the situation seemed to me pretty serious. Of course I may have misjudged him, but I still believe he intended to murder me. Just as we were crossing the first low ridge a small caravan came round the corner. I breathed a prayer of thanksgiving, and my Turk put away his revolver and drew his horse up alongside of mine. For the rest of the way we were, to my great relief, and as luck would have it, never out of sight of human beings for more than a few minutes at a time. However, as I said before, I may have misjudged the fellow.

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At a village a few miles north of Tulkeram we halted to water our horses, and while we were sitting there eating some food we had brought with us a German officer and his orderly rode by. The German caught sight of me, and coming across asked me in German if I was the English flying captain who had attempted to escape. When I answered in the affirmative he told me that I should not be long a prisoner as the war would be over in three months. "Why do you say that?" I asked. "Because," said he, "our armies have been completely victorious in France." At my request he gave me some details of the places that had been captured, and added that to all intents and purposes the war was over, and asked me what I thought of it. I said that I did not put any reliance on German *communiqués*, but that if it was true it looked as if the war would last another four years. He left me feeling rather miserable at the way things might be going in France. I hated that German, so damned condescending and superior. No man with any instincts of a gentleman would have gloried over an unfortunate prisoner as he had done.

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About the rest of the journey to Tulkeram there is nothing to add. I was received there by the very worst and most unpleasant type of superficially civilized Turk, and by a gruff and, I should think, efficient German intelligence officer. After some questioning, I was put into the charge of a Turkish officer of the intolerably stupid type, with whom I very soon lost my temper completely. He deposited me in a cell in what I imagine was the civil prison. A sentry was left in the cell with me, whose presence and dirty habits annoyed me beyond words.

By one of those amazing incongruities, possible where the Turk rules and nowhere else, I found in a corner of the cell three very fine new eiderdowns, and with these made myself a comfortable bed and went to sleep. I was awakened some hours later by three English Tommies being brought into the cell. One of them was badly wounded in the arm just above the elbow. The wound obviously needed dressing, so after five exasperating minutes I managed to convey to the sentry that I insisted on seeing an officer immediately. When the same fool of an officer turned up, his dense, imperturbable stupidity nearly drove me mad. At length I turned my back on him and lay down once more in my corner. When a man has been starving he cannot satisfy his hunger at one meal, and I was now desperately hungry. The strain through which I had lately passed was as much nervous as physical, and it had left me so irritable that I sometimes think that I could not have been quite sane during that intolerable never-to-be-forgotten three weeks' train journey to Constantinople. I lost my temper daily, and several times a day. But then the

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Turks are an irritating nation to a prisoner with a spark of pride left in him. Even now it makes me hot and angry when I think of the Turk, and the hatred of Turkish officialdom is branded on my soul.

That night we, the three Tommies and I, left in a cattle truck on the first stage of our long journey. They gave me some food before we started, but no doctor came for the unfortunate wounded man. I protested whenever I saw anyone who could speak a Christian lingo, and promises were given by superficially civilized barbarians that it should be attended to. But result there was none.

The journey to Constantinople, with breaks of a few days at Damascus and Aleppo, lasted, as near as I can reckon now, for about three weeks. Many of the details of time and place, I am almost thankful to say, I have forgotten; but in any case I would not tell of the journey in detail, not only for fear of boring anyone who has been kind enough to read so far, but also because the memory of the journey is abhorrent to me. I found out afterwards that my heart had been considerably displaced by my late exertions. I was tired, irritable, disappointed, and ill; continually subjected to small indignities, which are more unbearable than open insults; covered with lice; unable to lie down for days on end; herded with Jews and civil prisoners, and ordered about by a Turkish gendarme or "dog collar" man, whose impenetrable stupidity nearly drove me mad. In reality I suppose the hardships of this journey were not very great, and many times in the past had I suffered much greater privations and discomforts, but never have I experienced anything so hard to bear, or of which the memories are so unpleasant. [275]

The first or pleasantest stage of the journey, as far as Damascus, was made by the three Tommies and myself in a closed horse wagon. At any rate I had the companionship of some stout-hearted Englishmen, who bore their troubles nobly and showed that unselfishness and cheerfulness in adversity which is perhaps the greatest asset of the British Tommy. The nights were very cold, and we slept huddled together for warmth on the bare boards of the filthy truck. I begged a log from the engine-driver as a pillow, and managed to get a good deal of sleep in spite of the cold. The days were pleasantly warm, and to a certain extent I was able to forget my troubles in the struggle to get food and to obtain medical aid for our wounded man. It was only after several days that I got a doctor to attend to him. I managed it at last by hailing some German soldiers whilst we were halted at a station. They promised to do their best for us, and also brought us good food. A little later a Turkish or Armenian doctor turned up and dressed the man's arm, fairly skilfully it seemed to me. He told me that the arm was in a bad condition, and that the man should go to a hospital at the earliest opportunity. I kept on trying to get medical attention for the poor fellow, but with little result, until we left him behind at some wayside hospital at a place the name of which I have forgotten. I have never heard whether his arm or his life was saved. Throughout that journey the Germans without exception were good to us and did all they could for us, and meeting them was like meeting civilized men in a savage land. The German privates several times—whenever they had an opportunity, in fact—brought us food, good hot stew, and expressed their contempt for the Turk in no measured terms. [276]

Our escort and the other occupants of the horse truck were rather a grotesque crew. An Arab in full Arab costume seemed to be in command. He was extremely suspicious of me, and objected strongly when I talked to the Germans, which I did at every opportunity. In the day time, when it was futile to think of escaping, he watched my every movement, and at night slept peacefully, often with the door a few inches open, so that a night seldom passed when I could not have escaped if I had wished. It was grudgingly that I was allowed sometimes to sit in the sun or walk up and down for exercise at the numerous and prolonged halts. When I pointed out that my feet hurt me and that I had no boots on, he explained by signs that he suspected me the more for having taken off my boots, and made movements with his hands to show that a man could run all the faster without boots. That made me so angry that I nearly hit him, and a little later I managed to get hold of an interpreter to tell him that, as I could escape any night I wished to while he slept, he might give me a little more liberty in the day time when escape was hopeless. Our relations remained, to the end, rather strained. Then there was a big lout of a Turkish sergeant, a kindly sort of fellow, whose main diet seemed to be raw onions, lemons, raisins, and almonds. There was also a particularly dirty Turkish soldier who was seen and smelt but not heard. The most curious member of the party was a filthy, ragged Arab beggar. He possessed only two garments, both unbelievably dirty. One was a coarse linen nightshirt, and the other a large irregular-shaped piece of black cloth, which he wore over his shoulders in the day time, while at night, sitting huddled up into a small ball, he covered himself completely with it. He had no hat, boots, stockings, money, or possessions of any sort. I was under the impression that he had been arrested as a spy by the Turks, but never found out for certain. He seemed to be on very friendly terms with my escort, and appeared to enjoy the journey, depending for food on bits that other people did not want. The Arab gave him all the liberty he wished for, and he was most useful in fetching water and buying food for us. He was just a cheeky, cheerful, ragged street-arab, who seemed to know how and where to beg, borrow, or steal the cruder necessities of life. He seemed to take a special interest in me, and sometimes used to brush down the place where I slept with his outer garment. He also liked sleeping close to me, but I could not stand that, and, though I felt rather ungracious about it, insisted on him removing himself to a decent distance. For some time I thought he might be one of our spies who wished to communicate with me; but I don't think that was the case, as he could have found endless opportunities of speaking to me in private if he had wished to. I was very curious at the time to know who he was and where he was going, and always had a feeling that he was not quite what he seemed. I never found out anything about him; I wish I could, as I am still curious. [277] [278]

After a couple of days' journey from Tulkeram we reached Afule, the place from which I had escaped. Rather an angry crowd collected round the carriage when it became known that I was there, and one or two Turkish soldiers put their heads in at the door and cursed me; for I believe the sentries from whom I had escaped had received rather severe punishment. I have little doubt that they had been cruelly bastinadoed, poor brutes.

Some German flying men and also some Turks came to see me; the former from curiosity, and the latter to question me about my escape. Had I bribed the sentry? "Of course not," I said, "why spend money unnecessarily? Any fool can get away from a Turkish sentry whenever he wants to. I had had heaps of opportunities since my recapture, but my feet were sore and I could not walk." This statement gave them something to think about, the more especially because it coincided with statements which had been made by Austin and Lee when they had been questioned. Their statements and the belief that Austin, Lee, and I would repeat our opinions as to the incompetence of all Turks, and especially of those at Afule, alone prevented, as I now feel sure, any word of my escape being forwarded to Headquarters. I received no special punishment for my escape, which is perhaps just as well, as I much doubt if I should have lived through it.

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Of the rest of that tedious journey to Damascus I remember only a few incidents, of which the following is an example. At Deraah, the junction of the Damascus and the Mecca lines, the train halted for about ten hours and I was put in charge of the station-master. He was a dirty-looking blackguard but not so stupid as most Turks, and gave me to understand that he was very friendly. He invited me to share his lunch and we ate together, dipping our fingers into the same dish and fishing out lumps of meat. There is nothing like real true hunger to tide over a little squeamishness. When we had finished, he asked me to write him a note to say that he had been kind to British prisoners. He was convinced, he said, that the British would soon be in Damascus, and that perhaps he would be taken prisoner. I wrote on a piece of paper, "This fellow, Station-master at Deraah, gave me food when I was hungry—A. J. EVERARD," and gave it to him: I had been his guest, and was grateful for the meal. I should like to know if he ever used my chit.

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We arrived at Damascus very early one morning, and were marched through the streets to the courtyard of a hotel. They pushed the Tommies into a room absolutely packed with stinking, filthy, crawling human beings. They were mostly Turkish soldiers, military criminals I should think, and only once in my life, at the main jail at Constantinople, have I ever seen such a miserable, famished, filthy crowd. I absolutely refused to enter the room in spite of all threats, and at length they gave in, and put a guard over me in the courtyard. Later in the day all four of us were marched up to the main barracks and I was lodged in a room with barred windows—I call it a room, because it was on the second floor and had a wooden bedstead and a mattress in one corner, but no other furniture. The place was comparatively clean, and I might have been much worse off. I asked that the Tommies should be put into my room, but this was refused, though I obtained permission to visit them. They were in a long, narrow stone cell. The walls had at one time been whitewashed, but now the whole place was filthy. From the long side-wall boards sloped down to the center of the room, leaving a narrow gangway. The boards and the stone floor were filthy, and all over the room a thick crowd of still filthier Turks slept or played cards. What the place was I don't know, but it is just possible that it was the Turkish guardroom, though it is hard to credit it unless you have spent a little time in Turkey as a prisoner. I did what I could for our poor fellows, who were wonderfully cheerful; but it was little I could do to make their existence a little more tolerable.

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Twice every day I was conducted by George, a miserable little Armenian with the fear of death on him, to a hotel in the town, where I had my meals with Turkish officers, and paid at reduced and very reasonable rates. The meals were quite good and satisfying. I also found a small library in the hotel in which there were several English books which I borrowed from mine host—an Armenian, of course. All business men of any description seem to be Armenians in Damascus, and they one and all seemed to be praying for and expecting daily and hourly the coming of the English.

After a couple of days in Damascus, I felt so much better that I began to turn my attention once more to escaping. I broached the matter first to some Armenians in the hotel, but soon saw that they were too frightened to be any use. Next I tested my conductor, George, and found that for years he had had the desire, but never the courage, to escape. I cheered him on with promises of prosperity if we succeeded, and two days later he told me that he had got into touch with some men who would guide us to friendly Arabs outside the town. We were to escape disguised in two days' time; but, when questioned, George was unable to produce any details or any connected scheme of escape. I continued to press for details, but when the day came he went dead lame, and was so obviously in a blue funk that I called the matter off. I don't believe for a moment that he had ever made any arrangements for escaping. In any case I feel sure I was right not to trust myself blindly to this miserable little cur of an Armenian. Before I had time to discover any more suitable conspirator—the next day, in fact—I was moved off by train together with the Tommies in a cattle truck, with about thirty other human beings, all as dirty and smelly as possible, and all, I have no doubt, covered with vermin, as I was by that time. Whilst at Damascus I had a good opportunity of looking round the town, with George as my conductor. The Arab thinks of Damascus and the waters of Damascus as a sort of heaven upon earth. Although it does not quite accord with my idea of heaven, the place has for me a certain fascination. The sight of water in plenty in a thirsty land is in itself a pleasant sight. The shops too are exceptionally good for that part of the world. Altogether, making due allowances for the circumstances, I have quite pleasant recollections of Damascus. The last day I was there I tried to change some money, for curious as

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it may seem, I had never been robbed of my money. I was unable to come to an agreement with a robber of an Armenian about the rate of exchange. George came in, in the midst of the argument, and told me that he could arrange things better for me. He led me by side streets to an insignificant-looking little shop and introduced me to an old man in rich clothing, who spoke French. This old man was an Armenian, with French blood in his veins, I should think, and offered to give me gold for my Egyptian notes. He refused my thanks, saying it was a small thing to do to help one who had risked his life on the side of the Allies against the Turks.

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Of the journey from Damascus to Aleppo I am pleased to say I remember absolutely nothing. We made a particularly bad start, as I have said, being crowded at night with from thirty to forty nondescript human beings into a dirty cattle truck, so that I have no doubt it was as unpleasant as the rest. At Aleppo the Tommies and I were marched through the town to a big white stone fort or barracks which stands on a hill above it. Here we were separated, and it was not till some months afterwards when one of them came as my orderly at Afion that I heard of those good fellows again. They had had an awful time, but I believe survived to the end, being strong men. Of the fate of the wounded man they knew nothing. I was brought up to the Commandant's private room. After the polite formalities of introduction, together with cigarettes and coffee, I was given a seat on a divan whilst the Commandant submitted himself to be shaved. When this operation was concluded, he politely offered me the services of his barber, which I gratefully accepted. Feeling much refreshed, I was led away and deposited in a very bare and unpleasant cell. Just as I was preparing to kick up a fearful row and give my celebrated imitation of an indignant demi-god by kicking at the door and cursing the sentry, the only method I found to be of the slightest use in getting food or washing materials out of the Turks, an officer appeared who conducted me back into the town. After sundry intensely irritating vicissitudes, and after losing my temper intentionally and unintentionally a number of times, I slept that night in a passable imitation of a hotel, and in a bed which was the cleanest thing I had seen for weeks.

CHAPTER III

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TO AFION VIA CONSTANTINOPLE

From this point onwards I don't intend to attempt to give a day-to-day account of my sojourn in Turkey. I will try to recall only those few events which seem to me of special interest, and confine myself, as I have done with few exceptions throughout this book, to those events of which I was an eye-witness. For there never was such a country for rumors and stories as Turkey, where few can read and news is passed from mouth to mouth.

I stayed for two or three nights in the hotel at Aleppo, and while there was visited by a representative of an embassy—Dutch, I think—which had charge of British interests in those parts. I asked for shoes, socks, vest, pants, and a bath—particularly for a bath. He sent me some nondescript but most welcome articles of clothing, together with bright red Turkish slippers of the genuine Aleppo brand, which I still treasure.

The bath was a much more difficult business. He advised me most strongly against the public baths, in which, he said, one was much more likely to catch typhoid than get clean, and as for a bath in the hotel, such a thing simply wasn't done. He was a Greek, I think, and seemed to find it difficult to sympathize with my desire. I stuck to my point, however, with obstinacy, although I knew I was already beyond the stage when a bath could cleanse me. When he left me he gave instructions in the hotel that I was to have a tub of warm water. What a request! The hotel was shocked, and most properly refused to countenance such an outrage on its premises. I waited for an hour or two in my dormitory, for there were half a dozen beds in the room, and Turkish officers used to drop in at odd hours for a sleep; but as no bath appeared, I started to forage for one. There was no sentry to be seen, and I made my way into the backyard, commandeered a bucket, and amidst universal protest went back with a pail of water to my room. Then, in the middle of the floor, watched the while through the half-open door by the outraged members of the hotel staff, I proceeded to wash myself section by section. It was as I had suspected. A bath in cold water was precious little use to me. But how could it be otherwise, since for the last fortnight I had been in close contact with people who live year in and year out covered with lice? It is disgusting to have to refer to these things, but it is not possible to appreciate life in Turkey unless one realizes that ninety-nine out of every hundred people one meets are crawling with these loathsome vermin. I was told one very good tip, which is to "keep them on the move." The louse lives and multiplies inside the shirt or vest and next the skin. The scheme is to put on your shirt inside out. Then he has to make his way back again to the inside, and just before he has got comfortably settled down you turn your shirt back again and "keep him on the move." Of course it is considered rather eccentric to change your shirt inside out every day or two instead of every month or two, but I disregarded this and, I must own, found the method most efficacious. They were lean, owing to too much exercise and too little nourishment, and it certainly interfered to some extent with breeding. I apologize for the foregoing, and will try to keep off the subject in future. When one is condemned to be unclean with these pests, one can either shudder with disgust and shame, or try to laugh.

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The journey from Aleppo to Constantinople lasted a fortnight or more, and I traveled the whole way in company with Jews. Just before this, orders had been issued for the arrest of all the Jews

in Palestine, whatever position they might hold. This was a result, I believe, of our declaration that after the war Palestine should once more be the national home of the Jewish race. Very many of the best doctors in the Turkish army are Jews; many of these posts in the censor's office and in the commissariat department where efficiency is necessary, but the hope of honor small, were held by Jews. They were all arrested, on no charge whatsoever, and dispatched under armed guards to Constantinople, being treated, in some cases, on the same footing as prisoners-of-war—in other cases as spies or rebels. There was one officer who traveled part of the way with me. He was filled with shame and bitterness at his treatment. He had fought at Gallipoli and most of the battles in Palestine. He had been twice wounded, twice decorated by the Turks, and once by the Germans with the Iron Cross, and now he was returning as a suspect, with a sentry with a fixed bayonet at his heels whenever he moved. They had made a rebel of an efficient servant, for he prayed night and day for the downfall of the Turks. [287]

The Jew with whom I traveled most of the time had been for some years in the censor's office at Haifa on the Palestine coast. He was an inoffensive, clever, and kind little fellow, and I last caught sight of him in the most unpleasant section of the Constantinople jail. Poor fellow! I am afraid he found me a bad traveling companion. He was all for conciliation, and advocated judicious bribery to increase our comforts, while I was as irritable and unreasonable as only a tired, ill, and disappointed man can be.

In the early days of the war there was only one bad road, which zigzagged through the Taurus Mountains. Later, the Germans organized an efficient motor lorry service with German drivers and mechanics, for machinery of any sort is quite beyond Turkish intelligence. When we passed through, the narrow gauge railway had been working for some time and they were making good progress with the broad gauge line, which would improve enormously the Turkish efficiency on the Mesopotamia and Palestine fronts. Thousands of men were working in the cuttings and widening the tunnels. In particular, I remember one great bridge, with four huge stone pillars rising 200 to 300 feet from a gorge below. It seemed a marvel of engineering in that wild land. It was three parts finished, and I believe the whole line was completed just about the time of the Armistice. It must have been not the least of the many bitter blows this war has brought to Germany, that after so much labor, ingenuity, and money expended on the Bagdad line, they abandoned the work to their enemies at the moment of its successful conclusion. [288]

We traveled through the Taurus in open trucks on the narrow gauge line, and on the passengers an incessant shower of sparks descended from the engine, which burnt wood, as do nearly all engines between Mecca and Constantinople. The scenery is wild and wonderful. Great peaks, grim and ragged with straggling pine trees, tower to the clouds, while the train crawls round the edge of precipices where a stone dropped from the carriage window would fall a sheer thousand feet or more into the gorge below.

At one point on the journey over the Taurus the line passes through an extremely long tunnel, where all passengers would inevitably have been asphyxiated by our wood-burning engine. Owing no doubt to the fact that Germans and not Turks were in charge, this had been foreseen, and steam-containing engines, much on the principle of the thermos flask, had been substituted. They had no boilers or furnaces, but were filled up with sufficient steam before each journey.

I met many of our men on the way through. They were wonderfully cheerful and optimistic, and many had an amused and pitying tolerance for the inefficiencies of the Turk, though when one had heard their tales, one realized that they were just survivors and that 75 per cent. had died under the treatment. [289]

To live with the Turk one must laugh at him, for otherwise one would go mad with rage. They complained of malaria and lack of food. Incredible as it may seem, many of them occupied posts of considerable responsibility, being in charge of power stations and repair depots on the route.

On the whole, the Germans whom they had met had treated them well. There were certain damnable exceptions: no mitigating circumstance could here be pleaded, for calculated and intentional brutality and not national inefficiency was here the cause. A moderately civilized Turk was once accused by an English officer of allowing English prisoners under him to die in thousands. "We treated your men," answered the Turk, "exactly as we treated our own soldiers." Exactly! The food and treatment that will kill Turkish peasants by tens will kill Europeans by thousands. As well expect a bulldog to thrive on a jackal's fare.

With the German rank and file, the motor drivers and mechanics, our men made friends quickly. They had a common bond of friendship—hatred and contempt for the Turk. At one station where our train was standing after dark a man entered my carriage. I was alone for the moment; for my guard, who irritated me beyond endurance, being stupid even for a Turk, and who only kept strict watch on me every other day and never at night, had gone in search of food. The man had on a very dirty but German-looking uniform, and surprised me when he addressed me in good English. He was an English Tommy and asked me if I would like some food in his mess. He was spare man on one of the German lorries, and his fellows would be delighted to see me. It was only a couple of hundred yards away. In a small dark hut, by the light of a candle, four German motor drivers and an English Tommy offered me hospitality, and I have never met more generous or cheery hosts. Our Tommy seemed on excellent terms with them, and swore to me that they were topping good fellows. We cursed the Turks together, swapped yarns, whilst partaking of most excellent German rations—tea, soup, German army bread, cheese, and butter. I went back to my carriage feeling much cheered and once more in possession of my temper. Only for a moment, however, for my blithering fool of a Turkish guard, who was hunting wildly for me under the seat, grabbed [290]

me as I entered with a cry of triumph.

From the Taurus to Constantinople, about a ten days' journey, we traveled in very dirty and extremely crowded second-class carriages, and all that time we had to sleep sitting up while I longed above anything in this world to lie down, for I was very tired, and my bones ached with sitting. The coach next to ours was occupied by a German general and his retinue. Some of the smart young A.D.C.'s condescended to speak to me once or twice; and once, when we had been traveling a week together, the general sent one of them to me with food. I thanked him, but refused it, saying I had sufficient money to buy what I needed.

The haughty and insolent attitude of those Germans towards their Turkish allies gave me the greatest pleasure from every point of view. I was no longer surprised that the Turks hated the Germans. Success and efficiency was the Germans' only claim to respect, and when the *débâcle* came small mercy was shown by the Turks to starving and beaten German battalions and none to stragglers. After the victory of Allenby in Palestine, trains full of starving Germans came through Afion Hissar, with hundreds clinging to the roofs and buffers and not daring to get down to beg or buy food, for fear either of being murdered or of losing their places on the train. They actually sent a message to the English prisoners-of-war in the town of Afion, asking for safe conduct to buy food. I had left the prison camp by that time, but I believe the Germans were told that if a good party came they would be quite safe. Of course by that time, October 1918, English officers took no further notice of their Turkish sentries and wandered about where they would. The whole position was Gilbertian beyond the wildest dreams of that genius. [291]

During the four years that the Teuton was lord in Asia Minor, whenever a German saw a Turk in close proximity he kicked him, either metaphorically or actually, usually the latter, and the Turk submitted—partly because he admired the German efficiency and fighting powers, but chiefly because he had to. "He who would sup with the devil needs a long spoon," and it's precious little soup the Turk got out of that unholy alliance.

The Turk cannot understand how a man by shutting himself in an office and writing on pieces of paper can cause all the trains to run to time and armies to be equipped or fed. It is beyond his intelligence, and he can but wonder. The English, French, Germans, and Americans not only have these wonderful powers, but in a scrap they fight like the devil. In the Greek and the Armenian the Turk recognizes this same power of organization, at closer quarters this time, for the Greek and Armenian rob and out-manceuvre him in his own bazaar. This is intolerable to him, for he knows he is a better man than they are in a fight. If he meets them in the open with a sword instead of a pen they will go on their knees to him and squeal for mercy. This strikes me as pretty reasonable from a Turkish point of view. The Turks' commercial methods are rather crude: "Let some one else make money, then murder him and take it." If we stop them from murdering Armenians, the Turks will starve. [292]

On arriving at Constantinople we crossed to the European side. Our escort, as I might have expected, then spent several hours, to my intense annoyance, wandering about the streets, not having the faintest idea of where to go or what to do. At length, after many weary waits, and after an interview with Enver's chief executioner and torturer, who looked a real devil, I parted company with my escort (I think the relief was mutual) and found myself in the great military prison. I was put into a room with two flying men from the Mesopotamia front and an Italian count, who expected to be hanged every day for spying, but was most cheerful nevertheless. The room was about 9 feet square, but as it had four beds in it, there was not much room to walk about. However, as far as I am concerned, I have no complaint to make of my treatment at Constantinople. It was a blessed relief to be left in peace after that train journey, and we were quite decently fed. The Dutch embassy sent me in clean clothes and bedding, for which may they ever be blessed! Also I had a Turkish bath in the town, and by burning my old clothes got rid of the lice. But if we, considering that we were prisoners-of-war, were tolerably comfortable in that place, there were many poor devils who were not. Every day we were allowed an hour's exercise in the prison yard, a not unpleasant sunny place where there was ample room for walking exercise. From here there was a perfectly gorgeous view of Pera and the Golden Horn. Our room was on the second floor, and, as we passed through the lower portions to reach the yard, starving, ragged, lice-covered wretches yammered at us from behind bars. Turkish military criminals, we believed they were. Poor devils! A friend of mine, an officer and usually a truthful man, who had been imprisoned in a different part of this building, swore to me that Thursday was torture day, and every Thursday he used to hear the shrieks of the victims. I believe him myself. [293]

After a week in this prison nearly all the British prisoners were moved to Psamatia. I was very pleased to come across Lee and Austin once more. They gave an amusing account of the court of inquiry which was held at Afule after my escape. They had made the journey in comparative comfort, having come across Kemal Bey, the military governor of El Karak, who had been so good to us when we were first captured. He was once more extremely good to them, but took a gloomy view of what would happen to me if I were recaptured. Why I was not punished for my escape I have never found out for certain. [294]

At Psamatia I found means to send a private and uncensored letter to my people. Even in these days I think it as well to draw a veil over the methods employed to this end. It was not a route by which military information could be sent. To this letter I added a note to my bankers telling them to cash my cheques drawn under my assumed name of A. J. Everard. If I had known the Turks as I know them now, I should have realized that such a precaution was unnecessary. They usually recorded our names phonetically, in Turkish characters, and to the last expressed surprise and

incredulity when a prisoner stated that his name was the same as his father's name. Of course the difference between Christian names and surnames was quite beyond them, and it was useless to attempt to explain.

During the ten rather interesting days which we spent at Psamatia we visited St. Sophia and explored the old town. A small bribe enabled one to wander with the sentry almost where one would on the European side, and to buy in the bazaars a number of small things which greatly added to the comfort of our lives. At the end of that time nearly all of us were moved to camps in the interior. Half a dozen other officers and myself, after a three days' train journey, arrived once more at Afion-Kara-Hissar, which I had passed through three weeks before on the way up to Constantinople. It is here that the Smyrna line joins the Constantinople-Bagdad railway, and it was here that I remained for the next six months, till about a fortnight before the Armistice. [295]

Others have already written of the life in prison camps in Turkey, and I shall not attempt any description. We lived in houses which once had belonged to Armenians. The Armenians had been "removed"—in nine cases out of ten a Turkish euphemism for murdered. The houses were quite bare of all furniture, most of them were in an advanced state of dilapidation, and they were all very dirty and overrun with bugs.

The first thing that every prisoner must do is to buy himself tools and wood and string, and make himself a suite of furniture, and then open the first battle in an almost ceaseless warfare against the bugs. One officer of the merchant service in former days said that he was too hard an old sea dog to be worried by bugs—he would just disregard them. After a few weeks he was very weak and pale. His bed was brought out of doors, and boiling water poured into the crevices, and a vast quantity of well-fed bugs were discovered who had been draining him of blood.

We bought our food in the bazaar, and our menu was very simple and monotonous. However much I ate I never seemed to get any nourishment out of it, and all the time felt weak and ill. For money we cashed cheques at the rate of 13 lira for £10. As a lira was worth about two shillings at pre-war prices, living, in spite of its simplicity, was most expensive. To help us out, officers were given an allowance from the Dutch Embassy of 18 lira a month. [296]

We passed our time, like all prisoners-of-war, working, reading (for there was a good library), carpentering, writing and acting plays, and towards the end, when we had matters more our own way, playing hockey or cricket.

It is hard to compare my Turkish with my German experiences as a prisoner. The whole position was so very different. It must be remembered that I only speak of a Turkish prison camp as I saw it—that is to say, during the seven months which preceded the Armistice. If we compare Afion with Clausthal, which in 1916 was one of the best camps in Germany, I think there is no doubt whatever that any man would have preferred to be a prisoner in the German camp. We had more freedom in Afion, but that was more than counterbalanced by the fact that we lived in Germany in close proximity to civilization. Our letters and parcels came regularly and quickly, and only those who have been prisoners can understand what that means. When, however, I think of Fort 9, Ingolstadt, in comparison with Afion, I find that I look back on the German prison almost with pleasure—certainly with pride—while I loathe to write or think of the Turkish camp where there were no real hardships, at any rate whilst I was there.

Those who had been prisoners for a long time had suffered much; and we later prisoners had some difficulty in appreciating the attitude which was adopted by most of the camp towards certain things. When I first came to the camp, escaping was looked upon almost as a crime against your fellow-prisoners. One officer stated openly that he would go to considerable lengths to prevent an attempt to escape, and there were many who held he was right. There is much to be said on the side of those who took this view. Though it was childishly simple to escape from the camp, to get out of the country was considered next to impossible. On the face of it, it did seem pretty difficult. An attempt to escape brought great hardship and even danger on the rest of the camp; for the Turks had made a habit of strafing, with horrible severity, the officers of the camp from which a prisoner had escaped. This point of view, to one who had been a prisoner in Fort 9, Ingolstadt, where we lived but to escape, was hard to tolerate, and I am now convinced that this anti-escaping attitude was wrong. It seems to me to take too narrow a view of the question; quite apart from the fact, generally accepted I believe, that prisoners-of-war are inclined to deteriorate mentally and morally when they settle down to wait, in as great comfort as possible, but with a feeling of helplessness, for a peace which weekly seemed farther off. It seems to me that we owed it to our self-respect and to our position as British officers to attempt to escape, and to go on attempting to escape, in spite of all hardships. It used to amuse me sometimes to think what would have happened if the prisoners of Fort 9 could have been set down as prisoners in Afion-Kara-Hissar. They would certainly have marched out in a body and taken pot luck with the brigands. There would have been nothing to prevent them. To recapture them would have been a next to impossible task. Many brigands and deserters would have joined them. In fact, I think this would have been quite a nice little diversion in Asia Minor. A hundred armed, determined, and disciplined men could have gone almost where they would and done what they chose in Asia Minor. [297]

About the time I came to Afion, a number of young lately captured officers, mainly flying men, were also brought in. Many of the older prisoners, who had suppressed their wish to escape in deference to the opinion of the majority of the camp, joined hands with the later prisoners and made preparation to escape. I know of at least twenty officers who had every intention of departing in the spring of 1918. Most of the plans were to my mind rather crude, and consisted of [298]

walking over 250 miles of almost impossible country and hoping for a boat. We were sent from England, concealed most cunningly in post cards, maps of the route to Smyrna and a method of getting out of the country from the neighborhood. Tempted by this, three stout-hearted fellows tried to walk to Smyrna—a most terrible undertaking. They met brigands, and one of them was shot, probably in the leg, and left wounded on the hills. The other two were stripped, driven from their wounded comrade with rifles, and returned to the camp in a semi-nude condition. Nothing has since been heard of the third, and to the best of my belief the Turks made no effort whatever to save him. His two companions and the senior officers of the camp did their utmost to induce the Turks to send a few men to the place where he had last been seen alive. To take a little trouble on the off-chance of saving a human life is not the sort of thing that appeals to a Turk; so several prisoners offered to go on parole to the place at their own risk, which to unarmed men would have been considerable. But this was forbidden. [299]

Bribery seemed to me the one method which had a real chance of success in Turkey. An officer, whom I will call David, and I first of all opened negotiations with a Greek to be allowed to take the place of the stokers on the Smyrna train. The Greek's courage failed, however, and that fell through. Then we got into touch with the Arabs who wished to desert. They agreed to produce horses and arms; and four armed men on horseback would have had no difficulty in going anywhere. When the whole thing had been settled and it was only a question of final details and deciding the day to go, the second commission came to the camp in order to select sick officers for exchange. As there were very few, if any, sick officers left in the camp, and as the examination was a pure farce, David and I thought we should get a more comfortable journey to Smyrna by bribing the doctor. This was completely successful, and cost me £15. On the whole, I think if you went the right way about it, it was less difficult to escape successfully from Afion than from most of the German camps.

N.B.—For a description of the life in the prison camps of Afion-Kara-Hissar, I can recommend *A Prisoner in Turkey*, by John Still (published by John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd.).

CHAPTER IV

THE ROUND TOUR CONCLUDED

There is one incident in our otherwise uneventful journey to Smyrna which seems to me worthy of record. We were passing through a particularly wild and uninhabited stretch of country, when the train halted just after it had passed a small bridge over a ravine. I and a friend who spoke Turkish descended to stretch our legs, and saw standing on the bridge a very ragged sentry, so we walked back to question him. He had been there, the solitary guardian of that bridge, for four years. Two years before this he had somehow seen or heard from his wife, and had learnt that three of his four sons were dead and the other was fighting. Since then he had had no news of his family. The only food he received were two loaves of bread thrown out of the train twice a week, and during these four years he had lived and slept in the clothes, now ragged and rotten, which he was wearing. He scarcely spoke to any one from year's end to year's end, and lived perpetually on the border of starvation. He only prayed God to blast Enver's eyes, because he was a year and a half in arrears with his pay of 1/4d. a day or so. Thank God I was not born to be a Turkish territorial. In the Turkish army, I suppose, this fellow would be envied, as having a nice quiet job on the lines of communication. [301]

On arriving at Smyrna we were told, to our great astonishment, for we had given no parole of any sort, that we were free to go where we would and do what we liked.

By the kindness of the American School Missionaries the mission school buildings had been thrown open to the officers and Tommies. The place was beautifully clean but rather crowded, and as I desired solitude above all things, I packed a rucksack and set out to test how far our freedom extended. There was no one to stop me at the station, so I took the train to a small village in the hills above Smyrna and spent two most enjoyable days in a country hotel.

The population of Smyrna seems to be the result of inter-marriage between all the nations under the sun. Perhaps there is rather more Greek blood about than any other. They speak no language well, and usually five or six badly. They are a timorous, effeminate community, very immoral and untrustworthy, and seem to live in a perpetual and perhaps justifiable fear of being massacred. They all hated the Turk much but feared him more, and were very friendly to us. Once I had discovered that I was really free to go where I would, it seemed to me that I was in rather a false position. The fact that we were not guarded in any way made me no less anxious to get out of Turkey; and the fact that the Turks had not asked for our parole, which most of us would have refused, in no way relieved us of the duty of escaping if we could. There were other considerations, however. A small minority of the British officers and men now collected at Smyrna for exchange were really sick men; and several of us, who were ardent escapers, did not consider that we were justified in bringing possible punishment on these men by escaping. We therefore decided to wait for the exchange ship and to go by that, so long as it was not necessary to give any sort of parole not to fight against the Germans. In the meantime we prepared a method of escape by which we could clear out of Asia Minor if ever the Turks changed their mind [302]

and attempted to send us back to camps in the interior. It was not so easy to find a method of getting away as one might have expected. Nearly every one in the place would take a bribe without hesitation; but they were more likely to betray you at the last moment than do any job in which there was the slightest taint of danger. That is the worst of these half-breeds; they have no morals of any sort. The Turk has his own peculiar morals, and whatever he may be he is not a coward. If you go the right way about it I believe all Turks can be bribed. A good deal of intrigue and preparation is sometimes necessary; but once he has accepted money he seems to consider it dishonest to fail to carry out his part of the bargain. Eventually one of us got into touch with our secret intelligence system and made arrangements for three or four of us to get away if it became necessary. However, the exchange ship was expected any day, so we settled down to wait for it.

When we had been there about ten days David came to me with an extraordinary story. He said that a Turk had approached him and suggested that there should be a revolution in Smyrna. [303] Apparently there were a number of Turks in Smyrna who believed that the Turkish empire was completely done, and that the sooner peace was made with the Entente the better. By a revolution in Smyrna they hoped to force the hands of the Government in Constantinople. They hoped, by handing over the place to the English, that Smyrna would be left, when peace came, as an independent state. Above all, I think they feared that it should go to Greece. However, I am not sure that these were the real motives, or all the motives, of the proposed revolution. The motives were a small matter to us. What we had to consider was—(a) Was it possible? (b) Was it desirable from a military or political point of view? We decided to make all preparation, but to refuse active participation till we had information that a revolution in Smyrna was desired by the British. The Turks who brought this proposal to David said the job the Turkish revolutionaries would undertake would be to tie up or murder the commander of the garrison, the military governor, the chief of police, and a few other important personages. David was to select a party of men from amongst the British and hold the railway with a couple of machine guns, incidentally cutting all the telephone and telegraph wires. My job was to capture the Austrian aerodrome just above the town, and then to fly one of their machines to Mitylene and report events to the English. "What about the garrison?" David had asked. "That is all right," said the Turk; "we have a Mullah who will preach a holy war against the Germans, and the garrison will all come over to us." [304]

The scheme seemed pretty mad at first, but the more we considered it the more possible did it seem. David felt certain he could do his part, and I went up and inspected the aerodrome, and made a number of inquiries about the personnel and the guard. It seemed that with about a dozen men there would be absolutely no difficulty in capturing the aerodrome, probably without bloodshed. We considered that if the Turks could do their part—and they were perfectly confident they could—we could capture the town and hold it for at least a fortnight. If the wires were cut we could more or less rely on the fact that for a week or so it would be considered only a normal breakdown of the line. The Turk said that the nearest troops were ten days' march away, and there was no rolling stock to bring many troops by train. Such was the rough outline of the scheme, though I may not have got all the details quite correct.

We now refused to move any further in the matter till we got into touch with the British and learnt that a revolution was desirable, and that there were ships and troops to take over the town when and if we were successful. To disarm criticism and indicate that I am now more or less sane, I am prepared to admit now that we must have been perfectly mad to entertain the idea for a moment.

About this time a certain English colonel turned up in Smyrna and put up at the best hotel. He had nothing whatever to do with the exchange of prisoners; and in order to explain his presence I must digress here to give some account, probably rather inaccurate, of his previous adventures in Turkey. [305]

A month or two before the Armistice the colonel had been a prisoner-of-war in a Turkish prison camp about 100 miles from Constantinople. From there he had escaped by means of a judicious mixture of bribery and audacity and made his way to Constantinople. For over a month he lay hid in the town, and at the end of that time had prepared a complete plan of escape. The details of where and how he was going is not part of this story. On the night on which he had made all preparations to depart he received a note from the Minister of the Interior of the Turkish Empire saying that he, the Minister, had heard that the colonel was about to escape, and would be much obliged if he would call on him before departing. As I said before, it is no use being surprised at anything in Turkey; but that it should be possible that, while one department was searching high and low for an escaped prisoner, another department not only knew where he was but when he intended to escape, throws an interesting sidelight on Turkish methods of government. The only explanation seems to be that each department has an entirely independent secret service of its own. The colonel decided that he would go and see the Minister, as he had really not much choice in the matter. This interview between a prisoner-of-war in the middle of an attempt to escape and a Minister of an enemy country must be almost unique, dealing, as I believe it did, with the probable attitude of the Entente towards certain aspects of the coming armistice.

At the end of two hours the Minister thanked the colonel courteously and intimated that he would not hinder him further in his attempt to escape. "That won't do at all," said the colonel, "you have already spoilt my plans, and it is now up to you to get me out of the country." [306]

"I will send you out by aeroplane," said the Minister, and went to the telephone. In a short time he returned and stated that, to his great regret, it was impossible to obtain an aeroplane for the

purpose, as they were all in the hands of the Germans.

The Turks are notoriously incompetent as aviators, and this was only to be expected. As an aeroplane was out of the question, the Minister did the next best thing and wrote out for the colonel an official "passe-partout," stamped all over and signed by the highest powers in the land. Armed with this document the colonel was no longer a poor prisoner-of-war. He was more than free; he was a power in the land of Turkey. All officialdom would bow down before him. So he took the train to Smyrna and put up in the best hotel.

Soon after his arrival David and I determined to seek his advice in the matter of the revolution, so we introduced him to the spokesman of the Turkish conspirators, and the three of us met one night in the colonel's private sitting-room and discussed the question from every point of view. The colonel viewed the proposed revolution in the same light as we had done, as a wild but not impossible scheme, only to be put into practice if we received definite information that such a thing was desired by the British. We spent the next day or two in futile attempts to find a boatman (they were nearly all Greeks) sufficiently honest, courageous, or patriotic to be worth bribing. [307]

Quite suddenly it was announced that the Turkish armistice commissioners had arrived in Smyrna, whence they would leave to go either to Mitylene or to a British battleship, in order to undertake negotiations. The colonel and David, with the help of the colonel's all-powerful pass, made their way to the presence of the commissioners, and somehow or other persuaded them that it would be a good thing to take the colonel with them when they went. They left early one morning in a large motor boat, the colonel promising to send us back word if a revolution was desirable. No word came through to that effect, and less than a week later the arrival of the exchange ship was announced. On board the ship we were once more assailed with doubts on the question of parole. Should we be eligible to fight against the Germans? We nearly got off the ship at Mitylene with the idea of taking a sailing boat back to Smyrna, surrendering to the Turks, and escaping in a legitimate way the same night, as I think we probably could have done. We decided against it, however, after consultation with a distinguished general and the captain of the ship. Our advisers pointed out, firstly, that as far as they knew we had given no parole not to fight against the Germans; and, secondly, that there seemed every prospect that the war with Germany as well as with Turkey would be over before we could return to Europe. We left Smyrna on November 1st, 1918, when I had been a prisoner in Turkey for seven and a half months, so that, in Germany and Turkey together, I had been a prisoner-of-war for under eighteen months. Quite enough. Technically, I think I may claim to have escaped from Turkey as well as from Germany, but I am not particularly proud of the Turkish escape. [308]

There is one further incident which happened after I had been enjoying the luxuries of Cairo and Alexandria for a fortnight, and then I have finished.

It occurred to me that it would be interesting to visit the officer prisoners-of-war camp between Alexandria and Cairo. I got on the telephone and asked for permission, and as I was speaking something prompted me to ask if by any chance there was a German flying captain by name of Franz Walz in the camp. Yes, there was. This struck me as most humorous, and also a unique opportunity of repaying some of Hauptmann Walz's kindness to me when I had been a prisoner in his power. My visit to the camp was extraordinarily interesting. The place was a high wire enclosure on bare and very sandy soil. It was clean and well ordered, and most of the wooden huts had been made to look quite pretty by small gardens round them. For all that, it was not a place in which I should have cared to have been a prisoner. Not that there seemed much to complain about, except that it must have been pretty dull. The wooden huts were well built and of the right type for the climate and the country: the prisoners seemed to have a reasonable amount of liberty outside the camp, with the possibilities of bathing from time to time, and they could purchase books and clothes with few restrictions, but discipline was a bit too strict for my liking. Quite right from the point of view of the commandant, but I can't help looking at it from a prisoner's point of view. When I asked Walz, he told me some of their causes for complaint, but they seemed to me pretty insignificant, compared at any rate with those things we had to complain about at Ingolstadt; and I told him so. I was told that Walz had been rather truculent when first captured, and I respected him for it. No decent man takes kindly to being a prisoner-of-war. However, he was very friendly to me, and gave me tea in his mess and introduced me to a number of German officers, many of whom had been captured off the *Konigsberg*, and three or four had been among my hosts in the German flying corps mess at Afule. They seemed a particularly nice lot of fellows, though there were one or two about the place to whom I was not introduced whose looks I did not like, and the feeling was obviously reciprocated. [309]

Walz was not unnaturally very depressed both at his own and his country's position. The terms of the Armistice had just been published, and the prisoners ridiculed the idea that Germany would accept them. They only saw our newspapers and did not believe them—prisoners-of-war are the same all the world over—and had no conception of Germany's desperate condition. I did not attempt to enlighten them much, as it seemed to me tactful and generous, remembering my own experiences to keep off the subject as much as possible. Germany accepted the terms the next day. Poor fellows! It must have come to them as a terrible shock. I found that Walz had been told, when first captured, of my own experiences as a prisoner in Germany, and just before I left, he took me aside and said, "Can I possibly escape from a place like this? What would you do here? and if you got out, where would you escape to?" I said that it seemed a most difficult camp to get out of, and if a prisoner got out there were thousands of miles to cross before reaching a friendly country. As a matter of fact, as I told the commandant afterwards, it looked to me as if any [310]

prisoner who could learn a few words of English could bluff himself out of the camp any day in broad daylight. A man in English officer's uniform had only to call to the sentry to open one of the many gates and I think it would have been opened. I may be wrong. There would have been no harm done and ample time to retreat, change clothes, and prove an alibi if the bluff were unsuccessful. The second difficulty—the distance, and where to go—was much more serious. The Aboukir aerodrome was within a couple of miles of the camp, and Walz's thoughts as an airman naturally turned in that direction. I was compelled to prevaricate and tell him that the aeroplanes there were all training machines and seldom had more than one hour's petrol on board, and also that the place was well guarded. At this discouraging news, I hope and believe he gave up all attempts to escape. He told me that two German airmen, who had been captured by the English shortly after my own capture, had reported that I had broken my parole when escaping. On hearing this Walz had taken considerable trouble in denying it, and I am most grateful to him for that, quite apart from the other kind things already referred to in this book which he did for me. I count Hauptmann Walz among the many nice fellows whom I met in this war. For his sake, and for the sake of the many kind acts done by Germans to our prisoners-of-war in Turkey, I can never agree to class all Germans together as brutes. Surely it will be better for the peace of the world if we admit that the majority of Germans in this war only did their duty and did it well. This attitude need in no wise lessen our dislike for the German national ideals of "Might is Right," "Deutschland über Alles," or our loathing for the inhuman and unforgivable way in which these ideals were pushed to their logical conclusion. If wars are to cease, future generations must find a "modus vivendi" with the Germans; and surely, having beaten them, we can afford to encourage their good points by recognition of them. The Turk, however, still remains to me the "unspeakable Turk."

[311]

Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

High-resolution images can be displayed by clicking on the images in the text.

Hyphen removed: look[-]out (pages 216, 245), country[-]side (pages 185, 260).

Page 6: "hold" changed to "holding" (holding her off).

Page 9: "It" changed to "In" (In Cambrai station).

Page 12: "aslym" changed to "asylum" (lunatic asylum).

Page 25: "dèjà" changed to "déjà" (Ils sont déjà partis).

Page 25: "captin" changed to "captain" (the captain fell on his neck).

Page 30: "Unter Offizier" changed to "Unteroffizier" (sent by an Unteroffizier).

Page 31: "whol es ghet" changed to "wohl, es geht" (ja wohl es geht nicht so schlimm).

Pages 37, 216: "grade" changed to "gerade" (gerade aus).

Page 44: "on" changed to "of" (till one of them).

Page 45: "place" changed to "placed" (placed a loaded revolver).

Page 54: Missing word "asked" was added to "We just banged on the wall and asked the people next door".

Page 54: "bady" changed to "badly" (badly wounded).

Page 64: "my" changed to "me" (which had been given me).

Page 64: "temoin" changed (twice) to "témoin" (je suis témoin).

Page 66: "Nisson" changed to "Nissen" (the shape and size of a Nissen hut).

Page 82: "prisioniers" changed to "prisonniers" (combien de prisonniers).

Page 86: "proceed" changed to "proceeded" (proceeded to read).

Page 108: "rucksacks" change to "rücksacks" (home-made rucksacks).

Page 111: "durfen" changed to "dürfen" (Sie dürfen nicht).

Page 111: "Marceillaise" changed to "Marseillaise".

Page 117: "senrty" changed to "sentry" (a single sentry).

Page 120: "equipment" changed to "equipment" (rucksacks and other equipment).

Page 133: "Medlicatt" changed to "Medlicott" (Medlicott had finished).

Page 145: "Batty-Smith" changed (twice) to "Batty Smith".

Page 145: Errors in French corrected in the sentence: "Nous n'avons ... un officier".

Page 147: "brueau" changed to "bureau" (into the bureau).

Page 151: "or" changed to "of" (of anchovy paste).

Page 154: "skillful" changed to "skilfull" (most skilful labor).

Page 154: "Représailles" changed to "Représailles".

Page 157: "souflet" changed to "soufflet" (where a "soufflet").

Page 160: "Frenchmen" changed to "Frenchman" (Frenchman excellently got up).

Page 164: "a" changed to "an" (He called an N.C.O.).

Page 175: "were" changed to "was" (the guard was being changed).

Page 183: "ought" changed to "out" (train was out of sight).

Pages 183-184: The last line in the scan of page 183 "caps, and got out our compasses and a very poor sketch" was moved to between the 3rd and 4th lines of page 184.

Page 184: "rish" changed to "risk" (to risk so much).

Page 200: "yeards" changed to "yards" (within 100 yards of us).

Page 201: "rtouble" changed to "trouble" (did not trouble to search).

Page 202: "parellel" changed to "parallel" (a few miles parallel).

Page 210: The map on this page refers to Chapter II of Part II but has not been moved so as not to change the list of Illustrations and the links there.

Page 212: "immedately" changed to "immediately" (immediately if chased).

Page 249: "Ismali" changed to "Ismail" (Ismail Kemal Bey).

Pages 255, 294, 297, 299 (footnote): "Afion-Karah-Hissar" changed to "Afion-Kara-Hisar".

Page 256: "encompment" changed to "encampment" (Turkish encampment).

Page 269, 271: "Hèdéra" changed to "Hedéra" (village of Hedéra).

Page 269: "Haky" changed to "Hakki" (Ahmed Hakki Bey).

Page 269: "slighest" changed to "slightest" (in the for slightest degree).

Page 275: "imprenetrable" changed to "impenetrable" (impenetrable stupidity).

Page 276: "skillfully" changed to "skilfully" (fairly skilfully it seemed to me).

Page 278: "angry" changed to "angry" (an angry crowd).

Page 283: "founded" changed to "wounded" (the wounded man).

Page 284: "sojurn" changed to "sojourn" (my sojourn in Turkey).

Page 295: Missing "an" added (an advanced state of dilapidation).

Pages 299, 300, 304, 306: Misspellings of "Smyrna" corrected.

Page 301: "langauge" changed to "language" (speak no language well).

Page 306: "demtermined" changed to "determined" (determined to seek).

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ESCAPING CLUB ***

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