

# Canada's War Prisoners

[This article (condensed) is one of a series on "Canada at War," written for publication in several U. S. newspapers by Earl Harding, an American, who was in Canada during August, 1914, and again in August, 1915.]

The prisoners of war whom Canada is holding most securely are 270 Germans in Fort Henry, an old stone fortification on a hilltop overlooking the harbor of Kingston, Ontario. Some were commiserating over their first anniversary when I visited them on Sunday, August 22.

The curse of Fort Henry is lack of facilities to afford healthful work for the interned. As many as can be used are engaged in rebuilding the old walls; others do the cooking, washing, cobbling, and general work, for which they are allowed wages of 25 cents a day, against 11 cents paid by Germany to Canadians working in her prison camps. I heard bitter protest by one or two prisoners that their eyes were being affected by the absence of green things, and that the lack of employment was driving some men mad. These, however, were the complaints of men of temperament who would chafe under any confinement. It is true that several prisoners have been transferred to an asylum, but they were acting queerly when apprehended as dangerous. As a whole the Fort Henry "guests" look well fed and comfortable.

It happened to be the off-day for church. The Dominion Government pays the expenses of a German Lutheran clergyman from Ottawa to preach on alternate Sundays to the Fort Henry prisoners. But on this Sunday pinochle was holding most of the congregation. Others were reading German books—they are allowed no German newspapers, and their supply of Canadian papers is not large. One blonde young man of the German gymnasium type were reading Latin verse. Nearly all were smoking.

## Rooms Comfortable.

The Canadian Government allows them \$1 a month spending money, which must meet requirements of smoking and letter-writing.

In some of the quarters they were holding singing services, with music from violins and guitars constructed by the prisoners. The bass drum in the fifteen-piece band is a pork barrel with oiled canvas stretched over the ends. Daily band concerts, recitals by the Saengerbund, German plays by the Theatre Club, and the activities of the Turnverein help to pass monotonous days and evenings. Ordinarily the prisoners must be in their rooms by 8 and lights are out at 9.30. The day begins at 7.

The Government has supplied footballs, boxing gloves, and facilities for making athletic equipment. Every day there are stunts on the athletic paraphernalia, quoit throwing, boxing, and wrestling matches. A prisoner remarked that the only pleasure denied them, aside from their beer, is the *scheutencorps*. If there was a canteen at the fort Tommy Atkins must have taken it away with him to Flanders.

With a few exceptions they are a husky lot, the majority being reservists and officers who are interned because they otherwise would go home to fight.

The stone barracks are built into the earthwork of the fortifications, so that it is like living in a sidehill cellar. The yard is some thirty feet below the top of the circular stone wall, atop of which sentries pace night and day. The sleeping quarters, each room about 15x25 feet, open on the stone gallery. At the back of each compartment is a musketry loophole, which affords meagre cross ventilation, and from certain rooms a squint at the green world.

## In Good Health.

It was a wet morning and the dampness from the earthworks dripped between stones in the roof of the gallery, but side the rooms were dry and comfortable. Clean blankets, comfortable cots, benches, chairs, and rough tables afford ordinary conveniences of barrack life of a generation ago. There is nothing very modern or luxurious about Fort Henry.

The complaint that the barracks are sunless and damp finds its answer in the fact that before the war the sleeping quarters were used for powder magazines, which must be dry. Only two out of 270 prisoners were in the hospital ward, one of them suffering from rheumatism before he was interned. To meet the demand for a sight of the green world the men are taken under guard in squads of twelve, each afternoon, to the top of the fort for a half-hour's look at the green hills and the blue of Lake Ontario.

The definite purpose of the Canadian Government has been to treat its prisoners of war in strict conformity with regulations of The Hague—"to treat them," as one officer expressed it, "as we hope Germany and Austria and Turkey will treat our men." There is evidence everywhere of conscientious effort to avoid injustice and to make detention as comfortable as war conditions will permit.

The quartermaster took me through the kitchen and refrigerator while Sunday dinner was being prepared. As neat a chef as one could care to see was supervising the work. "I have been in the best hotels in Canada for two years, and before that I was in New York," he said.

## One a Baron.

"No, please don't ask my name; I do not wish to have my friends know I am here. It is a mistake that I am here—but then that is the fortune of war. Let my cooking speak for me." Here is the dinner:

Soup—Fresh Tomato. ♣

Meat Balls—(Koenigsburger).

"I have never made better Koenigsburger in a hotel," interpolated the chef.

Vegetables—Cabbage, Potatoes.

Bread and Butter.

Pudding—Fruit and Bread.

Coffee and Milk.