

**Harry M. Field, Former Toronto Musician, Writes of His Experiences in Germany—Men Go Insane and Commit Suicide From Hardships.**

Some interesting sidelights on the inhuman treatment accorded prisoners of war in Germany, especially the civilians, are given in a letter from Harry M. Field, the former Toronto musician, and latterly a professor of music in Germany, who was released from an internment camp by the military authorities in Germany and now resident in England. The letter was written to friends in the city.

"The Ruhleben experience has once and for all defined my position and attitude towards Germany," he declares. "When we arrived at Ruhleben we were allotted our respective barracks. I walked with my bag in mud and slush almost knee deep to barracks or horse stall No. 5, and trudged up the wooden steps to the loft where I was told I could stay. To my amazement I was told I must sleep on a straw sack, that is a bag filled with damp straw and wedged in a division with five other men so that our bodies actually touched. I had fortunately brought my bed things with me and this helped me to make the most of a gruesome situation. It seemed to me that we were thrown into this infernal place like a lot of animals and told to shift for ourselves.

**Sleep on Straw**

This was bad enough, but the experience of those who came first in November was ten times as bad. Four fellows I knew from Dreden were given a box from which a moment before a horse had been taken. They were told to clean the box out and were given an armful of straw to sleep on. There was no heating, and the poor chaps did not take their clothes off for weeks."

Mr. Field further describes how all classes of men were hurded together. "Criminals were accorded the same treatment as professional gentlemen," says he.

**Insufficient Food**

"The German Government allotted six men one wash basin, one towel, one bowl, and if you had no blanket you were allotted one," continues Mr. Field. "Each man was given 65 pfennings (16 1-11c) worth of food which consisted of bad coffee in the morning, a tin of soup at noon, which we were obliged to bring from the kitchen, some distance away, in all kinds of weather. The barracks lined up in order to fetch the food in military fashion. In the evening we were given a piece of sausage, another time bad tea and so on. A loaf of bread was divided among six men, and fellows would often come and ask if you had any bread to spare. There was a canteen where we could buy things, and those who had money could manage to get along, but gradually the supply has been diminishing, and before I left there was no butter, eggs, milk or sugar. Meat was out of the question.

**Hardships Affect Prisoners**

"You can easily see from these conditions it is impossible for the prisoners to keep in proper or good health, and it is visibly affecting them. Those who receive parcels from England and the colonies fare better. There are two parcel lists posted up every day, one in German and the other in English. If your name is in either you line up in front of a large window, where a soldier stands inside; a constable stands in front of the window and calls out the names in turn, and the soldier cuts your parcel open, examines it to see if there is anything disallowed, and then passes it out to you. It has frequently happened that everything in the parcel has been confiscated and the poor prisoner goes off with empty hands.

**Men Go Insane**

"The mental condition of the camp is now not of the best, the men are losing their memories; some are on the verge of lunacy. Two came away with us in that state. The day before we arrived in Ruhleben one man cut his throat. Several have been sent to asylums and sanitoriums. The callousness, indifference and cruelty of the German authorities make one absolutely shudder. It is a fact that they have thrown off the mask and now show themselves as they are, nothing but fiends. The so-called 'kaiser' is a cloak. I cannot tell you here all the dreadful and terrible things they have done. No doubt you have read about Wittenburg, where they shot the British down for sport one evening when the British asked to be separated from the Russians, who were communicating a virulent type of typhus.

"They were told that those were their allies, and they should get to know them better. The result was

two hundred British soldiers and several civil prisoners died. The German doctor left the camp with nobody to attend them. They lay there helpless.

### Get Solitary Confinement

"Upon the slightest pretext or complaint of a soldier we got in Rubleben twelve, twenty-four, forty-eight or seventy-two hours solitary confinement on bread and water, and a hard bench to lie on.

"There are some talented fellows interned, all kinds—violinists, pianists, composers, conductors, actors, poets, Cambridge and Oxford men, Harrow, Rugby and Clifton School boys, correspondents, engineers, sea captains, sailors, niggers, pickpockets, lots of rats, and, last but not least, the Earl of Perth, whom we called 'Pearl of the Earth.'

"One of the chief pastimes of the rougher element in the camp was catching and killing the rats."