

IN A GERMAN PRISON

AUSTRALIAN IN BAD FIX WHEN WAR BROKE OUT.

Farmer From the Antipodes, Who Has Just Arrived In London, Has a Strange Story to Tell of His Adventures In Germany — Had Been Jailed for Assault—Brother Convicts Sent to the Front.

An Australian farmer, who has arrived in London from Germany, tells an interesting story of the past six months, so far as it concerns his personal history. He says: During May last year I was making a pleasure trip through Germany. I was going to Hamburg from Berlin, and had engaged a seat in the train by placing my luggage upon it. While I was smoking a cigar in the corridor, a German removed my luggage and took my place. He refused to give it up and I lost my temper and struck him.

In the fight that ensued the German fell through the door on to the platform and was injured severely. I was imprisoned for two months before I was brought to trial in Berlin before a bench of five judges. Though my counsel pleaded that the German's fall from the train was the result of an accident, the prosecutor's version that I threw him out of the train was accepted, and I was sentenced to five months' imprisonment.

I was first sent to Slesburg Prison, near Cologne. Here I stayed for seven weeks and heard of the declaration of war while I was there. I was set to work at making buttons, the first I made being for the British market.

After the outbreak of war I was sent away to the prison at Cassel, a gaol which has the reputation of being "easy." Here I had to make lead soldiers for the English market. About 15,000 soldiers of all kinds are made daily in the Cassel gaol. The food was very bad and I was kept working from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

As soon as I realized that Great Britain was at war with Germany, I determined that I must hide my nationality. The only evidence the authorities had of this was that my prison docket was marked "English," because that was my native tongue, but they had no papers of mine. I therefore said I was an American, and this secured better treatment for me than I should have received if it had been known that I was British.

After a time I was given easy work and came into contact with other prisoners. The German authorities were recruiting soldiers from the prisons. All prisoners under forty were sent for and asked if they wanted to serve. Those who volunteered were let off the rest of their sentence. Those who had already done their military service were sent straight to the front; those who had not yet served were despatched to training camps.

Two of the prisoners who used to help me with the food were despatched to the army. One was a clerk from a big shop who was serving a sentence of three years for embezzling. He had eight months of his sentence to run when he went off, and another prisoner had a year and two months to do when he was released. Only the ordinary prisoners, who occupied a separate wing of the prison, were allowed to volunteer for the army. Some of the released prisoners sent back to the gaol officials picture postcards from the front.

I made friends in prison with a Serbian who was serving a sentence for stabbing a man. He pretended that he was an Austrian. We used to laugh together at the fabulous tales of German victories always circulating through the gaol.

As I had made myself out to be an American, when my release came I persuaded the prison governor to give me a ticket to Frankfort so that I might call on the American Consul at Zurich, who had managed to send me word that he had money for me. From Frankfort, after many difficulties, I reached Zurich. Now I am back in London I mean to have a fortnight's rest and then try to go to the front and get a little of my own back.

Both in face and frame the Australian shows traces of the suffering he endured in German prisons. His clothes hang quite loosely on him.