

GERMANS IN PRISON CAMPS PLEASED AT THEIR TREATMENT

Most of Their Difficulties Are With Their Fellow Prisoners

A humorist recently remarked that there were two classes of people who would really be sorry when peace came: the war profiteers and the German prisoners of war. That there is truth in this remark so far as the German prisoners are concerned, is evident from the letters which are being written today in the prisoner-of-war and internment camps in England. They know that the moment peace comes they will be packed off to Germany, and Germany seems to possess no attractions for them at present.

In fact the chief complaint most of them make about the prison camps is that they are full of Germans. They allow that were it not for this fact life would be ideal. "I have nothing to complain of as regards treatment by any Englishman," writes a German prisoner. "But I have many difficulties to put up with from my own people." Another man, who is an officers' servant in a prison camp for German officers, writes: "I do not at all like being in this camp as servant to the 'gentlemen'. I am very content with the treatment from the side of the English, 'the gentlemen'."

In almost every case where trouble has arisen it is due, not to domineering on the part of the British, but to friction between the German N.C.O.'s and the rank and file. A prisoner, who is probably an N.C.O., writes "I have practically no free time at all, due to my fellow prisoners giving me such an amount of work. . . I should never have believed before that German soldiers as soon as they became prisoners could show such insolence and undisciplined behavior to the leader put in charge of them, who unfortunately cannot enforce discipline on them."

Another prisoner from the same camp writes from his own point of view: "Tell Hermann that if he must join he must do his duty, but he need not let himself be harassed or tormented by the non-commissioned officers and sergeants. You know yourself what extortioners they are, there are few of these rascals who have a heart in their body, if I only dare write you all about them you

would hate and loathe them as much as I do."

There is not the slightest doubt that the German prisoners of war in England are displaying a steadily growing desire to avoid militarism, with all that it involves, when the time comes for a general exchange of prisoners. This feeling appears to be prompted by various causes, not the least effective of which is the studied arrogance of the Prussian type of N. C.O. In connection with this a prisoner writes: "If the common soldier is no longer of any value, then let the war be carried on with the help of the officers and N.C.O's". Others write even more directly against the military system "I take no pleasure in anything now", writes a prisoner, "for the war has really opened my eyes to the fact that we working-classes are only playing things for the moneyed men. . . What crime has our poor brother Karl committed. Most likely he did not place his middle finger exactly on the seam of his trousers, when making a ceremonious bow to the trenches." A man who was captured in a U-boat writes: "I really do wonder when the swindle will come to an end. I for my part believe that the German people will be fearfully disillusioned when at last the truth leaks out."

As to the prospect of returning to Germany the following extracts furnish a fair sample of what is the general opinion amongst the prisoners on that point. One man writing to Holland says: "I have had more than enough of militarism and entirely agree with Aunt Bertha when she says: 'When the war is over you can come here (i.e., Holland) where one is freer and need not live under German tyranny.'" Another writes: "I shall leave no stone unturned not to go to Germany, for I loathe the German conditions. . . As soon as the war is over, I begin a business with my friend in Rotterdam". "When I think over things quietly," writes another, "I feel I should like to return to England; I am sick and tired of all the nonsense in Germany." Finally a prisoner puts the whole case in a nutshell thus: "In the end we must bear the whole responsibility for this terrible world-misery, and so on. It seems that only N.C.O.'s and Sergeant-Majors have earned the thanks of the Fatherland. The rank and file in captivity may quietly go under. At all events when one knows your circumstances, as one learns about them in letters, then the longing for one's native country vanishes too."