

ENEMIES WELL USED

Rev. B. E. Rutzky, of Ottawa, Reports Visit to Alien Enemies' Camp at Kingston.

Through the courtesy of Major Sir William Otter I have received permission to pay periodical visits to the interned German prisoners of war at the different detention camps to preach the Word of God to these men and to act as their spiritual adviser generally.

My first visit was at Fort Henry, near Kingston, Ont., where there are a large number of German prisoners. But the courtyard on which the buildings used for housing the prisoners front, is sheltered from the worst of the wind and is very large. In this courtyard the prisoners walk, talk, play football and other rugged games.

Their clear skins and alert movements speak well for their general health and upon inquiry I found only a few cases of cold and catarrh among them. A doctor calls to see the men every morning, any prisoner who feels the need of medical attention may consult the physician and will receive proper treatment. A well equipped dispensary supplies the necessary drugs, while a small and scrupulously clean hospital stands ready to receive the more seriously ill; both are in charge of two hospital sergeants. At my visit there were no sick persons in the hospital.

Good Food.

The food served to the prisoners is the same as that given to the Canadian soldiers as to quality, and it is more in quantity by a quarter pound of bread per day, which General Otter has been good enough to grant them for the reason, that many of the men have been used to five meals a day and have not yet succeeded in adjusting their systems to be satisfied with the stereotyped three square meals a day as we have them here in America.

When necessary, clothing is served out to the men without cost as stipulated in international agreements; this clothing consists of the following: Two suits of underwear, two pairs of socks, two outside shirts, corduroy trousers, warm coat and warm cap, and strong shoes. Every prisoner receives a cot, a mattress and two blankets for his bed, every room has a heater and is allowed two large scuttles of hard coal. My visit to the men took place in the evening after they were locked up for the night, and all the rooms visited were well heated.

The prisoners are held responsible for the thorough daily cleaning of their rooms, which are inspected by the sergeant detailed for that purpose. Anybody found infringing upon sanitary regulations is dealt with summarily for the protection of all the prisoners. A well arranged laundry and bathroom with four tubs and hot and cold water give ample opportunity to keep clothing and bodies clean. The few who do not yet seem inclined to give to cleanliness the proper regard are urged to do better by the gentle persuasion of the genial sergeant-in-charge.

Well Treated.

The treatment accorded to the men is by their own testimony very humane; I have not found one instance where a reasonable complaint has been proffered. In the early days of their confinement, friction between the guards and the prisoners was more frequent. But one of the more intelligent men explained to me, that anger at their confinement and consequent spitefulness of their behavior toward their keepers was the cause of most of the trouble. Now that they have cooled down, they cannot fail to see that the officers in charge from the highest to the lowest wish to be just and humane to them.

One of the main grievances seems to be that their mail service is not as regular as they might wish. Naturally all the mail, outgoing and incoming, is subjected to strict censorship, and too many indiscreet statements may cause the censor to destroy the missive altogether. Some of the men in their simplicity seem to think that a registry stamp attached to the letter will ensure safe delivery without regard to the contents and are chagrined when they find out their mistake. Any personal matter relating to the men or to their families is, however, passed without objection and unnecessary delay.

The total number of prisoners at Fort Henry includes besides the Germans, a large quota of Austrians and some Turks, but apart from slight family-jars they get along very well with one another. Some being musically inclined and in possession of instruments, have formed a little band, and by dint of diligent practice are able to render very creditably national hymns, folksongs and choral music.

Men Given Work.

As many of the men as possible are given employment by the authorities and are paid 25 cents per day for their labors as specified by international agreement. But the scope of work in the fort being rather limited, time hangs heavily on their hands. To pass away the time in bad weather and evenings some have taken to woodcarving and turn out very neat articles, such as picture frames, little boxes, models of full rigged ships, torpedo boats, Zeppelins, etc. One man

more than ordinarily talented in this respect has built a large model of a harbor crane, which to my uninitiated eye looked very real and businesslike. In one of the rooms a motto hangs on the wall with the diction: "Orendum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano." Everything is done apparently to make this humble petition a reality. The very fact that the officer commanding internment operations has given his consent to have regular divine services held with these men, besides the afore-mentioned attention to their animal needs, shows that everything possible is being done to insure not only bodily comfort, but

contentment of mind and spiritual consolation as well.

This is an objective statement of conditions as I have found them among the men visited, and I may assert that by my own observation I have satisfied myself, that not only is the letter of international agreements carried out, but thanks to the humaneness of General Otter and his subordinate officers the treatment of the prisoners of war is kind and considerate as far as consistent with military rules.

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