

GERMAN PRISONERS OF WAR AT AMHERST ARE WELL TREATED.

A Correspondent, Who Inspected the Internment Camp, Says the Men Are Well Fed, Are Comfortably Housed, Have Plenty of Amusement and Generally Are a Cheerful Lot--They Are Now Sent Out in Groups to Work on the Experimental Farm at Nappan and Are Enjoying the Change Greatly.

In a great red brick building, formerly a malleable iron foundry, in Amherst, Nova Scotia, there are, and there have been for nearly a year now, about seven hundred very able bodied men, six hundred and ninety-three, to be exact, who are prisoners under forcible restraint, but yet whose conditions of confinement are not similar to those of other prisoners, wards of the civil power. And arising partly from these peculiar conditions, partly from the prisoners themselves, and partly from other things which we will discuss in a moment, there have arisen rumors that these men, German prisoners of war of the Imperial Government in Canada, were not receiving correct treatment from their Canadian jailers.

To discover just what the nature of these grievances are, to learn how much basis, in fact, they have, to esti-

mate as nearly as possible actual conditions in the prison, in a word, to tell the public exactly what things are like in this big war prison in the Maritime Provinces, to put an end, if possible once and for all, to German stories of Canadian cruelty to these men, or if these stories are well founded to substantiate them without fear or favor--this was the object of a visit just paid to the prison--"station" is, by the way, the official title of the place. Needless to say, Major Oulton and Adjut. Redeout, the two superior officers in command of the station knew absolutely nothing of the proposed visit.

The Converted Factory.

First of all then, as to the station itself. It is, as has been said, a great oblong red brick building of

one story in height, of the usual factory type, with huge windows from floor to ceiling and with additional light coming through the cupola roof. It is lighted with electric light and heated by steam. To get this building ready for occupation by the prisoners about \$30,000 was spent. The machinery was removed and the place thoroughly cleaned, the necessary partitions were erected, and a complete water system installed with modern plumbing and an unlimited supply of hot and cold water for shower baths and the washing of clothes. Twelve big ranges were put in for cooking purposes, and separate quarters for seamen and officers provided. In the same way a complete installation was necessary for the more than two hundred guards needed for the safe keeping of the prisoners.

Now, then, as to the building as it stands today:

On the east side it runs along the Intercolonial tracks, on the west of it there is a compound or exercise ground, more than long enough for a football field, but too narrow for the playing of the game under our rules. Around the building and compound runs barbed wire entanglements, six or seven feet high and as many wide. At the corners of the compound, as in the middle and inside the prisoners' quarters, platforms raised ten feet from the ground contain a Canadian soldier guard, rifle loaded and bayonet fixed.

Food of Excellent Quality.

Behind the offices of the commandant and his staff are the quartermasters' stores for the whole station, and as, roughly, three thousand meals a day have to be served, these stores show a big stock in hand. And since we have come to the stores it may be just as well, at this point, to go at once into the all-important question of the food these men, prisoners and guards alike, have to eat.

To begin with the meat: I do not think it is any exaggeration to say that the German prisoners at Amherst get as good meat as anyone in Canada, and a good deal better than a great many Canadians do. The meat comes from the Harris Abattoir Company of Toronto, which has the contract for supplying all these stations, and its heavy, prime meat such as the Amherst people say they would be mighty glad to get if they could. It arrives every two or three days, and is care-

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not come up to requirements it is instantly sent back. When approved, it is immediately placed in a big, new and spotlessly clean refrigerating chamber, such as the most modern butcher shops use and, when needed, is cut up by expert butchers. The butter is choice dairy butter, delivered in waxed papers, by the pound. It, like the meat and like everything else, must be of the best. The prisoners are getting new potatoes, and new boiled potatoes cost you ten cents a portion at a good restaurant these days. The same high standard is maintained in all the food, the allowance is ample and it is well served, as we shall see.

Where Offenders are Kept.

In the first division of the building, along with the quartermasters' stores, are the famous ovens, about which so strenuous an objection was raised some days ago. It may sound very severe to put a man in an oven by way of punishment, but there are ovens and ovens. These are brick chambers, the interior of which are, roughly, twelve feet long by eight broad. The arched roof is well over six feet high at the centre, sloping at the walls to about five feet. One-half of the iron door is pierced by holes about four inches in diameter, set within six inches of each other. The only light within the oven comes through these holes. Ventilation is secured by means of the same holes in the door and two ample flues in the walls, connecting with the great smoke stack outside—in other words the ventilation is excellent. The inside of these ovens is kept perfectly clean, and a layer of clean straw covers the floor. Into these ovens some prisoners have been put for offences against the regulations. When a prisoner is sentenced to solitary confinement overnight he is given a good bed and clean bedding. Only one man has been put there for more than twenty-four hours since the station was established. In the winter a comfortable temperature is assured by the presence of an ample steam coil. So far as these oven-cells are concerned, there is not one municipality in one hundred in Canada that provides as comfortable temporary quarters for the breakers of its laws. The great majority of the committals to these cells has been for the breaking of the rule which forbids smoking in the bunks. As we shall see in a moment, a fire among these would mean great danger and perhaps loss of life. The men know perfectly why it is forbidden, and those to whom I spoke approved of the rule. They are at liberty to smoke anywhere else and they do smoke all over the place. To complain because a man is punished for breaking a rule established for the safety of all who complain of the "lock up" in which he is placed is simply to make trouble for the fun of making it.

The "Prison" Proper.

We come now to the prison proper, always under the same roof. A big fire wall shuts it off from the rest of the building. Through the centre of this is a big door guarded night and day by pacing sentinels and a great wire entanglement ten feet high. Once inside and you are greeted by a buzz of conversation punctuated by laughter. You are among the prisoners at last. You have to stop for a moment to get the idea of a prison at all. You might be in any Canadian factory at the noon hour for all the suggestion of prison there is in it at first. Only when outside the window, you get a glimpse of barbed wire, and when, above your head, you catch the smack of a rifle stock as the sentry in his box presents arms, do you realize that the men before you are under forcible restraint. It is a great cheery hall, blazing with sunshine in this morning hour. Along it in orderly rows stretch deal tables, without cloths, but spotless. Seated at these or walking about are a couple of hundred men, chatting, playing cards, reading, skylarking with one another, and all smoking like chimneys. They glance at you in a friendly way but without curiosity. If you stop to speak to one of the groups you are pretty sure to find someone in it who can speak English, well or ill. There is nothing but the most perfect politeness for the visitor. A personal introduction means an instant springing to attention, a sweep of the cap and a deep bow, a warm grip of the hand and a ready answer to all questions. I am coming to the grievances presently.

Chef of the Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse.

To the right of the dining room is the kitchen. Here twelve big hotel ranges have been established and they are presided over by the head chef of the Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse—nearly all the prisoners in Amherst are from the big German sea raider sunk off the African coast a year ago last month. Given the best raw material the market of Canada affords, the chief cook of one of the crack ocean liners ought to be able to turn out a meal fit for the consumption even of a war prisoner. And he is, so far as I could judge. Into the kitchen staggered a ration party, bending under the weight of the next day's supplies. And the chef barked at them in true man o' war style, so that a man lugging on his back what looked like a whole quarter of beef skipped nimbly out of sight with it with the least possible delay. Then the chef resumed his sway. He has a whole corps of assistants—and every prisoner who does work of any sort whatever gets twenty-five cents a day from the Government—and his cuisine is of the strictly German variety. The fish steaks rolled in a batter of bread crumbs which he was turning out were good enough for the visitors, anyway. At least the prisoners have nothing to complain of in the way of unaccustomed cookery.

The Sleeping Quarters.

Now we come to the sleeping quarters. To the right of the centre of this big hall bunks rise, one above the other, in three rows of three tiers each, to the height of about ten feet. There are bunks for over eight hundred men and as there are not quite seven hundred prisoners there is no over crowding. Each man has a sleeping space of over ten feet long by four or over wide. They have been given every liberty to arrange

their bunks as suits themselves. The lowest bunk is about three feet from the floor, the next about six feet and a half, the third, on top, probably ten feet. In many cases two chums have knocked out two lower bunks thereby making a little room big enough to stand up in and, with the two adjoining bunks forming a fair approximation to their quarters on the defunct Kaiser Wilhelm. Planks have been begged from the carpenter and the bunks enclosed, little curtains have been hung and the extemporized walls and ceiling covered with photographs, either from home or cuts of pretty girls clipped from magazines. One man has his parrot, a large moth-eaten green bird with a bad eye, hanging in his bunk. There are no white sheets or pillow slips but plenty of thick clean blankets which are washed every three weeks and replaced by new ones every three months. A man may place his sleeping quarters where he likes, decorate them as he likes, fence them off or leave them open as he likes, spend as much of his time in them as he likes. The one thing he must not do is to smoke in them, and this for obvious reasons. These bunks are wooden, covered with bedding, curtains and clothing; a fire in a lower berth and the men on top might have to scramble for it.

Franz-Josef Platz.

These big bunk tiers rise to the right of the central line of the building, leaving a considerable floor area to the left clear. This is the "Franz-Josef Platz," as a sign in good sound German capitals announces. In it are several tables, and seated at these are groups of prisoners playing cards, reading or writing. Another table is surrounded by a crowd and the centre of attraction is a man doing beautiful inlay work in colored woods. His only tool is his jack-knife; yet he has turned out several pieces of intricate and beautiful design, all brought to a high degree of finish and polish by dint of innumerable rubbing.

To the right of "Franz-Josef Platz" run "von Hindenberg Platz," leading to the exercise ground, at right angles to it, between the bunks and "von Kluck Strasse," and, lastly, "Zeeppelin Allee." "Zeppelin Allee" has, as is appropriate, a vision of the open sky, but "von Kluck Strasse" is short on daylight and long on shadows. Overlooking Franz-Josef Platz there is a little blackboard, and on it the visitor notices the announcement of the next practice of the "Gesangverelin", or choral society—of which more in a moment.

Beyond the sleeping quarters of the men are the washrooms, toilets and shower baths. Looking at these, you understand why it cost so much to fit the place up. There are two long rows of porcelain toilets of the lat-