

I have in general found an absence of evidence to support the case that Major Matheson is a man naturally disposed to ill-treat men. On the other hand, I have found much evidence pointing to a desire to do everything within his power and in his knowledge to preserve the health, comfort, and well-being of the men committed to his charge. I have noticed many cases in which he has pressed for concessions, the failure to obtain which would have left the men less comfortable than they are. A notable instance of this is the ration scale, in connection with which he managed to secure a more liberal scale than had actually been ordered. The evidence of Captain Gentry, the Supply and Transport Officer, makes this clear. I have also evidence, even of men who are making charges, of acts of kindness which negative a malicious desire to ill-treat the men. In this view the cases of the alleged ill treatment in general may as a matter of mere probability be regarded as cases of enforcing discipline, perhaps at times with severity. I admit that to take this view involves in some cases disregarding the evidence of the complaining party.

In any conflict of evidence Major Matheson generally stands at a disadvantage, in that so many members of his staff whose names are mentioned have gone abroad on service.

As my opinion is that charges of wanton ill treatment are not based on evidence that I can accept and act on, I do not think it necessary to examine in detail the evidence supporting these charges, but I will deal with some of them by way of illustration. During the early history of the camp there is no suggestion of ill treatment. It begins at a time when Major Matheson had undoubtedly to deal with a formidable spirit of insubordination, involving sending a number of men to Wellington for detention at Alexandra Barracks. At a later period in the history there was another marked outbreak of insubordination, and there have been scattered instances at various times.

There had been numerous demonstrations, beginning in October, 1914, and later, but the real trouble may be said to have begun in March, 1915, when a number of men in one of the sleeping-rooms had to be dealt with collectively for urinating out at a window on to the sentry's beat. They had been put on what is called "urine parade." The short history of the matter is that the men had refused to gravel the path leading to the door of their sleeping-quarters, which had got into an insanitary condition. To compel attention to this the door was closed with screws, and they were ordered to enter their room by a ladder. This they appear to have resented by urinating through a window. Their excuse that they had to do this is negatived. They could have called the sentry, or used a pail that was provided. This trouble had to be treated *in globo*, as the men in their room must have known who the offenders were, and their identity was concealed and the offence repeated. Thus the matter became one of refusal of men to do work necessary to keep the ground about their room clean and sanitary. In the result, as men of this and three other squads refused duty, the men of these squads were, after trial, sent to Wellington, until there were nineteen there in detention. These are described as the rougher and stronger characters of the squad. The weaker men were subjected to disciplinary treatment on the island.

I will refer briefly to a few of the cases of those who complain. To refer to them all, or even to refer in full detail to a few of them, would enormously overload this document.

Walter Moormeister was one of these. He admits that he refused duty. He gives an account of his treatment which is obviously exaggerated. He says that some violence done to him caused a rupture. There was no reason for any such violence, and his evidence is discredited by the fact that in writing to his sister he spontaneously said that what was done "led to my rupture being enlarged." He had a truss with him when he came to the island, which he says he did not wear. I see no reason to doubt that the enlargement was the result of accident, but it is not even clear that it occurred on this occasion. He gives a very long narrative which, based on a substratum of fact as to disciplinary treatment, is in my opinion so exaggerated that I cannot accept it as true. He, like some others, makes a grievance of having to do physical drill, which seems to me to have been only a mild