

Franz Joseph's birthday he composed a set of verses libelling Major Matheson, which, though not read, as originally intended, at the entertainment, was passed round among his friends, with very bad effect. He says in cross-examination, "I know the concert was permitted if decently conducted. I have never even said my conduct in camp was decent. I admit my offence, and do not complain of the punishment. I complain of rough handling." And again, "You told me that you would give me every chance, but that if I ever came up again I would get severe punishment--told me I had better keep out of sight."

As to this I can only say that I can see no ground for saying that this man has been improperly treated.

Hugo Kösel: This man gave a very long narrative, filled with the kind of exaggeration to which I have become accustomed, and contradicted so far as it can be contradicted. The only reason for specially mentioning it is that he specifically charges Sergeant Wahren with pushing him into the sea when urging him round a circle near the beach where he was doing physical drill. After Kösel had given his evidence Wahren returned to New Zealand after serving abroad. He gives an entirely different version of this. Both met with an accident and fell together into the water. They were at once sent up to the camp, and Wahren saw that, with the assistance of others, Kösel was properly dried and given dry clothes before he (the sergeant) changed his. This exaggeration colours his whole evidence.

Hugo Steinbrügger had been convicted of some minor offence, and was punished in January, 1916. He makes a complaint of ill treatment by the Commandant. I cannot accept his story of ill treatment. It omits all reference to his own breaches of discipline. It is quite evident that his case called for disciplinary punishment, and that this was effectual. He says, "Since January, 1916, I have got on all right." This is borne out by Major Matheson, who says that ever since then he has been well behaved and on good terms with the camp officials. Part of his grievance was that his treatment had caused a sore on his back. From the description it is evident that he was sunburned. Some accident caused the sore thus created to open. For this condition he himself was alone to blame, as it was of his own choice that he followed a practice that is common among the men of working in the sun in a singlet alone, or even without one. He has complained of not having had a fair trial on the 10th January. The record of his case shows that he was given every opportunity of explaining his alleged breaches. I have no reason to doubt that he had a fair trial.

George William Frank Kröner: This is a case which naturally excites sympathy. The man is a natural-born British subject, born in New Zealand of naturalized parents. He has been educated in Germany, and has a wife and family. At the outbreak of the war he was in the Postal service, where he had been for fifteen years, and there is no doubt that his plight is a sad one. He states that he has instructed a solicitor to challenge the power of Government to detain him. He has given a very long narrative in very vehement terms. His main complaint is that, being a British subject, he has been detained at Somes Island. I should judge him to be a neurotic hysterical subject. He has been continually before the Commander for breaches of discipline. I think there are six convictions for various breaches recorded against him, and judging by his demeanour when before me I can well suppose that he is a difficult subject to keep under discipline. His charges go beyond the camp officials. He says, "Don't think any other has received so many sentences. I have been treated worse than any of the Germans. This is not only with tacit consent but with the instigation of Headquarters." Major Matheson says, "Going through his file I observe such charges as threatening language, such as 'There is a day of reckoning coming for you,' followed by profound apologies and promises of good conduct for the future." His evidence throughout is given in exaggerated terms, and it is quite impossible that upon such evidence I should say that his various punishments have been wrongly inflicted.

In cross-examination about allowing him to Wellington to see his wife when a child was ill he admits that Major Matheson showed him kindness. He says, "I don't deny that you said you did not care a fig for regulations if the child was in danger. I acknowledge my debt to you there."