

by a resolute Camp Commander who does not fail to make it clear that they are under strict discipline. Disciplinary measures tend to cause grumbling, but the relaxation of them causes something worse than grumbling, and certainly does not make the lives of either the Commander or the men pleasanter.

One of the Samoan Civil servants contrasted in somewhat glowing terms the conditions prevailing at Motuihi and Somes Island internment camps, and their respective Commanders. The good-natured indulgence of the Camp Commander at the former island and his abstention from all interference with the prisoners of war was contrasted with the way in which Major Matheson conducted his camp while that prisoner of war was there, carrying the contrast to a point verging on the ludicrous. I declined to allow him to be questioned as to whether he had any part in the conspiracy through which a number of prisoners of war escaped into the Pacific, and owing to which the Commandant at Motuihi had to pay the penalty for his good nature of being dismissed from his post, holding that if taking part in the conspiracy was an offence those open to accusation should be tried in the ordinary way. It is certain that such an escape could not have occurred under the disciplinary system followed by Major Matheson, and equally certain that the attempt brought, for a time at least, considerable extra stringency upon the prisoners interned at Somes Island. Incidentally I may mention that during the sitting of the Commission, and after there had been added to his staff an assistant with the rank of Lieutenant, Major Matheson, for the first time since the escape, was able to spend a night at his own house in Wellington. A prisoner of war at Somes Island who took a prominent part in the proceedings before the Royal Commission apparently shared to some extent the views of this Civil servant, and, without adopting his extravagant suggestions, asserted that the Somes Island camp compared badly with the camps of the various belligerents, and in particular with those in Germany which had been unfavourably spoken of.

It seems to me clear that these gentlemen, either for want of opportunity or want of will, are unfamiliar with the authentic literature available to ordinary readers. Thus Mr. Gerard, late American Ambassador to the German Imperial Court, speaking of the Hanover Munden camp, says, "The Russian officers handed me some arrows tipped with nails which had been shot at them by the kind-hearted little town boys; and the British officers pointed out to me the filthy conditions of the camp. In this, as in unfortunately many other officer camps, the inclination seemed to be to treat the officers not as captured officers and gentlemen, but as criminals. I had quite a sharp talk with the Commander of this camp before leaving, and he afterwards took violent exception to the report which I made upon his camp. However, I am pleased to say that he reformed, as it were, and I was informed by my inspectors that he finally made his camp one of the best in Germany."

Then, "Undoubtedly the worst camp which I visited in Germany was that of Wittenburg. . . . With Mr. Chas. H. Russell, jun., I visited the camp. Typhus fever seems to be continually present in Russia. It is carried by the body-louse, and it is transmitted from one person to another. The Russian soldiers arriving at Wittenburg were not properly disinfected, and in consequence typhus fever broke out in the camp. Several British Medical Officers were there with their prisoners. These Medical Officers protested with the Commander against the herding-together of French and British prisoners with the Russian, who, as I have said, were suffering from typhus fever. But the Camp Commander said, 'You will have to know your allies,' and kept all the prisoners together, and thus as surely condemned to death a number of French and British prisoners of war as though he had stood them against the wall and ordered them to be shot by a firing-squad. Conditions in the camp during the period of this epidemic were frightful. The Germans employed a large number of police dogs in the camp. Many complaints were made to me by prisoners concerning these dogs, stating that men had been bitten by them. It seemed undoubtedly true that the prisoners had been knocked about and beaten in a terrible manner by their guards, and one guard went so far as to strike one of the British Medical Officers."

There is more of this in Mr. Gerard's book, and a great deal more of similar matters such as have never been heard of in British or French detention camps.