

In Ruhleben Camp – No 8, September, 1915, p30

THE SIXTH

RUHLEBEN, 6, September 1915.

It's the sixth,
The crowd that gathered round the gate
Are come to wish Godspeed
To these – these lucky few – that soon
Shall be restored to England and to
Liberty.

She comes, she comes,
With rattling roar and shrilly shriek –
Monarch of speed enwrapped in Steam
With mile-devouring power she flashes by
Among the duller trains that push and
shunt.

Monarch of Speed – she bears
But one or two of us – those lucky few
To England and to Liberty.

Amid the roar and swirl of Steam
A flutt'ring sign – a waving arm –
Cheer O!
They understand –
Th'oppressive grey of dull captivity.

We feel with them
Their new found joy and gaiety of Mind

And signal back
Cheer O! –
Wishing them joy
In England and in Liberty.

Gone by, gone by –
That living Moment in a dull Eternity,
And while the Iron Monarch swiftly speeds
Out, out across the pain to Liberty
Our listless thought precedes,
But straight inspired,
In vigour turns to visit those
That stand in bloody trench
In flanders' weary mud and mire,
And those that watch and wait upon the
Deep:

Upon the Deep by Orkney's distant isles:
And those that offer sacrifice
Of bloody sweat and quivering limb
Upon the rocks of far Gallipoli.
And thence returning to ourselves,
Our quickened eyes respond,
And out again the message of Good Hope
Cheer O!

In Ruhleben Camp – No 1, Sunday June 6th, 1915, p7

THE SEVEN AGES OF A KRIEGSGEFANGENER.

All the world's a cage,
And all the men within it weary players;
They have no exits, only entrances,
Where each spends many months ere he departs.
At first the Newcomer,
With china bowl and palliass of straw,
And apprehensive mien, as who should say
'What cruel lot has Fate for me in store?'
And then the Student, with his cloth-bound Otto,
For foreign languages are now his motto,
Alleviates the woes of his position
By laying up a store of Erudition.
He seeks the shining morning hours to pass
With verbs irregular and der, die, das;
Upon the Promenade he daily walks,
And with his Tutor French or German talks.
Next comes the Lover, a lead pencil biting
A weekly card to his loved one inditing;
Reflect on this ye Dorothies and Daisies
When you peruse your lover's fiery praises
Nor start, Angelic Doras, Claras, Flossies
When blushing you look upon those crosses!
The Mariner next comes upon the view.
His uniform and language both are blue,
A British sailor, broad of beam and bearing,
Full of strange oaths that seamen call endearing;
From Leith and Cardiff, Hartlepool and Hull
He comes, and finds life here most passing dull;
Ye Landsmen pause, ye innocents be chary,
Lest you provoke his rich vocabulary!
Lo here! the Captain, badged and awe-inspiring,
In discipline and duty never tiring;
The world he looks upon with scornful pity,
Alone, unaided by the Camp Committee;
Superior to men or common clay,
He gains in self-importance every day.
The Rumour-Monger now takes up the text,
His soul by every foolish outcry vexed;
The news that he dispenses freely one day,
Is contradicted flat the following Monday;
And last of all before we drop the curtain
Upon the scene where life is so uncertain
Comes he who, patient, waits upon the Stage,
Nor uninstructed seeks to read the page;
Well knowing that the day will come when he
Will once again be numbered with the Free.
Resigned to all each passing day he views
Sans Cash, Sans Clothes, Sans Liberty, Sans Views!

L. E. Filmore.

In Ruhleben Camp – Christmas Number 1915, pp47

THE DAY DREAM.

A train of thought! – How sweet, when in disgust
With life and all the trouble life has brought,
To follow, as we wander through the dust,
A train of thought.

To think you're FREE, – to fancy you have caught
The Night-Express and momentarily are thrust
Yards nearer Home, – O word with comfort fraught!

And then – CRASH! BANG!! What? Has the boiler bust?
No, – you've encountered, wand'ring all distraught,
The flag-staff! – It was no Express, – 't was just.
A train of thought.

MUSIC V. R. D. S.

The Pros and Cons of subjects they uncoil
As many-coloured as chameleons,
When into speech and speechlet down they boil
The Pros and Cons.

A Court of Savants rule them, and of Dons,
Crammed full of wisdom, reared on midnight-oil,
August, sublime, – like demigods in bronze.

Yet greater still, a gracious counterfoil,
The Artists and their baton-waving bonze,
Since Concord, not Contention, crowns their toil. –
The Pros and Cons.

In Ruhleben Camp – No 6, August, 1915, p31

THE BATTLE – AXE.

The shades of night were falling fast,
They were without a doubt;
'Twas half past nine within the loft
And just as late without.

As I returned to "shlafen gehen"
(I sleep in the corner dim) –
In murderous attitude I saw
My neighbour, Cockney Jim.

In his sinewy hands an axe he grasped,
'Twas thrown behind his shoulder;
One moment more, some victim sure
Would soon grow cold and colder.

My heroic blood within me boiled,
As I caught his villainous gaze;
I rushed on him and caught his arm,
Thus lengthening somebody's days.

"Bloodthirsty wretch! is that your game
To chop off somebody's head?"
But he replied; "Gaw blimey no!
I'm miking me bloomin' bed".

In Ruhleben Camp – No 8, September, 1915, p30

SANS NOUVELLES.

Ils sont heureux ces internés,
Qui chaque jour de leur facteur,
Reçoivent letters et paquets,
Oui, ils ont vraiment du bonheur!

Depuis plus d'un mois anxieux
J'attends la distribution;
Chaque jour, pourquoi, Grands Dieux?
Je n'ai qu'une deception.

Oh, Poste! Sois moins cruelle,
Cesse ces retards angoissants,
Deonne-moi donc des nouvelles
De ma femme, de mes enfants.

H. A. B.

In Ruhleben Camp – No. 3, July, 1917, p44

RUHLEBEN GNATS.

A little Rumour floating round upon the sunny air
By chance arrived at Ruhleben from God alone knows where.
And carried by an air-wave to a Scotsman's fertile brain
On his imagination fed, and quickly waxed amain.

And as it grew, it multiplied itself in many forms
Just like the little polyps that the sea contains in swarms
Until a hazy group of Rumours finally emerged
And like the ocean swell upon the patient Camp they surged.

Mosquito like they flew along from group to chatting group
And left each one assuming they had really got a coup
And soon the Camp was permeated fully, as with leaven,
Till the stories in the Teehaus were discussed in Barr seven.

And wildly inconsistent were the various reports;
Not tentative suggestions which were rich in "shoulds" and "oughts"
But marvellous assurances of awe-inspiring acts,
Was ever such a horde before of self-destructive facts?

You know, of course, the midges small that flourish for a day
And dance upon the shimmering air and quickly pass away?
Well, so it happened unto this mysterious Rumour-horde
A heat wave came at close of day and washed them overboard.

And when the shades of gathering night descended like a pall
And in the sky the silver moon was watching over all
Not one remained to tease the weak or victimise the strong,
The Camp had settled down, – until the next should come along!

S. E. J.

In Ruhleben Camp – Christmas Number 1915, pp3

“RING OUT WILD BELLS”

“Ring out wild Bells!” The verses sprang
From one who, in his slumber spells,
Had never heard with sudden clang
 “Ring out wild bells.”

Bell hangers, seem scarce, for yells
Of “HANG THAT BELL!” full often rang
At noon through barracks, rooms and cells.

I, too, have said, with inward pang
Obeying those insistent knells,
‘I’d like to ring his neck who sang:
 “Ring out wild bells!”

HOMAGE

Time plants his foot our necks upon, –
 However high we climb;
Time beats us all – save Peeble-Conn,
 For Conn beats time.

LLOYD WOLLEN.

In Ruhleben Camp – No 6, August, 1915, p33

RICE AND PRUNES.

Where'er you see a barrack wend its way
Towards the kitchen, whistling lively tunes,
You're safe to bet the menu for the day
Is 'rice and prunes'.

No other dinner has such power to impart
A smile, alike to supermen and loons,
As that last triumph of the cooking art –
Boiled rice and prunes.

Let others long for matrimonial bliss
And liberty and such forbidden boons;
I'm quite content so long as I don't miss
My rice and prunes.

And often at the swill-tub (so it's said)
You'll hear some pious soul who softly croons
A testimonial unsolicited
For rice and prunes.

The very milkman rubs his hands and beams,
To see his profits mounting like balloons;
He has no better customer, it seems,
Than rice and prunes.

No doubt we'll all be here a long time yet;
But though we're juggled for twenty thousand moons,
Some day we'll leave, and think with fond regret –
Of rice and prunes.

In Ruhleben Camp – No 3, July, 1915, p12

REMERCIEMENTS

(We have received following little tribute from a french reader)

“Ruhleben Camp” quel est ton âge?
Un mois Monsieur, plein de courage.
“Ruhleben Camp”, je suis heureux
De te savoir si valeureux!

Ne crains donc rien, marche toujours
Tu possides tous nos amours;
En cet exil, ta vive flamme
Rechauffera notre pauvre âme.

Te demandes si tu nous plais?
Compte tous ceux qui désolés
Vinrent oûir à ta fenêtre:
“Tout est vendu, je le regrette”

Faire le bien! Quoi de plus beau
Quoi de plus doux, quoi de plus haut?
Et quand viendra la Delivrance
On gardera ta souvenance

Bien cher ami ton prompt success
N'étonne point, car tu le sais:
Quand l'homme veut, quand il travaille,
Il est vainqueur dans la bataille.

Toi, tu mourras, mais tes bienfaits
Dans tous les coeurs seront graves
Et ce sera ta recompense
Predit la Muse en vers de France.

Sanssouci.

I wonder, if many of us will miss,
When the day of freedom dawns,
This Camp which like a chess-board is,
Whereon we are but Pawns.

Sometimes a Pawn is taken away
For hours – at least 24! – –
And when I think it over, I say:
I don't want to play any more.

P. H.

OVERHEARD IN THE QUEUE

I

My name has appeared on the list,
So I've taken my place in the queue,
And I don't care a cuss for the cold,
For at last I have something in view!
My clothing has gone to the dogs,
My wardrobe is far from complete,
My coat is in rags, and my clogs
Admit both the rain and the sleet. –
What matter sartorial wants?
Or the wind that is searching me through?
A parcel from home has arrived,
So I've taken my place in the queue!

II

For the cannibal, naked and stark,
Some suitable raiment is meet,
But one thing I wish to remark
I want something dainty to eat!
Oh! Fortune be friendly to me,
Remember my delicate taste,
Let heathens with flannel make free
But send me some anchovy paste!
Elizabeth Lazenby, think
Of the man who is thinking of you!
Forget me not, Lipton and Pink,
Remember the man in the queue!

III

In my youth I have marvelled sometimes
Why men for sheep-stealing were hung;
My wants are more modest than theirs,
I don't expect more than the tongue!
To battle with joy I would go,
Though I shrink from all barbarous scenes,
For a herring, with hard or soft roe,
For a ninepenny tin of sardines!
Oh! Huntley and Palmer give heed
To the boon I am begging from you;
You would, if you knew of the need
Of the man who is here in the queue!

IV

Some fairy godmother, perhaps,
Has sent me a succulent ham,
With oddments to fill up the gaps, –
Such as pickles, or chutney, or jam;
Or Buszards have sent me a cake,
Compounded of currants and plum;
With joy of their gift I'll partake,
And devour to the very last crumb!
If Fortnum and Mason were kind,
If Poulton and Noel were true,
A parcel I surely should find,
Addressed to me here in the queue!

V

(Five minutes later.)

Is decency perished and gone?

Is charity utterly dead?

Not one of the things I required

Is here, but I've got this instead!

(displaying parcel)

Each person I've mentioned above

My grievous necessity mocks: –

Here's a maiden aunt sends me her love,

And a pair of blue hand-knitted socks!!!

(exit, with appropriate language).

In Ruhleben Camp – No. 4, August , 1917, p42

OUR GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION.

At School:
We're forced by masters doubly rude
To geographically grind
In all degrees of Longitude
And scrape within our gaping mind,
The parallels of Latitude;

And here:
We learn to sprawl all demi-nude
As savours of our kind,
In all degrees of Loungi-tude,
Whilst nowhere else on earth we find
Our parallels in Lassitude.

Boj.

OMAR KHAYYAM AT RUHLEBEN.

Wake! For the Glories of the Rising
Sun
Remind us of another Day begun.
There is the old routine to live again,
The weary round before the Day is
done.

Hark how the cock crows, welcoming the
day!
Arise my Little Ones to work or play;
And cheat the ultimate Design of Fate;
And pass the all too slothfull Hours
away!

Lo! Those who lived to heap the Golden
Grain
And those whose Aim was similar, but
vain –
Well, here they are, just like the rest of us
And, like us also, here they must remain.

For here and there, above, below, about,
Though you may look for means of getting
out,
'Tis Labour vain and ill-repaid, as some
In Stadtvogtei would prove to you, no
doubt,

Though two there were who set their
hearts upon
Deliverance, and ever and anon
Pondered profoundly: and the Place they
knew
And which knew them, is there! – but
they are gone!

A wondrous, motley crowd are we, and
queer,
Made more so, possibly, in the long year
Of tedious Trivialities and Talk,
Sans Wine, sans Cash, sans Women and
sans Beer!

But of the sum the Government doth lend
Which recklessly or thriftily we spend,
Fate may contrive to build us greater
debts!
So laugh at Fate and clutch the Cash my
Friend!

And to and fro if you will come with me
Full many a quiet card-game you will see,
Played in a Box where Candles shed the
light,
Round which the Figures play and
disagree.

A moving Finger wrote, and having writ
Moved on; nor could we change a word of
it
Fate brought us from the corners of the
Land
With stubborn Hands of Steel, and here
we sit!

Oh! Plagued no more with Rumours of
Release,
Come where the Babble and the Tumult
cease,
To that secluded Spot we know so well
Where we can smoke and meditate in
Peace.

Come, fill your Pipe! What boots it to
lament;
And fill with sighs the Spacious
Firmament?
Anticipation aggravates the ill.
To-morrow comes not till To-day is spent!

Alike for Those who dwell within the Past,
And those who after unknown Morrows
cast,
The Time is Now! – to pass it as we may,
Until Deliverance shall come at Last!

A (Translated from the Original by S. E. J.)

In Ruhleben Camp – No 6, August, 1915, p19

O D E

By RON

The R.D.S., the R.D.S., –
Where coy Lavinia coo'ed and preached,
Where Holmes cleared up a horrid mess,
Where Enid sobbed, and Phoebe schreeched;
A smile celestial gilds it yet,
But all except the smile is set.

Who can forget the icy thrill
When Spintho formed the "Lion's share"?
Do not sweet memories linger still
Of artful Lady Sis so fair?
What scene could ever make us shake
Like Adler and the Sprockled Snake?

The R.D.S., the R.D.S., –
Tears blind me at the thought of Ros-
Alind's attenuated dress,
And Hymen's chaste Maud Allan pose,
And Cattermole, – and then, the pri-
vate secretary's eye!

The master of the house we've had;
But where's the master builder gone?
HE stays alive, (if somewhat mad)
At least until the play's near done.
We've had some things we didn't like:
But "Phipps" was nectar to a strike!

Oh R.D.S., dear R.D.S., –
The Silver Box and Ballad Mong-
Er gave us all true cause to bless
Your work with no uncertain tongue.
And though internal strife might rage,
All went like clockwork on the stage.

But now a rabble fills the hall,
Where once the lofty-browed and wise
Were wont to take a tanner stall
And praise, expound or criticize.
Their seats are now profaned, worse luck!
The R.D.S., alas, has STRUCK!

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NIL DESPERANDUM.

Let's hang the lyre on a willow tree,
Or on a wall, or on the barbed wire,
But out of sight, as quickly, as may be,
Let's hang the lyre.

Let's live and LEARN, – learn what we most require
And harp no longer in a minor key
On smaller needs and our ONE great desire.
We're free to learn, thus learning to be free
At least in mind, till freedom be entire.
Meanwhile, who says that we're downhearted? We?!
LET'S HANG THE LIAR!

SINEWS OF WAR.

Sinews of War! Alas, – on evil days
Hath Europe fallen; ever more and more
She bleeds her hapless countries white to raise
Sinews of war.

We, fed and boarded free, may at the roar
Of tax-collectors chuckle, – Some-one pays
For us. We have no need of golden store.

O happy fate! And yet, as now I gaze
Upon my Sunday slice of beef – O Lor'!
A new and baleful light illumines the phase
'SINEWS of War!'

In Ruhleben Camp – No 9, October, 1915, pp37

NEWS!

But yesterday we seemed to be
Interned for all eternity,
And now – hope lights up every face,
Men walk about with quickened pace.

In every breeze we seem to hear
The cannon's roar, familiar cheer:
Oh! Look, those are not clouds up there,
'Tis smoke and dust infects the air.

My love, I hear your voice so near,
I see your lovely form so clear;
I feel, I feel the time is nigh
When in my arms embraced you'll lie.

That day, that scene you will forgive
Must we apart for ever live?
No, no, when nations all make peace
Then too my punishment shall cease.

Vain hopes
And all because the papers day
Our new offensive's underway.

M. H.

In Ruhleben Camp – Christmas Number 1915, pp22

HE THOUGHT HE SAW

[With apologies to Lewis Carroll]

He thought he saw a Seraphim
That played upon the bones.
He looked again, and saw it was
The poems of -----

In Ruhleben Camp – No 7, September, 1915, p37

ADIEU A L'HIRONDELLE DE RUHLEBEN.

Sais-tu petite hirondelle
Si ici, tu nous retrouveras
Quand à la saison nouvelle
Ton vieux nid tu rechercheras?

Malgré le plaisir de te voir
Entre nos baraques voler,
Crois-moi, j'aimerais mieux, le soir
Dans mon jardinet, t'observer.

Adieu donc, oiseau favori
Viens me charmer au mois de Mai
Esperons la paix rétablie
Et près de l'aimée je serai.

H. A. B.

The Ruhleben Camp Magazine – No 1, March, 1916, p23

“A YOUNG MAN’S FANCY”

With poetic inspiration, on the wing
Of my Pegasus, I now propose to sing
Of the ardent lover’s fancy-waistcoat, worked for him by Nancy, –
It’s the kind of thing you only see in spring!
Of the busy bee – so busy with its sting –
Of the mossy glades, and all that kind of thing,
Of the lambkins, so romantic, as they frisk in frolics antic,
Urged by frenzy Corybantic,
In the Spring!

Have you ever seen Ruhleben in the Spring?
It is there that all my tender fancies cling;
Where the wooden-footed shuffler, well enveloped in a muffler,
Wipes his eyes, and blows his “snuffler”,
In the Spring;
But this year the gentle zephyrs do not bring
With them hope, and youth will *not* have any fling:
Damon much against his will is parted from his loving Phyllis,
And his hope reduced to nil is
In the Spring!

Let the birds prepare their airy homes in Spring,
Let every little blighter chirp and sing, –
All this joy and jubilation bear for me no consolation,
I am tired to desperation
In the Spring!

But, before I stop, there *is* one little thing,
That I ought to mention (à propos of Spring),
I am weary of the slacking, and with joy I’d start my packing,
In the Winter, or the Summer,
Or the Spring! F. C. R.