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The Prisoner of War Camp.

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THE PRISONER OF WAR CAMP

Camp Crowder's Prisoner of War Camp -- established hardly more than two months ago -- has already become a smoothly functioning, efficient organization. This was the way it impressed two prominent and competent visitors -- one from Geneva, Switzerland; the other from Washington, D.C. -- who recently came to inspect the camp and its inhabitants. The Swiss gentleman, Mr. _____, represented the International Red Cross and, in this capacity, the interests of the German captives; while his companion was a delegate from our State Department.

The Red Cross concerns itself impartially in the plight of prisoners of war all over the world -- no matter what their race or nationality. Mr. _____, before visiting eleven Prisoner of War camps in the United States, conscientiously examined the living conditions of our boys interned in Germany. If he found anything wrong about the way American soldiers are being treated by their Nazi guards, he certainly submitted his complaints to the German authorities and ~~also~~ at the same time notified our Government. He would have done the same thing, if he hadn't liked the setup in our P.W.C. In this event, the criticism of the Red Cross would have been come to the attention of Washington and Berlin -- which wouldn't have been so good for the reputation of Camp Crowder and -- even more important! -- for our buddies kept in Nazi camps: they would have been the ones to suffer from the inevitable retaliations.

But, happily, the prisoners in our P.W.C. have nothing to whine about; nor is the American officer in charge -- Major Francis E. Judkins -- dissatisfied with their conduct. The Major believes in ^{military} strict discipline but also in military fairness. "After all," he

says, "it's not a disgrace to be a prisoner of war. If it were, some of our finest men would be disgraced as well."

He regards and treats, therefore, the prisoners as soldiers and human beings -- not as criminals. The most effective method of avoiding trouble -- Major Judkins feels -- is, to keep the morale of the prisoners as high as possible. As long as they are contented, they will not be up to mischief: there will be no riots, no attempts to escape. That is why the German prisoners in this camp enjoy considerable privileges. They have their own canteen, and motion picture shows; they do a good deal of singing (a German choir is being organized); they have their library, or rather, the nucleus of a library consisting of a number of books donated by the Red Cross. Those few among them whose English is adequate are free to read American newspapers (including The Message).

The new P.W.C. chaplain -- Chaplain J.H. Plueger -- holds regular services -- delivering his sermons in the German tongue. Moreover, there are plans for a kind of evening school to be opened in the near future. Some of the prisoners with academic background will try to instruct their comrades in such important matters as the English language, American history, stenography, mathematics.

But if the evenings and holidays are devoted to instruction and recreation, the six days of the week are tough working days -- in the P.W.C. as in all other parts of this post. The prisoners -- besides taking care of their own barracks and kitchen -- handle all kinds of chores, except such jobs that would be of direct help to the Allied war effort. They work in the motor pool and in the Quartermaster laundry; they busy themselves cleaning ditches, salvaging lumber, cutting wood, repairing machinery or pieces of

furniture. Their pay is settled by the Geneva Convention -- 80 cents for every working day; 10 cents for each day without work. The prisoners, however, do not receive any cash; they are paid in the form of coupons, for which they can purchase articles in their canteen. A certain proportion of the coupons (if they save any) may be exchanged for good American money, when the War is over and the prisoners are released.

That wished-for day, when it arrives at last, will find the German prisoners of Camp Crowder in excellent physical shape. Their food rations are the same as those of the U.S. soldiers (with German cooks preparing the prisoners' meals). They have their own infirmery personnel -- supervised by doctors from the Station Hospital who pay regular visits to the P.W.C. Two dentists are at their disposal -- Lt. and a German assistant. Undoubtedly, as far as their physical well-being is concerned, they are better off here than they would be in their homeland or at one of the European fronts. As for their mental condition, it can only be hoped that the moral and intellectual climate of this country may somehow, gradually, affect their muddled, misguided minds -- even if their only impression of the American way of life is this Prisoner of War camp: a fine example of American efficiency and American kindness.