

Philipp Wittmann paper, January 1915 – 19 May 1919

MLMSS 261 / Box 5 / Item 46

Hywell, 14 September 1920

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Monrepos

St John the Baptist's Day [24 June]. On this [indecipherable] morning, which I shall always remember, I saw Miss Amalia for the first time alone and unclad at the Nymph's Pond. I had just shed my clothes behind the shrubs and was about to jump into the water when I saw her, nestled into her white coat, emerge under the apple trees a short distance away and stroll towards the water's edge.

Will that coat drop to the ground at last, at long last, I wondered and held my breath in trepidation. As if my wish had the power of immediate self-fulfilment, her left hand began unfastening the coat's clasp above the swell of her breasts while the right hand freed her auburn hair of its confinement. The coat slowly slid to the ground so that it looked like her white body was rising out of it, as if onto a pedestal, and at the same time her hair was falling onto her shoulders and over her breasts, robbing my eyes of

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part of their catch. But not for long! With a sudden jerk of her head she throws the red-glowing opulence of her hair over her shoulders to their rightful place at the back, and the masterfully shaped curves of her body reveal themselves in full. The liberated limbs stretch in sheer delight and extend themselves towards the early glow of the morning, which tinges her pink. The slender arms extend high above her head, which is slightly tilted backwards, as if in unbridled lust. Taut and full her youthful breasts rise from the delicately shaped body, like two floating moons above the earth. On strong and well-proportioned legs she basks in the early light, like Eve, like the very first woman.

I, on the other hand, filled with pleasure, trembled behind the bushes and heard my own blood race through my veins while my eyes drank and drank from the pulsating chalice of her naked limbs.

St John the Baptist's Eve. [ie. the night of St John the Baptist's Day]
It was deep into the night when I woke.

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A diagonal ray of the late moon fell through the shutters across my living rooms onto the door, where I thought I could make out a figure. I strained my eyes to better see and lay still and paralysed in anticipation of what was to come. Now the figure detached itself from the dark frame of the door and floated closer to my bed. — "Who is it," I sighed as if smothered by an incubus. — "It's me, my friend!" — The voice was sweet and melodious and I recognised it well. It was the voice of Miss Amalia, the one I had so often heard in my dreams. — "Have you come to see me," I asked, and suddenly all the anxiety was gone. — "I have come to see you," the voice answered softly and full of desire. — I shuddered and yanked myself up from the bed. There she stood in the moonlight, as if bathed in limelight, that delicious body I had espied early that morning at the pond. The white coat draped her blooming limbs tightly and yet revealingly.

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The left hand fingered the golden clasp that fastened the transparent fabric across the swell of the breasts. The right hand, held high above the head, loosened the mass of tresses. The auburn wealth streamed down her back, past her white shoulders, and from the slowly sinking coat rose, naked and shimmering, moonlit Eve, the first woman.

I extended my arms in a hitherto never known and fathomless desire, and with a deep sigh the whole white and swelling female magnificence fell into my arms.

Cool and hugging arms pulled me down. Silky and fragrant hair enveloped me and her, and the moonlight tucked us in.

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Hong Kong, January 2015

I have decided to start a diary, but first I want to recap what has transpired since the beginning of my imprisonment. A good friend has lent me his diary for that purpose.

So, on 5 August 1914 the "Princess Alice" set anchor in Manila. I went post haste to the German consulate where, after a medical, I was told to proceed to Tsingtan. They had factored in some business, so I had 2 days to check out Manila. The company's managers hosted a fine farewell dinner on the last night, and on 7 August I boarded the "Manchuria". All had to pay their own fare it at all possible (we were to get it back in Shanghai) and so I was left with very little [money]. For

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reasons not known to me the departure was delayed by one day, but the journey itself was smooth and we arrived outside Hong Kong harbour earlier than anticipated. It took quite some time until we were allowed to enter the harbour proper, and right away a contingent of English officials came aboard and asked all first-class passengers to reveal their destinations and nationalities. An hour later a higher-ranked officer asked us Germans to reconvene, asked us if we had weapons or ammunitions with us and then declared that he was forced to take us into Hong Kong for further questioning. We were to take along an overnight bag. So off we went and in a rather large building we were left waiting for a long time before being told that the interrogation would take place the next day. We now had to march on, guarded by heavily armed black and white soldiers, and were simply put into prison. The

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conditions there were appalling and my cell mate Flügge, who had just celebrated his birthday, cursed the English rather loudly. Next morning the interrogation indeed took place and how badly it ended is clear from the fact that we were detained as prisoners of war. Thus I had no chance to do anything for my fatherland and instead have to sit out the war here in Hong Kong. If only I could have stayed in Manila and done some work for myself! I tried hard in those first few days to effect my release, even showed the wound on my arm, but to no avail. To top it all, my suitcase vanished from the Manchuria and despite my protestations I was not recompensed for any of it. Only when I was left with nothing but my swimming shorts and a shirt, Leslie handed me some garments from the captured German steamers.

Well, yes, those were some gruelling days back then,

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out there on Stonecutters Island, and I certainly would not want to live through them again. The food was halfway bearable, but the lack of washing facilities was something else. All we had was a bucket of water that served both for drinking and cleaning ourselves, and once an Englishman's dog drank from it and we could not even chase his off. On the 2nd day it rained quite heavily and so we tried to seize the chance to wash ourselves, but we were forbidden to step outdoors without any clothes on. Gradually our circumstances improved, we were even allowed to go for swims on the other side of the island (the prison camp itself was just a small, heavily fenced-off, barren space) and the inadequate tents were replaced with huts made from bamboo and palm fronds. On the other hand, the number of prisoners had quickly doubled and tripled. In the beginning, we had to surrender our table knives, and even our

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penknives, each evening, and the whole camp was once painstakingly searched.

Upon our request, we were allowed to get the newspaper so as to keep halfway informed, although in those days the English were still lying shamelessly. We also built a canteen to be able to stock fruit and other essentials, and it promptly also stocked beer and whisky. The canteen was run by Adolf. – To protect us from the mosquitos we had been provided with nets, but it was the numerous ants that would give us a lot of grief. In the evening we usually gambled, and often during the day as well because in those days nobody thought about studying; besides it was far too hot. The first few weeks I just idled away and it didn't even occur to me to write home, but then I finally pulled myself together and wrote Herta a letter in English,

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in which I also asked her to inform my father; after all, who would have translated it for him!

Every so often a typhoon came perilously close, and just for experience I wouldn't have minded one, but I lost all such inclination on 3 September, when as a result of one we had to move, heavily laden and bogged down by wind and rain, to the other end of the island, to a small and solid structure. Luckily for our camp, the typhoon retreated in time.

On 12 September they let us leave Stonecutters Island and move into a new camp in Hung Hom, which brought various improvements. So as to sleep above ground we originally built our own bedsteads out of bamboo, but they did not last long. Most people then simply hammered 4 stakes into the ground. What gave us no joy at all was the establishment

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of a work roster, from which at first I tried to get exempted because of the "inability" of my right hand, but I was forced to participate and it hasn't really hurt me. – There was always great joy when we heard about the feats of the "Emden" and our U-boats, and quite often some patriotic gatherings ensued. – Fischer speaks Hindustani and he once was told by a guard that the Indians harboured friendly feelings for us, that the sun was shining in Germany and that they would get us warm clothing and money for the winter.

Although we didn't like the constant addition of new prisoners, we did allow ourselves some delicious fun in that we searched them one by one, as they came in, and in a most extensive manner, too. Broeg had donned a tunic for the purpose, inquired about each

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man's history of illness and flat feet, had him show his tongue, and finally hung the poor guy with all his baggage onto the meat scale. Each also was fingerprinted with the help of ink, a

task fittingly executed by Finger. – Around this time we began partitioning our tents by erecting enclosures; e.g., I and Weinschenk and Peter erected one, and it does make communal life a bit easier. On my wall I promptly nailed Herta's photograph, for which I even made a bamboo frame. – Writing home became a no-no at some stage because we read on the noticeboard that mail to Germany and Austria-Hungary was no longer being forwarded. On 15 October I received a long letter from my dear Herta, mailed on 30 July, in which she told me about her great fear of the war. Well, things happened as they were meant to happen and her letters nowadays are a lot more optimistic.

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In the meantime, the Germans in Manila collected money [on our behalf] and transmitted the sum of 3000 dollars. That was really nice of them, and although several disputes erupted in the camp over this, the initially distributed 10 dollars [per head] would have benefited rather a few destitute prisoners of war. I was one of them since I had indeed spent all my money by that stage, but shortly thereafter I received, without asking for it, 100 dollars from my company. That was a huge relief for me! The government had already provided some items for winter, although only to those without money; but this way I managed to get myself some change of clothes again.

During October, for reasons unknown to us, delivery of the newspaper was stopped, which resulted in some trying to get hold of it secretly, and they succeeded.

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Which made it all the more enjoyable to read of the Emden's successes, etc and to give the English the runaround. On the last day of October all Germans still residing in Hong Kong had been imprisoned, and it was clearly England's infamous intention to usurp their businesses even though at the beginning of the war [the Germans] had been assured that they would be left in peace. What could we do? In the prison camp itself they came up with ever more rules to our disadvantage, e.g., by removing the coolies who had cleaned our dishes and done other chores.

From the war front we heard the agreeable fact that Turkey was fighting on our side, but rather depressing was the news that on 8 November our beautiful Tsingtan had fallen into the hands of the Japanese. Even more painful for us was the destruction

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of our courageous “Emden”, but no point complaining, and anyway the main thing was the comforting feeling that things were all right at home. Thus merriment soon took over again, and the evening shows staged by the “Artistic Circle Hung Hom” found undivided acclaim. We particularly enjoyed Plücker's song recitals and also the newly established ladies' band [sic. Apparently this was a mixed-gender camp.]

In early December we finally got wooden floors and shortly thereafter real glass panes for the windows instead of the paltry louvres. The arriving cold spell made it absolutely necessary. – A very peculiar prisoner arrived in those days, said to be the former Turkish admiral and grand vizier Kiamil Pascha, a stately old man of 79 with a long white beard. He was the fourth Turk in the camp.

On 5 December I happily received

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Herta's reply to my letter of August. Since then I have been writing to her regularly, and in German too, for which I have special permission.

For Christmas, spectacular preparations were made and I don't think anybody disliked what was offered. The food was particularly well done, and the recitals and performances were splendid. Even the married women, who for the first time were allowed to enter the camp, hugely enjoyed the festival. For my part, I joined the newly formed men's choir. It was also highly thoughtful of the consul of Swatan to send us a huge amount of apples, mandarines, oranges and nuts.

Even more boisterously was the New Year's Eve party, a very elegant masked ball with the most inventive costumes for both genders. At 11:45 there was a lantern polonaise, at midnight the speech with a triple hurrah to the Kaiser,

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and then all sang the national anthem. At 7 a.m. next day we commemorated the beginning of the new year back home and the men's choir rendered the Dutch hymn ["We Gather Together", a hymn of Dutch origin]. It goes without saying that we all wished not to be here next year, and we rang in New Year's Day with a boozy morning pint concert. The members of the band were festively decked out in seaman's uniforms.

[End of the recap marked by a curlicue]

Now it's the 4th of January. From now on I will keep a regular diary and I want to mention right off that 2 recent letters from Herta have been destroyed, all I received were the empty envelopes. What ever did she write?!

24 January 1915

This Sunday it's Herta's birthday; I have sent her a letter and an extra postcard with all the signatures of those partaking in the cocoa gatherings, which will surely please her. – Other than that camp life has become rather quiet. At one point we registered a biting cold of 6° [not clear if minus or plus, Celsius or Fahrenheit], but as soon as the sun comes out it's quite comfortably warm. – These days I laid hand on an interesting reading matter, a report by Sauerbeck, Schannermann, and Hoffmeister, who travelled aboard the coal steamer Rio Pasig in search of our South Sea fleet. They at least have done their utmost to serve the homeland and have seen and experienced a lot.

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28 January

The Kaiser's birthday was celebrated sumptuously. To avoid a dispute with the English we refrained from the reveille, but no sooner the working hours were over we went off to the grand final of the 2 best soccer teams, which ended in a tie. After lunch we started the pentathlon, in which I participated. At 7 p.m. the party began. Jebesen gave a good speech, followed by a triple hurrah to the Kaiser and the national anthem. Then [indecipherable] awarded the prizes. Our tent was the most successful; Bähr alone received 6 prizes, 5 of which for first place, Dr Beusel got 4, I followed with 2, and Weinschenk, Wietfeld and Peter got one each. A pity we didn't also win the tug-of-war, but we came second. Schannermann made some very pretty diplomas for the winners, which were handed out along with commemorative medals. A very well-performed stage play concluded the evening.

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29 January

Since yesterday there have been some interesting news for the camp, albeit not cheerful ones. First the cook told us that the rations had been cut by a third, apparently as a result of an inquiry from London as to how the English prisoners in Germany fared. Then the camp commander somehow learned that we were always informed about the war events, so the policeman who is overseeing the Chinese labourers now searches every coolie departing or entering the camp and finds one carrying the latest newspaper. A huge turmoil ensues and the poor chap gets arrested and imprisoned. But they didn't find out who is behind it, and a few hours later the same newspaper reached the camp anyway, and in the same manner. Now we are not getting any beer until further notice and we are not allowed out onto the playground.

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31 January

How the newspaper reaches us remains undetected and we keep getting it. Last night the matter even prompted a good joke. While the cork club "Hes em bi Di" [no idea what this means] is holding its meeting I'm playing bridge and suddenly we hear mad laughter so we go outside to have a look. A chap has installed a life-size puppet on the roof of the new dining tent carrying in one hand the latest newspaper. The Indian guard nearest to it shouts several times and even threatens to shoot it down, but eventually the new English sergeant fetches the thing amid much hullabaloo. – After a few cold days the weather has changed again and I'm sweating profusely despite doing nothing. I think I have to participate in some sports action, the scales indicate 86 kg, which means I already have gained more than 10 kg.

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2 February

Today I was nicely surprised by a letter from Herta (not just an empty envelope this time) with good news. Furthermore, they distributed the cigars that had been sent by various firms in Manila, particularly by Helios, and I got 2 packs at 150 pieces each, one from Helios and one especially from Weirich. I now have to dispatch a few notes of thanks and at the same time ask my designated work mate Klock to send me a few garments from my suitcases and to air out my black suits. – From now on, the camp commander only allows us \$10 a week, so we have to tighten the belt considerably.

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7 February

To this day, Sunday, we have not been getting any beer because of the newspaper matter. And now there was a new provocation for the English. The matter evolved like this. The sports ground was to be fenced off with barbed wire, and on Thursday tents 1 & 2 were ordered to ram in the stakes. But everybody refused on the grounds that it amounted to fortification work. We decided to present the matter to the American consul but Leslie pre-empted us, and already the next day we had a letter from the consul telling us that we were in the wrong and ordering us to do the job. To avoid further disputes we began with the ramming yesterday, led by the Hong Kong chiefs, who really are exempt from work. It seems the gentlemen are worried that more than just the beer supply will be stopped. – Yesterday a new prisoner arrived

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in camp and he informed us in detail about the beginning of the war. He left there [the diarist does not mention where] at the end of August and, equipped with a Swiss passport, was able up to now to do his job, travelling the east for a Tientsin company. While setting sail he was caught by a French police commissioner whom he knew from Tientsin. That's what you call

bad luck. — For a change, the camp band entertained us with a special concert last night, complete with café-type catering. Everybody quite liked it.

14 February

The past week has been generally quiet. We complained to the camp commander that we could not manage on \$5 a week, especially not the mess-room patrons, which includes me, and so he granted us \$7 a week. — On Wednesday, I fell

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while playing soccer and damaged my knee, so I now have to hobble about with a stiff leg. I guess I will concentrate on playing fistball once I have recovered. — Yesterday I finally received compensation for the unused ticket Hong Kong–Shanghai; it was \$66. I had to wait long enough, already in early November I had sent the ticket to the company for compensation. — Lately war news made it into camp through secret codes, but they must have got wind of it because suspicious mail is now simply confiscated before it reaches us. Rittig now has adopted the simple means of having his wife in Shanghai writing the news with lemon juice, and it seems to work.

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16 February

The newspaper reports that the blockade of England will begin on the 18th of the month. We are all thrilled by it and our hopes for an imminent release have risen rapidly. — Today marks the end of the Chinese New Year, which meant a string of jubilation days for the yellow men. We often heard shots from across the road, and quite often we lost sleep. — The weather has once more turned cold and miserable, which doesn't do much for working outdoors. By the way, today we had to work on the sports ground fence from 8:30 to 11:30 instead of the usual 1.5 hours.

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18 February

The recent tranquillity in the camp has abruptly turned into great turmoil. On several occasions there has been talk of escaping, and how to go about it, but because of the sizeable distance to the border and our lack of local knowledge, nothing came of it. But suddenly yesterday morning, after the roll call, we heard rumours that a certain Smith had escaped. Fortunately, the English sergeant had not noticed during muster, and did not in the evening either, so several of us who had made preparations were to escape at 10 pm. Obviously a plan had been formed after all because it takes a lot of preparation to dig a tunnel from the dining tent, underneath the stage, under the whole barbed-wire fencing right through to the railway tracks. The 6th evening show was about to conclude and they were playing the final tune, "Auf der Alm" [On the Mountain Pasture] when the first contingent of prisoners broke loose. Budzig, Starck & Kahrs

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were already outside and it was Broeg's turn. Unfortunately, the guard came near the tunnel exit right at the moment when Broeg was about to hoist himself out of it. The Muslim shouts a couple of times, cocks the rifle and shoots three times into the dark hole. Broeg had slid back at the first sound but his handbag, which he had already placed outside, was left behind. Once the shots rang out, of course, all guards were alarmed, and soon the handbag was sequestered and the tunnel was guarded extra heavily. Shortly before 10:45 we heard the bugle call. Several Indians were posted inside the camp, ready to shoot. Lt. Dryer, accompanied by Thomas, 2 white soldiers (one holding a rifle, the other a lantern) and an

Indian officer armed with a revolver, did the muster. After that things turned quiet and we went to bed, but at about 01:30 we were awoken by another bugle call

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and had to do another muster. The same people, but this time headed by Leslie in civilian clothes, walked down the rows and, as each name was called out, looked at each individual very thoroughly. This took quite some time and we were freezing in our thin sleepingwear. Broeg's bag, of course, did him in and despite his denials he was taken to the calabash. This morning, unfortunately, we heard that the first escapee had been captured right as he transited the border and was returned to the camp in chains. We know nothing about the other 3 escapees [according to page 27 there should only be 2 left] but it is clear that the English are searching far and wide. Several military convoys have passed by.

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19 February

This diary, along with many others, has been hidden between the fronds of the roof since yesterday. They say Hong Kong Harbour is shut off until the escapees are captured. We can easily see that from the three red [balls?] that have been strung up. Our beautiful stage was completely dismantled yesterday, and "Meier" was particularly diligent in helping, and the tunnel has been blocked inside and outside. Lots of rubbernecks and onlookers have gathered over by the railway tracks. This morning the hearing against Sohrmann began, the head of tent 8, about Smith's escape. He will be transferred to the Hong Kong gaol for the time being. We also heard some talk about a Singapore mutiny, during which several English officers and a number of others were slaughtered. We hope it is true.

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21 February

Today it's a Sunday in the true meaning of the word! Everybody is milling about in the warm breeze outside and discussing the latest events. Through a letter from Mrs Rittig we have heard some good news from the war front; the lemon-juice ink works a treat. Our numbers have also multiplied considerably in that 76 men, all defenders of Tsingtan and wounded in the process but now recovered, joined us yesterday. Their leader is a dashing lieutenant of the reserves by the name of Marcks. Now the camp is rife with talk, and no shortage of information. The soldiers smuggled some German magazines into the camp and of course we are devouring them and our eyes revel at the sight of the German uniforms. Because our band was forbidden to play while the soldiers arrived, we decided to have an open-air concert in the evening, which

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took place with great success. – Meanwhile the great escape has ended miserably. All three were captured in the night from Friday to Saturday and gaoled in Hong Kong. All up, 9 of us are now there, the four escapees, three who jeered the guards long the tunnel, and Broeg and Sohrmann. All of us inmates of tent 5 were interrogated individually about the Broeg matter, by the way, and it seems he is making a huge effort at playing the innocent.

25 February

The great escape is not quite finished yet, there are more investigations every day. So as to give the sentry on the west side of the camp a full view of the camp, the two long mess tents are being dismantled, the camp is extended by some 50 m, and new tents are erected there.

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Leslie even considered having all floorboards removed again, but thankfully the physician objected. But for the foreseeable future we will not receive any money, after they found Starck in possession of \$100. We are even banned from making music without explicit permission, what utter nonsense!

A compatriot, Ruby from Neustadt, gave me "De Pälzer Weltgeschichte" [presumably "The Palatinate World History", because the diarist probably forgot the f in Pfälzer) for a read, a fabulous little piece of work in local dialect that I enjoyed enormously.

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27 February

My birthday! Cheerfully I start my 23rd year since no doubt happier times will come again. I have ordered some cakes from the city to have with our coffees at lunchtime. At the same time I had a card sent to Herta. –

The great escape is now concluded after all; we were summoned to a roll call at the sportsground at 1pm, where Leslie, in the presence of the P.M., announced the verdicts. Smith, Budzig, Starck & Kahrs, and Broeg, get a 2-month gaol sentence, Sohrmann a fortnight, all without heavy labour. It doesn't strike me as much but I still deem it wrong. If you get a chance to escape it's practically your duty to seize it.

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3 March

It has been a day of great joy because we found out that our worst enemy, "Meier", is finally being removed. A new guy is doing the roll call. Leslie, too, is about to depart. – We were told a few days ago that the camp would get its own currency, and indeed, the first 50 were called up and received \$20 in various banknotes: 5, 10, 20, 40 & 50 cts, and 1, 5 & 10 \$. We will soon get beer again as well. A new comrade will arrive this afternoon; he was travelling from Java to the north but was arrested here despite a passport that the British had issued in Singapore. He is Austrian and has already spent 2 month in Colombo as a prisoner of war. He is carrying news from the Singapore Mutiny but unfortunately also from a less auspicious side event, namely that 5 men from the "Emden" who tried to

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escape the chaos have been shot. But overall the news from Europe were favourable for us. — For some time now we have been organizing language courses in camp; Steinhorst is teaching the soldiers English, Paschmann teaches French, Schuhmann Chinese, an Austrian Italian and Schneider Spanish. I'm part of the latter one. We are allowed to use the sportsground from 10–12 am and from 3–5 pm. Working hours have been reduced to $\frac{3}{4}$ hrs.

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14 March

It's Sunday today so I finally get a chance to continue the diary. Nowadays we work from 8.45 to 9 am, then we can use the sportsground until 11 am, and then it's studying for the Spanish course, which takes place from 1.30 to 2.30pm. Another round of sports after the coffee break, then dinner and some hands of Skat or bridge thereafter, while the lights are on. It's the best way to pass the boring evenings. Meanwhile I have received the things I ordered from Manila and so I could truly wear my Sunday best today. But how tedious and uncomfortable these collars and shirt cuffs after almost three-quarters of a year without them, at least I did. At the moment everybody is lapping up the contraband Echoes [presumably a newspaper] with their news from the front.

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22 March

In the past few days we have heard good news from the front; particularly the Dardanelles campaign [Gallipoli campaign] had our full attention since the English first reported a successful shelling of the Dardanelles but then gradually had to own up to, if not their defeat, at least their losses. Some of the details reached us via the famous citrus letters. Steinhorst received one that was particularly full of good news. Today, we even heard rumours of peace negotiations. We had a ball with our erstwhile Meier when we espied him promenading along the country road with his wife and treated him to a chorus of whistles and laughter. Blushing a deep purple he ran into the Office and then took off again.

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25 March

This dirty dog Meier! Randomly he denounced 3 men for having obscenely molested him during his constitutional, and I was rather amazed to hear that I was one of them. Rittig, Rost and I were summoned to the P.M. and were censured and only thanks to Lt. Dryer did we not end up in the calabash. To denounce 3 innocent men! Of course we all had had our laughs but who could blame us for it!

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30 March

I had the great pleasure of receiving 2 letters today, one from Herta, 8 pages long and full of interesting news, the other from Sannchen Heine, who got my address from Herta. The two write to each other, which both amazes and pleases me. None of the closer acquaintances has died in battle yet. I shall reply to Sannchen immediately, tell her how her letter pleased me and even more so her question if she might send me something. Herta even promised to knit a pair of stockings for me. – This morning on the sportsground they pronounced the sentence for Pieper, which was for 112 days in prison but was reduced to 74 days. He had been accused of deceiving the English government by carrying a Swiss passport.

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4 April. Easter 1915

I've been having a toothache for some days now so I'm not sleeping well. I shall soon see a dentist in Hong Kong, I'm already booked in. – Since Thursday we are allowed to drink beer again, but after the long withdrawal it doesn't taste particularly good. I also have secured a bottle of whisky from Plücker, the aidman, whom we call bandaidman and who has been bringing in the stuff in gallons for some time now, naturally clandestinely. – Yesterday the owners of a photographic camera were allowed outside to check on and clean the thing. But after the long storage in this humid climate the cameras were in a pretty desolate state, and some brought their lenses back to save at least those. At the time, the English had not confiscated the plates and films, so some of us are busy constructing cameras from cigar boxes and all are hoping to succeed.

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13 April

The camp has been equipped with splendid lighting all along its perimeter, at a height of about 3 metres, no doubt to prevent another great escape. The guards are no longer stationed in the central corridor but outside the barbed wire fence, while Indian officers patrol the camp throughout the night. – Meanwhile a few photographic attempts have been made. Taking pictures with the plates is halfway successful, but it's rather difficult to spool the films through the handmade cameras. – Last week, to break the monotony, we had a typhoon drill whereby we had to pack up everything and muster with light equipment. We found it rather

annoying, however, that right away, without a proper inspection, we were sent back to the tents to unpack. At least we can take all non-essential items to a building of the gun club for storage. – On 7 April, we

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celebrated Bähr's birthday with a boozy party and no shortage of pranks. The highlight was Peter's rage when he found that we had replaced his Weissmann cake with pebbles and potatoes. [No idea what a Weissmann cake is, or used to be] – They finally have finished the new dining tents; we had to eat outdoors and suspend the Spanish course for the time being. Eckerlein has used the freed-up space to plant flowers, which in this climate grow like crazy. The green patches also look terribly nice.

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16 April

Today, finally, I could go and see the Japanese dentist in the city. But I wasn't able to bring back much in the way of news; the coolies with their telegrams did not stand still long enough [?]. Except for Smith, who is ill, the escapees returned to camp yesterday, they got an extra 12 days' lenience. What they told us was astonishing and doesn't say much for the respectability and conscientiousness of the English officials. The Indians really carry on. After laying fire to the guards' house in the gaol's courtyard, they even offered the 4 escapees some rifles. – Our photographic activities are improving, we even managed to shoot some halfway decent films. But we have to be very careful: recently they confiscated von Blanckensee's binoculars while he was watching a ship approach.

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25 April

The day before yesterday I had the pleasure to receive a letter from Herta and it even included a photo. Today one arrived from my pal Kätchen, to which a highly amusing note was attached: "Tell your Miss Kätchen that she should not write such long letters and should not scribble into all the margins." Stamped: Examination Office of the Second Battalion at Ludwigshafen on the Rhine. To top it all, it turns out that she even knows Peter from somewhere; she asks to give him her regards and even asks him some questions. A funny coincidence indeed, although Peter says he doesn't know her. – We held a patriotic assembly last night, the first one in a long while, to mark Bismarck's 100th birthday; we hadn't been able to commemorate it on the day proper for lack of a suitable venue. Dr Beusel was the speaker.

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10 May

All's very quiet at the moment. There have been no hassles whatsoever since Meier and Leslie departed. The day before yesterday we even were given permission to receive newspapers again, so we are all reading with abandon. Before, we had to read quickly and furtively. There was great cheer when reading about the sinking of the Lusitania. – At 6.30 yesterday morning the choral society serenaded Kuby on his birthday and once again Plücker sang along. We now sing regularly for 3 hours each week and are rehearsing a lot of good stuff. There have been a few residential changes: Fischer relocated to the taipans in the back while Kretfeld, Dr Beusel & Bähr, along with Scheunemann & Schneider, took up residence in the abandoned Turkish tent. In exchange, the two war volunteers Wiese & Lorenz have moved in with us.

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22 May

A fellow inmate, called Hauler, tried to shed his shackles yesterday while visiting the dentist but he was recaptured last night and imprisoned. Broeg, too, ended up in the calabash yet again because, against all warnings, he had installed an electric lamp but was found out by an Indian officer. Von Blanckensee was thus released 3 days early from his stint [to make room for Broeg]. – We are enduring a colossal heat and to make the stay in the tent a bit more bearable I have taken the erstwhile table top, which I fashioned myself, and attached it above my head, just like a punkah. – A new kind of sport is being played in the camp, including by me, and it's hockey. Our guards have been strengthened with 25 Hong Kong volunteers this week, and towers have been erected in two corners of the camp, manned by a white guard each. The barbed wire around the camp has been fortified and is also significantly higher.

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5 June

Today I'm tending to my diary with a black eye, stemming from yesterday's hockey match. The ball hit me squarely in the right eye, although it didn't do further damage. I was compensated by the evening mail, which brought 2 letters from Herta, and all is well at home. A few days earlier I had received a postcard from her with [indecipherable], which I liked. We also enjoyed a lecture by lieutenant-colonel Marcks about the defence and taking of Tsingtan, to which the Japanese contributed a huge amount of pictures and photographs. – With much dismay we heard about Italy's entry into the war [on the Allied side], but we still hope for a favourable outcome, even if it may take longer now. We are not discouraged. The recapture of Przemyśl, reported in today's newspaper,

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was greeted with great cheer. The English carry only minor articles, a sign that they have little good news to report from the war. – The day before yesterday we celebrated Peter's birthday, and amply so, I had quite a hangover. Other than that it's quiet here, except for a rumour that we are to be deported to Australia, but it's very uncertain and I certainly don't wish for it.

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27 June

Today I wrote a letter to Herta and added a caricature that Wiese made of me. I'm sure Hertchen will enjoy it if it ever gets there. Almost like an anniversary of my departure we had a choral concert last night, a Saturday, which was a huge success. Among others, we also heard "Tomorrow, my Love, the journey begins ..."
Last week, unannounced, they searched my luggage and I still don't know why. It has happened to several of us and nobody knows what they are looking for.

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11 July

Hurrah! The company keeps sending me money, just as I wished, and yesterday I got \$100 with a friendly note. A few days ago a missionary joined us, who today, Sunday, celebrated the holy mass. Already last Sunday there was a church service, but very few attended, so now the soldiers have been ordered to attend. I also received another letter from Herta, dated 3 June, so for a change it has been forwarded quickly. Pal Ludwig in Buenos Aires also wrote. Last night, when we had been in bed for an hour, the typhoon alarm sounded, but we only had to show up for the roll call.

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13 July

I have to grab the diary for another entry, I'm in such a good mood today. Just then an Indian regiment walked past our camp on the rural highway, to the tune of a German march. Our hearts jumped for joy at the sound of it! – All week I have been getting mail every day and yesterday I even received a parcel from Heine Sannchen with 2 sausages in it. The delight was great. This morning I received a letter from Herta that she had sent already in May, but at least it included a photograph. – It's amusing to hear Dill patronise Wiese. He has Wiese's entire monthly allowance in safekeeping and dishes out 50 cents each day.

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29 July

I have just received another letter from Herta that made me all sentimental. I pity my poor Hertchen for having to wait so long for me; I'd love to return home to her no sooner the war ends, but to judge from the circumstances that won't be possible. Only just recently Klock informed me that Weirich will go on leave after the war and that a lot of work is awaiting me. I'm getting money whenever I need it, and also cigars regularly. Well, the remaining 3 years will pass quickly and I definitely won't stay on after that. – The heat has become totally unbearable and the heavy sweating is making a siesta impossible. Bathing 4–5 times a day is essential.

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I have shed 10–15 [pounds? The diarist uses an unfamiliar symbol] because of the heat but I feel good and strong. – The newspapers report favourable events from our point of view but an end to it is nowhere near. We had sad news because von Blanckensee's twin brother, already decorated with both the 1st and 2nd class Iron Cross and now a lieutenant, died in battle.

6 August

For the first time in ages we had construction work in our tent. This was because yesterday afternoon we got a new resident. He has been in gaol in Hong Kong for 2 years, apparently for forging cheques, and has

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been transferred to this camp. Peter now has my place and I share the most beautifully appointed space in the tent with Till. – Yesterday they distributed a Manila donation of cigars and cigarettes and each received 33 pieces of the former and 150 pieces of the latter; for the penniless a truly splendid gift. Last Saturday we had a typhoon alert and had to pack up; the typhoon lingered all day within 300 miles of Hong Kong. Hopefully none will find its way here this summer; we can do without the slightly cooler weather under the circumstances. – At last I had mail from my brother Fritz, a letter the day before yesterday and 1 postcard with his picture today.

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7 August

We had been thrilled to track the colossal advance of our troops into Russia these past few days, and yesterday evening news of Warsaw's fall spread like a fire. Everybody figured that this called for a drink, which resulted in the canteen virtually being stormed and the beer being sold out within a quarter of an hour.

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18 August

Emperor Franz Joseph's birthday today. Unfortunately the P.M. prohibited any kind of patriotic shindig to commemorate the august event and we had to make do with a celebratory speech. To make up for it, however, there shall be a concert next Saturday night. The English are really behaving a bit nastily here and elsewhere; for instance, Hong Kong's residents have been taking issue with the fact that the city's military band is playing frequently at the Kowloon casino, that is, right near the imprisoned "Huns". And the newspaper reports that in neutral Shanghai the English tramway is refusing to carry Germans on the grounds that it constitutes "trading with the enemy". It's hard to believe we have to read such stuff. We rather much read the smuggled-in "Woche, Jugend" ["Week, Youth"] and similar publications.

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22 August

For a long time I have been spared bad news, but today I had 2 letters from Herta with the sad message that her dear brother Günther died a hero's death on 21 June in Poland. Although one has to expect such news at any given time, I did not expect to be so saddened by it. Well, well, as rich as a human life can be, as suddenly it can be taken. I sure would have loved to fight for the home country but I'm still happy about the turn of events and that I shall be living on for my beloved Herta. – Today's newspaper reports about a big naval battle in the Gulf of Riga, where we are said to have lost no less than 11 warships, including the "Moltke", but I don't trust the report because it is from Petrograd and does not indicate any enemy losses.

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1 September

Today's mail brought me no less than 6 letters and a postcard, but while I'm pleased about the good news from Herta I am rather unpleasantly surprised by what Kätchen writes. When I departed I surely did not utter a word that would have fuelled any hopes for the future, and to boot she would have heard via Heene Sannchen how I stand with Herta, and now suddenly this sentimental love poem with this intimate greeting: with the most heartfelt kisses from your Kate! It looks like I need to send a few clear-cut words her way to end this story once and for all. The poem, by her aunt in Dresden, is not even all that bad, but it would only be fitting if it came from Herta. To immortalise it, here it is:

[The next two pages are taken up by the poem, which can be said to be somewhat florid but rather repetitive)

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5 September

A fire erupted in the camp today, which caused quite a bit of turmoil. It originated in tent 1, I happened to see it through my window, but fortunately the camp's fire brigade was there in no time and extinguished it before it could spread. –

I have used the siesta to re-read all letters from Herta. I have a quite a number of them by now and have great fun reading them all over again.

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6 October

I haven't written a word in a whole month because so little of note happened. Today I am a bit saddened by the departure of Dr Drouven, who along with Father Freche has been

released and will board the Mongolia to America. The choral society farewelled him with the beautiful song "At long last ..." Ah well, I wonder when the bells will toll for us, telling us: Free!!! Herta has told me that she received that first caricature and loved it, but I was a bit taken aback by her comment that she now has a [male] friend, whom she even escorted to Lادينen one Sunday. Not sure why this upsets me so but I am pleased to hear her assurance that she won't do it again. Last Sunday I sent off a second caricature, again drawn by Wiese,

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showing me gobbling up the tinned food that Herta sent. What I liked best about her parcel were the cigars (100 pieces of the Spielratten brand), which were most tasteful but are all gone by now. –

The new English chief, the camp commander, seems to be a lot more reasonable than his predecessor; he has agreed to a stage and also showed up for Saturday night's farewell concert for Dr Drouven.

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28 October

The first time in a long time, and hopefully the last time, we had to pack up our things because of a typhoon alert. Fortunately, the typhoon turned into another direction and we did not have to leave.

Last Friday, to celebrate the birthday of our Empress, we held a concert made up of songs and music. Towards the end, once again the Mayor showed up with Bently and an officer named Hamilton, who is a relative of the commander of the English troops in the Dardanelles. Generally, the news from the war front are still favourable for us, but nonetheless it would be great to see an end to it! Waiting around this damned long is horrible. I'm using up a lot of money and probably have to earn it back afterwards. If only I could duck out of service!

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31 October

No sooner the last typhoon has bypassed us than the next one was announced yesterday, one that could have turned into a huge threat for Hong Kong. Already in the morning we were ordered to pack up, but the storm never made it into the 300-mile zone until evening. In its lieu a gale-force wind came up that threatened to flatten our living quarters. Some tents were already near collapse and the roofs had come off the guard towers. But then, thinking that the danger had passed, we sat down to a hand of bridge when suddenly we were ordered to prepare for departure, off to Gun Club Hill. The typhoon had by then come inside the 300-mile zone. In several units and heavily guarded we were brought to the large, barren buildings that were to serve as our night camp. My bones still hurt from having to spend a long, sleepless night on the hard concrete floors. In addition,

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2 or 3 of the sailors were drunk and for the longest time made a lot of noise and with their English tirades behaved abominably. Fortunately, the storm abated over night and the typhoon took off elsewhere so we were able to return to camp at around 9am. I hope this was the first and last relocation, uncomfortable as it was. To brighten things up a bit I received a nice letter from Herta yesterday.

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5 November

Because of a looming typhoon we are sitting here once again with our things packed up. Even if the storm won't make it here all the way, it did bring stormy rains that render our anything but wind-proof tents extremely uncomfortable. But let's hope we don't have to move again! –

I had another really saddening bit of news the other day: my best friend, Richard Duttenhöfer, has died. Herta and Heene Sannchen informed me simultaneously. And he didn't even die in battle, but from a gunshot through his neck while he was sitting in the trenches and having coffee. I will write at once to his parents and convey my sincerest condolences, and I will also ask them for a photo of Richard.

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9 December

It's been a long time since I added anything to this diary, even though there might have been a few noteworthy events, but one does become more and more phlegmatic. The latest news is that we were allowed to have our pictures taken by a Chinaman. There was a lot of cheer that we would now be able to send off photos when unexpectedly, by order from London, the whole matter was vetoed and called off. Yesterday, the Mayor did consent to the photo shoot after all, but nobody is allowed to send off his pictures. Ah well, we will have to store them for now, even though I would have loved to send some postcards. We also learned that the painted Christmas cards that we sent off in October have all and sundry been embargoed in England. Which is a pity because I had put a particular effort in recreating the drawing that Wiese once made of me. And I sure doubt that my latest letter to Herta will ever reach her since I mentioned something about the photo shoot and also included another caricature. I'd be extremely sorry if the letter got lost given that I wrote it especially for her birthday. Last week I received 3 letters from her, all with good news. Fritz, too, wrote again and included a picture of Richard's grave. – As last year, we are preparing early for the Christmas party. Eight days ago we also held the birthday party for the choral society, and how many others have now celebrated their second birthday here. Just as well that the prospect of peace is gaining traction.

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21 December

I've had a lot of mail this past week, among others 3 letters and 1 parcel from Herta. There was also one dating back to August that explained, sadly, why a recent letter of mine to Leermann came back with the note: Deceased. –

The previously announced Christmas parcel from Manila has indeed arrived and brought us no less than 47 tins with various foodstuffs and 550 cigars. Really quite considerate of the company! – A particular treat proved to be the large cigars, handmade by Koop, that came with Herta's parcel.

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26 December

Christmas 1915 is now behind us as well. Last year the celebrations were a lot more interesting, not least because it was all so new, and this year it was all rather civilised. Yesterday afternoon, during the field service, we of the men's choir sang accompanied by the whole orchestra. Last night's play, "Mister Senator", was truly excellent and will be given again tonight so that as many as possible get to see it. They did the same with the past two plays, a fortnight ago and 4 weeks ago, much to everybody's delight. Of course, the stage is rather more luxurious than you would expect in a prisoner-of-war camp.

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3 January 1916

As promising as the new year started, that is, with wine and bubbly, as fast and inexorably came the bad news that we will be shipped off to Australia in the near future, and this time for good since the Mayor himself told us. It's even reported in today's paper. What a shame! I'm sure we will never be treated as well as were treated here, not to mention the long and tedious voyage to that place down under where you get nothing but mutton. The whole camp is in uproar over it, particularly the Hong Kong people who view it as an English ploy to get rid off all German businesses in Hong Kong.

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6 January

No shortage of events in this young year! It's hard to believe but somebody informed the English that a few intended to escape and that the tunnel was completed. Of course the English right away began searching for it and had 40 Indians dig a trench behind the loo. When it became clear that the diggers were about to hit the tunnel, Hannig and Bücking went to the Mayor and showed him the spot within the loo from there the tunnel ran off. They also confessed to being the culprits. At first nothing more happened until, suddenly, yesterday Göpfert, Breithaupt and Driebe were taken to the detention barracks. The old loo is no longer usable and its stead a new one was erected next to the tennis court, but it's so primitive it

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defies description. Just a small tarpaulin in the front and on the side, on top and to the back it's wide open. And of course it has been raining dogs since yesterday morning. If these conditions prevail, maybe leaving the Hong Kong camp behind won't be so bad after all. To top it all, I have contracted a stomach cold [sic] during the New Year's festivities and am now suffering quite a bit.

8 January

Despite the uncomfortable conditions right now we could not help but burst into tears of laughter this morning when the Chinamen carried the frame of the old loo to the new loo, and exactly at the moment when the band began playing a march in honour of Lt-Col Marcks, whose birthday it is. The troop looked comical

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enough, and even the coolies had to laugh. Otherwise it's become quite hectic in camp, every few minutes there is new message on the board and all day long people are being summoned to the Mayor. I myself had recently written a letter to the Mayor and given him the details about my trunk's disappearance. He responded that he would be willing to attest to its disappearance so that I could claim damages after the war. That bastard of Leslie! Just "lost" my earlier correspondence and reported instead that I had arrived in camp with his Japanese hand luggage. Well, maybe I can achieve something after the war. – These days the book "Ayesha" was handed from man to man, an extremely interesting account of how Lieutenant von Mücke managed to manoeuvre his landing crew through all manner of perils back to the home country.

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21 January

This is our fifth day on board the "Empire" and I have not had a chance to continue my diary. Well, I won't forget this voyage in a hurry! The last days on shore were marked by chaos. First we were told that we were only allowed our hand luggage, then they said we could bring everything along, and finally it was that each man could bring a hundredweight and that the

rest would be shipped at the sender's risk. Chairs are not allowed on board. I have now consigned my chair along with the rest of my stuff for shipment, having been told that furniture items would be taken on board until they ran out of space. Maybe we find our chairs when we arrive down under, maybe not. As for my missing trunk, the Mayor once more called me and told me that after my statement he had inquired in Hong Kong and had

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been told that he was not to bother himself with such old trivia and that all that was lost of ours would be chalked up against the loss of the Lusitania. Fabulous answer indeed! I shall later make a last attempt and present all my documents in the matter to the German government. If I'm lucky they will compensate me to some extent.

The last days in camp were not exactly pleasant. Some of us had already packed up and were defenceless when it suddenly turned rather windy and cold. Mustering 4–5 times in the span of 24 hours, even in the middle of the night, was commonplace. The canteen was sold down on Friday the 14th and if you had not made provisions, you had to make do with what come out of the kitchen. The day of departure, set for Monday the 17th, slowly crept closer. First thing on that morning we had to return all government property, a horde of coolies lugged our trunks to the railway carriages, from where they were carted to the dock. At 3 in the afternoon it was our turn. In three units and heavily guarded we marched off to the back of the sportsground and from there to the vessel. We were instantly ordered below deck, all of us, into a ridiculously small room at the bow. No sooner was the last man below deck than the steam whistle rang out and the ship was unmoored. We all sang "Die Wacht am Rhein" and "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles". We caught a last glimpse of our camp through the porthole and then began to inspect our room. Attached to the sidewalls were long tables that can be folded down to accommodate 14 men. The hand luggage was to be stowed

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overhead. We had not long been at it when the steamer left the harbour entry and began rolling more and more. Already the first man got sick, a few others followed suit and before long about half of us were sick. We fetched the hammocks and soon enough all the sick men were hanging in them. Because of the heavy swell we had to close all portholes, and the air soon became nearly unbearable. Even I abstained from the food when it was meted out, although I held up quite well. Like herrings we were squeezed next to each other and I spent this first night, like so many to come, absolutely sleepless. On the morning of the 18th I felt rather queasy but I managed to recover in the fresh breeze on the promenade deck. Here the whole portside part is set up for us, and thanks to the

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constant north-east monsoon we enjoy nice, fresh air. In the mornings, all prisoners have to come up here so that the room below can be cleaned and so one could behold a lot of sad-looking faces on this first morning. I mean you have to pity the poor seasick, but they are still funny to look at. Especially Peters was in a very sorry state. In the next few days most of them recovered and the swell became more moderate. Yesterday afternoon the first few songs could be heard and by the evening, when the band played, the spirits were audibly lifted. The only problem: the food is not very good and there's not enough of it. The washing facilities could be better, too. – We have seen various parts of the Philippines along the route and right now we are passing Zamboanga.

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25 January

Today I'm sitting on deck with a bit of a headache and am writing. Yet inexorably my brow is hot and the sweat is running. There is such a heat now that it's hardly bearable. At night, when I'm lying in my hammock, without any bed linen, of course, and with just a thin, short pair of underpants on, I think I'm melting. The tropical heat has never before felt so oppressive. It is compounded by the aftermath of my celebrating Herta's birthday, because I allowed myself a bottle of Australian wine and that surely didn't help the sweating. Beer is ridiculously expensive, a bottle costs 1 shilling. But people still spend quite a lot of money for drinks as witnessed the day before yesterday, on Sunday, during the [equatorial] line-crossing ceremony. That was a highly amusing affair on this uncomfortable voyage, and even though the ceremony itself is not to everybody's

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taste, seafaring tradition has it that nobody can skip it unless he has a very sound reason. Thus, as much as the conditions allowed it, several sailors had begun preparing for the rite. It was around 1:30 in the afternoon that the crossing of the line was ascertained and right away Neptune emerged and was given a list of the candidates for baptism, that is, of those who had crossed the equator for the very first time. They numbered 144. A few sailors had blackened themselves from head to toe and, standing in the tarpaulin pool full of water, were awaiting their victims. One after the other on the list was called up and had to sit on the edge of the pool to be baptised. This meant that the sailors first painted the chap's head with a colourful viscous paste while asking him various questions, but woe is him who opens his mouth because it would be stuffed with the paint-logged brush in no time. Then the baptisee had to swallow a pill but more often than not spat it right out again, being horribly foul-tasting. It consisted of flour baked with pepper and saltwater. Then they were administered a spoonful of medicine, taste-wise right up there with the pill, consisting of bitter lime and seawater. Then one of the sailors scraped off some of the paste on the chap's face with a huge wooden razor, to make room for a handful of ash. If he had long hair, they would try to cut it with wooden scissors of similar proportions, and then he was dunked into the water, head first, where the blacks made sure he got properly immersed before tossing him out again. Neptune then shook his hand and he was baptised. Everybody is to get a certificate of baptism.

It is interesting to observe how the English are hugely afraid of

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us and how the Mayor hardly ever dares venturing out from behind his wire fence. Everything is handed to us through the mesh, and even if you hurt yourself, you'll be treated through the mesh. They even pulled someone's tooth this way. The portside part of the promenade deck resembles a cage and from behind the bars a machine gun control the whole area.

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11 February

It seems that the worst of my captivity is yet to come, because the conditions we encountered here in Australia are worse than anything we could have imagined in Hong Kong. A year and a half ago to this day we were put behind bars, thinking that we would be free again within the year, and now we are here and still in captivity. But no use fretting, it will end one of these days and in the meantime it's best to make life as bearable as possible. My Hong Kong diary has been taken off me and I doubt I will ever see it again. It's a pity but I won't bother trying to re-write it and instead start afresh if anything strikes me as noteworthy.

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We mastered the trip alright, but I was unhappy to hear on the last day of it that I was not going to Trial Bay along with most of the merchants, but would be put into the main camp in Liverpool. On 2 February the steamship arrived in Sydney. By 2pm we had boarded the train that was already waiting and which brought us quickly inland. The ride lasted a bit more than an hour and was quite nice, but then we had to embark on a 5-mile march to the camp. Liverpool itself also hosts an Australian army camp and what we overheard while marching past were diatribes best not repeated. Some of the scoundrels even resorted to physical abuse, but having been briefed quite unequivocally we knew better than getting involved. Sodden with sweat and caked with dust we arrived in our camp, where the band serenaded us and

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numerous inmates cheered us. Upon inspecting my countrymen a bit closer, however, my spirits rather evaporated, because here you find incarcerated anybody and anything that the Australians ever laid hands on, and since the merchants were sent to Trial Bay and the naval officers and engineers to Berrima, the people are pretty ragtag. I immediately resolved to try to get away as fast as possible, but meanwhile I'm looking at it a bit differently. I don't have to mix with the masses and there are always enough reasonable people. Herrmann has found an old acquaintance here who helped us set up our quarters.

In the first few days the air was so dense with dust and dirt that you could not protect anything from it. Just as well that on the second day we were able to move into one of the newly erected barracks. We all have to procure our own beds, however – some show that is!

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It meant going to the woods with a carpenter, helping him fell some trees and logging them back to camp so that he could build our bed frames and a table and chairs. It made for a halfway homely room. The blankets we were given often turned out to be flea-infested, which caused some very unpleasant nights. To boot, there's the continuous buzzing from untold mosquitos. At least we have enough water and bathing facilities; in Trial Bay, from what I hear, fresh water is rather scarce. Overall, the advantage of the other camps lies merely in the more elite population and the absence of dust. Here we have a real theatre, and in a few days also a cinema, sportsgrounds, etc etc. We have an excellent little orchestra and regular concerts, wrestling and boxing matches, and inevitably also a gymnastic club and a choral society, and

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two bowling alleys. There are cafeterias with all sorts of beverages and bakery goods, but there is no booze to be had, which is just as well because it would lead to murder and battery. Even without it there is still enough rough play around; Hannig, for one, was drubbed in a bad show of retaliation, and Max Lorenzen was beaten to a pulp when word came from Trial Bay that he had been involved in the Hong Kong tunnel treason. I never would have thought him capable of it.

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23 February

Generally, I have found my stride here, but I think I need to take up sports again, otherwise I'll be getting big and fat in no time. – Today for the first time I received mail from Germany, a bit dated, but still enjoyable. It was a letter from Herta from early November and a card from Heene Sannchen from 14 July 1915. I have made some more inquiries about the vanished

diary and the money card [sic; could hardly have been a credit card] and actually did get them back, now I'm just waiting for the large luggage.

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28 February

I'm 24 years old and wonder: how much time will pass before I will have met all financial and military obligations and can think of getting married? If only this captivity ended so I could get a better idea of what lies ahead. I couldn't care less about Manila and I'm quite done with serving. Hopefully, I won't die of boredom here, I will have to take up Spanish and English lessons again. Other than that, I play quite a lot of bridge and often go to the theatre. Heene Sannchen has sent me a Christmas parcel that just made it in time for my birthday, and I also received a letter from Herta. I just hope I'm getting all the mail forwarded that is still sent to Hong Kong!

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2 April

We have a true Sunday weather today. The sun is shining peacefully, the people are laughing and joking, and out there in the big wide world the horrible slaughter continues unabated. Not that you have to go far here to be reminded of it: only last evening a comrade was shot when he tried to escape. Attempts to escape occur almost daily but hardly any is successful. Some time ago 3 men disappeared in broad daylight and rather ingeniously. It's a pity though that those who are recaptured are marched to the ostrich farm; life for those chaps becomes even more monotonous than it is here. Well, I haven't lost heart yet and a better time is bound to return.

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Although the press is manipulated enough to feed us nothing but war stories that paint a favourable picture of the English achievements, enough rumours reach us that attest to the contrary. Generally the Sydney newspaper is better written than the Hong Kong one, but there they could not suppress as much as the authorities here suppress. Last week I had the great pleasure to receive a parcel from Herta that made it here in one piece and contained really good cigars. The smokes you can buy here are not only horribly expensive but also very mediocre. I noticed that recently when I bought tobacco for a pipe so that I can switch to the pipe if the Manila cigars stop arriving.

Of the more decent people, more and more say goodbye because they are transferred either to Berrima, like

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Dannemann, Bähr, etc, or to Trial Bay. I wouldn't mind holding up my hand for it, too, if we weren't so close to winter. I hear that the dust will let up and then life here, with all the entertainment, is surely more pleasant. Just this morning I attended a boxing bout and last night the theatre society performed some pretty good stuff.

My friend Wiese has given me a truly beautiful souvenir; with the help of a real-life artist he made a portrait of me, but I had to sit for it over a whole week every day for 2 hours.

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13 April

After a long wait our luggage has finally arrived, and in better condition than expected. It was about time too because after the war most of the stuff will be worthless, whereas here we can still make good use of it.

35 new people have arrived from China; they were captured by the English just after leaving Shanghai. Among them are 5 Austrian officers who were captured by the Russians in the Carpathian Mountains and then, in Siberia, managed to jump from the train and escape. Such bad luck; having avoided capture by the Chinese they are now stuck here and have to wait again for a release.

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25 April

Last week there was a horrible brawl in the camp, a reaction to the continuous blackmails and assaults by the "Black Hand". Led by Hildebrand, several men teamed up and beat the 6 main gang leaders to such a pulp that they had to be carried like corpses to the gate and, what's more, even were thrown across the fence. One of them died while being transported to the hospital. It's not a nice story but the act was absolutely necessary to restore some law and order. Now the gang leaders can let off steam over there on the ostrich farm, once they are fit again; the hat makers [sic] will see to it that they calm down a bit. So after that the Easter holiday went by without a hitch.