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REPORT

ON THE

TREATMENT OF BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR IN TURKEY.

Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty. November 1918.

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Report on the Treatment of British Prisoners of War in Turkey.

I.

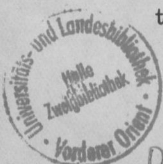
THE history of the British prisoners of war in Turkey has faithfully reflected the peculiarities of the Turkish character. Some of these, at any rate to the distant spectator, are sufficiently picturesque; others are due to the mere dead-weight of Asiatic indifference and inertia; others again are actively and resolutely barbarous. It has thus happened that at the same moment there have been prisoners treated with almost theatrical politeness and consideration, prisoners left to starve and die through simple neglect and incompetence, and prisoners driven and tormented like beasts. These violent inconsistencies make it very difficult to give a coherent and general account of the experience of our men. Almost any unqualified statement can be contradicted again and again by undoubted facts; and the whole subject seems often to be ruled by nothing but pure chance.

Yet on the whole there are two principles which may be detected as influencing the behaviour of the Turk in this matter, first and last, one being an affair of deliberate policy, the other instinctive and customary. Mixed in with a good deal of easy-going kindness, there is always to be found the conviction that it can matter little what becomes of the ordinary mass, so long as compliments are paid to the great. It has doubtless been a real surprise to the Turkish mind, even in high places, to learn that the rights of the common soldier are seriously regarded by western opinion—the rights, moreover, of a few thousand disarmed men who could be no longer used in battle. This principle has not always been effective, it must be added, in its application to prisoners of higher rank, as some of the following pages will abundantly show; but it has seldom failed in the treatment of the rank and file. These have had small reason in their helplessness to regard the Turk as that chivalrous and honourable foe of whom we have sometimes heard.

We may feel, perhaps, that where western standards are so unknown it is futile to condemn; and it is true enough that much of the suffering of our prisoners has been due to the mere muddle of all Turkish organisation, the constant inability to think ahead, the inveterate unwillingness to take any trouble that may be postponed. But whatever allowance may be made for such reasons, it is a long way from covering some of the facts that have been revealed during the past three years; and there are, besides, too many signs that Turkish improvidence is less ingenuous than might appear superficially. This brings us to the policy referred to above, the remarkably sustained effort, far from infirm in purpose, by which the Turkish Government has tried to conceal the results of its neglect. There has been no wilful carelessness here.

Alone among the countries at war, Turkey has refused to allow the representatives of any neutral power to visit and inspect its prisoners' camps. For two and a half years the American Embassy at Constantinople never ceased to press for this right, which has of course been freely granted wherever there are Turkish prisoners in British hands. When in the spring of 1917 the United States broke off diplomatic relations with Turkey, the demand was taken up with equal vigour by the Dutch Legation. The obstinacy, the malevolent suspicion, the unending procrastination of the Turks has been in the true Byzantine tradition. An occasional concession in words would be followed by a blank refusal of the means to make use of it in fact; one department of state would mysteriously impute the blame of delay to another; personal interests and jealousies played freely through the whole question; indeed the full account of it all would be ludicrous, if it had been less tragically paid for. It was not until the Berne Agreement was concluded in December 1917 that the principle was definitely admitted by the Turkish Government and the promise exacted that the Dutch Legation should have access to the camps.

More months of delay have followed, and until quite lately we have still had to rely for our knowledge of the way in which our prisoners are faring on fortunate chances and the careful collation of news which filters through by various channels. The only neutral visitors who have ever had sight of our men, up to the summer of 1918, have been a messenger from the American Embassy who managed to penetrate to Afion Kara Hissar on a single occasion in 1915, two Roman Catholic Priests sent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at another time by the Papal Nuncio, and two delegates from the International Red Cross in Switzerland, who were allowed to make a useful but circumscribed tour at the end of 1916. And not only have other visits been forbidden but the prisoners have constantly been prevented from communicating by letter with the Dutch Legation, and have suffered for it when they succeeded in doing so. The inference to be drawn from this secrecy is obvious; and now that the evidence in our hands, in spite of the many gaps, is plentiful and detailed, suspicion is only too closely confirmed. The Turks have not been so ignorant of western ideas; they have wished to figure as a power of European enlightenment; and they have known that this depended on a successful screening of the truth.

A portion of the truth, accurate so far as it goes, is given in the present report. It will be seen from our narrative that by far the most urgent of all the questions that arise from it is the question of supply. Food is scarce in Turkey, and so is clothing; neither is to be bought there except at high and often fantastic prices, if it is to be bought at all. The prisoners are naturally ill-placed for supplying their own needs; yet so far as the Turks are concerned they are for the most part left to do so. In these circumstances the organisation of relief whether from home or by means of intermediaries in Turkey, has long been, still is, and will more and more be the most important of all matters in connection with the prisoners in Turkish hands: or less important only than the possibility of getting them back into our own. It is not within the scope of this report to deal with the latter point; nor can any complete account be given of the methods by which the supply problem has been attacked. But some of the principal difficulties may be mentioned, and the steps which have been taken to overcome them.

For the purposes of the delivery of parcels the prisoners in Turkey fall naturally into two groups—those interned in Asia Minor and those (the largest part, at any rate a few months ago) distributed among the working camps to the East of Aleppo. Even assuming that parcels can be conveyed without interruption as far as Constantinople, the chaotic condition of the Turkish postal service makes it impossible to ensure that they will reach the more distant destinations in the East. This latter group is therefore placed under the care of a Relief Committee at Aleppo, controlled by the Spanish (in succession to the American) Consul in that town, and affiliated to a similar Committee in Constantinople under the presidency of the Dutch Minister. The Aleppo Committee, which is financed from Constantinople to the extent of its needs, makes local purchases of food, medicines and clothing for the eastern group of prisoners. The British and Indian Governments have authorised the Dutch Minister to spend on their behalf such sums as he may judge necessary for the relief of all the prisoners, whether by money or goods; a monthly allowance, varied according to circumstances, being sent to every officer and man. The best calculations may indeed be defeated, and often are, by the corrupt and primitive Turkish service, and by the difficulty of extracting punctual information with regard to the movement of prisoners; but the work of these Committees has been invaluable, and they have used to the full their opportunities of buying large consignments at the lowest prices. Whenever it is possible, this method of supply is supplemented, as is well known, by parcels from home. Here, however, we are outside official action.

Always and everywhere the prisoners, and more especially the officers, must be kept in a position to buy food and fuel for themselves on the spot, and much distress was caused, at the end of last year, by the sudden decision of the Turkish Government to reduce the rate of exchange by about one-third—from the actual rate, that is to say, to the pre-war figure, or even less. The purchasing power of the paper in which the money is paid is itself but a fraction, anything from a fifth to a tenth, of what it used to be, so acute is the shortage of all necessities. An impression of the kind of hardship so caused will be given in the later pages of this report. It has been immensely aggravated by the refusal to allow prisoners of war to buy food at ration rates—those fixed for the Turkish forces—and their consequent exposure to local profit-mongering and extortion.

The bulk of the British prisoners in Turkey are still the men who were taken at the fall of Kut-el-Amara in April, 1916. It is of the division there captured that we must principally speak, not only because our knowledge is fullest with regard to these, but also for the reason that to follow the story of what happened to them gives us the best and clearest survey of the whole position. For the study of the prisoner question in the war with Turkey the surrender of Kut has been the outstanding event, and it provides the point of departure for our narrative. It is not possible to give any such connected account of the other prisoners' experience, those taken in the Dardanelles or

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Palestine campaigns. Generally speaking, however, it is these men who have had most experience of the regular Turkish hospitals, in the first case at Constantinople, in the second at Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Damascus; and we may begin by touching upon this aspect of our subject.

It need scarcely be said that the level of surgical and medical skill is low in Turkey. There are good doctors, but not many of them, and it is only in Constantinople that they are to be found. In the provincial towns the hospitals are nearly always places of neglect and squalor, where a sick man is simply left to take his chance of recovery, a chance greatly compromised by Turkey's total indifference to the first rudiments of sanitation. Such hospitals are naturally the last to be provided with adequate stock or equipment of any kind; and even if some modern appliance is by fortune forthcoming, it will probably be beyond the local talent to make use of it. In a very horrible Red Crescent hospital at Angora, for example, there was at one time seen an excellent German disinfecting apparatus standing idle amidst the filth, because no one could tell how it was worked. It is fair to say that in such places there is no distinction between the treatment of prisoners and that of Turkish sick or wounded; all suffer alike by reason of a state of civilisation centuries out of date. Fortunately our men are now less often exposed than they once were to the very serious dangers of this kind of hospital, where the death-rates have always been appalling. The British medical officers, of whom there are a number at work in various camps, have been able to organise their own arrangements; in certain places German or Austrian hospitals, on western lines, have been created in connection with the work on the so-called Bagdad railway; and elsewhere the more serious cases, or any that require special treatment, are sent—sometimes, it is true, only after many delays and urgent demands—to Constantinople.

There matters are, on the whole, very different. Out of about ten hospitals, of which we have reports, very few have been described as really unsatisfactory or badly managed, and at least three—Haidar Pasha (Stamboul), Zappeion (Pera), and Zeynib Kamil (Scutari), to give them their names—are good modern institutions, staffed by Turkish or Greek doctors of European training, and for the most part by German or Austrian nurses. The prisoners who passed through these hospitals, as far back as 1915, had as good attention as need be desired, though drugs and provisions generally have, of course, tended to grow scarce. Less fortunate were those men who were sent to the smaller and more oriental of the city hospitals; but even those were not of the true provincial sort, and we often hear of some kindly Armenian doctor or charitable visitor who helped to make things better. The typical Turkish hospital orderly, lazy and dirty and dishonest, was everywhere an object of detestation, and a helpless man fared poorly if he had none else to depend on.

Many stories could moreover be related of the way in which particular cases of illness or injury have been neglected, and of the difficulties against which some of the prisoner officers and other ranks, have had to battle in order to get proper attention, when they have perhaps been sent expressly, from distances of hundreds of miles, to see some surgeon or specialist. The absence of any preparation, even for a foreknown emergency, is usually to be counted on as much at Constantinople as elsewhere in Turkey; there were two officers, who, on arriving in the city from Kastamuni in November, 1917, for urgent treatment, demanded admission in vain at one hospital after another, and were finally put into an empty house, where they were kept for several days, forbidden to go out and in actual straits for food, until by sheer persistence they succeeded in making their predicament known to the right authority. The apologies and compliments which have afterwards been poured out on such occasions have not always seemed an adequate reparation.

It was characteristic, too, that until the end of 1916, or even later, the only clearing-station that existed in the city, where the men discharged from hospital were collected until they could be sent into the interior, was apparently the common civil prison, a most vile and filthy place, in which many of our men lay for weeks until the convenient moment happened to come for removing them. At first they were lodged there in ordinary cells; later they would occupy the gallery of a large hall, where their tedium was relieved by witnessing the vociferous floggings of the criminals on the floor below. This would seem to be the same prison as that in which certain British naval officers have at different times undergone most barbarous punishment (in the name of "reprisals"), by being confined for many weeks underground, without sight of day, in solitude and severe privation. As a collecting place for prisoners from hospital it was superseded in 1917 by a camp at Psamatia, a suburb of the city, installed in a disused Armenian school and church. This was at first a dirty and disagreeable place; though

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supposed to be in some measure for convalescents, it was always a struggle to get so much as a wash there; but under a better commandant it was improved later on.

The group of hospitals in Palestine, where prisoners taken on that front have been treated, are of a heterogeneous sort—charitable institutions with kindly and polyglot staffs, French, Greek, Syrian, Armenian, not remarkable for cleanliness, but attentive to the prisoners and the stream of Turkish wounded who passed through their hands indiscriminately. The American Consul at Jerusalem was very helpful. Here and there, notably at Damascus, was a good Turkish doctor; friendly residents—at Nazareth even some English ladies—could visit the men, bring them small comforts, help them to send letters home and so forth. From the higher Turkish officials there was courtesy, and sometimes even more, as when the commander-in-chief sent his A.D.C. to escort a British officer round the shops of Jerusalem (this was in 1916) and advanced him £50 for necessary purchases. The worst was the perpetual looting by the Arab soldiery, and not seldom their savage cruelty to the men on first capture. The predatory greed and indiscipline of this rabble has been a recurring danger to our prisoners at many times and places on the remote desert fronts. What it was in Mesopotamia we shall presently see.

But before going further we may give what is in effect the substance of our whole report—the epitome, in unmistakable terms, of the story of the prisoners' treatment. The officially announced figures of the mortality among them, so far as are known up to the present date, give the exact measure of the meaning of captivity in Turkey. The total number of officers and men believed to have been taken prisoners by the Turks from the beginning of the war is 16,583. Of these 3,290 have been reported dead, while 2,222 remain untraced, and we must believe that they, too, have almost all perished unnamed, how or where we cannot tell in any single case. They all belonged to the force which surrendered at Kut, and it is therefore certain that they passed living into Turkish hands, but not one word was ever afterwards heard of any of them. The story we shall now tell is the only light that can now be thrown upon their fate.*

* The complete figures, according to information received up to 25th October—

BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR IN TURKEY.

——	Believed captured.	Repatriated, Escaped, or Released.	Died.	Untraced.	Still prisoners.
Officers—					
British	472	43	14	None	415
Indian	231	7	7	None	217
Total officers	703	50	21	None	632
Other ranks—					
British	4,932	279	1,840	449	2,364
Indian	10,948	1,177	1,429	1,773	6,569
Total other ranks..	15,880	1,456	3,269	2,222	8,933
Total all ranks ..	16,583	1,506	3,290	2,222	9,565

The corresponding figures for the Kut Garrison in particular are:—

——	Believed captured.	Repatriated, Escaped, or Released.	Died.	Untraced.	Still prisoners.
Officers—					
British	284	31	10	None	243
Indian	222	7	5	None	210
Total officers ..	506	38	15	None	453
Other ranks—					
British	2,680	210	1,306	449	715
Indian	10,486	1,177	1,290	1,773	6,246
Total other ranks..	13,166	1,387	2,596	2,222	6,961
Total all ranks ..	13,672	1,425	2,611	2,222	7,414

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II.

The 6th Division, besieged in Kut-el-Amara from the 4th December, 1915, and reduced by starvation, surrendered on the 29th April, 1916. The whole force was by that time naturally very much weakened by long privation. There were 1,450 sick and wounded in hospital; and these, as it proved—or the greater part of them—were the most fortunate of the whole number. About 1,100 of the worst cases—British and Indian—with four officers, were sent down the Tigris for repatriation forthwith. They alone escaped the experience of becoming—as Enver Pasha presently expressed it to those who remained—"The honoured guests of the Turkish Government."

The entry of the Turkish forces into Kut took place in the morning. Within a very short time they were busily thieving, assisted by the Arabs of the town. The kits of both officers and men were systematically rifled, especially for boots and water-bottles. Stray looters made their way into the hospitals and seized what attracted them among the property of the sick. Some of their officers made unsuccessful attempts to stop them; others were as bad as the men. One held up the officers of a British unit with a revolver and collected their watches and money; many others were seen carrying British swords and field-glasses. The officers of the R.A.M.C. and Indian Medical Service had their cases of surgical instruments taken from them and their stores plundered. This went on till nightfall, when the disarmed prisoners had to organise a guard for their own protection, as best they might.

During the night and the following day the greater part of the British force, officers and men, was marched about eight miles up the river to Shamran, where they were to encamp until they could be sent on to Bagdad. They found no preparations for them whatever at Shamran, only a bare piece of the desert ringed by Turkish sentries. Here for a week the men lay about unsheltered in sun and rain. For two days no rations were issued by the Turks; there was nothing to eat but some dates and black bread which Arab soldiers peddled among the men in exchange for boots and clothing, thus bringing their destitution a stage further; the Turks also plied a traffic in their dry and stony ration-biscuits, quite indigestible fare for semi-starved men and probably one of the main causes of the large number of deaths from gastro-enteritis and dysentery which occurred at Shamran. Nearly 300 of the men were dead within a week from the surrender. The Turkish medical department gave no help at all: in fact they took from our own medical staff their most important drugs. It was in short very soon clear—and at the time this came as a surprise—that the Turks had neither the power nor the will to protect the lives of the prisoners they had taken.

Their state of chronic confusion in all matters of supply and transport was a familiar story before long; all necessities had to be demanded and redemanded, argued about, insisted on, and more especially waited for. But over and above all this there appeared one sign after another that the help which the British officers themselves could give was to be hampered and largely rejected. On the 6th May when the column of prisoners was to set out on the 100-mile march to Bagdad, these officers learned to their consternation that they were to be separated from their men; by this time they well understood what the consequences would be. They did what they could by urging upon the Turkish commandant the men's exhausted condition, by stipulating that they should not be required to cover more than eight miles a day, and by setting aside the large number who were unfit to make the journey at all except by boat. This number was much reduced by the Turkish doctors, but the limit of the day's march was expressly agreed to. Thus the officers had to leave the men with whom they had shared the long hardships of the siege, and for all it was a deeply trying moment. They have recorded how great was the contrast, even in the wretchedness of the camp at Shamran, between the men's disciplined bearing and that of the Turkish soldiers around.

It was arranged that the officers and the absolutely unfit should be sent to Bagdad by river, and on the 9th and 11th May they embarked in two heavily-loaded boats. Everyone was gradually relieved of more and more of his possessions. On the day of the surrender a generous weight of kit allowance had been granted to each officer; this was reduced by successive stages, from 200 lb. to 100, and later again to 30, and at each reduction the surplus disappeared, to be seen no more. The river journey was long and crowded, particularly for one of the boats, which was stranded for several days through shortage of fuel. But the worst of it was the evidence, at certain intervals, of the manner in which the men were faring on their march. At Baghalie 700 or 800 who had fallen out through illness were found awaiting the arrival of the boat. Not

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more than half of them could be stowed on board, and then it was impossible for any but the very worst cases to lie down. There were many deaths before Bagdad was reached. The sick who remained at Baghalie were brought by a later boat, with others who had dropped at different stages of the march. The whole account of it could be pieced together by the officers only later and by degrees.

The Turkish commandant had kept his promise about the length of the day's march for one day. On the second the men were made to march 18 miles, and afterwards 12 to 15 miles daily, lying at night on the open ground. They were herded like sheep by mounted Arab troopers, who freely used sticks and whips to flog forward the stragglers. Food was very short, the heat was intense, the clouds of dust perpetual, and a great number of the men had now neither boots nor water-bottles. Their escort stripped them still further; by the time of their arrival at Bagdad most of the Arab guard were dressed in odds and ends of British uniforms, stolen during the march. There was little or no control by the Turkish officers, who usually rode at the head of tne column. The only mitigating influence was that of the Turkish doctor who accompanied the march; his name—which was Ilia—deserves to be recorded, for he was untiring in his ministrations to the men; but he could, of course, do little among the thousands who needed him. One day—the fourth of the march—had absolutely to be given over to rest; this was at Azizie, where some 350 sick, British and Indian, were left behind in a sort of cowshed, densely crowded and filthily verminous, to follow later by river. The rest struggled on, many of them now half naked, all so near the limit of exhaustion that there were daily deaths by the roadside. So, after 9 days' march, the column arrived at Bagdad on the 15th May, and were marched for 3 or 4 hours through crowded streets before being taken to the place where they were to encamp.

Meanwhile, the first boat-load of officers had already reached the city, and had likewise been exhibited to the crowd, which received them in dead and undemonstrative silence. They were then lodged for a few days in the Turkish cavalry barracks before continuing their journey northward. On their last evening in Bagdad they attracted the surprised attention of the commandant by holding an after-dinner concert—behaviour most unfitting, as he pointed out, on the part of prisoners who could have nothing to be so cheerful about. The main question of the moment, indeed, was to all of them one of great anxiety. What was to happen to the mass of prisoners, now arriving in Bagdad, all so grievously in need of rest, food, and medical care? If these men were to be left to the chances of oriental ignorance and mismanagement—to put it no worse than that, and assuming goodwill on the side of the Turks—their plight was easily foreseen. It was accordingly proposed to the authorities that a certain number of the British medical staff should remain in Bagdad, for work among the sick prisoners; and this plan was most fortunately agreed to. Eleven so remained. All the other officers who were fit for the journey were despatched to Mosul, and thence by Ras-el-Ain and Aleppo into Asia Minor. Among them were the regimental doctors, who were thus sent ahead of their men, instead of being allowed to accompany the further march of the sound prisoners—an utterly disastrous arrangement, as afterwards appeared. The officers' journey need not be described in detail. It was very long and tedious (Ras-el-Ain was then the eastern limit of the railway), and the earlier part of it was made difficult by insufficient transport and by the scarcity of the native population who had food to sell. After reaching the railway it was rather more comfortable, but it was over a month in all before the officers came to their various destinations at Broussa, Yozgad, and Kastamuni.

The retention in Bagdad of eleven British medical officers meant the relief of much suffering and the saving of many lives; but in spite of all that could be done the rate of mortality among the sick prisoners was still very high. They were distributed among some six or seven Turkish hospitals in different parts of the city, and the officers had to wage an incessant war against the prevailing dirt and disorder, neglectful nursing and mediæval sanitation. There were already in one of the hospitals a few British prisoners who had been taken before the fall of Kut, and the chances of life under unmitigated Turkish care may be reckoned from the fact that of these men, twenty-five in number, nineteen died, fifteen of the deaths being due to dysentery and septic poisoning. It is right to say that the British officers met with much sympathetic co-operation among the Turkish medical staff in Bagdad; their disposition was to help to the best of their power, though they had 10 or 15 thousand of their own sick and wounded in the city. But on the other side the difficulties were endless. The fierce Mesopotamian summer was now reaching its height, and at the best the men were in no condition to endure it. Bagdad was very poorly stocked with the necessary drugs; and what was even more serious—owing to the nature of the chief epidemic—there was

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much scarcity of milk and suitable food. Add to this that most of the nursing was performed by slovenly and untrained (often ill-disposed) Turkish orderlies, and it is possible to picture something of the long trial of these weeks.

Dysentery and gastro-enteritis—a disease closely resembling cholera—were still the principal scourges; but there was also a certain proportion of wounded men needing surgical treatment. In such cases even the best of the Turkish doctors were fully capable of using uncleaned instruments and verminous bandages, so that our officers had to take matters entirely in their own hands, down to the simplest dressing of wounds and the most elementary demands of hygiene. The Turkish commandants could indeed always be relied on to order a flogging for an offending orderly; but though it was easy to get these men punished it was impossible to make them clean or attentive. Still, the general condition was greatly improved from the moment the British staff were able to get to work. They were magnificently helped by some French sisters of charity, who acted as nurses in one or two of the hospitals; and a tribute of deep gratitude has further to be paid to a convent of nuns, also French, who busied themselves in visiting and ministering to the sick prisoners. Even when their work of compassion was hindered by the Turks they still persisted, using ingenuity in conveying comforts and small luxuries to the men when they could not do so openly. The American Consul, Mr. Brissell, gave constant and invaluable help; but of him more fully in a moment. Nevertheless to lie for weeks, as so many of our officers and men did, in these foul-aired and overcrowded hospitals, mostly improvised in schools or barracks, without books or occupation, cut off from news of the world and still more of home—all this was a climax to the bitter disappointment of the surrender which might well damage the chances of reaction and recovery. Once more, however, we have the testimony of our officers that throughout their stay in Bagdad the bearing and behaviour of the men were exemplary.

All this time it was a matter of anxiety to the Turkish command that the prisoners should be passed out of Bagdad and sent up country as quickly as possible. At that time there were Russian forces within a few days' march of the city, and the men were despatched northward by successive parties into what might be considered securer captivity. On their first arrival in Bagdad all but the worst of the sick and wounded had been placed in an unsheltered enclosure on the right bank of the Tigris, where there were as usual no sanitary precautions whatever—the only drinking water, for instance, being brought unfiltered from the river. Rations were rough and scanty, and dysentery still spread. The comparatively sound—if any of the prisoners could be so called—were rapidly drafted away for their journey; and in a few days the number left in the camp was reduced to about 500. Their condition was so wretched that after constant complaints from the British medical officers the camp was shifted to a better site a mile below the city, where some trees gave shade and where the men could bathe in the river. This place was used as a convalescent camp for the sick as they were able to leave hospital, and one of the British staff was put in medical charge of it. The military guard was still the Arab cavalry of the march from Shamran, but they now left the men unmolested.

It was a dispiriting life enough, with nothing to do all day but to lie about in the fly-tormented heat; but at least it was rest, and through the unceasing efforts of the American Consul there was at length a sufficiency of food. Mr. Brissell had been profoundly impressed by the miserable state of the prisoners as they arrived in the city, worn-out, emaciated, half-naked (there were some with literally nothing left but a shirt); and he immediately made it his chief care to do what he could for them. His position was not a little difficult and delicate. If he shewed himself over-conspicuous in charity for the prisoners he ran the risk of finding it frustrated by Turkish suspicion, so that he had to proceed circumspectly. He none the less found the means to give solid help out of the funds of the American Red Cross; he continually visited hospitals and camps; for the latter he sent a daily supply of sheep, which the prisoners killed and cooked for themselves; and he made purchases of all kinds on behalf of the British staff. Open and official thanks he could not receive, and unhappily he died before they became possible; but the officers were able to thank him in private and to record the prisoners' great debt to him.

The end of their time in Bagdad was at last approaching. Negotiations had been concluded between the British and Turkish commanders for the exchange of the medical staff and the sick (officers and men, British and Indian) who were still in the city. On the 8th of August, after many delays, twenty-two officers and 323 men embarked by river for the British lines. At the last moment about fifty had been disappointed and detained (with two medical officers. who stayed to look after them,) being pronounced

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by the Turkish doctor as too healthy for exchange, though perhaps the real reason was that the boat would hold no more. They cheered the departure of the others from the river bank. These latter had a long and broken journey, never feeling secure against a like disappointment until they were actually in the hands of their own people. It is worth mentioning that just before they had left Bagdad the Turks—then and then only—had provided them with new boots and clothing, feeling ashamed, as a Turkish officer candidly expressed it, to send them home in their rags.

There remains to be told what had happened to the main mass of the prisoners, those who had been judged capable of the journey up country and across the Syrian desert to Asia Minor. Week after week, through June and July, parties of them had left Bagdad, following the route already taken by their officers. They had been seen leaving the city camp and crowded into the railway trucks which were to take them as far as Samarra, the railhead (as it then was) some seventy miles up the river. From there they would go afoot. Their state of preparation for a march of 500 miles, the health and strength and equipment which they possessed for withstanding one of the fiercest summers of the globe, can be pictured from what has been described already; and the efficiency of the oriental care to which they were entrusted is as easily imagined. The officers who were left in Bagdad, and who watched them depart, could only feel the deepest anxiety and dread.

The truth of what happened has only very gradually become known, and in all its details it will never be known, for those who could tell the worst are long ago dead. But it is certain that this desert journey rests upon those responsible for it as a crime of the kind which we call historic, so long and terrible was the torture it meant for thousands of helpless men. If it is urged that Turkish powers of organisation and forethought were utterly incapable of handling such a problem as the transport of these prisoners, the plea is sound enough as an explanation; as an excuse it is nothing. There was no one in the higher Turkish command who could be ignorant that to send the men out on such a journey and in such conditions was to condemn half of them to certain death, unless every proper precaution were taken. And there were precautions which were easy and obvious, the chief one being that the prisoners should not be deprived of the care for their health which their own officers could give them. Yet even this plain opportunity was sacrificed, as we have seen, with perfect indifference to the fate of the mere rank and file. Here, as always, we find that Turkish apathy is not as simple as it seems; it betrays considerable respect of persons, and it contrives to evade the most dangerous witnesses of its guilt.

It was indeed by the purest accident that the British doctors in Bagdad received the first confirmation of their fears. It so happened that a small party of officers, delayed by illness, were sent north *after* the first batches of men had departed. These officers followed the same track, and presently an urgent message from one of them reached Bagdad, addressed to the Turkish Commander-in-Chief, pressing for a hospital establishment and one of the British staff to be sent at once to Samarra. Hospital and staff were immediately ready, though it took the Turkish authorities five days to provide the necessary pass for leaving the city. At Samarra were then collected the hundreds of sick who had fallen out of the march during its first stages. They were picked up from the road side where they lay in the miseries of dysentery, just as they chanced to drop, disregarded and deserted. All possible care was given them at Samarra, but many were beyond help. It was clear enough what would have happened to them all, but for the chance of the state of things being discovered in time. It was a chance that was not allowed to recur; a subsequent party of officers were carefully sent from Bagdad by another route.

But it was only those who failed on the first part of the march who could be brought to Samarra; the main body passed on and out of reach. The track was still followed by the same group of officers, and the sights they saw, at villages and halting-places all along the road, hardly bear telling. There were parties of men lying exhausted under any shelter they could find, in all stages of dysentery and starvation; some dying, some dead; half clothed, without boots, having sold everything they could to buy a little milk. Only here and there had an attendant of some kind been left to look after them; generally there was no one but the Arab villagers, who mercilessly robbed them, or the under-officer of the local police-post, who stared indifferently and protested that he had no authority to give help. The dead lay unburied, plundered and stripped of their last clothing. All across the desert, at one place after another, these sights were repeated; starving and dying men, in tens and twenties, lay in any scrap of shade or mud-hovel that might be allowed them and waited their end. Some had to wait long. Many weeks later, at a desert village about three days' journey from

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Aleppo, there was found a group of six British soldiers and about a dozen Indians, who for three months had lain on the bare ground of a mud-walled enclosure, subsisting solely on a few scraps thrown to them by Arabs or passing caravans. The Englishmen had been fourteen ; eight had died ; and of the survivors only one was still able to crawl two or three hundred yards to a place where there was water. It begins to be evident how it came about that of the men who surrendered at Kut more than three thousand, British and Indian, have never been heard of at all.

The last part of the march, over the mountain ranges of the Amanus, had been the worst of all, and here too the same terrible vestiges had been left in many places. In the future it will be possible to throw further light on the whole of this crime of two years ago, even though much of it will remain beyond the reach of any investigation. For the present a brief and imperfect summary has to suffice. It is at least enough to ensure that the march of the Kut prisoners will never be forgotten in this country. Their own silent and stoical endurance of the worst made a deep impression, we are told, on those who saw them emerge from this experience.

III.

When the thinned ranks of these prisoners arrived (July, 1916—by successive batches) within sight of the Mediterranean, on the western side of the Amanus mountains, their journey was over for the time, but it was only a new stage of suffering that began for them. Though so many had been lost on the way, the survivors were still numerous enough to form a valuable army of labourers, at a time and spot where labour was greatly in demand. The Bagdad railway, which was to lead to the final destruction of the English in Mesopotamia, only wanted the piercing of a few tunnels to be complete from Constantinople to the Syrian desert, and the prisoners were to be employed in finishing the work. Most of the Indians seem to have been left at Ras-el-Ain, on the way, where the line was being pushed forward over the flat plain to Mosul. The rest of them, and all the British, were brought to the region of Tarsus and Adana, the south-eastern corner of Asia Minor, where was the centre of the tunnel-blasting operations in the Taurus and Amanus ranges. The construction of the railway was in the hands of a German company, to which the prisoners, between two and three thousand of them, were now consigned. A few days' rest was allowed them before they were set to work.

They were, of course, absolutely incapable of work of any kind, after all they had been through. Nevertheless they were distributed among various working-camps of the neighbourhood, and were somehow driven to their task. In the Bilemedik region on the north side of the Taurus mountains, the few hundred British prisoners who had been taken at the Dardanelles the summer before, were already, it seems, employed on the railway. Their case was apparently tolerable ; but it was a very different matter for the exhausted remnant of the Kut prisoners. These naturally broke down at once, and were soon recognised by their employers as useless. Already the hospitals at the various places were full of them, and the rate of mortality was very high. By September the Railway Construction Company had handed them back to the Turkish authorities, deciding that it was hopeless to try to get work out of them for the present.

If they could not be made use of, the Turks had no wish to keep them in that district, where (as will be seen in a moment) kind and liberal care was at hand for them. They were to be sent to camps in the interior of Asia Minor, and early in September an instalment of a thousand British prisoners were thither despatched. They were placed in railway trucks that went as far as the break in the line at the Taurus mountains, and over this steep and difficult range they had then to march on foot. It was a journey of several days before the northward continuation of the railway could be reached at Bozanti. The way in which an operation of this kind may be mismanaged in Turkey is almost incredible, familiar as the details become by repetition ; it is a fact that these men were sent off without food for the journey, and that no provision was made for them at any point of the road. It was, perhaps, a worse experience than that which a few weeks before had seemed the limit of possible suffering. The men were forced forward by *gendarmes* with the butt-ends of their rifles, till of sheer inanition many had dropped and died. A few managed to take refuge in certain German and Austrian military camps in the Taurus ; but the main body was somehow beaten and driven across the mountain range. It was like one thing only—a scene from Dante's Inferno ; the word was that of an Austrian officer who witnessed it.

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But the sick and exhausted stragglers were not now beyond the reach of help. There were charitable Americans, not far off, who had shown the most active kindness to the prisoners on their first arrival from the east, and who now redoubled their efforts. Through the exertions of the American Consul at Mersina, who made urgent appeals to the military authorities, all the sick that could be collected were brought to the hospitals of Adana, and in particular to an American college at Tarsus. For the majority it was too late; it is said that of several hundred who were the first to reach these two places, less than half survived. But whatever was possible was done for these men by American ladies and doctors, whose services are thankfully remembered. Perhaps the best of these services was not the material benefit, timely as it was, but the less measurable effects of sympathy and friendly interest on men whose sufferings had for so long been watched with mere nonchalance.

This brings us to the last months of 1916. No connected narrative is possible from this point, for the prisoners were now gradually dispersed in different quarters, as they were absorbed into the chaotic system of the Turkish Empire. Some, the more fortunate, were sent to act as orderlies in the officers' prison camps. Those who survived the Taurus march were placed at Afion-Kara-Hissar, Konia, and elsewhere. The majority, as they became fit for work, were kept upon the pressing task of completing the great railway, the three main sectors on which they were employed being that of the Taurus tunnels, that of the Amanus tunnels, and that beyond Ras-el-Ain to the east. There have also been, and still are, a certain number (300 in August, 1917) working in the region of Angora, on the construction of a light railway from that place to Erzeroum, while others are employed on work of different kinds at several places round about Constantinople.

Some account can be given of each of these groups; for though our evidence is necessarily imperfect, it is enough to create a fair idea of their aspect and condition. It is more difficult to generalize with regard to the experience of the prisoners on the whole n the various working camps. Food, lodging, treatment at work, medical care, have all differed greatly at different times and places, from scandalously bad to decently good, though it is unhappily certain which extreme has been touched most often. It can, however, be said that for the greater part of the men conditions have tended to improve, and this because most of them have had the benefit of the more western methods of organisation which have by degrees prevailed in the camps under the Railway Construction Company. The work is undoubtedly hard; but it is more tolerable to be a prisoner in Turkey under some sort of business-like rule, even a strict one, than to be exposed to the full carelessness of the Turk, with his mediæval ideas on the subject of housing, feeding and doctoring. The best factor of all, in the whole case, has been the presence of British medical officers in nearly a dozen of the chief working camps, where in the face of many difficulties and much discouragement they have achieved an incalculable work of good for the men.

The prisoners employed in the neighbourhood of Constantinople have suffered from being under municipal or private, not military direction. For some reason which is not explained, the Turkish rule has been that only those who are on Government work should receive pay, and the small groups employed in building, road-making, wood-cutting and so forth, at Psamatia and San Stefano (suburbs of the capital), and at Adabazar (on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus), have been paid nothing for their labour. Food is scarce, prices enormous; and it need hardly be said that the rations provided are miserably insufficient. Much has depended on the individual who happened to be in control of the group; at Adabazar, for example, a very bad state of affairs in the summer of 1917 was transformed in the autumn by a new and fatherly commandant, who tried to win the men's goodwill, and succeeded. This camp, however, seems to have been since broken up. At Ismid, Eski-hissar, and Deridja and other places, a few prisoners are or were working in factories.

Afion-Kara-Hissar was used as a place of internment for prisoners from the beginning of the war. It is an important junction on the great railway—a small town, high up in the central plain of Asia Minor, dominated by a hill with a castle on it. Some of the prisoners from the Dardanelles were here early in 1916; they were joined in September by many more from the Kut garrison, and by the end of the year there were in all about 400 British soldiers, some 200 Indians, and a few French and Russians. Later on the numbers fell, as the men were drafted away to working camps. At Afion the Indians were placed in a Mohammedan school and were employed in road-making. The British were lodged in an old Armenian church with its outbuildings—cold and dirty quarters, which they did their best to make habitable. The chief event of the day was the despatch of two of them, under escort, to the town bazaar to buy

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provisions. Those who were capable of it were sent out to work on the roads, and here they fared very badly at the hands of the Turkish sailors (such they seem to have been) who had charge of them. And all alike, whether out at work or in their comfortless lodging, suffered severely under a barbarous discipline which lasted for many months.

Afion, indeed, has a hideous record for the flogging of prisoners—punishment which was habitual there, for the most trifling offences, while the place was under the control of a certain Turkish naval officer. This man ruled with a cow-hide whip, from which the offender received a given number of lashes on his bare back. Many specific instances are known and noted. Fortunately the man's behaviour became notorious, and the Turkish Government, under pressure, removed him early in 1917. He had had time, however, to add to the burden of the unhappy men from Kut, whose appearance when they reached Afion is vividly remembered by the prisoners who were already there. Some of them naked, many half out their minds with exhaustion, most of them rotten with dysentery, this band of survivors was received with deep sympathy by the rest, who did all they might to restore them, small as their own resources were. In very many cases it was too late. The sick men were placed in the camp hospital; but this was a hospital in not much more than the name, for though there was a Turkish doctor in attendance, with some rough Turkish orderlies, medicines were non-existent, and a man too ill to look after himself had a very poor chance. Deaths were frequent; the dead were buried by their comrades in the Christian cemetery of the town. All this time, close at hand, there was a party of British officers imprisoned at Afion, two of whom were officers of the medical service. Yet all communication between officers and men was flatly forbidden, under heavy penalty, throughout the bad time of 1916 and even later. English doctors had thus to wait inactive, knowing that the men were dying almost daily, a few yards off, for mere want of proper care.

All this was afterwards happily changed since then and Afion became a good camp; the men there (about 200 in April, 1918), enjoy considerable freedom and have plenty of occupation and amusement. They are busy with cooking, washing, mending, and other duties about the camp; they have football and cricket on certain days, and occasionally country walks; some time ago they hired a piano at £5 a month and gave concerts and dances. Better still, the embargo on communication with the officers has been removed, so that sickness can be properly treated.

Angora is another camp which began very badly. In the spring of 1917 (it had already been in use for a year and a half) there were seventy-five prisoners lodged here in two rooms of a very insanitary house, which caused outbreaks of typhus. There was a brutal sergeant-major in charge and a free use of the whip. Conditions have improved as Angora has become the centre of the working groups engaged in laying the narrow-gauge line towards Yozgad. By May, 1917, the chief settlement was under canvas, in a healthy position about twenty miles from the town, moving forward as the work progressed. A little later we hear of kind treatment on the part of the Turkish officers. By the end of the year there was a rather large concentration of British prisoners in this district; and although they were short of clothing and suffered much from the winter cold—snow was thick in December—the general treatment was considerate. The men appear to have considerably impressed the Turks by their power of bearing up and adapting themselves to hard circumstances.

The numerous working-camps in the Taurus and Amanus mountains were the chief centres of activity, so far as the English prisoners were concerned, until the breaks in the railway were completed in the summer of 1917. Several long tunnels had to be pierced through very hard rock, and many river-gorges bridged. The men were distributed by small settlements, in tents or huts, wherever their labour was needed. The principal hardships were due to the climate, which is one of violent extremes of heat and cold, and to the exceptionally poisonous form of malaria which is common in some parts. So long as health could be kept the life was an endurable one, for the hard work was varied with a good deal of liberty; it was the life of a labourer, though on short commons, rather than the restricted and supervised life of a prisoner. Unfortunately health was very precarious, and the many who broke down with malaria, gastritis, and dysentery were in a bad way. A convalescent camp was established at Bor (or Bora) on the north side of the Taurus, ten miles from the town of Nigde; but supplies were very scarce there and deaths were frequent. There was a hospital at Nigde, which is described as clean and comfortable, though the difficulty of getting food or medicines was everywhere the same. The immense advantage to the men when English medical officers were placed in several of the camps has already been referred to.

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There were half-a-dozen working settlements to the north of the Taurus—Bilemedik, Pozanti, Kouch Djoular, Tasch Durmas, Hadji Kiri and Gelebek. Bilemedik was in a deep valley, under towering mountains, a bad place for malaria, but otherwise not without agreeable resources. On Sundays the men could go and picnic by the river, play cricket and bathe. Their pay was good (twenty piastres a day), if prices had been less exorbitant. Kouch Djoular was more healthily placed on the top of a hill. South of the Taurus there were Boudjak, Dorak and Adana. Dorak contained a good hospital, staffed by Germans. The chief camps in the Amanus were at Bagtche and Entelli, the two ends of a great tunnel, and there were others at Yarbaschi, Airan, and Sheher Dere. All these places were much of the same kind—not prison camps or wired enclosures, but tents, wooden huts, mud cabins, scattered round the various scenes of work. Some of these dwellings would be occupied by prisoners, the Indians and Russians generally much outnumbering the English; others by a mixed crowd of Turkish and Levantine labourers. All alike were under the same rule—that of the civilian chief engineer, usually German or Austrian; there would be a few Turkish sentries, supposed to guard the prisoners, but no real military organisation. It is probable that there was very little active ill-treatment; the engineers seem generally to have behaved well to the men, some of them notably so.

The Construction Company was and is supposed to supply the prisoners with food and clothing, but they have done neither sufficiently. The nights, even in summer, are liable to be very cold in these mountain heights, and the provision of bedding was of the scantiest. The wants of the men have again and again been met by the watchful energy of the American consuls at Mersina and Aleppo, the latter taking charge in particular, as has already been noted, of the desert camps to the east, at Ras-el-Ain and beyond. The funds placed at their disposal were spent on goods of all sorts, but the difficulty was to find the stuff to buy. Resource and enterprise were needed even more than money, and they were forthcoming. At Aleppo, for example, the consul, when it was a question (in the winter of 1916–7) of sending clothing to the many hundreds of Indian prisoners at Ras-el-Ain, had first to provide for the spinning and weaving of the material; all of which work had to be done, moreover, in discreet secrecy, since the authorities were by way of commandeering any such goods for government use. Not only clothing, but food and medicines were distributed, perpetual troubles of transport and risks of theft having to be met and defeated every time.

By the early summer of 1917 the mountain works seem to have been finished, and there began a great easterly shifting of the prisoners for the still-incomplete extension of the line to Mosul. In the Taurus and Amanus sector only such of the men have since been retained as were needed for the handling of goods on the railway, with perhaps a few more engaged on skilled technical work, as designers and mechanicians. After the departure of the big labour-companies, this remnant seems to have dropped entirely out of Turkish hands, to their universal relief. Conditions have probably been as good as the ever-present food difficulty allows, but even in this matter they have the advantage of being associated with western ways and methods, and the assurance that where there are Germans in Turkey, there is likely to be the best organisation of supply.

As for Ras-el-Ain we get no more than two or three glimpses of it during its earlier life, when it was occupied almost solely by Indians. Scores of low black camel-hair tents were pitched in the open wilderness near the small Arab town. Here, until the first charitable help arrived from Aleppo (November 1916), about 1,300 Indian prisoners passed some very dreadful months, ravaged by sickness, ill-fed and over-driven. An officer of the Indian Medical Service was fortunately there from the first, but in the lack of medicines and proper food it was inevitable that the death-rate should be very high. Towards the end of the year there was a small group of about fifteen English prisoners in this large community. Discipline was vague, though spasmodically harsh; some Turkish soldiers were assumed to keep an eye on the camp, but its isolation was a surer prevention of escape than any armed guard. The men could wander as they pleased in the surrounding expanse, well knowing the risk they ran of having their throats cut by the Arabs if they strayed far. They cooked their small doles of maize and lentils and washed in the neighbouring river; their work, though they might be driven to it under the whip, was miscellaneous and not rigidly allotted.

Far reaching changes, all evidently for the better, followed when the eastward migration of the main body of the prisoners took place. As early as May, 1917, there is news of a fine new hospital that is being built at Ras-el-Ain, and other camps spring up along the extending line. The chief of these was Nisibin, half way to Mosul—Nisibin had become railhead by June or July. Intermediate camps were formed at

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Derbisieh, Tel Halif, and other places; and English officers were put in medical charge of the various sectors. Not much is known about these settlements, but clearly they were soon very unlike the old make-shift Ras-el-Ain of the year before. At Derbisieh some German sisters started a soldiers' home which the prisoners were allowed to use for meals; and elsewhere there seems to have been a reasonable understanding between our men and the European directors of the work. The summer heat was long and very trying; but here, too, the men's life was more that of ordinary labourers than such as one associates with the name of prisoners. In the winter of 1917-8 there were believed to be some 650 British and 5,390 Indians employed in this region.

It is impossible as yet to say what the general distribution of the prisoners may have been since then. There has doubtless been a returning movement towards the west, and, indeed, it was already noticeable last winter that Angora was becoming more and more a centre of concentration for the British prisoners. It must be hoped, though there cannot be much confidence, that they are not falling back under the slipshod management of the Turks. That way lies the worst of privation and the gravest risk of ill-treatment; but further evidence must be awaited before either hope or fear can be confirmed.

IV.

The Turkish Government has announced that in its zeal for the comfort of the British officers in its hands the finest situations in Asia Minor have been chosen for their internment; and if a prisoner of war were in the position of a summer tourist in peace-time this consideration would be admirable. Yozgad, Kastamuni, Afion-Kara-Hissar, Gedis, are places of interest and beauty: the mountain scenery of Central Anatolia is very striking, the summer climate excellent. Unfortunately this attractive landscape is buried deep in snow throughout the winter; the cold is intense, the places named being from three to four thousand feet above sea-level; communication with the outer world (Afion alone is on the railway) becomes difficult or almost impossible; and the picturesque towns, with their streams and valleys and mediæval citadels, have none but the most primitive provision against the rigour of the season. This would be so even in the time of peace. The difficulties of life under such conditions in war-time can hardly be imagined—difficulties partly due to the general scarcity of necessities, but also much aggravated by Turkish incompetence and disorganisation. With each winter the officers have had to face the prospect of something like famine and destitution, well knowing that they must rely entirely on their own hampered efforts, if they were to get through.

In writing of them one must, in fact, put aside all idea that the care of prisoners is the business of their captors. In Turkey it has amounted to this—that British officers have been sent to live in places where at least it is very hard to keep body and soul together—have there been put under various restrictions and disadvantages—and have then been left to support themselves as best they might. They have had to pay for practically everything they needed beyond bare housing, and sometimes even for this. Prices of food and fuel have risen to eight and ten times the figure of three years ago; and on the other hand the true rate of money exchange has been refused since the end of 1917, so that prisoners now receive for a pound sterling less than two-thirds of its current value in Turkish money. In the officers' camps at any rate, the mere question of the behaviour of the Turks in charge is now almost unimportant compared with the strain of this perpetual anxiety concerning the means of life. The situation differs in detail in the various camps, but broadly speaking the predicament is the same for all. It has been met by the British officers with determined and business-like forethought, with extraordinary ingenuity in resource, and above all with unshaken good spirit.

The difficulty is least at Broussa, with its lowland climate and its easy accessibility from Constantinople. The officers interned here, British and Indian, lead what is practically hotel life, but for the periodic roll-call and for certain rules with regard to their circulation outside. They are lodged in two houses, formerly hotels, one of which has a wide terraced garden in front, sloping to the town street. The surroundings are somewhat mean and squalid, but there are opportunities for exercise further afield. The Indians, both officers and other ranks—of the latter there is or was a small camp at Broussa, installed in a Greek school—can go freely and as they like; the British must be accompanied outside by a Turkish soldier. A limited zone was originally prescribed for walks beyond the town. Information about Broussa is not very full, but it is known that a new commandant took charge early in 1918, and that he was regarded by the officers as the best they had had. There is reason to hope that the British are now allowed more freedom of movement.

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After Broussa the most conveniently placed camp, so far as officers are concerned, is Afion-Kara-Hissar, though its direct communication with the capital by railway did not save the prisoners from severe privation in the winter of 1917-18. The few things there were to buy were then at prohibitive cost; and the general state of affairs may be judged by the fact that on Christmas Day, there being no firewood and twenty degrees of frost, the officers took their dinner in bed, as the only place where they could keep a little warm. Afion was one of the earliest formed prison camps in Turkey. In the spring of 1918 there were 100 British officers here, and 120 Russians. This is too large a number for the accommodation, and still more for the resources of the town.

They are lodged in a number of empty houses between the town and the station, which is about two miles away. These houses are in two groups, forming the so-called upper and lower camps, though they are not camps in the sense of being enclosed in any sort of compound. They seem to be fairly satisfactory in good weather, but they are very primitive. In the buildings, more or less unfinished, of the lower camp there was at first no provision for heating and no glass in the windows. By the early part of 1917 the officers had arranged a routine for themselves which the vexatious, sometimes maddening, inefficiency and caprice of the Turk did not seriously interfere with. They had books and games indoors, fixed hours of study, and a flourishing run of amateur theatricals. Out of doors they were cramped, but there were some limited chances of cricket. Once a week the two camps could visit each other, under escort, and there was another weekly outing when they could go for country walks.

The constant trial was not bad treatment, but the stupid and irritating notions of the commandant and his subordinates on the score of discipline. The natural indolence, the want of organisation, the dirty habits and customs of the Turks, their inveterate and irrational lying, all meant a wearisome wastage of time and temper. The commandant had the mark of the typically incompetent manager—a fondness for imposing sudden and teasing regulations, without the will to enforce them consistently. Thus at one time it was decreed that every one must be fully dressed for the 8 A.M. roll-call, at another that all lights must be out by 9.30 in the evening, at another that no officer should rest on his bed during the day; such rules would be rigidly insisted upon for a few days, till the novelty wore off, and then helplessly abandoned. It is recorded, indeed, that soon after the "lights out" rule was started, the commandant himself dropped in at 11 P.M. one night to visit the officers of the lower camp; he found them all up, stayed for a talk and a glass of Greek brandy, and made no further allusion to the matter. This is the amiable side of the Turkish misrule. It is the other that has since become prominent at Afion, till the place compared badly with other camps for the stupid tyranny of its control. It is not surprising if the officers have felt themselves back in an ill-managed nursery, with its rotation of indulgence and random severity.

Yozgad, a town of some twenty thousand inhabitants, perched at the head of a rocky valley in the mountainous heart of the country, and five days journey from the nearest point on the railway (Angora), is now the most isolated of the officers' camps, and that in which the approach of the necessitous winter is most to be dreaded. It was started in the summer of 1918 for about 100 officers (all British) with a complement of orderlies. They are lodged in a group of detached houses, picturesquely placed on the steep side of a hill, which is dotted with other buildings and tall poplars. Life here might perhaps be as good as a prisoner's life may, if it were not that on any terms it is almost impossible, so acute is the scarcity of all kinds of supply. The commandant is a Turk of the old school—polite, honest and silent; his merit has been warmly recognised by the officers in his charge. They live under a reasonable rule which gives opportunities for constant exercise and a considerable amount of local liberty. The officers have a hockey ground in front of their houses; ski-ing is possible in winter; and latterly some of them have been able to start a small pack of hounds, stimulating the enthusiasm of the Turkish sentries with a share in the spoils—the skin of a hare or a fox. Indoors we hear of the production of a successful pantomime last Christmas.

All this would be very well but for the problem of food and warmth. By October of last year the officers were busily laying in stores for the winter and were having to pay starvation prices for them. A few weeks later the situation was really disastrous, between the continually rising cost of everything and the sudden reduction in the rate of exchange. At the end of the year a £20 cheque was yielding little more than half its proper value, and the monthly messing bill for each officer amounted to £30—this, moreover, having to be paid in advance in order that the mess might be run as economically as possible. For a single item it may be noted that the bread contract

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worked out at 10*s*. for 3 lb. The general cost of living, it is said, was about ten times the normal figure.

Kastamuni, another small Alpine town of the same sort, but even more inaccessible in the winter snows, would have meant equal or greater hardship if the officers' camp there had been kept open for another winter, instead of being closed in September 1917. British officers were first sent there in July 1916, and eventually numbered about 200. They were placed in a row of empty houses on the edge of the town and as usual had to make them inhabitable entirely at their own charges. The first commandant, by name Tewfik Bey, seizing the favourable chance, exacted rent for the houses (which belonged to the Government) and arranged a contract for the officers' meals at a local restaurant, with a commission for himself from the proprietor. The officers soon decided to cater for themselves, in spite of natural opposition from Tewfik, and were gradually able to improve the equipment and sanitation of their houses. In the course of the winter a colonel arrived from Constantinople to inspect the camp; Tewfik, found to be still handling his share of the available profits, was dismissed; and Fattah Bey, a man of correct and kindly behaviour, was appointed in his place.

Under him life at Kastamuni ran smoothly. The officers hired a field for games, and country walks, with a sentry or two, were taken weekly. They could go to the town bazaar to make their purchases on certain days, and to the Turkish bath whenever they liked. They were allowed as many orderlies as they chose—British prisoners brought from other camps—and to save the men from possible ill-treatment elsewhere they asked for a considerable number. Indoors they followed their own pursuits undisturbed; the guard remained outside, and there was little friction with the authorities. The officers started an orchestra, which even gave performances in the open, attended by an admiring public. As a touch of Turkish comedy one punishment is recalled; it was inflicted on the officer who derided the antiquated pump which did service as the town fire engine. After the successful escape of three of the prisoners in August 1917 discipline grew stricter; and what was worse, the good-natured Fattah had already been dislodged by an unscrupulous second in command, Shereef Bey, who had an eye on the succession.

But by this time the most pressing question was the prospect of another winter in a place so badly supplied. The winter of 1916–17 had by chance been unusually mild. In normal years Kastamuni is liable to be completely isolated by its heavy snowfall; the prices of local provisions were steadily rising; and fire-wood in a bleak and bare part of the country, was very scarce. In July 1917 the Senior British Officer formally asked for the removal of all the prisoners to some place on or nearer the railway, where their wants might be better met. No answer was received, and they were encouraged to lay in such stock of all sorts as they could against the winter, on the understanding that it would certainly be passed at Kastamuni. They had begun to do so when in September they were suddenly told they were all to be moved forthwith. The loss fell of course on the officers, who had also to leave behind them the furniture they had had to buy for their quarters. A memorial of their year in this remote mountain fastness remains in the British cemetery, where there are the graves of three officers and three men who died at Kastamuni; stones were quarried and placed over them by the other officers with their own hands.

Their destination was now announced as Changri, where a new prisoners' camp was to be inaugurated. This at once destroyed any hope of an improvement in their situation, for all the officers could remember Changri as a place of halt on the rocky, 100-mile march from Angora, the nearest railhead to Kastamuni. It was vividly recalled as a group of dilapidated houses, huddled under the ruin of an ancient castle, in a desolate and fever-stricken spot. When they now came there again they found their appointed quarters to be a large empty barrack, very recently and obviously used, including the upstairs rooms, as promiscuous stabling for farmyard animals of all kinds. The floors were crusted with dirt, vermin swarmed, most of the windows were without glass, the sanitation was Turkish, and drinking water had to be brought in buckets from a town a mile off. Such was the place in which the officers had to set to work once more, reconstructing a tolerable existence from the beginning. They did this undiscouraged; there was immediate activity in scraping and cleaning, procuring furniture and devising improvements—all, it is needless to say, on the initiative of the prisoners alone.

It was none the less clearly impossible to make Changri a convenient or attractive abode, and after a few weeks a proposal was made to the officers by the Turkish authority. Those who would agree to give their parole were offered the choice of removal to another camp—Gedis—where they were promised more freedom, better

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housing, and more considerate treatment all round. Decision was difficult, but after weighing the offer about two-thirds of the prisoners resolved to accept it, and these were transferred from Changri towards the end of the year. Those who were left behind succeeded gradually in making Changri a little more habitable. The place seems now to have been definitely classed as a camp for "irreconcilables," and they were joined before long by some fifteen other officers, formerly at Gedis, who were regarded as falling under this category. The usual routine was established; football could be played at certain times on a large open space in front of the barrack; at other times the barrack yard itself was used for exercise; carpentry, shoemaking, the study of languages went on indoors. A very severe winter set in, and for two months at a time it was impossible to get exercise outside. In February, 1918, there were 44 officers at Changri; the familiar difficulties of supply had reached a crisis, and it was found necessary to do without a midday meal. The 44 were not, it may well be supposed, of a kind to be easily daunted, but a telegram (on 26th March) announcing that the camp was to be broken up must have been well received. In the course of April the officers were all moved elsewhere, and this was the end, none too soon, of the camp at Changri.

Gedis, about 60 miles to the north-west of Afion, had been used for the internment of officers from the spring of 1917. It is a pretty little breezy place among precipitous hills, facing a fine country of streams and oaks and fruit trees, not unlike many parts of southern England. It is sheltered from the east, and its winter is short. The small town is as picturesque as it is dirty. A little way out of it stands the house where the British officers live—a good house in itself, it is said, with about an acre of ground. But here, as everywhere else, they had first to create order out of Turkish chaos. When the orginal party arrived (in May, 1917) they found nothing ready for them, neither furniture nor supplies; least prepared of all was the kindly and bewildered old commandant, armed with a book of rules, which he consulted assiduously, though without enlightenment. The officers took matters into their own hands, collected furniture where they could, contrived bedsteads out of packing cases, and laid in provisions. Things were still very rudimentary, however, when towards the end of June there appeared a Turkish officer on a visit of inspection from Constantinople. This officer, a man of European education, was much horrified by the state of affairs. The commandant and his book of rules were immediately ejected, and orders were given for the house to be properly fitted up under the British officers' direction. A new commandant arrived later, described as a very pleasant and intelligent man.

When however the officers from Changri reached Gedis in December (after a bitterly cold march, lasting many days) they found little that came up to their expectation beyond the unaccustomed liberty of the life. It was very new to them to be able to come and go, as they now could, free from any kind of surveillance; and it may be imagined that this at least was acceptable. Discomfort and inconvenience—growing with the increased strain on the wretched resources of an Asiatic village, unprepared for such company—were still considerable; but it was a diversion to find themselves sharing in the native life of the place, to sit and talk with the local worthies in their shops, or to be invited by the neighbouring farmers to shoot wild boar in the mountains. Not all the country folk were thus friendly; the officers might sometimes be reminded that they were enemies and prisoners by being pelted with stones or set upon by dogs; and at times the easy discipline of the place was drawn tighter. But on the whole the relations with the Turks seem to have been satisfactory; indeed it is noted that the commandant preferred the officers to wear uniform, that they might be recognised and respected on their walks.

Unfortunately it was still the same story of acute scarcity and famine prices. It was the height of winter when the rate of exchange was suddenly lowered to less than the old peace-time figure, and many of the officers found themselves in very serious straits. With bread and butter at 4*s*, and 26*s*. a lb., firewood risen from eighteenpence a load to 20*s*., and a suit of clothes unprocurable under 20*l*., the monthly bill of expenses reached an enormous height for each officer. Money had to be raised somehow, even if it was necessary to sell much-needed boots and clothing. Meals were curtailed and all possible economy practised. It made things no pleasanter to know that abundant parcels from home were actually in the country, held up in the helpless confusion of the Turkish post, a large proportion of them certain never to be seen at all. The enterprising population at Godis began to see their opportunity and to stock their shops with particular view to the officers' custom. As this might amount to about 2,000*l*. a month, it was a dazzling gold-mine in such a place, and Gedis took care to profit freely. Prices were not likely to be restrained in such circumstances, but it was reassuring for the officers to know that at any rate the stuff was there.

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Here for the present ceases our information with regard to the officers' camps in Asia Minor. There are others—Eskichehir and Konia—which are reserved for Indian officers only; but of these little is known beyond the fact that the prisoners enjoy complete local freedom. Eskichehir was supposed to be the "depôt modèle" of the empire, and the late Sultan even ordained that the officers there might keep their swords. But so far as the British officers are concerned, our sketch will have indicated the main lines of their daily routine, its security on the whole from the worst forms of coercion, and on the other hand its exposure to grave risk and hardship. Fully to understand what their existence is like, one must of course amplify the picture in many ways, the chief of which is perhaps the deadly monotony of its isolation. All communication with the world outside is endlessly uncertain and broken. Between these prisoners and their friends at home, who only ask to be allowed to send them the help they need, there lies a mass of corrupt and torpid inefficiency, a barrier almost impossible to overcome because incalculable and irrational. The due and punctual censoring of the prisoners' mails, for example, has apparently been beyond the resources of the Turkish Empire. The authorities have never been able to establish any system by which parcels, letters and books, might be regularly scrutinised at the various camps. These are all dealt with at Constantinople, with long and exasperating delays. A novel for an hour's reading, say, is delivered to an officer in Asia Minor; it will instantly be taken from him, returned to the Capital, and there lost to sight for months before it is discovered to be inoffensive and allowed to proceed. For a long while the prisoners' letters were cut down to the barest minimum both in number and length, because the censor at headquarters could not deal with more. It appears that it has not been possible to carry out this work in the camps for the highly Turkish reason that the various authorities concerned mistrusted each other too deeply.

When, as the result of the Berne Agreement, a proper scheme of regular and impartial inspection is put into force, we may hope that the officers will be relieved of many vexations and impositions, against which they have at present so little power of effective protest. These troubles may singly be small or great; the accumulation even of the smallest, year after year, amounts to a very severe test of endurance. But we cannot suppose that anything will arouse in the Turk an abiding sense of his responsibility towards our prisoners, and it must continue to be upon their own force of character and will that they largely depend. To watch jealously and help vigorously, whenever and wherever it may be possible, will be the aim of all who have this duty at home.

It will be gathered from the above how difficult must have been the task of the neutral Diplomatists representing British interests, and therefore charged with the protection of British prisoners in Turkey. Indeed it is impossible to appreciate too highly the services of the United States Ambassadors, Mr. Morgenthau and his successor Mr. Elkus, whose work was continued by Monsieur de Willebois, the Netherlands Minister, after the United States had entered the war. They have been unceasing in devotion to the welfare of the prisoners, and have never failed to add the weight of their personal influence to the unending succession of proposals, protests and menaces addressed through them to the Turkish Government, on behalf of the Prisoners of War Department.

The housing, feeding, and medical care of the prisoners, the delivery of their parcels and correspondence, their pay, the exchange of invalids and others, the inspection of internment camps, and the thousand and one details of the treatment of prisoners, have been the subject of constant attention and voluminous correspondence, hampered not only by the callous obstinacy of the Turkish Government, but by the failure of Turkish officials even to read the communications addressed to them.

Thus, to take only the question of the exchange of invalids, it was after two years of effort that the Turks were brought to agree to the Conference at Berne, when Lord Newton and Sir H. Belfield secured an agreement providing for the immediate repatriation of at least 1,000 invalids, as well as for better treatment of all prisoners and for the inspection of camps by the Netherlands Legation. Some improvement in treatment has resulted, and the inspections have at last begun, but the Turkish Government has never obtained from their German allies the promised guarantee that the ship bringing the invalids should not be torpedoed. The ship is now to sail, nevertheless, and a fresh proposal has been made for the exchange of all prisoners, invalid or not, who have been 18 months in captivity.

Even more laborious, though more fruitful, than the task of moving the Turkish Government has been that of directly relieving the prisoners with money and supplies, besides the food, &c., sent from this country. The Netherlands Legation at Constanti-

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nople is spending for the British Government at the rate of over £70,000 a month on the purchase of food and clothing and in relief allowances; they are also the channel for the stream of private remittances sent through the Prisoners of War Department and for the system of enquiry forms instituted by that Department for communication between relatives in this country and Turkey; and they carry on direct correspondence, very considerable since the conclusion of the Berne Agreement, with the Senior Officers of camps and with other prisoners of war on matters affecting their welfare.

It has been hard work, not generally realised by the public, but it is enough for the workers to know that it has rendered possible, if not tolerable, the lives of the great number of prisoners and civilians still in Turkey.

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