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EDITORIAL.

THE TYPHUS EPIDEMIC AT GARDELEGEN.

The horrors of the prison camp at Wittenberg are still fresh in our minds, and now we have, issued in a White Paper (Cd. 8351), the story of the typhus epidemic in the prison camp at Gardelegen, in the report of the Government Committee on the Treatment by the Enemy of British Prisoners of War—a story which must stir the nation to its depths, both because of the inconceivable brutality of the German officials, and the self-sacrifice of their victims.

The report is based on the accounts given by Major P. C. T. Davy, Captain A. J. Brown, and Captain Scott-Williams, R.A.M.C. officers, who were at Gardelegen during the epidemic.

When the typhus epidemic broke out, the Germans deserted their prisoners, and left them to fight the disease without equipment. The camp is near the Gardelegen station, on the line between Berlin and Hanover. It is divided into eight compounds, each containing eight huts. When the epidemic began in February, 1915, there were about 11,000 prisoners in an area of 350 yards by 550, of whom 260 were British, the others being French, Russians, and Belgians, the men of all nationalities being crowded together.

Major Davy reports:—"The overcrowding was such as I have never before seen or imagined anywhere. The hut contained in the breadth four rows of straw or shaving pallasses, so arranged that laterally they were touching, and terminally only left the narrowest passage-way between. Here men of all nationalities were crowded together. In these huts, devoid of tables and stools, the men lived, slept, and fed. They sat on their bags of shavings to eat their meals; they walked over each other in passing in and out; they lay there sick, and, later on, in many cases, died there cheek by jowl with their fellow-prisoners. The atmosphere by day, and still more by night, was indescribably foetid, and this was their sole

alternative to going outside in their meagre garments for fresh air."

The food the prisoners received was not sufficient to keep them in a normal state of nutrition.

The British and French existed more and more on what they received from home. The Russians were not so fortunate, and Captain Brown relates:—

"The men were semi-starved. It was no unusual sight to see a crowd of Russians on their hands and knees in the pit in which potato peelings were thrown, struggling to find a stray potato, or a piece of rind with a little more potato than usual. This occurred day after day."

Add to this that the heating arrangements were totally inadequate, that the description of the sanitary arrangements given by Major Davy and Captain Brown "cannot properly be repeated" in the Committee's report, though we are told that the latrine work was specially allotted to the British prisoners, that there were practically no facilities for personal cleanliness, that lice swarmed in every garment the men wore, and in every blanket they slept in, and it is evident that there was every facility for the outbreak of typhus which occurred. When this broke out, a commission of German doctors arrived, and within two hours there was not a German left inside the camp. The sick were left quite unattended. The hospital was overfull, and the sick were pouring into the annexe. There were no feeding-mugs, or small cups, no beds, no bedpans, and the state of the patients and the floors was indescribable. More than once the medical men were sent for hastily to a hut to see prisoners who were said to have gone mad suddenly. All that had happened was that they had had typhus for some days, but said nothing about it, and had reached the stage of delirium.

The one humane German appears to have been a Dr. Kranski, who had been in practice in Alexandria for many years, and who was deported at the outbreak of the war. He arrived at the camp at the end of March, and

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