

## Returned British Soldiers Tell of Terrible Treatment.

Men Exchanged as Units for Further Military Service Declare on Arrival in England That Wittenberg Is by Far the Worst of the German Camps—Early Last Year the Prison Was Swept by Typhus.

**T**HE terrible tales of life in German prison camps are told by exchanged British prisoners of war who arrived in England during the week from Germany.

By far the worst of all the German camps is Wittenberg, a point on which all the released prisoners are agreed. Early in the year the Wittenberg camp was swept by typhus. The German guards ran away, and the food was sent into the camp down shoots. Then six British officers volunteered to go to Wittenberg and treat the men. Five of them caught typhus, and three died.

Before the typhus was stamped out nearly 1,600 men died—a thousand Russians, 500 French and 98 British. The wounded prisoners of war traveled from Germany by way of Roosendaal, the Dutch frontier station, and Flushing. Lying in the train cots at Roosendaal were soldiers who had fought in all the great battles of the war. There was a group of heroes from Mons, men wounded on Aug. 23, 1914, and the few following days. There was a young officer, Lieut. Eli of the 8th Royal West Kents, wounded at Loos a few weeks ago, with one arm clean amputated and the other cut off below the elbow. He was the brightest of all. "At all events I've got one elbow left," he laughed. "And I'm jolly glad to be home."

The kindly Dutch were waiting for the ex-prisoners. Col. van Loon was there with a staff of nursing sisters and male attendants. The ladies of Roosendaal had come with food and tea, cigars, cigarettes, and fruit. They swiftly passed from car to car, giving every man all he wanted. "Tea," said one Tommy. "It's the first I've seen for 16 months." And he lifted the cup to his mouth and inhaled its fragrance as a connoisseur would a fine wine. Blessings on the ladies of Roosendaal! As they went on their work of mercy they seemed to me the most beautiful women I had ever set eyes on. Lady Johnstone, the wife of our Minister at the Hague, came bearing bundles of newspapers—perhaps the most welcome gifts of all—and with a cheery smile that brought sunshine as she went from man to man.

During the long pause at Roosendaal and while we were traveling on Tuesday from Flushing to Tilbury, many of the soldiers told me the story of their prison life. The most appalling tale of all came from 17 prisoners from Wittenberg, the notorious camp in Prussia on which the American Ambassador himself reported, so serious were the complaints. Among the men from Wittenberg whom I saw were Trooper Branch, of the 2nd Life Guards, wounded and captured at Dixmude, Sergt. Ward and Pte. Lee, of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, wounded with shrapnel and captured at Le Cateau on Aug. 26, 1914. Rifleman Parker, of the Rifle Brigade, also bowled over with shrapnel on Aug. 26 last year, Pte. Jones, of the South Wales Borderers, wounded at Poelcapelle, and Gunner King, of the Royal Field Artillery, Pte. Green, of the Somerset Light Infantry, and Pte. J. H. Riley, all wounded at Le Cateau. These men I interviewed individually and collectively. Their stories about Wittenberg agreed.

The camp at Wittenberg contains in all about 15,000 men, of whom under 1,000 are English, nearly 10,000 Russians, and the remainder French and Belgians, with some civilians. It has been conducted from the first in a brutal fashion. It is a threat in other prison camps, if a man is disorderly, "We will have you transferred to Wittenberg." During last winter the food was even worse than in other camps. Early in the year typhus swept the camp. The German guards ran away. They quit the camp, left it to itself, and simply kept their guards outside. They sent the food over a shoot into the grounds to the prisoner cooks.

Hearing of the typhoid ravages, Majors Iry and Priestly, Capts. Vidal, Sutcliffe, and Field, and Lieut. Lauder volunteered, and were allowed to go there from another camp to attend the men. All those now living owe their lives to these six devoted officers of the Royal Army Medical Corps. Tragically three of the doctors themselves caught the disease and died, these being Iry, Field, and Sutcliffe.

Several prisoners captured in the early fighting had gruesome stories to tell of their experiences. Pte. Stanbridge, of the Queen's Royal West Surreys, was captured at Ypres, where his company was holding a line of trenches covering a retirement, and was surrounded. There had been a long fight, and the men were parched. "We asked for water," he said. "A bucketful was chucked straight over us. The fellows were so dry that they licked the wet off their coats. There were four Kitties and four Gurkhas in our party taken to Gustrow. At every place we stopped these were brought out for fun. The guards mocked at them, pulled their clothes about, and then kicked them back into their place. Pte. Pardon, of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, who was shot and captured in the first battle of Mons said: "When the Germans first got us they treated us very, very badly. Our wounds were dressed as well as was possible, but our guards would kick our wounds, smack us in the faces, and knock us about. One thing they frequently did was to slash the legs of the Kitties with their riding whips as hard as they could."