

### CONSTANTINOPLE'S AWFUL PRISONS

What British Commissioners Saw and Remedied

Men Kept Like Beasts — Corrupt Officials and Incompetents Caused Victims to Die in Scores

The conditions of Turkish prisons are told in a British government paper containing reports by Vice-Admiral Calthorpe. The commissioner says: "The whole system is so honeycombed with bribery and corruption that it was impossible to expect any real alterations while the Turks remained their own masters. Fortunately, under the armistice, there are means of compulsion available, and in six months some radical and humane changes have been forced upon them."

The corruption of Turkish officials was evident in the Central Prison at Istanbul. A long imprisonment there was merely a lingering death. When a British naval officer paid a surprised visit he found that no one had tasted food for the past twenty-four hours. Temporary pandemonium reigned when he asked, "Have you had enough to eat?" They ran up to the prison director, Hussein Fud, screaming out "He steals our food; it is he who sells our rations, and now when you have left he will have us beaten!" These prisoners were half-naked, lousy, human beings, with shrunk, wasted bodies and ravenous eyes. When protest was made against the famine diet, the officials replied, "May you all die; that will mean so many less for our country to feed."

The prison hospitals were a travesty of the name. In one, visited by Rear-Admiral Webb, the beds were crawling with vermin; and the emaciated patients were covered from head to foot with sores and mange. The Turkish doctor who came in, "a smug, clean-shaven person," said he was "really very sorry" for his patients, but that he had no funds.

In the Maison d'Arret, at Istanbul, a great majority had been awaiting trial for four months, many for six to twelve months, some as long as twenty-five months. The mortality during this time was extremely high. There was a boy—a Greek—18 years old, who had been imprisoned twelve months before with five companions. None of the six had been tried. Now this boy was a wasted skeleton, and his five companions were dead. Such cases, says Admiral Webb, could be multiplied ad infinitum.

The very large Greek and Armenian population of Constantinople made this question one of particular interest to the Allied Powers, for the charge against many of these prisoners—Greek and Armenian—was only that of desertion. Clause 4 of the armistice gave the British Commissioner special powers to deal with cases of this kind. In March he requested Reshid Pasha to issue directions without delay for the release of (1) All awaiting trial over three months, not charged with murder, and all awaiting trial over five months, even if accused of murder; (2) all non-Muslims accused of, or condemned for, desertion or any military or political offence.

The Grand Vizier, Damad Ferid Pasha, showed both energy and good will, but he was struggling against a system. The demands above-mentioned, however, were complied with. Exceptions were very properly made in the case of those accused of participating in the deportations and massacres of Christians, and also war profiteers. As a consequence, by April 6 the Constantinople Central Prisons which contained 450 prisoners, of whom 100 were awaiting trial, had only 107 inmates, and the numbers on the roll at the Galata Serai Prison were reduced from 67 to 17. The same liberation measures were understood to have been taken in the provinces.

The conditions in which the prisoners were kept are portrayed in a description of the Maison d'Arret at Constantinople. "Anyone who kept wild beasts in England under similar conditions would be retained by the police," says the Commissioner. "The conditions in the Constantinople Central Prison are such that it is not likely to be repeated."

"In two big rooms on the ground floor nearly all the boards of the flooring had been torn up by the prisoners for firewood, and also had some of the supports of the staircase leading to the upper stories. On the ground, which had been laid bare by the removal of the boards, was an indescribable collection of excrement and filthy cast-off rags of prisoners, the whole being a breeding place for vermin of all kinds. The prisoners were lying about on the boards, and sometimes even on the bare earth, and none of these had any covering other than the filthy rags which still clung round them."

"The squalor and filth of these dens, the indescribable stench which pervaded them, the gloom even at midday, relieved by thin windows high up near the ceiling, and the total lack of ventilation, all these features formed a scene which I am not likely to forget. Of the miserable creatures lying or sitting about on the ground and floors, subsequent medical examination showed that between 80 and 90 per cent were suffering from mange (scabies). Quite a number have become consumptive through starvation and mal-nutrition, and many forms of illness, chiefly typhus and syphilis, were raging among them. There was not even a pretence of their being given any medical attention."

"Their diet, which consisted of a very coarse and indigestible bread, is augmented once daily by a cupful of so-called soup so repulsive in taste and smell that even the prisoners in their ravenous hunger often turned away from it in disgust. I smelt it and the stench was overpowering; to taste it was impossible."

"The sanitary arrangements, or rather the lack thereof, are best left to the imagination. The authorities seem to have no concern as to sending the sick prisoners at this place to any hospital. Lying behind the door of one of these noisome dens I saw a man in a peculiar attitude and who only required a second glance to see that he was dying, probably from typhus. In a dark corner in the same room were four forms; two of these were just able to move while the others showed no signs of life. It is not difficult to conjecture their condition."

This is a description of the worst prison of all, but the central prisons of Constantinople were not much better. Their state was such that the only thing to be done with them was absolutely to destroy them. Thanks to the purging

### THE REASON WHY



"Five thousand francs for a genuine Chippendale chair. Before the war, it cost one hundred francs. Now it costs five thousand francs. Ah, yes, madame, but consider how the cost of timber and labor has gone up." — Le Rire, Paris.

process in other prisons also, the worst of the dungeons were also closed. Admiral Webb had the temerity to venture into one of these, though nothing had been done to clean it up. "As a consequence," he says, "we emerged simply smothered in swarms of fleas, which remained an unhappy memory for some days."

The first efforts of the Allied authorities had been met with the usual Turkish procrastination and evasion, but these methods now no longer availed. In January abundant promises were made, and new credits were voted for better food and clothing and for facilities for cleanliness. These promises were unexecuted, but the peremptory demands of Admiral Calthorpe in March effected a transformation. A month later Rear-Admiral Webb, acting for the high commissioner, was able to report the following improvements. The food was now almost palatable and more nourishing; the accommodation was somewhat cleaner, and the prisoners themselves had lost the haunted look of starvation. The sanitation was improved, and the clothing of prisoners was better.

In addition, the reforms mentioned above by the closing of the main categories of prisoners also stood to the credit of the Allied commission. A great, if spasmodic, step in advance against the Ottoman government was taken. For Admiral Webb is compelled to add that the changes made were deeply resented by some of the prison officials, who were the only class of an opportunity of resuming the old horrible conditions. Nothing but a constant watch by the Entente authorities, he was convinced, could prevent a return to the old regime.

With reference to Armenian and other prisoners in whom the Allies took a special interest, the Ottoman government were given to understand that clause 4 of the armistice terms was to be interpreted to include Christians and natives of countries under Allied occupation. As the result of pressure the Ottoman government passed a new amnesty law, which stipulated that every one should be released except those already condemned or awaiting trial for murder, rape, or political offences.

### The English Vagrant

He Makes His After-War Appearance in Town and Country

(London Times).

With the gradual restoration of peace conditions, tramps are reported to be returning on many roads. The period of the war has been a time of stabilization during the war, they are once more drifting along their accustomed channels, to the renewed annoyance of the settled population. Their disappearance during the past four or five years has been one of the most curious of the minor social phenomena of the time. Most British vagrants are by no means the kind of "human material" that is useful in times of stress. They are more nearly degenerate than any other class. Most tramps are of disproportionate if not actually feeble physique, and their minds range between animal dullness and the verge of idiocy. The gipsy race, on the other hand, is naturally vagrant—or nomadic, if the word is preferred—but the great majority of our English vagrants have lost capacity for a settled and civilized life. Yet, in one way or another, they were caught up with the war and withdrew from their seasonal migrations, often gipsy half-breeds, joined the army. A certain proportion of men and women who had not lost all capacity for work were tempted by high wages to engage in unaccustomed toil. But some of the worst and feeblest of the vagrants collected in the neighborhood of great camps, living like rats on wasted food, and forming a focus of indiscipline and vice.

The casual wards and the "beggars' bushes" on the heath will again become the daily and nightly receptacles of these dislaid figures, whom the accustomed control of the police will no doubt prevent from becoming a serious menace. But in any vision of a brighter England, the elimination of these waste products of humanity must take its place. It is almost hopeless to attempt to deal with adult vagrants, and arguments in favor of hiding them in refuges and asylums, under pretext of caring for them, should be regarded with great mistrust. Out of sight is out of mind. A demand for driving vagrants off the roads and streets is often due to a desire, not to improve their condition, but to be rid of a visible offence. Most vagrants are well acquainted with the law as it applies to themselves, and have too little energy and initiative to transgress it seriously. So long as they keep within its bounds, there is no sufficient justification for forbidding them to follow the only life for which they are fit. On the other hand, the most vigilant efforts must be made to prevent their children from following in their footsteps; and where the law is found, in practice, to be insufficient to secure them a healthy upbringing and proper education, it should be strengthened. Much false sentiment prevails

about the charms of vagrancy and the benefits of sleeping under the stars. The stars do not always shine, and there is no benefit in sleeping in the rain. The first step in dealing with this question, is for the educated public to clear its mind of the notion that tramps are alluring and romantic, creatures of finer clay. George Borrow did much to found the modern literary cult of vagrancy, but Borrow laughed at his gipsies in his sleeve, whereas too many of his readers take them seriously. Most vagrants, moreover, are far inferior to gipsies of the type which Borrow described, alike in mind, morals, and physique. Vagrancy is a brutalized existence, which few of those who have cultivated it have lived for long.

### FIRE ALARM TELEGRAPH

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### INVESTIGATED MONCTON'S HOUSING OPERATIONS

Warden Holding, Councilor J. T. O'Brien, County Secretary J. King, K. C., and G. G. Murdoch were in Moncton over the week-end, looking into the methods employed by that city for the building of dwellings under the Dominion housing scheme. They found that in the railway town houses were being erected at a cost of between \$2,500 and \$4,000 and it was felt that the same type of dwelling could be put up here at a lower cost. The Moncton commission, consisting of Dr. M. F. Keith, George Robertson, Millidge Wetmore and Clement Crier, has been given a free hand in the expenditure of Moncton's allotment, \$150,000, and already twenty-nine houses are under construction. The houses are all

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either self-contained or of the twin variety. Before obtaining assistance under the scheme, applicants must satisfy the board that they are not in a position to build themselves without the assistance of the scheme. The delegation formed a very favorable impression of the scheme in Moncton and it is expected that the St. John county scheme will be under way before long.

### GHOST REFUSED TO WALK WHEN PAY WAS NOT

Origin of Common Expression Dates Back to English Stage

Well Known Terms — "Pretty Kettle of Fish," "Blue Stockings," and "Tetotalism" Based on Fact

Once upon a time, the story tells say, there lived in England a theatre manager of the bogus type who was very dilatory in the matter of paying his salaries. Now in this company was a self-willed actor whose strong part was the ghost in Hamlet. If his salary was not forthcoming on Saturday morning he would exclaim, "Then the ghost won't walk tonight!" As he was an indispensable actor, he was always paid. To this day the expression that "the ghost walks" is synonymous with the paying of salaries not only in theatres but in many offices, and actors' agents, and he would even go so far as to hold up the play just before the scene when he entered, until he was paid. Of course the managers could not give his salary to one member of the company and overlook the others, so they all began to feel a keen interest in the walking of the ghost as a barometer of their pay situation. About the time of "treasure" on a Saturday morning, they would wait until they received word by messenger that the ghost would walk. To this day the expression that "the ghost walks" is synonymous with the paying of salaries not only in theatres but in many offices, and actors' agents, and he would even go so far as to hold up the play just before the scene when he entered, until he was paid. Of course the managers could not give his salary to one member of the company and overlook the others, so they all began to feel a keen interest in the walking of the ghost as a barometer of their pay situation. About the time of "treasure" on a Saturday morning, they would wait until they received word by messenger that the ghost would walk. 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