

A YORKSHIRE PRISONER-OF-WAR CAMP FROM WITHIN.

KRIEGSGEFANGEN IN SKIPTON. Herausgegeben unter Mitwirkung vieler Kameraden VON SACHSSE, Kapitän a. S., und COSSMANN, früher Oberleutnant d. R. (Munich : Ernst Reinhardt, 20.80 marks.)

This, the first book of its kind that has appeared in Germany, is an account of their captivity compiled by a number of the officers who were held in the officers' prisoner-of-war camp at Skipton. It is a plain, though not unnaturally querulous, tale of how they were treated, amused themselves, and carried on a miniature university, and covers every subject from religious worship to the duties of the soldier servants. It is well illustrated and appears to have been written at Skipton and smuggled piecemeal out of England. This precaution should hardly have been necessary, for there is nothing in it to which a reasonable censor could object. The book contains, indeed, the clearest proof that Britain treated her prisoners of war well, and went much beyond what the "Rules attached to The Hague Convention concerning the laws and customs of war on land" require. The principal complaints are that the West Riding climate in winter is unpleasant, and the supply of fuel was small; the goods in the canteen were "made in England," dear and bad; the messing, charged only 2s. a day, was not up to "middle-class standard"; the huts were draughty, and so indifferent that they were unsalable when the camp was closed, and therefore "not good enough for the English"; there was at first insufficient separate accommodation for influenza patients; German newspapers were not supplied regularly; the prisoners were retained after the Armistice; their honour was injured by charges of cruelty to prisoners in Germany; and generally that the English were lacking in *Kultur*, and it was gross impertinence to detain German officers at all, and a crowning indignity to issue military garments of an obsolete pattern to them.

These complaints are not catalogued, but scattered all over the book, and represent its general tone. On the other hand, the prisoners have nothing but praise for their treatment in hospital and for one officer who for a long time was Commandant of the camp, and had fought and been wounded, and could sympathize with their condition. As an historical document we may be well content with its evidence and its accounts of the theatre, concerts, newspapers, book clubs, gardens, and games in the playing-field. Ten per cent. only of the prisoners engaged in football, but that "it has technique that cannot be acquired in a few weeks or by persons of advanced age" is probably true. We miss the humour and determination to keep the spirits up that are to be found in most of British prisoner-of-war books. Life, indeed, was earnest rather than joyous. There were so many officers with good educational degrees that it was possible to form a matriculation class for the younger men, whom the war had prevented from continuing their studies. There is a curious section on religion. The authors' general conclusion is:—

Both in war and captivity, I have discovered that no one loses his faith and no one wins it. Anyone who lost it never really had it, and anyone who gained it had it lying dormant in him.