

**ONE ACTIVE SERVICE  
SERIES. A  
PRISONER IN TURKEY**

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One active service series. A prisoner in Turkey by John Still

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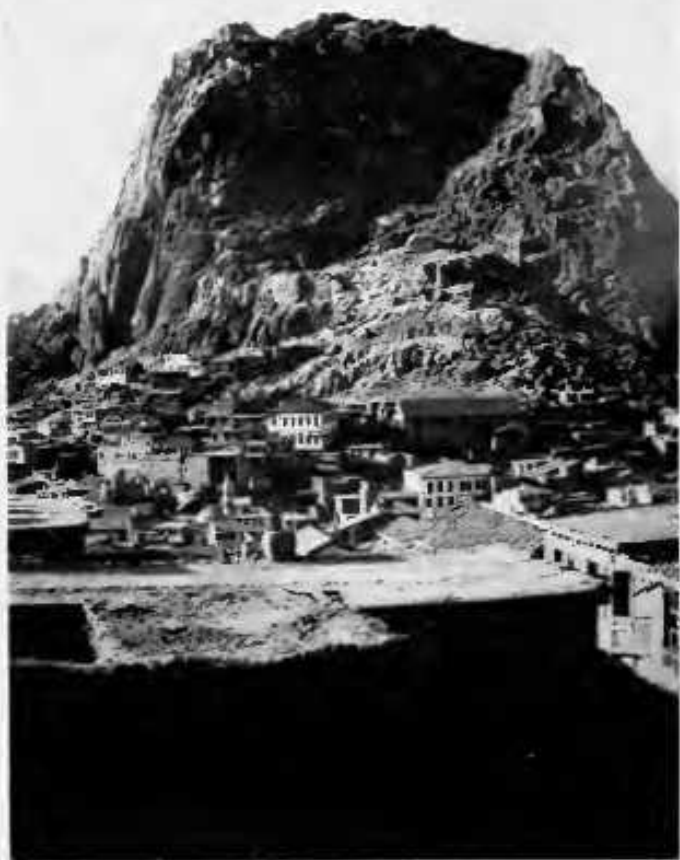
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ON ACTIVE SERVICE SERIES

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THE KARA HISSAR

The Armenian Church appears just to the right of the large white building in the centre of the picture, at the foot of the crag

# A PRISONER IN TURKEY

By JOHN STILL



23746!  
20.11.29.

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## FOREWORD

THIS book, like most books, consists both of facts and opinions. In order to fortify the facts, and so that it may be clearly seen that the opinions are justified, a number of extracts from the "Report on the Treatment of British Prisoners of War in Turkey," which was presented to Parliament in November, 1918, are included here by the special permission of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office. So few people read Government publications that this course seems necessary.

In this official report it is stated that out of 16,583 British and Indian prisoners "Believed Captured," 8,290 are dead, and 2,222 untraced and almost certainly dead. But this report was compiled before the end of the war and is admittedly incomplete. I do not know the actual statistics, which must by now be available, nor do I



know where to obtain them. But, as stated in the book, we in Turkey believed that about 75 per cent. of the British rank and file perished within two years of being captured. It may be that we were unduly pessimistic; it is very sincerely to be hoped that we were, and on the whole it seems probable. But I leave the figure unaltered in the text, for it was our sincere belief after very difficult and laborious enquiries made secretly. In the official report the figures show that of a total of 4,932 British believed captured, no less than 2,289 are either dead or untraced. This amounts to 46 per cent. It would be interesting to know the final figures.

The extracts taken from the report have been selected because they are either general in character or have special reference to Angora or Afion Kara Hissar, the two camps I knew personally.

I am indebted to three fellow-prisoners for the photograph reproduced as a frontispiece to this book, for the piece of music, for reading the MS., and for reading the proofs.

EXTRACTS FROM A REPORT ON THE TREATMENT  
OF BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR IN TURKEY.

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.

. . . . .

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