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A NOTE ON GERMAN AND ENGLISH WAR-TIME DIETS.

By Major GREENWOOD (Capt., R.A.M.C., T.F.) and
CECILY M. THOMPSON.

THE German Imperial Statistical Department¹ recently issued an analysis of some data relative to the cost of living in German towns collected in 1916 and 1917 by the Kriegsausschluss für Konsumenteninteressen. This analysis, which has been carried out with an elaboration which the comparative paucity of the original observations, perhaps, hardly justifies, is mainly concerned with economic details. We think it may be of interest to some readers of the *Journal* to give an evaluation of the dietaries from the physiological point of view. With that object we have computed the daily consumption of the three main constituents of a diet and also the yield of energy expressed in calories.

Comparison of German and English diets, 1916-17.

	Numbers of people.	Grams per head daily.			Calories daily.
		Protein.	Fat.	Carbo-hydrates.	
Average of German town diets, April, 1916.	823 families	63·8	60·9	389·1	2,352
Average of German town diets, April, 1917.	342 families	57·6	48·2	343·1	2,007
Average of 6 canteens and hostels in England and Scotland, June, 1917.	6,750 people	110·8	130·4	366·2	3,168 (3,073)
Average of 3 hostels in England, April, 1918.	1,843 people	86·7	69·4	434·0	2,782 (2,699)

Butter, margarine and lard per head per day.

					Grams.
German diet, April, 1916	....	....	....	....	28·7
" " 1917	....	....	....	....	18·0
English diet, June, 1917	....	....	....	....	43·3
" April, 1918	....	....	....	....	22·3

¹ *Beiträge z. Kenntnis der Lebenshaltung im dritten Kriegesjahre 17. Sonderheft zum Reichs-Arbeitsblatte.* Berlin, 1918.

We have employed the analyses of foodstuffs given in the eleventh edition of König's *Nahrwerttafel* (supposing them to be more accurately applicable to German foods than the standards adopted by the Royal Society's Food (War) Committee for English diets), and the energy figures are net values, allowance being made for loss in digestion— not, of course, for loss in preparation. The results are shown in the table, which also contains the most accurately comparable data of consumption in England which we possess. These latter figures relate to hostels boarding English munition workers. Certain reservations must be made before instituting a comparison between the English and German results. The calorie values of the English diets were obtained by using Rubner's coefficients, and do not therefore make sufficient allowance for loss in digestion ; the resulting exaggeration is about 3 per cent. The figures in brackets in the last column are more properly comparable with the German averages. Further, the German system of " man " values, which we have adopted, rates all persons over the age of 11 years as " men," while there are good reasons for supposing that the average consumption of an adult woman is less than that of a man doing the same class of work (although not necessarily the same amount of work). If our two samples of munition workers had each contained men and women in the same proportions this fact would not have affected the comparison ; but it happens that our second sample refers only to hostels for women, so that the fall in calorie value between 1917 and 1918 in England has been exaggerated. Lastly, the German data refer to a mixed population. Of the 342 families in the 1917 sample, only 111 were definitely working-class families. One would naturally expect that the energy value of a diet should increase with the demands made upon the physical energy of the consumer, and, unfortunately, the German data are not so presented that a separate calculation can be made of the calorie value in each class. The expenditure on different classes of food is, however, tabulated by occupations, and the differences are not very great. Hence, so far as appears, there is no reason to suppose that the working-class families did really obtain more calories in their diets than the remainder. Still, the possibility must be had in mind.

These objections naturally weaken the force of a comparison which is, however, so far as it goes, satisfactory to us. The decline in total calorie value between 1917 and 1918 in England is of the same order as that taking effect between 1916 and 1917 in German towns, but the absolute level in England is much higher. While the English 1918 average reaches the conventional standard for

moderate or sedentary work (the women were mostly light lathe operators), the German result is not much more than what has been deemed a bare subsistence diet.

The consumption of *rationed* fats (of course, the total consumption of fat shown above in the table includes the fat contained in all articles of food) shows that the English hostels were slightly better off in 1918 than the German families more than a year earlier. It seems reasonable to conclude that the position in Germany this year has been still worse than in 1917.