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## EDITORIAL.

### A CORPORATION WITHOUT A SOUL.

"The War Office is a corporation without a soul." That is the accusation brought against it in the House of Commons by Captain Charles Craig, M.P., speaking with the experience of a prisoner of war in Germany for two years, and few who read the report on the debate on the motion for the adjournment of the House—moved by Colonel Sanders on October 29th, in order to raise the question of the treatment of our prisoners of war—will have any wish to qualify the statement.

General Sir Ivor Philipps, who opened the debate, declared that "right from the beginning of the war our whole treatment of this question of prisoners of war has been most unsatisfactory. . . . There was a feeling at the beginning of the war that there was something of contempt to be felt for a prisoner of war. There is not," he said, "the slightest doubt in my mind that the War Office took this line, and I am not certain that even to-day they have quite got rid of it. . . ."

"There would," he continued, "have been no starving prisoners, or going to charity, or need to have young ladies of the Red Cross touting for prisoners up and down Bond Street, simply to feed your prisoners if you did your duty. . . . You made a contract with the soldier that you would feed, clothe and pay him, and you have done none of these things. You have left it all to charity. These men, some of the finest soldiers we have got, would have starved—you have said so yourself—if it had not been for the noble work of numbers of men and women who throughout the country have done their best to help."

And Captain Charles Craig spoke equally sternly. "I regret," he said, "that the first thing that I have to do when I come home,

after two years in Germany, is to level as strong an indictment as I possibly can against the Government for their treatment of this prisoners of war subject, during the last three or four years. I wish I could tell the House that my experiences assure me that the Government have done all that they could for the prisoners of war. Unfortunately I have to say the very reverse. As far as my experience goes, they have done little or nothing for us. I have to say, further, that they could have alleviated our lot to a very considerable extent. If they had done their duty as they ought to have done, they could have made the lives of those thousands of men I will not say happy but comparatively easy, instead of which they have been lives of unutterable misery all these years."

It is a grave indictment, especially when we know that the brutality with which even sick and wounded prisoners have been treated in Germany is proved up to the hilt, and we regret to observe Sir George Cave's statement that even among German nurses "many are found who, far from helping suffering prisoners, have stooped to inflict insult and injury upon them."

His Majesty's Forces on active service, or as prisoners, are not objects of charity. They are the servants of the State, and it is the duty of the State to provide for their upkeep, their well being, and their protection. The War Office has shirked the responsibility for which it is paid by the Nation, and left the financing of many of its duties towards the Army to the amateur efforts of charitable persons.

It is this principle against which we have persistently inveighed in the treatment of the sick and wounded from the beginning of the war, and we hope the womanhood of the country will make it perfectly distinct to would-be legislators that no shirking of duty in Government Departments will be permitted in the future.

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