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EDITORIAL

POISONOUS GASES IN WAR.

For some time the Germans had been stating that the Allies were making use of poisonous gases. On the authority of Sir John French this may be branded as a falsehood. But entirely unexpectedly the Germans employed gases, and, by this means, gained a temporary advantage. It now becomes quite clear that the allegation that the Allies had made use of gases was only to lay down an excuse for their use by the Germans, and prepare the mind of neutral nations for what actually came to pass. The neutral nations, as well as those fighting Germany, have learned to discredit statements coming from that country. Such a form of warfare is thoroughly illegal, and contrary to rules of war to which Germany is a party; but no obligations bind her in any way.

With regard to the gases employed several things are quite clear. In the first place these gases are intensely irritating to the eyes, and those exposed to them are speedily blinded by the copious flow of water from the eyes, the swelling of the conjunctiva, and the pain. This takes considerable time to pass away, and may induce severe inflammation.

Another effect of the inhalation of the gases is a very severe and distressing inflammation of the respiratory passages. The difficulty in breathing is extreme. Many die of this dyspnoea. The reaction is very marked, and the resulting laryngitis and bronchitis is most violent and painful. There is not uncommonly necrosis of tissue; in all cases the oedema is pronounced.

A third effect is the deadly and depressing effects of these gases. Those affected lose strength. If they live through the acute stage, they undergo a slow process of poisoning. Their extremities are swollen and covered with large blotches. There is some type of blood poisoning. There is a deep stupor that lasts for several hours. Several kinds of gases appear to have been used, including chlorine, the vapors of sulphurous anhydride, and others, the nature of which has not yet been determined.