

THE EFFECTS ON THE SOLDIER OF CRUEL CONDUCT IN WAR.

The effects of war on the human mind are very composite. In some it brings out the noblest qualities that man is capable of evincing, while in others it reveals characteristics compared with which the fury of the enraged tigress would be considered mild. This difference is largely due to the motive that governs the soldier, as the result of the mental attitude of his country and his superior officer towards war in general, the rights of the people of the enemy country, and what may be regarded as means to be adopted to win.

In the present war Germany approached it, indeed had long taught that war is a good thing, and is the surest way to make a nation great. It was the common teaching of the rulers in Germany that no nation reached its best except by war and conquest. Then, again, it is part of their teaching that the strongest should rule, and they mean by this, the strongest in material and physical force. Their chief teacher Nietzsche says "the saddest sight in the world is when the strong do not rule." But a still further code in Germany's attitude towards war is that anything you do against the enemy country is legitimate warfare, if it has the effect of causing loss of life the destruction of property, or the production of pain. Such a system of teaching will in the end break down the moral tone of an army and prove one of the most potent agencies in its defeat. "Self abasement will pave the way" to its own downfall. Odin in their eyes may appear strong; but in the final test will not prove so strong as the eternal moral laws of Jehovah, whom their war teachings ignore.

Have we any evidences of the effects of this teaching on the German army? Yes, many. In the first place hospital ships and ordinary passenger ships have been wantonly sunk. The Red Cross emblem has been used a means to gain a military advantage. Great works of art and cathedrals and colleges have been destroyed. Unarmed men, women and children have been tortured in most unmentionable ways, and cruelly murdered. Women and children have been used as a screen behind which the German troops fought. Prisoners with their doctors and nurses have been enclosed in a building and burned alive. The employment of disease-producing germs is another device.

Now as to the effects of all this on the soldier. General Hinderberg is authority for the saying that the victory in this war will belong to the army with the most enduring nerves. If he is a true prophet, he predicts the defeat of his own country. The cruel soldier is not the brave soldier. The German officer who shot Edith Cavell through the head when she fell exhausted before she reached the spot of execution,