

(Letter to London Times, Nov. 29, 1918, p. 6,c).

GAS WARFARE

A Weapon to be Abolished.

(undated)

To the Editor of the Times.

Sir: - The cessation of hostilities brings with it the great problem of safeguards for the future. The numerous perplexing claims to be dealt with, all of them of great importance, may tend to overshadow certain aspects of the war which urgently demand recognition. Amongst these is the employment of lethal gases as a weapon of warfare. Its introduction by the Germans was a violation of the principles of morality which had heretofore exercised some guiding control over civilized warfare. It was further a violation of the spirit of the second Delegation attached to the Regulations of the Hague Convention, ratified in 1907, which states "it renounces the use of projectiles the sole object of which is the diffusion of asphyxiating or harmful gases."

The Allies were forced in self defense to employ the same method. But now that the need is over, fresh safeguards must be devised to prevent any nation from ever again employing gas as a weapon.

The use of gas is self-condemned for the following reasons: -

It is an uncontrollable weapon, whose effects cannot be limited to combatants.

It is an "unclean" weapon, condemning its victims to death by long-drawn-out torture.

It opens the door to infinite possibilities of causing suffering and death, for its further development may well lead to the devising of an agent which will blot out towns, and even nations.

As members of the medical profession, we necessarily know more than any others the suffering entailed by the use of gas. Most of us have seen its victims on the field and in hospitals at home, since the time when the first deadly wave of chlorine was let loose on our troops. We therefore feel it our duty to bring the question to the notice of the allied nations and of their representatives who will attend the Peace Conference.

Are the best efforts of science to be chiefly devoted to devising more and more potent methods of causing death by chemical agencies, instead of to the service of industry and the increase for mankind of beneficent knowledge?

Surely in the coming Comity of Nations it ought to be decided to abolish forever such a malignant weapon. Let those to whom will be entrusted the drawing up of peace conditions have the knowledge that one such condition must be the abolition of all forms of gas warfare.

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