

## Comment by the Editor

### THE LURE OF WAR

There is no logic in fighting. The use of force, like the resort to slanderous epithets, is an indication of unwillingness to accept the verdict of reason. In a truly enlightened age wars can not be justified on any ground — political, economic, biological, religious, or moral. Yet wars occur. Perhaps the ultimate explanation should be sought, not in intellectual relations, but in the realm of human emotions.

Man is by nature a fighting animal possessed by a proclivity to engage in contests of skill and strength. In the quest for an explanation of civil society, Thomas Hobbes found three principal causes of war — competition, diffidence, and glory — which made men invade for gain, for safety, and for reputation. Three centuries of belligerent experience have revealed no other motives. Nations still resort to violence for purposes of conquest or defense, while individuals join in the great adventure and shed their blood for fame. If peace is a product of civilization — the triumph of reason over impulse — war can be interpreted as a wholesale relapse into primitive habits.

Work is an imposition of culture. People tolerate



the steady, dull routine of everyday life; but they crave adventure, heroism, and relaxation. While labor may be dignified and necessary, it is nevertheless an acquired characteristic, an attribute of domesticity. And if the tension of progress and efficiency becomes too severe, a general reversion to more inherent traits may be expected. The boys who flocked into the army in 1898 hailed the Spanish-American War as a glorious chance to get away from home and gain relief from the humdrum of their customary tasks; while, if newspapers are any good as mirrors, the folks who could not go to war found their thrills in the stories of the martial exploits of others. Patriotism rose to the boiling point and the news of every battle sent tingling sensations of pride up and down American spines. It was a period of national diversion.

The tendency to fight accounts in a measure, perhaps, for the vogue of military history. Poets as well as historians have capitalized the universal lure of battle by playing up the dramatic events, the valorous deeds, the decisive results, and all the innate qualities of human nature that wars provide. As men instinctively resort to force, so also they find romance and atavistic pleasure in reading the age-old tales of human conflict.

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