
PROFESSIONAL MILITARISM

Viewed from any standpoint, the business of killing men is a brutal and degrading profession, which must brutalize those who engage in it, to a greater or less degree, depending somewhat upon the character of the man in the beginning. Except where men strike for life, liberty, or country, the moment he reddens his hands with the blood of his fellows, the microbe of the *fiend* begins to circulate in his veins, and a slow but certain disintegration settles down upon him and all connected with him.

If he possessed great virtues and strength of character to start with, the process of dissolution may be lengthened to the second generation; but the end is the same. There is something abhorrent about the taking of life, and Nature will have her revenge. Even the man who delights in killing the lower animals gradually changes. He becomes coarse, his

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finer and nobler feelings are blunted, and he finally partakes somewhat of the nature of the fierce brutes whose conduct he imitates. From the standpoint of fair play, he sinks even below the average level of the brute; because the element of unfair advantage by reason of firearms, etc., must be considered.

The business of the professional soldier is to kill, to destroy. He creates nothing. All his thoughts run in the direction of destruction. He is a stranger to the elevating, strengthening, and ennobling influence that comes from creating something, from adding to the world's comfort or happiness. In spirit and aim he belongs to the barbaric ages. His environment in itself is enough to destroy even the strongest and noblest manhood. He is isolated from both the affairs and the society of the great body of citizens. He is a stranger to their aims and their aspirations. His as-

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sociation with women is generally confined to the worst of the sex.

The powerful and selfish interests of the world use him as a club to beat the toiling masses into subjection while they are being robbed of the fruits of their toil. He thus becomes the unintentional foe of liberty, freedom, and justice. He is made an instrument of injustice, and this in itself is degrading. He must obey orders, and therefore he is excusable before the law; but it does not change the nature of his act, nor relieve him from the reactionary effect of his conduct. In the world's armies, there is everywhere this tendency of the professional soldier to degenerate, because of his mental, moral, and physical environment.

The private soldiers in many cases are treated like dogs. What is more natural than that they should sink to the level of dogs in their conduct? The officers strut in fine uni-

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forms, and form a class by themselves. They are exclusive, and cultivate a spirit of snobbery. This spirit of exclusion, this "I am better than thou" attitude, is in itself belittling. No snob ever grew into a great man.

Nature draws no distinction between officer and private, and the death-dealing influence of a wrong destroys all who come within the circle of vibration which every wrong sets in motion. A fine uniform may conceal a scrofulous body; but no screen has yet been devised that will veil the windows of a putrid soul, or erase from the countenance the scars of a dead conscience.