

# Introduction to Men At War

by Ernest Hemingway,  
edited for the 1955 edition.

THIS book will not tell you how to die. Some cheer-leaders of war can always get out a pamphlet telling the best way to go through that small but necessary business at the end. PM may have published it already in a special Sunday issue with pictures. They might even have it bound up as a companion piece to the issue I read in November 1941 entitled 'How We Can Lick Japan in Sixty Days'.

No. This book will not tell you how to die. This book will tell you, though, how all men from the earliest times we know have fought and died. So when you have read it you will know that there are no worse things to be gone through than men have been through before.

When you read the account of Saint Louis the IX's Crusade you will see that no expeditionary force can ever have to go through anything as bad as those men endured. We have only to fight as well as the men who stayed and fought at Shiloh. It is not necessary that we should fight better. There can be no such thing as better. And no thing that can ever happen to you from the air can ever be worse than the shelling men lived through on the Western Front in 1916 and 1917. The worst generals it would be possible to develop by a process of reverse selection of brains carried on over a period of a thousand years could never make a worse mess than Passchendaele and Gallipoli. Yet we won that war and we must win this one.

The editor of this anthology, who took part and was wounded in the last war to end war, hates war and hates all the politicians whose mismanagement, gullibility, cupidity, selfishness and ambition brought on this present war and made it inevitable. But once we have a war there is only one thing to do. It must be won. For defeat brings worse things than any that can ever happen in a war.

Regardless of how this war was brought on, step by step, in the Democracies' betrayal of the only countries that fought or were ready to fight to prevent it, there is only one thing now to do. We must win it. We must win it at all costs and as soon as possible. We must win it never forgetting what we are fighting for, in order that while we are fighting Fascism we do not slip into the ideas and ideals of Fascism.

For many years you heard American people speak who admired Mussolini because he made the trains run on time in Italy. It never seemed to occur to them that we made the trains run on time in America without Fascism.

We can fight a total war without becoming totalitarians if we do not stand on our mistakes to try and cover them; our military; our political and our naval mistakes; and learn from the winners; rather than copy the methods of the losers because they have been at the business of losing for so long.

The Germans are not successful because they are supermen. They are simply practical professionals in war who have abandoned all the old theories and shibboleths which had accumulated to such a point that military thought had

completely stagnated, and who have developed the practical use of weapons and tactics to the highest point of common sense that has ever been reached. It is at that point that we can take over if no dead hand of last-war thinking lies on the high command; and we can thank the enemy for having done all this preliminary work for us.

The part this book can play in the winning of this war is to furnish certain information from former times.

When you go to war as a boy you have a great illusion of immortality. Other people get killed; not you. It can happen to other people; but not to you. Then when you are badly wounded the first time you lose that illusion and you know it can happen to you. After being severely wounded two weeks before my nineteenth birthday I had a bad time until I figured it out that nothing could happen to me that had not happened to all men before me. Whatever I had to do men had always done. If they had done it then I could do it too and the best thing was not to worry about it.

I was very ignorant at nineteen and had read little and I remember the sudden happiness and the feeling of having a permanent protecting talisman when a young British officer I met when in the hospital first wrote out for me, so that I could remember them, these lines:

*'By my troth, I care not: a man can die but once; we owe God a death . . .  
and let it go which way it will, he that dies this year is quit for the next.'*

Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part II

That is probably the best thing that is written in this book and, with nothing else, a man can get along all right on that. But I would have given anything for a book like this which showed what all the other men that we are a part of had gone through and how it had been with them. As nearly as it is possible to do so with only a thousand pages this book tells you how it was for all those who came before us from the shepherd boy who used his sling that day on a certain scrubby hillside to the moment when Admiral Fitch turned to Captain Sherman on the deck of the aircraft carrier Lexington and said, 'Well, Fred, I guess it's time to get the men off.'

The material has not been grouped chronologically but is rather placed under certain arbitrary heads and divisions. These divisions were made by probably the most intelligent writer on the metaphysics of war that ever lived. General Karl von Clausewitz.

There could have been more divisions; just as the book could have been twice as long. But something over a thousand pages is as large a book as can be handled and packed easily. Sometime there might be another volume to go with this one. After this war when things can be written without causing offense between allies I hope to live to read the true accounts of Hong Kong, Bataan, Singapore, Java, Burma, and the rest. I saw the preparation for all that and I have heard accounts of some of it from bitter young officers. But there has been no understanding writing on any of it up to the date this book is published.

In the last war there was no really good true war book during the entire four years of the war. The only true writing that came through during the war was in

poetry. One reason for this is that poets are not arrested as quickly as prose writers would be if they wrote critically since the latter's meaning, if they are good writers, is too uncomfortably clear. The last war, during the years 1915, 1916, 1917, was the most colossal, murderous, mismanaged butchery that has ever taken place on earth. Any writer who said otherwise lied. So the writers either wrote propaganda, shut up, or fought. Of those who fought many died and we shall never know who were the fine writers who would have come out of the war who died in it instead.

But after the war the good and true books finally started to come out. They were mostly all by writers who had never written or published anything before the war. The writers who were established before the war had nearly all sold out to write propaganda during it and most of them never recovered their honesty afterwards. All of their reputations steadily slumped because a writer should be of as great probity and honesty as a priest of God. He is either honest or not, as a woman is either chaste or not, and after one piece of dishonest writing he is never the same again.

A writer's job is to tell the truth. His standard of fidelity to the truth should be so high that his invention, out of his experience, should produce a truer account than anything factual can be. For facts can be observed badly; but when a good writer is creating something, he has time and scope to make it of an absolute truth. If, during a war, conditions are such that a writer cannot publish the truth because its publication would do harm to the State he should write and not publish. If he cannot make a living without publishing he can work at something else. But if he ever writes something which he knows in his inner self is not true, for no matter what patriotic motives, then he is finished. After the war the people will have none of him because he, whose obligation is to tell them truth, has lied to them. And he will never be at peace with himself because he has deserted his one complete obligation.

Sometimes this loss of his good name will not show during his lifetime because such critics, as have also sold out in wartime, will keep his reputation bolstered up along with their own, so long as they are functioning. But when such a writer dies, or a new generation of critics comes, the whole thing collapses.

In selecting the material for this book I found nothing that was useable in the books which were published during the last war. The nearest thing to useable material was an account of a trench raid by Arthur Guy Empey who wrote that glorified mug's-eye view of trench warfare called "Over the Top". But it was such a pitiful piece of bravado writing beside the solid magnificence of Private Frank Richards's writing that it was like comparing the Brooklyn Dodger fan who jumps on the field and slugs an umpire with the beautiful professional austerity of Arky Vaughan, the Brooklyn third baseman. Read Frank Richards, who also wrote that neglected masterpiece, 'Old Soldier Sahib', for the finest account of the last war by a professional soldier serving in the ranks that has ever been written.

To clean away the scent of Private Peat that still lingers in the corners of our lecture halls, and sweetens our library shelves this book publishes a part of 'Her Privates We' originally published, unexpurgated, in a limited edition in England as, 'The Middle Parts of Fortune.' It is the finest and noblest book of men in war that I have ever read. I read it over once each year to remember how things really were so that I will never lie to myself nor to anyone else about them.

As they get further and further away from a war they have taken part in all men have a tendency to make it more as they wish it had been rather than how it really was. So each year in July, the anniversary of the month when I got the big wound, I read 'The Middle Parts of Fortune' and it all comes back again as though it were not yesterday, nor long ago, but as though it were this morning before daylight and you were waiting there, dry-mouthed, for it to start.

The only good war book to come out during the last war was 'Under Fire' by Henri Barbusse. He was the first one to show us, the boys who went from school or college to the last war, that you could protest, in anything besides poetry, the gigantic useless slaughter and lack of even elemental intelligence in generalship that characterized the Allied conduct of that war from 1915 through 1917. His whole book was a protest and an attitude. The attitude was that he hated it. But when you came to read it over to try to take something permanent and representative from it the book did not stand up.

Its greatest quality was his courage in writing it when he did. But the writers who came after him wrote better and truer than he did. They had learned to tell the truth without screaming. Screaming, necessary though it may be to attract attention at the time, reads badly in later years.

I would have liked to include something from 'Three Soldiers' by John Dos Passos which, written under the influence of Barbusse, was the first attempt at a realistic book about the war written by an American. But in spite of its great merit, like Barbusse, as a pioneering book, on rereading it did not stand up. Try to read it yourself and you will see what I mean. The dialogue rings false and the actual combat is completely unconvincing. There are books like that which are as exciting as a fine new play when they come out and, when you return to them after years, are as dead as the scenery of that play if you should happen on it in a storage house.

It has always been a problem to know why certain writing dates and goes bad in this manner. I think it is probably due, as much as anything, to the improper use of slang due to a defective ear. There are certain words which are a permanent, but usually unpunishable part of the language. They are how men have talked actually, when under stress for hundred of years. But to substitute slang expressions for these words, slang being a language which becomes a dead language at least every three years, makes a defect in writing which causes it to die as fast as the slang expressions die. It is the 'Twentythree skiddo' and 'Ish ka bibble' school of American writing. Its pall, and the lack of all clarity in the combat scenes, is what makes the Dos Passos book unreadable today. But the writing of it was as valuable a pioneering feat in American letters as some minor Lewis or Clark's expedition into the Northwest.

There was no real literature of our Civil War, excepting the forgotten 'Miss Ravenall's Conversion' by J. W. De Forest, until Stephen Crane wrote 'The Red Badge of Courage.' This is published entire and unabridged in this book. Crane wrote it before he had ever seen any war. But he had read the contemporary accounts, had heard the old soldiers, they were not so old then, talk, and above all he had seen Matthew Brady's wonderful photographs. Creating his story out of this material he wrote that great boy's dream of war that was to be truer to how war is than any war the boy who wrote it would ever live to see. It is one of the finest books of our

literature and I included it entire because it is all as much of one piece as a great poem is.

If you want to find out how perfect a piece of writing is try to cut it for the purpose of making a selection for an anthology. I do not mean how good a thing is. There is no better writing on war than there is in Tolstoy but it is so huge and overwhelming that any amount of fights and battles can be chopped out of it and maintain all their truth and vigor and you feel no crime in the cutting. Actually 'War and Peace' would be greatly improved by cutting; not by cutting the action, but by removing some of the parts where Tolstoy tampered with the truth to make it fit his conclusions. The Crane book, though, could not be cut at all. I am sure he cut it all himself as he wrote it to the exact measure of the poem it is.

Tolstoy carries the contempt of the man of common sense who has been a soldier for most generalship to such a length that it reaches true absurdity. Most generalship is as bad as he believes it to be but he took one of the few really great generals of the world and, inspired by a mystic nationalism, tried to show that this general, Napoleon, did not truly intervene in the direction of his battles but was simply a puppet at the mercy of forces completely beyond his control. Yet when he was writing of the Russians Tolstoy showed in the greatest and truest detail how the operations were directed. His hatred and contempt for Napoleon makes the only weakness in that great book of men at war.

I love 'War and Peace' for the wonderful, penetrating and true descriptions of war and of people but I have never believed in the great Count's thinking. I wish there could have been someone in his confidence with authority to remove his heaviest and worst thinking and keep him simply inventing truly. He could invent more with more insight and truth than anyone who ever lived. But his ponderous and Messianic thinking was no better than many another evangelical professor of history and I learned from him to distrust my own Thinking with a capital T and to try to write as truly, as straightly, as objectively and as humbly as possible.

The account of Bagration's rearguard action in this book is the finest and best understood relation of such an action that I have ever read and it gives an understanding, by presenting things on a small enough scale to be completely comprehended, of what a battle is that no one has ever bettered. I prefer it to the account of Borodino, magnificent though that is. Then, too, from Tolstoy is the wonderful account of young Petya's first action and his death published here in the selection that has been titled, badly enough, for it is about much more than that and it has been presented from the viewpoint of an aristocrat, 'The People's War.' It has all the happiness, and freshness and nobility of a boy's first encounter with the business of war and it is as true as the 'Red Badge of Courage' is true although the two boys had little in common except their youth and that they were first facing that thing which no one knows about who has not done it.

They represent, too, the difference between a first cavalry action and the first action of a foot soldier. A man with a horse is never as alone as a man on foot, for a horse will take you where you cannot make your own legs go. Just as a mechanized force, not by virtue of their armor, but by the fact that they move mechanically, will

advance into situations where you could put neither men nor animals; neither get them up there nor hold them there.

After mechanized troops have had enough experience, so that they appreciate accurately the degree of danger involved in their movements, then the same limits in what they will do are reached. It has been one of the great advantages, in the tank warfare in Northern Africa, which the Germans have held that their Commander in Chief has always been up with the talks to see that his orders have been carried out rather than to assume they would be carried out simply because they had been given. He could thus make decisions on the spot and change orders which had become impossible of execution. He was there in person to see that they were obeyed.

In the civil war in Spain the tanks of both sides in early 1937 were completely vulnerable to the effective Russian anti-tank gun, which was employed on the Republican side, and to the even better German antitank weapon which was being first used then by the Franco troops, and there were never enough tanks to use them in proper force so that their possibilities had to always be deduced rather than proven. There we learned much about the mentality of men in armored vehicles functioning under the worst possible conditions for their morale.

I have seen a French tank company commander turn up at five o'clock in the morning for an attack so drunk he could not stand, having tried, with brandy, to bolster himself up to have nerve enough to make the attack which he was convinced, from careful study of the ground the day before, was hopeless in the force with which it had to be made. He never got his tanks up to the starting point and was shot, quite properly, that afternoon with only one week more to go on the time he had enlisted for. He had been a good officer at the start, but the necessity to do things in insufficient force and the constant improvement of the German anti-tank guns had, coupled with the approach of the end of his term of enlistment, made him worthless and dangerous.

We learned later that the attack had been a complete surprise. The anti-tank guns which had been in that sector had been removed to another part of the front where the attack had been expected and the French officer could have completed his enlistment with a victorious action. But it was a relief to everyone when he was shot because the amount of fear he was carrying around with him was dangerous, disgusting, and embarrassing. In the next action, a week later, when his tanks were used, very sound elements of infantry were detailed to keep close behind the disgraced tanks with anti-tank grenades and blow them up if they did not keep moving as ordered.

The moral of this digression is, as stated above, that a horse will carry a man in his first action where his legs might not go; and a mechanized vehicle will carry him further than a horse will go; but finally no mechanized vehicle is any better than the heart of the man who handles the controls. So learn about the human heart and the human mind in war from this book. There is much about them in here.

The best account of actual human beings behaving during a world shaking event is Stendhal's picture of young Fabrizio at the battle of Waterloo. That account is more like war and less like the nonsense written about it than any other writing could possibly be. Once you have read it you will have been at the battle of Waterloo and

nothing can ever take that experience from you. You will have to read Victor Hugo's account of the same battle, which is a fine, bold, majestic painting of the whole tragedy, to find out what you saw there as you rode with the boy; but you will have actually seen the field of Waterloo already whether you understood it or not. You will have seen a small piece of war as closely and as clearly with Stendhal as any man has ever written of it. It is the classic account of a routed army and beside it all of Zola's piled on detail in his 'Debacle' is as dead and unconvincing as a steel engraving. Stendhal served with Napoleon and saw some of the greatest battles of the world. But all he ever wrote about war is the one long passage from 'Le Chartreuse de Parme' which is included, complete, in this book.

It was at Waterloo that General Cambronne, when called on to surrender, was supposed to have said, 'The Old Guard dies but never surrenders!' What Cambronne actually said was, 'Merde!' which the French, when they do not wish to pronounce it, still refer to as, 'the word of Cambronne.' It corresponds to our four-letter word for manure. All the difference between the noble and the earthy accounts of war is contained in the variance between these two quotations. The whole essence of how men speak in actual war is in Stendhal.

There are good accounts of sea fighting in this book from Trafalgar through the Monitor and the Merrimac to Dewey in Manila Bay and the wonderful account of the destruction of the Russian fleet by Admiral Togo's forces. In that account, which is one of the finest that I know of fighting in armored ships before the introduction of the airplane into naval warfare, you see what men could go through, with their spirits unconquered, in a battle which most Americans had completely forgotten.

Our last two naval fights, before this war, the destruction of the Spanish fleet off Santiago de Cuba and Dewey's action in Manila Bay, had been pushovers. There are no more pushovers to be fought now and if more people had read 'Tsushima' there would not have been such a pushover psychology in our navy before Pearl Harbor. All through the Pacific and the Far East in 1941 I heard about the general incapacity and worthlessness of 'those Little Monkeys'. All the oil they had was what we, the Dutch and the British sold them and the quantity they split with the Russians on Sakhalin Island to their North. They had to have the oil if they were ever to be a first class power. So they edged down toward it. Finally we told them they could go no further toward the oil. At that moment it was perfectly clear that we would have to fight them.

When that moment arrives, whether it is in a barroom fight or in a war, the thing to do is to hit your opponent the first punch and hit him as hard as possible. But we were a great and noble power and they relied on our nobility and kept men talking to us while they prepared to hit. They had hit once before against Russia without warning. In Washington they seemed to have forgotten that. We kept on talking. As a matter of fact, I believe we were talking to them at the moment when it happened. So we had Pearl Harbor.

It is not in my province in this book to examine further into the causes of Pearl Harbor. A commission has reported on its immediate causes and fixed some of the blame. After the war there will be more blame to fix. In the meantime it has happened. There is nothing this book can ever do about it. But it can show you

something about our enemy so that they will not be taken lightly. 'Tsushima' makes interesting reading. There is nothing about monkeys in it at all.

Naval war has been changed completely and fundamentally by two events; the sinking of the wooden ships by the Merrimac which introduced the armored vessel, and the sinking of the Prince of Wales and the Repulse off Malaya. The British attack on the Italian warships in Taranto harbor with torpedo planes was the prelude to the Prince of Wales and Repulse loss but since the naval authorities continued to think of the Prince of Wales as unsinkable by air attack the later event was the real turning point.

Since then there have been the two accounts of the battle of the Coral Seas and the battle of Midway which mark the third and fourth phases of the evolution of naval warfare. The first of these is the evolution and supreme employ of the aircraft carrier so that two fleets might never be in contact and yet fight destructive actions exclusively with the planes from their carriers; actions which if carried to their furthest conclusion could result in mutual destruction of all planes and their carrier bases involved. The second showed the ability of land-based planes to beat off and destroy a fleet accompanied by aircraft carriers.

The implications of these two actions are too vast to go into in an introduction to this book.

There is no material on Commando raids in this book. But since those raiders, who due to the lack of action in the west from the fall of France until an invasion of the continent is undertaken, have been publicized very extensively, this book instead presents an account of that greatest pre-Commando raid of raids, the bottling up of Zeebrugge. If anyone ever sneers to you about the bravery of the British have him read that account.

This war is only a continuation of the last war. France was not beaten in 1940. France was beaten in 1917. Singapore was not really lost in 1942. It was lost at Gallipoli and on the Somme and in the mud of Passchendaele. Austria was not destroyed in 1938. Austria was destroyed in the battle of Vittorio-Veneto at the end of October in 1918. It was really lost and gone when it failed to beat Italy after Caporetto in the great Austrian victory offensive of the 15th of June, 1918.

All of history is of one piece and it is ourselves, who bore the least weight of casualties in 1917 and 1918, who have to bear the most to defeat Germany this time. Once a nation has entered into a policy of foreign wars, there is no withdrawing. If you do not go to them then they will come to you. It was April, 1917 that ended our isolation — it was not Pearl Harbor.

But there will be no lasting peace, nor any possibility of a just peace, until all lands where the people are ruled, exploited and governed by any government whatsoever against their consent are given their freedom. This premise has implications which have no place in this introduction.

There is no space to comment on each of the selections in this book. You will discover for yourself the fascination and lucidity of Sir Charles Oman, the great commentator and historian of the art of war in the Middle Ages. I wish that the two selections from his work could have been fifty. As it is, you have fti 'The Battle of Hastings' the account of the last great effort to use the Teutonic infantry tactics which

had once ruled Europe against the rising tide of the feudal cavalry, which was to be the dominant arm for the next two hundred and fifty years until it, in turn, succumbed to the English longbow at Crecy.

In 'The Battle of Arsouf' you see the classic example of the patience and endurance it takes in men to lure a harassing enemy to close combat and can admire without reserve the generalship of King Richard. In that meeting between the Saracens and the Franks, war took on the aspect of a part of the intercourse of the human race just as it had in the Battle of Hastings and as it was to have in the great fighting between Cortez and the followers of Montezuma and in all the encounters that were grouped under that first division' in the book.

Since war is made up of all the elements under which certain selections are listed in this book and since all the selections deal with war, many of them would fit as well under one head as under another. Especially, since war is the province of chance, are there many other stories that could be classified under that fifth division of material.

For wonderful narratives of the part chance plays in our history, read, 'The Wrong Road,' by Marquis James to really understand the fate of Major Andre and for excitement read, 'The Stolen Railroad Train,' by the same author. For excitement and for a great story which should do much to make us appreciate and understand our British allies, read, 'Turn About,' by William Faulkner.

Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall's account of an all-day air fight is as different from modern war in the air as the battle of Cannae is from a Commando raid; but you can appreciate the element of chance when you realize that but for the lucky appearance of a French Spad pilot, we would never have had the 'Mutiny on the Bounty' trilogy. That is, if it is autobiographical. If it isn't, read it anyway.

That War is the province of friction and that everything is very simple in war, but the simplest thing is difficult, no better example proves than Major General J. F. C. Fuller's account of Gallipoli. We had Masefield's account of Gallipoli, which is a poet's record of heroism and suffering. But I believe the men who died there would rather that Fuller's account be published. I do not agree with General Fuller's politics and he has written many things to which I am absolutely opposed. But his account of Gallipoli remains as something that we can learn from greatly and it contains the type of necessary criticism which has been mentioned earlier in this introduction.

Criticism of the friction at Gettysburg is presented in Lt. Col. John W. Thomason's story, 'The Stars in Their Courses.' It presents much else too and it is a fine story as are all of his other stories in this book. It is a great loss they could not be illustrated by his drawings which are so excellent and added so much to the edition of General Marbot's Memoirs which he edited.

There is quite a bit of Marbot in this book and if you like it, you must read it all. It is worth learning French to read the three volumes of his memoirs alone. None of the four great young cavalry leaders of Napoleon left memoirs. Colbert was killed by a sniper in Spain, Sainte-Croix was hit by a shell from an English gunboat in the same Peninsular campaign; Lasalle was killed at Wagram when the battle was all but over, and Montbrun died at Borodino. You know about the life they led and their battles,

though, from reading Marbot. That he should have lived to write the book is a miracle.

When reading the memoirs of fighting soldiers, I am always reminded of the story of old Marshal Lefebvre who was entertaining a boyhood friend who could not conceal his envy of the Marshal Duke's elaborate residence in Paris. 'So you are jealous, eh?' the Marshal peered at him. 'Eh bien, come out to the garden and I'll have twenty shots at you at thirty paces. If I miss you, then you can have the house and grounds and all that's in it. I was shot at a thousand times from as close range as that before I got this house.'

Of the stories that you must not miss in this book, one of the finest is, 'After the Final Victory,' by Agnes Smedley. In it she has gotten that absolute determination to win, the unthinkability of defeat no matter what the odds or how long the time that they must go, that has characterized the Chinese people. Under conditions that are inconceivable to Western people, they have fought for five years. Their great illusion was that we would enter the war finally and then the Japanese would be quickly destroyed. Now, having lost almost all the advantages they held when we were neutral, they are our second front against Japan; a second front which must be nurtured with more than promises and a little aviation aid.

China's resistance has been taken too much for granted, just as Russia's was. It cannot be dismissed with praise, fine words or simply money, and a few planes, no matter how superb are the pilots that fly them. The greatest danger that the allied cause faces is the possible disillusion of the people of China and Russia in regard to their allies. China must have aid in greatly increasing amounts. No enchantment with the possibility of immediate and flashy successes elsewhere should divert the long-term necessity for sending that aid to China no matter what sacrifices are involved.

This introduction is written by a man, who, having three sons to whom he is responsible in some ways for having brought them into this unspeakably balled-up world, does not feel in any way detached or impersonal about the entire present mess we live in. Therefore, be pleased to regard this introduction as absolutely personal rather than impersonal writing.

This book has been edited in order that those three boys, as they grow to the age where they can appreciate it and use it and will need it, can have the book that will contain truth about war as near as we can come by it, which was lacking to me when I needed it most. It will not replace experience. But it can prepare for and supplement experience. It can serve as a corrective after experience.

This year, the mother of the oldest boy, who is eighteen, had asked me to have a talk with him about the war in case he should be worried about it in any way. So when we were driving back in the car from the airfield where he had just flown in to spend the few days of vacation that were all he would get before the summer term started at college, I said, 'Mother thought you might be worried a little about the war and going to it and all.'

'No, Papa,' he said. 'Don't you worry about that. I'm not worried at all.'

'The one thing I really know,' I told him, 'is that worrying doesn't do any good about anything.'

'Don't you worry,' he said. 'I'm not worried.'

That was the end of that conversation. No, worrying does no good. Neither for children nor for their parents. A good soldier does not worry. He knows that nothing happens until it actually happens and you live your life up until then. Danger only exists at the moment of danger. To live properly in war, the individual eliminates all such things as potential danger. Then a thing is only bad when it is bad. It is neither bad before nor after. Cowardice, as distinguished from panic, is almost always simply a lack of ability to suspend the functioning of the imagination. Learning to suspend your imagination and live completely in the very second of the present minute with no before and no after is the greatest gift a soldier can acquire. It, naturally, is the opposite of all those gifts a writer should have. That is what makes good writing by good soldiers such a rare thing and why it is so prized when we have it.

You never know how people will react to war. Take self-inflicted wounds. In one famous International Brigade which fought at the battle of Guadalajara so valiantly and well that they made history there in that eight-day battle, there were thirty-seven self-inflicted wounds in the first afternoon the Brigade was in action. That was panic. There is a sure cure for self-inflicted wounds; much more efficacious than court-martial and execution when the offense is proven as was practiced in the world war.

It was discovered in the snow and mud of the plateau above Brihuega with that March wind blowing against the constant rolling roar of automatic weapon fire and it consists of loading all the self-inflicted wounded into a truck; taking away their coats and blankets so their comrades in the lines can have that much more warmth; and driving them back to the town of Guadalajara where all the men's wounds were dressed, and then returning the bandaged men to their sections in the line.

After that treatment there were no more self-inflicted wounds in that Brigade except head wounds. Any man who would rather shoot himself in the head than run the chance that the enemy might eventually do that same thing can be, and is, written off as a hopeless coward and listed under, 'Died of Wounds and Other Causes.'

There was much trouble with self-inflicted wounds in Italy during the last war. The men became very skilful at it and often a pair would team up to shoot each other, usually wrapping sandbags around the arm or leg, to avoid any evidence of a close discharge of the rifle. Others would hold copper coins in their armpits to get a yellow cast of complexion and simulate jaundice. Others deliberately contracted venereal disease in order to leave the lines. There were doctors in Milan who did a thriving trade in injecting paraffin under the kneecaps of their clients to induce lameless. Mussolini himself was wounded superficially in the legs and backside by the premature explosion of an Italian trench mortar in the early years of the war and never returned to the front. I have often thought that all his martial bombast and desire for military glory was a defense mechanism, formed against his own knowledge of how frightened he had been in the world war and the ignominious exit he had made from it at the first opportunity.

Against the type of cowardice, or more often panic and stupidity, that produces self-inflicted wounds, I will always remember one marvellous story of the deprecation the truly brave man can feel for them. Evan Shipman, one of my oldest friends, a fine poet and good prose writer, had gone to France in order to drive an ambulance on the Loyalist side in the Spanish Civil War. Our State Department had refused to validate

his passport for Spain, so he took the smuggler's route over the Pyrenees border between France and Spain with a group of recruits for the International Brigades. They were all caught by the French gendarmerie and sentenced to a jail term in Toulouse.

Being jailed made Evan so indignant that he determined, instead of driving an ambulance, that he would enlist in the infantry of the Brigades. After coming out of jail he successfully entered Spain by another route and in a short time was at the front, and in the battle of Brunete, one of the fiercest fought of all that war. He fought all through the battle with exemplary courage, staying with the Franco Beige battalion to whom he had been attached as an interpreter and a runner, and fighting in the fine stand they made against orders which prevented a rout at the very most critical time, and on the last day was severely wounded.

I did not see him for some months and when I did he was pale, ragged, limping and profoundly cheerful.

“Tell me about when you were wounded,” I said by the time we had settled down to a drink.

“Why, Hem, it was absolutely nothing. It was nothing at all. I never felt a thing.”

“What do you mean, you didn't feel a thing?” The machine gun bullet had gone through his thigh from one side to the other.

“Why, it was really nothing. You see I was unconscious at the time.”

“Yes?”

“You see the planes had just caught us in the open and bombed us and I was unconscious at the time. So I didn't feel a thing when they came down and machine gunned us. Really, Hem, it was absolutely nothing. I've hardly even thought of it as a wound. It was almost like having an anaesthetic beforehand.”

He turned his drink around in his hand and then said, “Hem, I can never thank you enough for having brought me over here. I was very upset that you might be worried about me. I want you to know that being in Spain is the happiest time I have ever had in my life. Please believe me, Hem. You really must believe me absolutely.”

You can set that against all the self-inflicted wound cases. It was because of Evan that I finally insisted ‘The Red Badge of Courage’ must be published entire in this book. Evan Shipman is a private now in an Armored unit of the U. S. Army. He was turned down innumerable times by medical examiners, but finally built up enough weight to get a doctor to pass him. He wrote me from where his unit is stationed, ‘I picked up a copy of ‘The Red Badge of Courage,’ here in the library and it seems even better than when I first read it.’ So I thought, on re-reading it that it better be in and all of it in.

There is no space now to recommend all the other things you should absolutely read in this book. If I did not think they were all good they would not be in.

This collection of stories, accounts, and narratives is an attempt to give a true picture of men at war. It is not a propaganda book. It seeks to instruct and inform rather than to influence anyone's opinion. Its only and absolute standard for inclusion has been the soundness and truth of the material.

I have seen much war in my lifetime and I hate it profoundly. But there are worse things than war; and all of them come with defeat. The more you hate war, the more you know that once you are forced into it, for whatever reason it may be, you have to win it. You have to win it and get rid of the people that made it and see that, this time, it never comes to us again. We who took part in the last war to end wars are not going to be fooled again. This war is going to be fought until that objective is achieved; if it takes a hundred years if necessary, and no matter whom we have to fight to gain that objective in the end.

We will also fight this war to enjoy the rights and privileges conveyed to us by the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, and the Bill of Rights, and woe to anyone who has any plans for taking those rights and privileges away from us under any guise or for any reason whatsoever.

During a war censorship can conceal mistakes, blunders and acts of almost criminal misjudgment and negligence. These occur in all wars. But after the war is over, all of these acts have to be paid for. The people fight the war and in the end the people know what has really happened. In spite of all censorship that can be imposed, the people always finally know in the end because enough of them have been there.

It is very easy to fool the people at the start of a war and run it on a confidential basis. But later the wounded start coming back and the actual news spreads. Then, finally, when we have won, the men who fought the war come home. There will be millions of them who will come home knowing how things were. A government which wants to keep the confidence of its people after the war, or during the last stages of it, should take the people into its confidence and tell them everything that they can know, bad as well as good, so long as their knowing of it does not help the enemy. Covering up errors to save the men who make them can only lead to a lack of confidence which can be one of the greatest dangers a nation can face.

I am sure that as the war progresses, our government will realize the necessity of telling the people the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, in everything that does not aid the enemy, because times are coming in this war when the government will need the complete and absolute confidence of all citizens if this country is to endure.

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