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Comment

John Ely Briggs

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Comment by the Editor

PROGRESS OF WAR

If war ever was an art it has ceased to be. War is scientific. The tactics of armies depend upon the inexorable laws of mathematics, physics, and chemistry. Not the niceties of human discretion, or the amenities of chivalry, but the strength of numbers, the range of guns, and the effect of gas are the factors that determine victory or defeat. The outcome of a battle may be calculated in advance. While strategy still has a place in the general scheme of military operations, it is a strategy of formula rather than genius. The conduct of war is not a business for amateurs.

The methods of warfare have changed tremendously since 1865. It would be surprising indeed, if the continual study and experimentation of professional soldiers had not produced new ways of winning battles. Some of the changes in tactics may have been induced by climate, topography, and the temperament of the belligerents; but most of the modern devices for defeating the enemy are adaptations of instruments of civilization to uses of destruction. The domestic tractor is converted into a monstrous tank and the swift mail plane becomes a scorpion of the air.

Although the technique of campaigning has been modified as shifting circumstances dictate, the qualifications of soldiers have remained the same as ever — albeit their functions have been specialized. Courage, audacity, and endurance are as essential now as in the reign of Caesar. Perhaps the element of discipline is more important than it was, but slavish regularity at the price of personal initiative may have cost Germany the war. Capacity for leadership is as vital in the composition of a first-class private as a general, and the traits of character that make a man a major general might also win a seat in Congress or a contract with the New York Giants.

J. E. B.