

## "WAR IS CRUELTY"

By James Babcock

It was one hundred years ago this year that the book *Capital Punishment* by Marvin Bovee of Eagle was printed. Four years ago in the Spring 1965 issue of *Landmark* an article by this author on Bovee and the abolition of capital punishment appeared. Since that time the gore of war has manifested itself with the evening news and increasingly protests against the war have become common. Yet such protests are not unique to our times; and the humanitarianism of Bovee is not unmeaningful to today's thinking. Following are excerpts from *Capital Punishment* — by Marvin Bovee.

"'War,' says General Sherman, in his celebrated letter to the Mayor of Atlanta, in 1864, 'war is cruelty and you can not refine it.' An honest confession of a distinguished military chieftain; and had the eminent general, then and there, publicly renounced the profession of 'arms', that renunciation would have transformed the military hero he then was, and now is, to the great moral hero he would have been.'" "The recent civil war of our own country illustrates the fact that our boasted civilization stands in need of a still higher civilization," . . . "four years of war, and for what purpose? That statesmen, legislators and those holding authority might be enabled to see the very things which they ought to have seen . . . to do the very things which they ought to have done, without the intervention of war. Must these things ever be? Is war never to cease amongst men? Never, until the people in their sovereign power shall determine for themselves this question of war, and no longer permit this tremendous power—this grave responsibility, to rest in the hands of misguided and unscrupulous politicians."

" . . . But there is one point on which we do most solemnly insist, and it is this; if those statesmen — or Congress itself who make the quarrels will not do the fighting, then, indeed, shall those who do the fighting have a voice in making the quarrels; in other words, the people shall determine for themselves whether they desire peace or war."

"Speaking, then, for ourself and for our own country we demand, in the name of the people of the United States, in behalf of the laboring classes who furnish the bone and sinews of war; in behalf of the toiling millions upon whom its calamities fall with crushing force; that they shall be exempt from any further military service in behalf of our government, unless that government permits the people to determine, through the ballot-box, whether war is necessary to the happiness or welfare of themselves; and to this end we would amend the constitution of the United States, by taking from Congress the war power which was originally delegated to it by the people, and returning it to the people whence it came; then, when our statesmen find themselves unable, in peering through the 'gimlet-hole' of diplomacy to discover light, and deem war essential to the improvement of their vision, let the question be submitted to the electors of the several states, their votes to be taken vive voce; and their names duly recorded for or against war, then, if a majority of the electors declare for war, let war come! but if in its duration, the volunteer force of the country should become entirely exhausted, and conscription an absolute necessity let its operations be rigidly confined to that class of electors who voted in favor of war."