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Weapons of War – NF #1

Not all weapons have been invented solely for the purpose of war. Despite humans’ war-filled past, there is much evidence that the ordinary person does not like to kill or be killed, to maim or be maimed, to plunder or be plundered. Certainly, humankind’s first desire is to continue to live, to preserve self and family. For this purpose, humans first used a club—to kill an animal for food. Later, they learned that the same club could kill a person, too.

The club was an effective war weapon, even if it had been borrowed from civilian life. With a rock fastened to the end of the stout stick, it became even more efficient in smashing an opponent’s skull. When the rock was chipped so as to present a sharpened edge, its destructive qualities were further increased.

So universal was the use of the club that it may be considered the ancestor of all other war weapons. Many ways have been found to improve it. A long shaft with a metal head can be deadly in strong hands, but even deadlier when a series of loose metal rings is placed around the shaft. As the attacker swings the club, the metal rings slide up to the end, adding their speed and weight to the metal head just as it strikes the victim.

Symbols of the club remain even in modern warfare. The field marshal’s baton and the emperor’s scepter are insignia of power—the power of the one who wields a club.

The club was the principal weapon of war. However, it did not remain a mere club for long. In the Stone Age, it became the stone ax with a sharpened edge. When iron was first smelted, it was used to make even stronger and sharper war clubs. In time, spikes were added to the sharp edges to make a battle-ax that would kill by one of three methods, no matter what the angle of attack—crushing, cutting, or perforating.

The discovery of metals—first copper, then bronze and iron—made possible sharper and stronger weapons. Daggers and knives took on thousands of different shapes. The dagger and knife were small weapons, but the development of the sword added several feet of striking power to an attacker’s arm. Throughout the world, there can be found as many shapes and sizes of swords as human ingenuity could conceive and manufacture.

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