

## Concluding Observations on Book One

We have identified danger, physical exertion, intelligence, and friction as the elements that coalesce to form the atmosphere of war, and turn it into a medium that impedes activity. In their restrictive effects they can be grouped into a single concept of general friction. Is there any lubricant that will reduce this abrasion? Only one, and a commander and his army will not always have it readily available: combat experience.

Habit hardens the body for great exertions, strengthens the heart in great peril, and fortifies judgment against first impressions. Habit breeds that priceless quality, calm, which, passing from hussar and rifleman up to the general himself, will lighten the commander's task.

In war the experienced soldier reacts rather in the same way as the human eye does in the dark: the pupil expands to admit what little light there is, discerning objects by degrees, and finally seeing them distinctly. By contrast, the novice is plunged into the deepest night.

No general can accustom an army to war. Peacetime maneuvers are a feeble substitute for the real thing; but even they can give an army an advantage over others whose training is confined to routine, mechanical drill. To plan maneuvers so that some of the elements of friction are involved, which will train officers' judgment, common sense, and resolution is far more worthwhile than inexperienced people might think. It is immensely important that no soldier, whatever his rank, should wait for war to expose him to those aspects of active service that amaze and confuse him when he first comes across them. If he has met them even once before, they will begin to be familiar to him. This is true even of physical effort. Exertions must be practiced, and the mind must be made even more familiar with them than the body. When exceptional efforts are required of him in war, the recruit is apt to think that they result from mistakes, miscalculations, and confusion at the top. In consequence, his morale is doubly depressed. If maneuvers prepare him for exertions, this will not occur.

Another very useful, though more limited, way of gaining familiarity with war in peacetime is to attract foreign officers who have seen active service. Peace does not often reign everywhere in Europe, and never throughout the whole world. A state that has been at peace for many years should try to attract some experienced officers—only those, of course, who have distinguished themselves. Alternatively, some of its own officers should be sent to observe operations, and learn what war is like.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

However few such officers may be in proportion to an army, their influence can be very real. Their experience, their insights, and the maturity of their character will affect their subordinates and brother officers. Even when they cannot be given high command they should be considered as guides who know the country and can be consulted in specific eventualities.