

On Military Genius

Any complex activity, if it is to be carried on with any degree of virtuosity, calls for appropriate gifts of intellect and temperament. If they are outstanding and reveal themselves in exceptional achievements, their possessor is called a "genius."

We are aware that this word is used in many senses, differing both in degree and in kind. We also know that some of these meanings make it difficult to establish the essence of genius. But since we claim no special expertise in philosophy or grammar, we may be allowed to use the word in its ordinary meaning, in which "genius" refers to a very highly developed mental aptitude for a particular occupation.

Let us discuss this faculty, this distinction of mind for a moment, setting out its claims in greater detail, so as to gain a better understanding of the concept. But we cannot restrict our discussion to *genius* proper, as a superlative degree of talent, for this concept lacks measurable limits. What we must do is to survey all those gifts of mind and temperament that in combination bear on military activity. These, taken together, constitute the *essence of military genius*. We have said in *combination*, since it is precisely the essence of military genius that it does not consist in a single appropriate gift—courage, for example—while other qualities of mind or temperament are wanting or are not suited to war. Genius consists in a *harmonious combination of elements*, in which one or the other ability may predominate, but none may be in conflict with the rest.

If every soldier needed some degree of military genius our armies would be very weak, for the term refers to a special cast of mental or moral powers which can rarely occur in an army when a society has to employ its abilities in many different areas. The smaller the range of activities of a nation and the more the military factor dominates, the greater will be the incidence of military genius. This, however, is true only of its distribution, not of its quality. The latter depends on the *general intellectual development* of a given society. In any primitive, warlike race, the warrior spirit is far more common than among civilized peoples. It is possessed by almost every warrior: but in civilized societies only necessity will stimulate it in the people as a whole, since they lack the natural disposition for it. On the other hand, we will never find a savage who is a truly great commander, and very rarely one who would be considered a military genius, since this requires a degree of intellectual powers beyond anything that a primitive people can develop. Civilized societies, too, can obviously possess a warlike character to greater

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or lesser degree, and the more they develop it, the greater will be the number of men with military spirit in their armies. Possession of military genius coincides with the higher degrees of civilization: the most highly developed societies produce the most brilliant soldiers, as the Romans and the French have shown us. With them, as with every people renowned in war, the greatest names do not appear before a high level of civilization has been reached.

We can already guess how great a role intellectual powers play in the higher forms of military genius. Let us now examine the matter more closely.

War is the realm of danger; therefore *courage* is the soldier's first requirement.

Courage is of two kinds: courage in the face of personal danger, and courage to accept responsibility, either before the tribunal of some outside power or before the court of one's own conscience. Only the first kind will be discussed here.

Courage in face of personal danger is also of two kinds. It may be indifference to danger, which could be due to the individual's constitution, or to his holding life cheap, or to habit. In any case, it must be regarded as a permanent *condition*. Alternatively, courage may result from such positive motives as ambition, patriotism, or enthusiasm of any kind. In that case courage is a feeling, an emotion, not a permanent state.

These two kinds of courage act in different ways. The first is the more dependable; having become second nature, it will never fail. The other will often achieve more. There is more reliability in the first kind, more boldness in the second. The first leaves the mind calmer; the second tends to stimulate, but it can also blind. *The highest kind of courage is a compound of both.*

War is the realm of physical exertion and suffering. These will destroy us unless we can make ourselves indifferent to them, and for this birth or training must provide us with a certain strength of body and soul. If we do possess those qualities, then even if we have nothing but common sense to guide them we shall be well equipped for war: it is exactly these qualities that primitive and semicivilized peoples usually possess.

If we pursue the demands that war makes on those who practice it, we come to the region dominated by the *powers of intellect*. War is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty. A sensitive and discriminating judgment is called for; a skilled intelligence to scent out the truth.

Average intelligence may recognize the truth occasionally, and exceptional courage may now and then retrieve a blunder; but usually intellectual inadequacy will be shown up by indifferent achievement.

War is the realm of chance. No other human activity gives it greater scope: no other has such incessant and varied dealings with this intruder. Chance makes everything more uncertain and interferes with the whole course of events.

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Since all information and assumptions are open to doubt, and with chance at work everywhere, the commander continually finds that things are not as he expected. This is bound to influence his plans, or at least the assumptions underlying them. If this influence is sufficiently powerful to cause a change in his plans, he must usually work out new ones; but for these the necessary information may not be immediately available. During an operation decisions have usually to be made at once: there may be no time to review the situation or even to think it through. Usually, of course, new information and reevaluation are not enough to make us give up our intentions: they only call them in question. We now know more, but this makes us more, not less uncertain. The latest reports do not arrive all at once: they merely trickle in. They continually impinge on our decisions, and our mind must be permanently armed, so to speak, to deal with them.

If the mind is to emerge unscathed from this relentless struggle with the unforeseen, two qualities are indispensable: *first, an intellect that, even in the darkest hour, retains some glimmerings of the inner light which leads to truth; and second, the courage to follow this faint light wherever it may lead.* The first of these qualities is described by the French term, *coup d'oeil*; the second is *determination*.

The aspect of war that has always attracted the greatest attention is the engagement. Because time and space are important elements of the engagement, and were particularly significant in the days when the cavalry attack was the decisive factor, the *idea of a rapid and accurate decision* was first based on an evaluation of time and space, and consequently received a name which refers to visual estimates only. Many theorists of war have employed the term in that limited sense. But soon it was also used of any sound decision taken in the midst of action—such as recognizing the right point to attack, etc. *Coup d'oeil* therefore refers not alone to the physical but, more commonly, to the inward eye. The expression, like the quality itself, has certainly always been more applicable to tactics, but it must also have its place in strategy, since here as well quick decisions are often needed. Stripped of metaphor and of the restrictions imposed on it by the phrase, the concept merely refers to the quick recognition of a truth that the mind would ordinarily miss or would perceive only after long study and reflection.

Determination in a single instance is an expression of courage; if it becomes characteristic, a mental habit. But here we are referring not to physical courage but to the courage to accept responsibility, courage in the face of a moral danger. This has often been called *courage d'esprit*, because it is created by the intellect. That, however, does not make it an act of the intellect: it is an act of temperament. Intelligence alone is not courage; we often see that the most intelligent people are irresolute. Since in the rush of events a man is governed by feelings rather than by thought, the intellect needs to arouse the quality of courage, which then supports and sustains it in action.

Looked at in this way, the role of determination is to limit the agonies of

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doubt and the perils of hesitation when the motives for action are inadequate. Colloquially, to be sure, the term "determination" also applies to a propensity for daring, pugnacity, boldness, or temerity. But when a man has adequate grounds for action—whether subjective or objective, valid or false—he cannot properly be called "determined." This would amount to putting oneself in his position and weighting the scale with a doubt that he never felt. In such a case it is only a question of strength or weakness. I am not such a pedant as to quarrel with common usage over a slight misuse of a word; the only purpose of these remarks is to preclude misunderstandings.

Determination, which dispells doubt, is a quality that can be aroused only by the intellect, and by a specific cast of mind at that. More is required to create determination than a mere conjunction of superior insight with the appropriate emotions. Some may bring the keenest brains to the most formidable problems, and may possess the courage to accept serious responsibilities; but when faced with a difficult situation they still find themselves unable to reach a decision. Their courage and their intellect work in separate compartments, not together; determination, therefore, does not result. It is engendered only by a *mental act*; the mind tells man that boldness is required, and thus gives direction to his will. This particular cast of mind, which employs the fear of *wavering* and *hesitating* to suppress all other fears, is the force that makes strong men determined. Men of low intelligence, therefore, cannot possess determination in the sense in which we use the word. They may act without hesitation in a crisis, but if they do, they act *without reflection*; and a man who acts without reflection cannot, of course, be torn by doubt. From time to time action of this type may even be appropriate; but, as I have said before, it is the *average result* that indicates the existence of military genius. The statement may surprise the reader who knows some determined cavalry officers who are little given to deep thought: but he must remember that we are talking about a special kind of intelligence, not about great powers of meditation.

In short, we believe that determination proceeds from a special type of mind, from a strong rather than a brilliant one. We can give further proof of this interpretation by pointing to the many examples of men who show great determination as junior officers, but lose it as they rise in rank. Conscious of the need to be decisive, they also recognize the risks entailed by a *wrong* decision; since they are unfamiliar with the problems now facing them, their mind loses its former incisiveness. The more used they had been to instant action, the more their timidity increases as they realize the dangers of the vacillation that ensnares them.

Having discussed *coup d'oeil* and determination it is natural to pass to a related subject: *presence of mind*. This must play a great role in war, the domain of the unexpected, since it is nothing but an increased capacity of dealing with the unexpected. We admire presence of mind in an apt reparator, as we admire quick thinking in the face of danger. Neither needs to be exceptional, so long as it meets the situation. A reaction following long and

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deep reflection may seem quite commonplace; as an immediate response, it may give keen pleasure. The expression "presence of mind" precisely conveys the speed and immediacy of the help provided by the intellect.

Whether this splendid quality is due to a special cast of mind or to steady nerves depends on the nature of the incident, but neither can ever be entirely lacking. A quick retort shows wit; resourcefulness in sudden danger calls, above all, for steady nerve.

Four elements make up the climate of war: danger, exertion, uncertainty, and chance. If we consider them together, it becomes evident how much fortitude of mind and character are needed to make progress in these impeding elements with safety and success. According to circumstance, reporters and historians of war use such terms as *energy*, *firmness*, *staunchness*, *emotional balance*, and *strength of character*. These products of a heroic nature could almost be treated as one and the same force—strength of will—which adjusts itself to circumstances: but though closely linked, they are not identical. A closer study of the interplay of psychological forces at work here may be worth while.

To begin with, clear thought demands that we keep one point in mind: of the weight, the burden, the resistance—call it what you like—that challenges the psychological strength of the soldier, only a small part is the *direct result of the enemy's activity, his resistance, or his operations*. The direct and primary impact of enemy activity falls, initially, on the soldier's person without affecting him in his capacity as commander. If, for example, the enemy resists four hours instead of two, the commander is in danger twice as long; but the higher an officer's rank, the less significant this factor becomes, and to the commander-in-chief it means nothing at all.

A second way in which the enemy's resistance *directly* affects the commander is the loss that is caused by prolonged resistance and the influence this exerts on his sense of responsibility. The deep anxiety which he must experience works on his strength of will and puts it to the test. Yet we believe that this is not by any means the heaviest burden he must bear, for he is answerable to himself alone. All other effects of enemy action, however, are felt by the men under his command, and *through them react on him*.

So long as a unit fights cheerfully, with spirit and elan, great strength of will is rarely needed; but once conditions become difficult, as they must when much is at stake, things no longer run like a well-oiled machine. The machine itself begins to resist, and the commander needs tremendous will-power to overcome this resistance. The machine's *resistance* need not consist of disobedience and argument, though this occurs often enough in individual soldiers. It is the impact of the ebbing of moral and physical strength, of the heart-rending spectacle of the dead and wounded, that the commander has to withstand—first in himself, and then in all those who, directly or indirectly, have entrusted him with their thoughts and feelings, hopes and fears. As each man's strength gives out, as it no longer responds to his will, the inertia of the whole gradually comes to rest on the commander's will alone. The ardor of his spirit must rekindle the flame of purpose in all others;

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his inward fire must revive their hope. Only to the extent that he can do this will he retain his hold on his men and keep control. Once that hold is lost, once his own courage can no longer revive the courage of his men, the mass will drag him down to the brutish world where danger is shirked and shame is unknown. Such are the burdens in battle that the commander's courage and strength of will must overcome if he hopes to achieve outstanding success. The burdens increase with the number of men in his command, and therefore the higher his position, the greater the strength of character he needs to bear the mounting load.

Energy in action varies in proportion to the strength of its motive, whether the motive be the result of intellectual conviction or of emotion. Great strength, however, is not easily produced where there is no emotion.

Of all the passions that inspire man in battle, none, we have to admit, is so powerful and so constant as the longing for honor and renown. The German language unjustly tarnishes this by associating it with two ignoble meanings in the terms "greed for honor" (*Ehrgeiz*) and "hankering after glory" (*Ruhmsucht*). The abuse of these noble ambitions has certainly inflicted the most disgusting outrages on the human race; nevertheless their origins entitle them to be ranked among the most elevated in human nature. In war they act as the essential breath of life that animates the inert mass. Other emotions may be more common and more venerated—patriotism, idealism, vengeance, enthusiasm of every kind—but they are no substitute for a thirst for fame and honor. They may, indeed, rouse the mass to action and inspire it, but they cannot give the commander the ambition to strive higher than the rest, as he must if he is to distinguish himself. They cannot give him, as can ambition, a personal, almost proprietary interest in every aspect of fighting, so that he turns each opportunity to best advantage—plowing with vigor, sowing with care, in the hope of reaping with abundance. It is primarily this spirit of endeavor on the part of commanders at all levels, this inventiveness, energy, and competitive enthusiasm, which vitalizes an army and makes it victorious. And so far as the commander-in-chief is concerned, we may well ask whether history has ever known a great general who was not ambitious; whether, indeed, such a figure is conceivable.

Staunchness indicates the will's resistance to a single blow; *endurance* refers to prolonged resistance.

Though the two terms are similar and are often used interchangeably, the difference between them is significant and unmistakable. *Staunchness* in face of a single blow may result from strong emotion, whereas intelligence helps sustain *endurance*. The longer an action lasts, the more deliberate *endurance* becomes, and this is one of its sources of strength.

We now turn to *strength of mind*, or of *character*, and must first ask what we mean by these terms.

Not, obviously, vehement display of feeling, or passionate temperament: that would strain the meaning of the phrase. We mean the ability to keep one's head at times of exceptional stress and violent emotion. Could strength of intellect alone account for such a faculty? We doubt it. Of course the

opposite does not flow from the fact that some men of outstanding intellect do lose their self-control; it could be argued that a powerful rather than a capacious mind is what is needed. But it might be closer to the truth to assume that the faculty known as *self-control*—the gift of keeping calm even under the greatest stress—is rooted in temperament. It is itself an emotion which serves to balance the passionate feelings in strong characters without destroying them, and it is this balance alone that assures the dominance of the intellect. The counterweight we mean is simply the sense of human dignity, the noblest pride and deepest need of all: the urge to *act rationally at all times*. Therefore we would argue that a strong character is one *that will not be unbalanced by the most powerful emotions*.

If we consider how men differ in their emotional reactions, we first find a group with small capacity for being roused, usually known as “stolid” or “phlegmatic.”

Second, there are men who are extremely active, but whose feelings never rise above a certain level, men whom we know to be sensitive but calm.

Third, there are men whose passions are easily inflamed, in whom excitement flares up suddenly but soon burns out, like gunpowder. And finally we come to those who do not react to minor matters, who will be moved only very gradually, not suddenly, but whose emotions attain great strength and durability. These are the men whose passions are strong, deep, and concealed.

These variants are probably related to the *physical forces* operating in the human being—they are part of that dual organism we call the nervous system, one side of which is physical, the other psychological. With our slight scientific knowledge we have no business to go farther into that obscure field; it is important nonetheless to note the ways in which these various psychological combinations can affect military activity, and to find out how far one can look for great strength of character among them.

Stolid men are hard to throw off balance, but total lack of vigor cannot really be interpreted as strength of character. It cannot be denied, however, that the imperturbability of such men gives them a certain narrow usefulness in war. They are seldom strongly motivated, lack initiative and consequently are not particularly active; on the other hand they seldom make a serious mistake.

The salient point about the second group is that trifles can suddenly stir them to act, whereas great issues are likely to overwhelm them. This kind of man will gladly help an individual in need, but the misfortune of an entire people will only sadden him; they will not stimulate him to action.

In war such men show no lack of energy or balance, but they are unlikely to achieve anything significant unless they possess a *very powerful intellect* to provide the needed stimulus. But it is rare to find this type of temperament combined with a strong and independent mind.

Inflammable emotions, feelings that are easily roused, are in general of little value in practical life, and therefore of little value in war. Their impulses are strong but brief. If the energy of such men is joined to courage and ambition they will often prove most useful at a modest level of com-

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mand, simply because the action controlled by junior officers is of short duration. Often a single brave decision, a burst of emotional force, will be enough. A daring assault is the work of a few minutes, while a hard-fought battle may last a day, and a campaign an entire year.

Their volatile emotions make it doubly hard for such men to preserve their balance; they often lose their heads, and nothing is worse on active service. All the same, it would be untrue to say that highly excitable minds could never be strong—that is, could never keep their balance even under the greatest strain. Why should they not have a sense of their own dignity, since as a rule they are among the finer natures? In fact, they usually have such a sense, but there is not time for it to take effect. Once the crisis is past, they tend to be ashamed of their behavior. If training, self-awareness, and experience sooner or later teaches them how to be on guard against themselves, then in times of great excitement an internal counterweight will assert itself so that they too can draw on great strength of character.

Lastly, we come to men who are difficult to move but have strong feelings—men who are to the previous type like heat to a shower of sparks. These are the men who are best able to summon the titanic strength it takes to clear away the enormous burdens that obstruct activity in war. Their emotions move as great masses do—slowly but irresistibly.

These men are not swept away by their emotions so often as is the third group, but experience shows that they too can lose their balance and be overcome by blind passion. This can happen whenever they lack the noble pride of self-control, or whenever it is inadequate. We find this condition mostly among great men in primitive societies, where passion tends to rule for lack of intellectual discipline. Yet even among educated peoples and civilized societies men are often swept away by passion, just as in the Middle Ages poachers chained to stags were carried off into the forest.

We repeat again: strength of character does not consist solely in having powerful feelings, but in maintaining one's balance in spite of them. Even with the violence of emotion, judgment and principle must still function like a ship's compass, which records the slightest variations however rough the sea.

We say a man has strength of character, or simply has character, if he sticks to his convictions, whether these derive from his own opinions or someone else's, whether they represent principles, attitudes, sudden insights, or any other mental force. Such *firmness* cannot show itself, of course, if a man keeps changing his mind. This need not be the consequence of external influence; the cause may be the workings of his own intelligence, but this would suggest a peculiarly insecure mind. Obviously a man whose opinions are constantly changing, even though this is in response to his own reflections, would not be called a *man of character*. The term is applied only to men whose views are *stable and constant*. This may be because they are well thought-out, clear, and scarcely open to revision; or, in the case of indolent men, because such people are not in the habit of mental effort and therefore have no reason for altering their views; and finally, because a firm

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decision, based on fundamental principle derived from reflection, is relatively immune to changes of opinion.

With its mass of vivid impressions and the doubts which characterize all information and opinion, there is no activity like war to rob men of confidence in themselves and in others, and to divert them from their original course of action.

In the dreadful presence of suffering and danger, emotion can easily overwhelm intellectual conviction, and in this psychological fog it is so hard to form clear and complete insights that changes of view become more understandable and excusable. Action can never be based on anything firmer than instinct, a sensing of the truth. Nowhere, in consequence, are differences of opinion so acute as in war, and fresh opinions never cease to batter at one's convictions. No degree of calm can provide enough protection: new impressions are too powerful, too vivid, and always assault the emotions as well as the intellect.

Only those general principles and attitudes that result from clear and deep understanding can provide a *comprehensive* guide to action. It is to these that opinions on specific problems should be anchored. The difficulty is to hold fast to these results of contemplation in the torrent of events and new opinions. Often there is a gap between principles and actual events that cannot always be bridged by a succession of logical deductions. Then a measure of self-confidence is needed, and a degree of skepticism is also salutary. Frequently nothing short of an imperative principle will suffice, which is not part of the immediate thought-process, but dominates it: that principle is in all doubtful cases *to stick to one's first opinion and to refuse to change unless forced to do so by a clear conviction*. A strong faith in the overriding truth of tested principles is needed; the *vividness* of transient impressions must not make us forget that such truth as they contain is of a lesser stamp. By giving precedence, in case of doubt, to our earlier convictions, by holding to them stubbornly, our actions acquire that quality of steadiness and consistency which is termed strength of character.

It is evident how greatly strength of character depends on balanced temperament; most men of emotional strength and stability are therefore men of powerful character as well.

Strength of character can degenerate into *obstinacy*. The line between them is often hard to draw in a specific case; but surely it is easy to distinguish them in theory.

Obstinacy is *not an intellectual defect*; it comes from reluctance to admit that one is wrong. To impute this to the mind would be illogical, for the mind is the seat of judgment. Obstinacy is *a fault of temperament*. Stubbornness and intolerance of contradiction result from a special kind of *egotism*, which elevates above everything else *the pleasure of its autonomous intellect, to which others must bow*. It might also be called vanity, if it were not something superior: vanity is content with the appearance alone; obstinacy demands the material reality.

We would therefore argue that strength of character turns to obstinacy

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as soon as a man resists another point of view not from superior insight or attachment to some higher principle, but because he *objects instinctively*. Admittedly, this definition may not be of much practical use; but it will nevertheless help us avoid the interpretation that obstinacy is simply a more intense form of strong character. There is a basic difference between the two. They are closely related, but one is so far from being a *higher degree* of the other that we can even find extremely obstinate men who are too dense to have much strength of character.

So far our survey of the attributes that a great commander needs in war has been concerned with qualities in which mind and temperament work together. Now we must address ourselves to a special feature of military activity—possibly the most striking even though it is not the most important—which is not related to temperament, and involves merely the intellect. I mean the relationship between warfare and terrain.

This relationship, to begin with, is a *permanent factor*—so much so that one cannot conceive of a regular army operating except in a definite space. Second, its importance is *decisive in the highest degree*, for it affects the operations of all forces, and at times entirely alters them. Third, its influence may be felt in the *very smallest feature of the ground*, but it can also dominate *enormous areas*.

In these ways the relationship between warfare and terrain determines the peculiar character of military action. If we consider other activities connected with the soil—gardening, for example, farming, building, hydraulic engineering, mining, game-keeping, or forestry—none extends to more than a very limited area, and a working knowledge of that area is soon acquired. But a commander must submit his work to a partner, space, which he can never completely reconnoiter, and which because of the constant movement and change to which he is subject he can never really come to know. To be sure, the enemy is generally no better off; but the handicap, though shared, is still a handicap, and the man with enough talent and experience to overcome it will have a real advantage. Moreover it is only in a general sense that the difficulty is the same for both sides; in any particular case the defender usually knows the area far better than his opponent.

This problem is unique. To master it a special gift is needed, which is given the too restricted name of a *sense of locality*. It is the faculty of *quickly and accurately grasping the topography of any area* which enables a man to find his way about at any time. Obviously this is an act of the imagination. Things are perceived, of course, partly by the naked eye and partly by the mind, which fills the gaps with guesswork based on learning and experience, and thus constructs a whole out of the fragments that the eye can see; but if the whole is to be vividly present to the mind, imprinted like a picture, like a map, upon the brain, without fading or blurring in detail, *it can only be achieved by the mental gift that we call imagination*. A poet or painter may be shocked to find that his Muse dominates these activities as well: to him it might seem odd to say that a young gamekeeper needs an unusually powerful imagination in order to be competent. If so,

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we gladly admit that this is to apply the concept narrowly and to a modest task. But however remote the connection, his skill must still derive from this natural gift, for if imagination is entirely lacking it would be difficult to combine details into a clear, coherent image. We also admit that a good memory can be a great help; but are we then to think of memory as a separate gift of the mind, or does imagination, after all, imprint those pictures in the memory more clearly? The question must be left unanswered, especially since it seems difficult even to conceive of these two forces as operating separately.

That practice and a trained mind have much to do with it is undeniable. Puysegur, the celebrated quarter-master-general of Marshal Luxembourg, writes that at the beginning of his career he had little faith in his sense of locality; when he had to ride any distance at all to get the password, he invariably lost his way.

Scope for this talent naturally grows with increased authority. A hussar or scout leading a patrol must find his way easily among the roads and tracks. All he needs are a few landmarks and some modest powers of observation and imagination. A commander-in-chief, on the other hand, must aim at acquiring an overall knowledge of the configuration of a province, of an entire country. His mind must hold a vivid picture of the road-network, the river-lines and the mountain ranges, without ever losing a sense of his immediate surroundings. Of course he can draw general information from reports of all kinds, from maps, books, and memoirs. Details will be furnished by his staff. Nevertheless it is true that with a quick, unerring sense of locality his dispositions will be more rapid and assured; he will run less risk of a certain awkwardness in his concepts, and be less dependent on others.

We attribute this ability to the imagination; but that is about the only service that war can demand from this frivolous goddess, who in most military affairs is liable to do more harm than good.

With this, we believe, we have reached the end of our review of the intellectual and moral powers that human nature needs to draw upon in war. The vital contribution of intelligence is clear throughout. No wonder then, that war, though it may appear to be uncomplicated, cannot be waged with distinction except by men of outstanding intellect.

Once this view is adopted, there is no longer any need to think that it takes a great intellectual effort to outflank an enemy position (an obvious move, performed innumerable times) or to carry out a multitude of similar operations.

It is true that we normally regard the plain, efficient soldier as the very opposite of the contemplative scholar, or of the inventive intellectual with his dazzling range of knowledge. This antithesis is not entirely unrealistic; but it does not prove that courage alone will make an efficient soldier, or that having brains and using them is not a necessary part of being a good fighting man. Once again we must insist: no case is more common than that of the officer whose energy declines as he rises in rank and fills positions that are beyond his abilities. But we must also remind the reader

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that outstanding effort, the kind that gives men a distinguished name, is what we have in mind. Every level of command has its own intellectual standards, its own prerequisites for fame and honor.

A major gulf exists between a commander-in-chief—a general who leads the army as a whole or commands in a theater of operations—and the senior generals immediately subordinate to him. The reason is simple: the second level is subjected to much closer control and supervision, and thus gives far less scope for independent thought. People therefore often think outstanding intellectual ability is called for only at the top, and that for all other duties common intelligence will suffice. A general of lesser responsibility, an officer grown gray in the service, his mind well-blinkered by long years of routine, may often be considered to have developed a certain stodginess; his gallantry is respected, but his simplemindedness makes us smile. We do not intend to champion and promote these good men; it would contribute nothing to their efficiency, and little to their happiness. We only wish to show things as they are, so that the reader should not think that a brave but brainless fighter can do anything of outstanding significance in war.

Since in our view even junior positions of command require outstanding intellectual qualities for outstanding achievement, and since the standard rises with every step, it follows that we recognize the abilities that are needed if the second positions in an army are to be filled with distinction. Such officers may appear to be rather simple compared to the polymath scholar, the far-ranging business executive, the statesman; but we should not dismiss the value of their practical intelligence. It sometimes happens of course that someone who made his reputation in one rank carries it with him when he is promoted, without really deserving to. If not much is demanded of him, and he can avoid exposing his incompetence, it is difficult to decide what reputation he really deserves. Such cases often cause one to hold in low estimate soldiers who in less responsible positions might do excellent work.

Appropriate talent is needed at all levels if distinguished service is to be performed. But history and posterity reserve the name of "genius" for those who have excelled in the highest positions—as commanders-in-chief—since here the demands for intellectual and moral powers are vastly greater.

To bring a war, or one of its campaigns, to a successful close requires a thorough grasp of national policy. On that level strategy and policy coalesce: the commander-in-chief is simultaneously a statesman.

Charles XII of Sweden is not thought of as a great genius, for he could never subordinate his military gifts to superior insights and wisdom, and could never achieve a great goal with them. Nor do we think of Henry IV of France in this manner: he was killed before his skill in war could affect the relations between states. Death denied him the chance to prove his talents in this higher sphere, where noble feelings and a generous disposition, which effectively appeased internal dissension, would have had to face a more intractable opponent.

The great range of business that a supreme commander must swiftly absorb and accurately evaluate has been indicated in the first chapter. We

argue that a commander-in-chief must also be a statesman, but he must not cease to be a general. On the one hand, he is aware of the entire political situation; on the other, he knows exactly how much he can achieve with the means at his disposal.

Circumstances vary so enormously in war, and are so indefinable, that a vast array of factors has to be appreciated—mostly in the light of probabilities alone. The man responsible for evaluating the whole must bring to his task the quality of intuition that perceives the truth at every point. Otherwise a chaos of opinions and considerations would arise, and fatally entangle judgment. Bonaparte rightly said in this connection that many of the decisions faced by the commander-in-chief resemble mathematical problems worthy of the gifts of a *Newton* or an *Euler*.

What this task requires in the way of higher intellectual gifts is a sense of unity and a power of judgment raised to a marvelous pitch of vision, which easily grasps and dismisses a thousand remote possibilities which an ordinary mind would labor to identify and wear itself out in so doing. Yet even that superb display of divination, the sovereign eye of genius itself, would still fall short of historical significance without the qualities of character and temperament we have described.

Truth in itself is rarely sufficient to make men act. Hence the step is always long from cognition to volition, from knowledge to ability. The most powerful springs of action in men lie in his emotions. He derives his most vigorous support, if we may use the term, from that blend of brains and temperament which we have learned to recognize in the qualities of determination, firmness, staunchness, and strength of character.

Naturally enough, if the commander's superior intellect and strength of character did not express themselves in the final success of his work, and were only taken on trust, they would rarely achieve historical importance.

What the layman gets to know of the course of military events is usually nondescript. One action resembles another, and from a mere recital of events it would be impossible to guess what obstacles were faced and overcome. Only now and then, in the memoirs of generals or of their confidants, or as the result of close historical study, are some of the countless threads of the tapestry revealed. Most of the arguments and clashes of opinion that precede a major operation are deliberately concealed because they touch political interests, or they are simply forgotten, being considered as scaffolding to be demolished when the building is complete.

Finally, and without wishing to risk a closer definition of the higher reaches of the spirit, let us assert that the human mind (in the normal meaning of the term) is far from uniform. If we then ask what sort of mind is likeliest to display the qualities of military genius, experience and observation will both tell us that it is the inquiring rather than the creative mind, the comprehensive rather than the specialized approach, the calm rather than the excitable head to which in war we would choose to entrust the fate of our brothers and children, and the safety and honor of our country.