SOLDIERS AND SOLDIERING

A. P. WAVELL

[FIELD-MARSHAL EARL WAVELL]

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'The late Lord Wavell commented that since the first world war generalship, and especially British generalship, had had a bad press. These essays offer some clue to the revolution in the public's attitude to its military leaders since those words were spoken. They are written in neat, simple, direct prose, charged with modesty, shrewdness and common sense. Anyone with a taste for history will find pleasure in Lord Wavell's meditations on the great commanders of the past, and some outstanding figures of today, for example, Colonel Spencer Chapman. It was Wavell and his generation who destroyed the old myth of Colonel Blimp.' SUNDAY TIMES

'Lord Wavell's book can be enjoyed by anyone who is at all interested in history or in human nature; in most of the lectures and articles which are here collected, Lord Wavell is not dealing with the intricacies of the art or science of war, but is more concerned with emphasizing clearly, distinctly and often humorously those general principles which his own great knowledge and experience have taught him to value. What he has to say is not only sane but also illuminating. No one can read this collection of articles without being impressed and delighted by the wisdom, the penetration and the charm of the author.' Rex Warner in the SPECTATOR

'The late Field-Marshal Lord Wavell had a gift of the pen with which to express the workings of a well-stored, kindly, and humorous mind. His prose was trim, on occasion even high-coloured, but it never had a hint of the tawdry. Within their scope and on their subject, these essays and reviews, many of them published or spoken during the last great war, some of them having appeared in *The Times*, are the best that have been written in the present generation.' THE TIMES

SOLDIERS AND SOLDIERING

By the same author

OTHER MEN'S FLOWERS

SOLDIERS AND SOLDIERING

or

Epithets of War

by

FIELD-MARSHAL
EARL WAVELL

JONATHAN CAPE
THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE
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COMPILER'S NOTE

'Horribly stuff'd with epithets of War.'

This sneer of Iago's at Othello's hyperbole corresponds with my father's comment in *Other Men's Flowers* — 'Note with what economy most of Shakespeare's characters get their dying done: the principal exception is, I regret to say, a Commander-in-Chief, Othello'.

No one would call my father a chatty general nor one given to repining farewells to 'all quality, pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war' — yet, I think he might like the transference of this tilt against one of his predecessors in the Middle East Command, to his one form of expansiveness — his 'book' on the Valhalla Stakes.

A. J. W.

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SOLDIERS AND SOLDIERING

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GENERALS AND GENERALSHIP

I. THE GOOD GENERAL

WHEN you did me the honour to ask me to deliver this series of lectures[1] I chose, instead of a campaign or a period of history, as I believe has been customary, to inflict upon you some general observations on generals and generalship. I felt that certain points which I wished to put before you with regard to the study of military history could thus be better illustrated than in the relation of some particular campaign. Comparatively few of you are perhaps likely to become generals; but many of you are likely to suffer, perhaps even to triumph, under generals; and all of you are likely to have opportunity to criticize generals. I should like your criticism to be as well informed as possible. Generalship, and especially British generalship, has had a bad Press since the late war (1914-18). I am not proposing to deliver to you an apologia for generals, but to explain the qualities necessary for a general and the conditions in which he has to exercise his calling.

While I was trying to define to myself the essential qualifications of a higher commander I looked back in history to see how these qualifications had been defined in the past. I read a number of expositions, by various writers, of the virtues, military or otherwise, that were considered

[1] Three lectures, 'Generals and Generalship', delivered at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1939.

necessary for a general. I found only one that seemed to me to go to the real root of the matter; it is attributed to a wise man named Socrates. It reads as follows:

The general must know how to get his men their rations and every other kind of stores needed for war. He must have imagination to originate plans, practical sense and energy to carry them through. He must be observant, untiring, shrewd; kindly and cruel; simple and crafty; a watchman and a robber; lavish and miserly; generous and stingy; rash and conservative. All these and many other qualities, natural and acquired, he must have. He should also, as a matter of course, know his tactics; for a disorderly mob is no more an army than a heap of building materials is a house.

Now the first point that attracts me about that definition is the order in which it is arranged. It begins with the matter of administration, which is the real crux of generalship, to my mind; and places tactics, the handling of troops in battle, at the end of his qualifications instead of at the beginning, where most people place it. Also it insists on practical sense and energy as two of the most important qualifications; while the list of the many and contrasted qualities that a general must have rightly gives an impression of the great field of activity that generalship covers and the variety of the situations with which it has to deal, and the need for adaptability in the make-up of a general.

But even this definition of Socrates does not to my mind emphasize sufficiently what I hold to be the first essential

of a general, the quality of robustness, the ability to stand the shocks of war. Probably this factor did not apply so much in Socrates' time. People did not then suffer from what is now elegantly known as 'the jitters'. I can perhaps best explain what I mean by robustness by a physical illustration. I remember long ago, when I was a very young officer, being told by a mountain gunner friend that whenever in the old days a new design of mountain gun was submitted to the Artillery Committee that august body had it taken to the top of a tower, some hundred feet high, and thence dropped on to the ground below. If it was still capable of functioning it was given further trial; if not, it was rejected as flimsy. The committee reasoned that mules and mountain guns might easily fall down the hillside and must be made capable of surviving so trivial a misadventure. On similar grounds rifles and automatic weapons submitted to the Small-Arms Committee are, I believe, buried in mud for 48 hours or so before being tested for their rapid firing qualities. The necessity for such a test was very aptly illustrated in the late war, when the original Canadian contingent arrived in France armed with the Ross rifle, a weapon which had shown its superior qualities in target shooting at the Bisley ranges in peace. In the mud of the trenches it was found to jam after a very few rounds; and after a short experience of the weapon under active-service conditions the Canadian soldier refused to have anything to do with it and insisted on being armed with the British rifle.

Now the mind of the general in war is buried, not merely for 48 hours but for days and weeks, in the mud and sand of unreliable information and uncertain factors,

and may at any time receive, from an unsuspected move of the enemy, an unforeseen accident, or a treacherous turn in the weather, a bump equivalent to a drop of at least a hundred feet on to something hard. Delicate mechanism is of little use in war; and this applies to the mind of the commander as well as to his body; to the spirit of an army as well as to the weapons and instruments with which it is equipped. All material of war, including the general, must have a certain solidity, a high margin over the normal breaking strain. It is often said that British war material is unnecessarily solid; and the same possibly is apt to be true of their generals. But we are certainly right to leave a good margin.

It is sometimes argued whether war is an art or science. I noted that in the invitation to me to deliver these lectures I was to choose some branch of the 'science' of war. Perhaps had I been lecturing at a rival university it might have been termed the 'art' of war. I know of no branch of art or science, however, in which rivals are at liberty to throw stones at the artist or scientist, to steal his tools and to destroy his materials, while he is working, always against time, on his picture or statue or experiment. Under such conditions how many of the great masterpieces of art or discoveries of science would have been produced? No, the civil comparison to war must be that of a game, a very rough and dirty game, for which a robust body and mind are essential. The general is dealing with men's lives, and must have a certain mental robustness to stand the strain of this responsibility. How great that strain is you may judge by the sudden deaths of many of the commanders of the late war. When you read military

history take note of the failures due to lack of this quality of robustness.

I propose to say a few words about the physical attributes of a general: courage, health and youth. Personal appearance we need not worry about: an imposing presence can be a most useful asset; but good generals, as they say of good race-horses, 'run in all shapes'. Physical courage is not so essential a factor in reaching high rank as it was in the old days of close-range fighting, but it still is of very considerable importance today in determining the degree of risk a commander will take to see for himself what is going on; and in mechanized warfare we may again see the general leading his troops almost in the front of the fighting, or possibly reconnoitring and commanding from the air.

As an example of the extent to which generals came under fire in the old days you may like to know that at Marlborough's assault on the Schellenberg during the Blenheim campaign six lieutenant-generals were killed and five wounded in the Allied army, while the 1500 British casualties at the action included four major-generals and 28 brigadiers or lieutenant-colonels. There is a good story told of one of Napoleon's marshals, Lefebvre, the gallant old soldier who became Duke of Danzig. A civilian friend was once envying him his house and decorations and other awards. At last the old marshal got tired of it and said to him: 'Well, if you want all these things come out into my garden and let me have ten shots at you at forty paces. If you survive I will hand over to you my house and everything in it.' His friend, perhaps naturally, objected. 'All right,' said the old

marshal, 'but remember that I had several hundred shots fired at me at that range before I got all these things.'

Courage, physical and moral, a general undoubtedly must have. Voltaire praises in Marlborough 'that calm courage in the midst of tumult, that serenity of soul in danger, which is the greatest gift of nature for command'. A later military writer, who had no great admiration for Joffre, was compelled to admit that his stolid calm and obstinate determination in the darkest days of the retreat had an influence which offset many of the grave strategical blunders which he committed. Health in a general is, of course, most important, but it is a relative quality only. We would all of us, I imagine, sooner have Napoleon sick on our side than many of his opponents whole. A great spirit can rule in a frail body, as Wolfe and others have shown us. Marlborough during his great campaigns would have been ploughed by most modern medical boards.

Next comes the vexed question of age. One of the ancient Roman poets has pointed out the scandal of old men at war and old men in love. But at exactly what age a general ceases to be dangerous to the enemy and a Don Juan to the other sex is not easy to determine. Hannibal, Alexander, Napoleon, Wellington, Wolfe and others may be quoted as proof that the highest prizes of war are for the young men. On the other hand, Julius Caesar and Cromwell began their serious soldiering when well over the age of 40; Marlborough was 61 at the time of his most admired manœuvre, when he forced the Ne Plus Ultra lines; Turenne's last campaign at the age of 63 is said to have been his boldest and best. Moltke, the most

competent of the moderns, made his name at the age of 66 and confirmed his reputation at 70. Roberts was 67 when he went out to South Africa after our first disastrous defeats, and restored the situation by surrounding the Boer Army at Paardeberg and capturing Bloemfontein and Pretoria. Foch at 67 still possessed energy and vitality and great originality. We must remember, in making comparisons with the past, that men develop later nowadays; for instance, Wellington, Wolfe, Moore, Craufurd were all commissioned at about the age of 15, and some of them saw service soon after joining. It is impossible really to give exact values to the fire and boldness of youth as against the judgment and experience of riper years; if the mature mind still has the capacity to conceive and to absorb new ideas, to withstand unexpected shocks, and to put into execution bold and unorthodox designs, its superior knowledge and judgment will give the advantage over youth. At the same time there is no doubt that a good young general will usually beat a good old one; and the recent lowering of age of our generals is undoubtedly a step in the right direction, even if it may sometimes lose us prematurely a good commander.

I don't think I need expatiate for long on the moral qualities of a leader. No amount of study or learning will make a man a leader unless he has the natural qualities of one. The qualities of a leader are well known to you and I shall deal with them further in my second lecture. Here I will mention only the barest essentials.

He must have 'character', which simply means that he knows what he wants and has the courage and

determination to get it. He should have a genuine interest in, and a real knowledge of, humanity, the raw material of his trade; and, most vital of all, he must have what we call the fighting spirit, the will to win. You all know and recognize it in sport, the man who plays his best when things are going badly, who has the power to come back at you when apparently beaten, and who refuses to acknowledge defeat. There is one other moral quality I would stress as the mark of the really great commander as distinguished from the ordinary general. He must have a spirit of adventure, a touch of the gambler in him. As Napoleon said: 'If the art of war consisted merely in not taking risks glory would be at the mercy of very mediocre talent.' Napoleon always asked if a general was 'lucky'. What he really meant was, 'Is he bold?' A bold general may be lucky, but no general can be lucky unless he is bold. The general who allows himself to be bound and hampered by regulations is unlikely to win a battle. As a 'cautionary tale' of what may happen to a commander who allows himself to be bound by the letter of regulations, I will take an example from naval history.

About 175 years ago a conscientious but somewhat limited admiral was pacing his quarter-deck in earnest consultation with his flag captain, while an enemy fleet lay close at hand at the mercy of his attack. The point on which the admiral was so earnestly engaged was in making certain that the dispositions he proposed to adopt in his attack on the enemy were strictly in conformity with some very long-winded and complicated instructions lately laid down by the Lords of the Admiralty. His flag

captain was able to assure the admiral that what he proposed to do was strictly in accordance with the regulations; but in the meantime the enemy fleet made good its escape, and the admiral on his return home was tried by court martial and shot, *pour encourager les autres*. If it encouraged them to disregard regulations at need, the ill-fated Admiral Byng did not die in vain. It is in peace that regulations and routine become important and that the qualities of boldness and originality are cramped. It is interesting to note how little of normal peace soldiering many of our best generals had — Cromwell, Marlborough, Wellington, and his lieutenants, Graham, Hill, Craufurd.

So far we have dealt with the general's physical and moral make-up. Now for his mental qualities. The most important is what the French call *le sens du praticable*, and we call common sense, knowledge of what is and what is not possible. It must be based on a really sound knowledge of the 'mechanism of war', i.e. topography, movement and supply. These are the real foundations of military knowledge, not strategy and tactics as most people think. It is the lack of this knowledge of the principles and practice of military movement and administration — the 'logistics' of war, some people call it — which puts what we call amateur strategists wrong, not the principles of strategy themselves, which can be apprehended in a very short time by any reasonable intelligence. May I give you a homely illustration? A man planning a holiday may decide for himself, or may be advised, that Egypt is the place to go to. That is easy; but then he has to

calculate the time it will take him to get there and the cost of the trip, and compare it with the length of his holiday and of his purse. And it is that which is the difficult part of the job. As a political example: there are the unemployed, there is a job of work. Anyone can see it would be a good thing to put the unemployed to do the job. But to overcome the practical difficulties of movement, housing, finance, etc., is a very difficult thing.

Unfortunately, in most military books strategy and tactics are emphasized at the expense of the administrative factors. For instance, there are ten military students who can tell you how Blenheim was won for one who has any knowledge at all of the administrative preparations that made the march to Blenheim possible. There were months of administrative planning to make Allenby's manœuvre at the third battle of Gaza practicable. Again, Marlborough's most admired stratagem, the forcing of the Ne Plus Ultra lines in 1711, was one that a child could have thought of but that probably no other general could have executed. Roberts's manœuvre before Paardeberg in 1900, Allenby's at Gaza-Beersheba in 1917, were both variations of the same very simple theme as Marlborough used in 1711; but again it required very intelligent and careful preparation to execute it. I should like you always to bear in mind when you study military history or military events the importance of this administrative factor, because it is where most critics and many generals go wrong.

In conclusion, I wonder if you realize what a very complicated business this modern soldiering is. A commander today has now to learn to handle air forces,

armoured mechanical vehicles, anti-aircraft artillery; he has to consider the use of gas and smoke, offensively and defensively; to know enough of wireless to make proper use of it for communication; to understand something of the art of camouflage, of the business of propaganda; to keep himself up to date in the developments of military engineering: all this in addition to the more normal requirements of his trade. On the battlefield, of course, conditions are completely different. Marlborough at Blenheim, after placing the batteries himself and riding along his whole front, lunches on the battlefield under cannon fire waiting for his colleague Eugène on the right flank, four miles away, a great distance for those days. Napoleon at Austerlitz can with his own eyes see the enemy expose himself hopelessly and irretrievably to the prepared counter-stroke, and can judge the exact moment at which to launch it. Wellington at Salamanca, seeing his opponent make a false move, has only to issue a few verbal orders, and can then turn with assurance to the Spanish representative with the remark: 'Mon cher Alava, Marmont est perdu.' Even at Sedan, 60 years later, Moltke and his Imperial master can watch practically the whole agony of the French army from a small hill close by. In the conditions of the late war no battalion commander launching his reserve company had anything like such a clear picture of the situation as any of these while the Commander-in-Chief was not on the battlefield at all, but sitting in an office many miles back or restlessly pacing the garden of a château waiting for news that seemed never to come, and when it came was usually misleading.

So much for the past, now for the future. There are new forces to handle, both on the ground and in the air, with potentialities that are largely unexplored. Some of them were partially exploited in the late war, but have since been greatly improved and extended, some have been only recently developed, some are still wholly untried. The commander with the imagination — the genius, in fact — to use the new forces may have his name written among the 'great captains'. But he will not win that title lightly or easily; consider for a moment the qualifications he will require. On the ground he will have to handle forces moving at a speed and ranging at a distance far exceeding that of the most mobile cavalry of the past; a study of naval strategy and tactics as well as those of cavalry will be essential to him. Some ideas on his position in battle and the speed at which he must make his decisions may be derived from the battle of Jutland; not much from Salisbury Plain or the Long Valley. Needless to say, he must be able to handle air forces with the same knowledge as forces on land.

It seems to me immaterial whether he is a soldier who has really studied the air or an airman who has really studied land forces. It is the combination of the two, never the action of one alone, that will bring success for a future war. Add to this that the commander's studies must have a background of solid common sense, and a knowledge of humanity, on whose peculiarities, and not those of machines, the whole practice of warfare is ultimately based. I will say something of this in my second lecture.

2. THE GENERAL AND HIS TROOPS

In my first lecture I gave you a few reflections on the nature and functions of generals; on the general in relation to himself, so to speak. I now want you to consider the general in relation to his troops. I will begin with a few words about his staff, who are the means by which he controls and directs his army. I will give you two simple rules which every general should observe: first, never to try to do his own staff work; and, secondly, never to let his staff get between him and his troops. What a staff appreciates is that it should receive clear and definite instructions, and then be left to work out the details without interference. What troops and subordinate commanders appreciate is that a general should be constantly in personal contact with them, and should not see everything simply through the eyes of his staff. The less time a general spends in his office and the more with his troops the better.

Two generals whom I served in the war, Allenby and Sir Philip Chetwode, were ideal in this respect. I think most British generals are.

The Germans, as you may know, have or had a peculiar staff system, by which considerable powers of decision, independently of his general, were given to the senior officer of the Great General Staff of a formation, sometimes quite a junior officer. You will remember the story of Lieutenant-Colonel Hentsch's mission on the Marne: and in the Hindenburg-Ludendorff combination Ludendorff was really the executive as well as the head of the staff, and Hindenburg little more than a figure-head.

It is a system not suited to, or likely to be adopted in, the British Army. The Russians tried to imitate the German system, with odd results at times. One group of armies in the war was commanded by a dear old man called Ivanov, who was given as chief of the staff a very scientific officer called Alexeiev. They had a difference of opinion as to who should first open and deal with the important telegrams from G.H.Q., and they arrived at a compromise. Two copies of all important messages were made; one went to the chief of staff, one to the general: each often took independent action.

As to a general's relations with his subordinate commanders, it is important to him to know their characteristics: which must be held back and which urged on, which can be trusted with an independent mission, and which must be kept under his own eye. Some want very detailed and precise orders, others merely a general indication. There are many generals who are excellent executive commanders as long as they are controlled by a higher commander, but who get out of their depth at once, and sometimes lose their nerve, if given an independent command. Others are difficult subordinates, but may be trusted on their own. It is important not to get the two sorts mixed: in other words, a higher commander must be a good judge of character. It is interesting to observe the practice of Napoleon and of Wellington in this respect. There were few of his marshals whom Napoleon trusted away from his immediate command — Davout, Masséna and Marmont were the principal exceptions. Wellington was perfectly happy to give Graham an independent mission, but did not let Craufurd, Beresford

or Picton have much latitude. Craufurd, though able, was too rash, and the abilities of the other two were too limited.

Now to come to the general's relations with the troops themselves. You will realize what a wide subject it is, and how impossible to dogmatize about. The outlook of the officer — the regimental officer — differs naturally from that of the men. And different nationalities demand different treatment. 'Mes enfants'—'My children', says the Frenchman, and may speak of glory and the Fatherland; 'Men', says the Englishman on the rare occasions when he feels called on to address his troops collectively; 'Comrades', says the Soviet Russian; the German commander of the future will perhaps cause a thrill of pride to run through the ranks with a cry of 'Fellow Aryans'. But whatever the nationality, whatever the conditions, there remains the basic problem: What induces the man to risk his life bravely, and what is the general's part in fostering his endurance? No man wants to die; what causes him to face death? Maybe hope of loot or glory, discipline and tradition, devotion to a cause or country, devotion to a man. Glory or loot appeals to few these days; nor, indeed, is much glory or loot to be had. Decorations and promotion count for something, but may cause much heart-burning unless carefully distributed. Belief in a cause may count for much, especially if fostered by mass propaganda; yet there is truth in the following from a book on the late war:

A man does not flee because he is fighting in an unrighteous cause, he does not attack because his cause is just;

he flees because he is the weaker, he conquers because he is the stronger, or because his leader has made him feel the stronger.

Devotion to a man has sometimes inspired soldiers in the past. Will it do so again in the totalitarian countries?

But tradition and discipline, anyway so far as the British are concerned, are the real root of the matter. I have not the time here to enter into any discussion on the subject of discipline; I will only remark that with national armies — as all armies, even the British, will be in a future war — and general education, discipline should be a different matter from the old traditional military discipline. It has changed greatly since I joined, and is changing still. But whatever the system, it is the general's business to see justice done. The soldier does not mind a severe code provided it is administered fairly and reasonably. As an instance, here is the verdict of a private soldier on Craufurd in the retreat to Corunna: 'If he flogged two, he saved hundreds from death.' Discipline apart, the soldier's chief cares are: First, his personal comfort — i.e. regular rations, proper clothing, good billets, and proper hospital arrangements (square meals and a square deal, in fact); and, secondly, his personal safety — i.e. that he shall be put into a fight with as good a chance as possible of victory and survival. Guns and butter, in other words. It may be remarked that Russian morale in the late war broke through lack of guns, German largely through lack of butter.

The general who sees that the soldier is well fed and looked after, and who puts him into a good show and wins

battles, will naturally have his confidence. Whether he will also have his affection is another story. Wellington was most meticulous about his administrative arrangements, and was a most successful general who never lost a battle. But he was certainly not popular, though on one occasion some of his troops, put into a tight place by a blunder of one of his subordinates, gave a spontaneous cheer at his arrival on the scene of action. Kitchener, who certainly never courted popularity, received the same tribute from his troops of a spontaneous cheer on the field of battle, at the Atbara. Marlborough, as careful of administration as Wellington and Kitchener and also successful, was most certainly popular, and was affectionately known as Corporal John by his men. He also received a great ovation from his men, on the battlefield of Ramillies. In the South African War Sir Redvers Buller, in spite of his succession of defeats, never lost the liking and trust of his army. 'Daddy' Hill, one of Wellington's corps commanders, a charming character, was popular with everyone, as you can guess from his nickname. But does it matter to a general whether he has his men's affection so long as he has their confidence? He must certainly never court popularity. If he has their appreciation and respect it is sufficient. Efficiency in a general his soldiers have a right to expect; geniality they are usually right to suspect. Marlborough was perhaps the only great general to whom geniality was always natural.

Modern generals are hardly known to the large armies they command. Few of his troops can have known Haig, who incidentally was a very reserved man, never at his

ease with troops. The times are past when generals can put themselves at the head of their men in a crisis, as did Napoleon on the bridge at Lodi, or Lannes at Ulm ('I was a grenadier before I was a marshal', he said, as he led the storming parties to a fresh effort), and inspire troops by their personal example. Byron in one of his poems writes of the sudden revival of spirit in an army, because —

> A little odd old man,
> Stripped to the waist, was come to lead the van.

That was written of the erratic Russian genius, Suvorov. The nearest modern example I can think of is Haig at the crisis of the first battle of Ypres, when the last man of his last reserve was in, mounting his horse and riding forward up the Menin road with some of his staff. A useless gesture, you may say: still the right kind of gesture.

But without placing himself at the head of his troops in battle a modern commander can still exercise a very real influence over the morale of his men. An outstanding example is Allenby's regeneration of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in the summer of 1917 after their two repulses at Gaza in the spring of that year. Australians are not easily impressed by British generals, but the following extract from the Australian Official History shows the impression made by Allenby:

There was nothing familiar about Allenby's touch with his regiments and battalions. He went through the hot, dusty camps of his army like a strong, fresh, reviving wind. He would dash up in his car to a Light Horse regiment, shake hands with a few officers, inspect hurriedly, but

with a sure eye to good and bad points, the horses of, perhaps, a single squadron, and be gone in a few minutes, leaving a great trail of dust behind him. His tall and massive, but restlessly active, figure, his keen eyes and prominent hooked nose, his terse and forcible speech, and his imperious bearing radiated an impression of tremendous resolution, quick decision and steely discipline. Within a week of his arrival Allenby had stamped his personality on the mind of every trooper of the horse and every infantryman of the line.

Should a general address his troops, collectively or individually? Only, I think, if he has a gift that way, a gift not of eloquence necessarily but of saying the right thing. He must be very sure of himself. He risks more loss of reputation than he is likely to gain. An unfortunate remark or tone, or even appearance, may lower his stock and do more harm than good. I only once remember Allenby addressing a large body of troops, and that was not in commendation. Napoleon in his maxims says:

It is not set speeches at the moment of battle that render soldiers brave. The veteran scarcely listens to them, and the recruit forgets them at the first discharge. If discourses and harangues are useful, it is during the campaign; to do away with unfavourable impressions, to correct false reports, to keep alive a proper spirit in the camp, and to furnish materials and amusement for the bivouac.

A general who speaks to men individually may sometimes receive a disconcerting answer. A story is told of Haig,

who usually inspected men in a complete and stony silence, that one of his staff told him that it would make a better impression if he spoke to one or two men. Accordingly he said to a man, 'Where did you start this war?' '*I* didn't start this war, sir; I think the Kaiser did,' was the reply. Allenby once, on a visit to the trenches, found a man sitting on the fire-step delousing his shirt. 'Well, picking them out, I see,' he remarked. 'No, sir, no,' replied the man without looking up, 'just taking them as they come.'

Explosions of temper do not necessarily ruin a general's reputation or influence with his troops; it is almost expected of them ('the privileged irascibility of senior officers', someone has written), and it is not always resented, sometimes even admired, except by those immediately concerned. But sarcasm is always resented and seldom forgiven. In the Peninsula the bitter sarcastic tongue of Craufurd, the brilliant but erratic leader of the Light Division, was much more wounding and feared than the more violent outbursts of Picton, a rough, hot-tempered man.

Should the high commander have a sense of humour? Certainly a sense of humour is good for anyone; but he must not display it too much or too often. I cannot find, indeed, that a sense of humour is a very frequent quality in great generals. Allenby certainly had one, though it was not safe to jest with him. But he kept it for his unofficial moments. So did Wellington. Haig, I think, had no sense of humour; nor can I find any attributed to Napoleon. The only great commander I can find who was consistently a humorist was that eccentric genius

Suvorov, the Russian; and he was perhaps more of a mountebank than a humorist. Yet the British soldier himself is one of the world's greatest humorists. That unhumorous race, the Germans, held an investigation after the late war into the causes of morale, and attributed much of the British soldier's staying power to his sense of humour. They therefore decided to instil this sense into their own soldiers, and included in their manuals an order to cultivate it. They gave as an illustration in the manual one of Bairnsfather's pictures of 'Old Bill' sitting in a building with an enormous shell-hole in the wall. A new chum asks: 'What made that hole?' 'Mice,' replies 'Old Bill'. In the German manual a solemn footnote of explanation is added: 'It was not mice, it was a shell.'

What can we get tangible out of the random reflections I have given you? Little enough, perhaps. What I have tried to show you is that military history is a flesh-and-blood affair, not a matter of diagrams and formulas or of rules; not a conflict of machines but of men. In the lecture hall of a French infantry school which I once attended was written the following from Ardant du Picq:

The man is the first weapon of battle: let us then study the soldier in battle, for it is he who brings reality to it. Only study of the past can give us a sense of reality, and show us how the soldier will fight in the future.

When you study military history don't read outlines on strategy or the principles of war. Read biographies, memoirs, historical novels, such as *The Road to Glory* or

Schönbrunn. Get at the flesh and blood of it, not the skeleton. To learn that Napoleon won the campaign of 1796 by manœuvre on interior lines or some such phrase is of little value. If you can discover how a young unknown man inspired a ragged, mutinous, half-starved army and made it fight, how he gave it the energy and momentum to march and fight as it did, how he dominated and controlled generals older and more experienced than himself, then you will have learnt something. Napoleon did not gain the position he did so much by a study of rules and strategy as by a profound knowledge of human nature in war. A story of him in his early days shows his knowledge of psychology. When an artillery officer at the siege of Toulon he built a battery in such an exposed position that he was told he would never find men to hold it. He put up a placard, 'The battery of men without fear', and it was always manned.

Here are a few principles that seem to me to embody the practice of successful commanders in their relations with their troops. A general must keep strict, though not necessarily stern, discipline. He should give praise where praise is due, ungrudgingly, by word of mouth or written order. He should show himself as frequently as possible to his troops, and as impressively as possible. Ceremonial has its uses. He should never indulge in sarcasm, which is being clever at someone else's expense, and always offends. He should tell his soldiers the truth, save when absolutely necessary to conceal plans, etc. Few things annoyed the soldier more in the late war than the extracts published by the Intelligence to make out

that the German soldiers were fighting badly, etc., when the soldier knew they were fighting as stoutly as ever.

To sum up, the relationship between a general and his troops is very much like that between the rider and his horse. The horse must be controlled and disciplined, and yet encouraged: he should, according to an old hunting maxim, 'be cared for in the stable as if he was worth £500 and ridden in the field as if he were not worth half-a-crown'. And the horse knows not only by his own comfort whether he is being ridden well or badly, but he knows if his rider is bold or frightened, determined or hesitating. A general must drive his men at times. Some of the best and most successful riders and horse-masters are not those who are fondest of horses. A general may succeed for some time in persuading his superiors that he is a good commander: he will never persuade his army that he is a good commander unless he has the real qualities of one.

3. THE SOLDIER AND THE STATESMAN

My third lecture deals with the relations of higher commanders to their masters, the statesmen who direct them. This is difficult and controversial ground. As you are aware, the relations between soldiers and statesmen were not too happy in the late war. Broadly speaking, the politician charged the soldier with narrowness of outlook and professional pedantry, while the soldier was inclined to ascribe many of his difficulties to 'political interference'. This friction between civil and military is,

comparatively speaking, a new factor in war, and is a feature of democracy, not of autocracy.

In old times the difference between civil and military was narrow, in fact soldiers and statesmen were usually interchangeable. In the history of classical Greece you may recall the story of Cleon and Nicias in the Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta. The demagogue Cleon, leader of the opposition, criticized the conservative Nicias. The latter, thinking to corner his opponent, turned on him with a challenge, 'Go you then and take command and see if you can do any better.' Unfortunately for Nicias, and unfortunately for Athens in the long run, Cleon accepted the challenge and won a striking, though lucky, victory. In ancient Rome an indispensable qualification for command in the field was to have passed through all the ranks of the magistracy — i.e. of the civil administration of the state. Generals, when required, were chosen from the heads of the Civil Service. If you read the *Lays of Ancient Rome* in your younger days you may remember how, according to Macaulay, the fathers of the city, on an emergency arising, came to the very sensible decision that:

> In seasons of great peril
> 'Tis good that one bear sway,
> Then choose we a dictator
> Whom all men shall obey.
>
> And let him be dictator
> For six months and no more,
> And have a Master of the Knights
> And axes twenty-four.

All very simple, you see. It would perhaps be easier for Europe if dictators were still selected for the same period.

The history of Hannibal perhaps provides the first striking example of a general's plans being ruined by political neglect, from one of the earliest democracies. For many years rulers of states usually led their armies in the field (e.g. Alexander, the English kings, Gustavus Adolphus, etc.), and, of course, no question of political interference arises. Marlborough was in a peculiar position. Besides Commander-in-Chief of the army in the field, he was virtually Foreign Minister, and directed the foreign policy of the country from his headquarters. He also, at his zenith, practically exercised the powers of the Prime Minister in home politics. Yet no general probably had his plans ruined so often by the interference of the Dutch statesmen and the enmity of his rivals at home. He bore it all with the same serenity of spirit that he showed in the field of battle. A very great man, for all his faults; and undoubtedly, I think, our greatest military genius.

'Political' generals are anathema to the British military tradition, yet most of the best British commanders had political experience. Cromwell was for many years a member of Parliament before he took to soldiering. Marlborough, of whom we have just spoken, had far more experience of political intrigue than of military service when he began his career as a general. Wellington had been a member of both Irish and British Parliaments. Sir John Moore sat in Parliament; so did Craufurd; so did Graham (afterwards Lord Lynedoch), the victor of Barrosa, who first took to soldiering at the age of 44. On the

other side, in the French revolutionary wars, we meet the political commissar often hampering operations, till Napoleon chooses himself as a dictator, not for six months but 'for the duration'.

The next example to which I would call your attention (I am ranging over the field of military history rather like a wild spaniel putting up birds and hares all over the place) is the American Civil War. The relations of that great and wise man Lincoln with his generals are well worth study. Having after many trials found a man whom he trusted in Grant, he left him to fight his campaigns without interference. I am going to read you an extract from a letter written by Lincoln to one of his generals which will, I think, show you his quality.

Abraham Lincoln to Hooker on Appointment to Command the Army of the Potomac

I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course I have done this upon what appears to me sufficient reason, and yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which I am not quite satisfied with you. I believe you to be a brave and skilful soldier, which, of course, I like. I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right. You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable, if not an indispensable quality. You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does good rather than harm; I think that during General Burnside's command of the Army you have taken counsel of your ambition and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country and to a most

meritorious and honourable brother officer. I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the Army and the Government needed a dictator. Of course it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up as dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. The Government will support you to the utmost of its ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done and will do for all commanders. I much fear that the spirit which you have decided to infuse into the Army of criticizing their commander and withholding confidence from him will now turn upon you. I shall assist you as far as I can to put it down. Neither you nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get any good out of an army while such a spirit prevails in it; and now beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories.

Doesn't that strike you as the letter that only a great man and wise man could have written? Lincoln did not find in 'Fighting Joe Hooker' the general he wanted. It was Ulysses Grant whom he eventually selected as his commander-in-chief; and then he trusted him through thick and thin, though he, Grant, suffered many reverses and had often very heavy casualties. To a critic who alleged that Grant drank, he replied by asking him to ascertain his brand of whisky so that he could send a case to some of his other generals. This recalls the reply of George II to one of his Ministers who described Wolfe (who took Quebec) as mad: 'I wish to heavens he would

bite some of my other generals.' In the campaigns of 1866 and 1870 the ruler William and his chancellor Bismarck accompanied General Headquarters in the field, so that all questions of policy could be dealt with directly. As you may remember, there was a serious difference of opinion between Moltke and Bismarck over the bombardment of Paris, which was decided on the spot by King William.

We now come to the Great War. I have not the time to go into all the controversies and errors of soldiers and statesmen in the long struggle. They were not all on the British side by any means. The German military command possibly lost the war by insisting on the unrestricted submarine campaign and thus bringing in America, against the advice of the civil Ministers. Compare this with Sir Edward Grey's careful handling of the blockade so as not to offend American susceptibilities, in spite of the objections of the sailors.

The chief and bitterest controversy centres around Mr. Lloyd George and Sir William Robertson, who were, as you know, practically always at odds. A great pity, they might have made a fine combination had Robertson been a little more pliant and Lloyd George a little less opinionated. Robertson made the error of treating the Prime Minister's strategical ideas with scant courtesy, instead of explaining in what respect they were faulty. And where Mr. Lloyd George went wrong was not in his general strategical conceptions, which were often excellent, but in his lack of knowledge of the mechanics of war — i.e. of the time it takes to transport troops from one place to

another, of the influences of climate, geography, and so forth. For instance, he had an idea of borrowing troops from France in the winter, when large-scale operations were impossible, using them to knock out the Turk in Palestine, and retransferring them to France by spring. He did not realize the time and effort required to transport even one or two divisions from France to Palestine; that the lines of communication in Palestine would require complete remodelling — a matter of several months — before extra divisions could be supplied at the front; and that although Palestine was in the Eastern Mediterranean its winter climate was almost as unfavourable to operations as France.

Similarly with his ideas of turning the iron wall in the West by operations through Italy or Serbia. The idea of turning a flank was perfectly correct, but the facilities for movement and supply were quite inadequate. If you will take the position of the Central Powers in the late war as a circle and draw to the circumference of that circle the principal lines of communication from both inside and outside the circle, you will, I think, be persuaded that the only front on which the Allies could fight the Central Powers on reasonably even terms as regards communications was on the Western Front. Our tactical methods on that front may have been, in fact were, crude and wasteful, but Sir William Robertson's basic idea, that owing to questions of communications we were forced to make our main effort on that front, was, I am sure, right.

That brings me back to the point I tried to make in my first lecture, that it is knowledge of the mechanics of war,

not of the principles of strategy, that distinguishes a good leader from a bad. Now what lessons can we draw from these scattered instances I have given you? Interchangeability between the statesman and the soldier passed for ever, I fear, in the last century. The Germans professionalized the trade of war; and modern inventions, by increasing its technicalities, have specialized it. It is much the same with politics, professionalized by democracy. No longer can one man hope to exercise both callings, though both are branches of the same craft, the governance of men and the ordering of human affairs. In acquiring proficiency in his branch the politician has many advantages over the soldier; he is always 'in the field', while the soldier's opportunities of practising his trade in peace are few and artificial; he may be compared to a man learning to be a M.F.H. by practice on an electric hare in a riding school, varied by an occasional drag-hunt in the open (large-scale manœuvres). The politician, who has to persuade and confute, must keep an open and flexible mind, accustomed to criticism and argument; the mind of the soldier, who commands and obeys without question, is apt to be fixed, drilled, and attached to definite rules. I will not take the comparison further: that each should understand the other better is essential for the conduct of modern war.

But how is this knowledge to be acquired? The only keys are a thoughtful study of the past, a receptive mind in the present, and, when the occasion comes, a patient understanding of each other's difficulties. The soldier is apt to disregard or underrate the statesman's difficulties. I remember one of our present politicians giving an apt

illustration of this tendency. He instanced a soldier's impatience at the slowness of the statesman to implement some political measure which was agreed to be essential, say, compulsory service. If you agree it has to be done, why not do it at once? says the soldier. The politician might retort thus: When you come to a river line defended by the enemy, which you must cross to reach your objective, do you assault it forthwith? Of course not, the soldier will reply; it is essential to reconnoitre, to group the artillery, to construct bridges, to draw the enemy's attention away from the point of crossing, and so on. Just so, says the politician, so must I prepare public opinion, anticipate objections, draw up a measure which will be fair to all classes, arrange for the medical examination of men liable, decide on exemptions, and so forth.

My three lectures are done. All I have hoped to do in them is to persuade you to a flesh-and-blood study and understanding of military history, and that war is not a matter of diagrams, principles, or rules. The higher commander who goes to Field Service Regulations for tactical guidance inspires about as much confidence as the doctor who turns to a medical dictionary for his diagnosis. And no method of education, no system of promotion, no amount of common-sense ability is of value unless the leader has in him the root of the matter — the fighting spirit. Whatever mistakes they committed, however they differed from each other, the great leaders of the war, civil or military, such as Clemenceau, Foch, Lloyd George, Earl Haig, had this in common, an unconquerable spirit. As one of them has said: 'No battle

was ever lost until the leader thought it so': and this is the first and true function of the leader, never to think the battle or the cause lost. The ancient Romans put up a statue to the general who saved them in one of Rome's darkest hours, with this inscription: 'Because he did not despair of the Republic'.

One word more. The pious Greek, when he had set up altars to all the great gods by name, added one more altar, 'To the Unknown God'. So whenever we speak and think of the great captains and set up our military altars to Hannibal and Napoleon and Marlborough and such-like, let us add one more altar, 'To the Unknown Leader', that is, to the good company, platoon, or section leader who carries forward his men or holds his post, and often falls unknown. It is these who in the end do most to win wars. The British have been a free people and are still a comparatively free people; and though we are not, thank Heaven, a military nation, this tradition of freedom gives to our junior leaders in war a priceless gift of initiative. So long as this initiative is not cramped by too many regulations, by too much formalism, we shall, I trust, continue to win our battles — sometimes in spite of our higher commanders.

MILITARY GENIUS

I. A HISTORICAL RETROSPECT[1]

LETTERS, newspapers and magazines have in these days almost as slow a passage to the East as had William Hickey; so that it is only a short time ago that I happened to see Captain Liddell Hart's article in the *Strand Magazine* of last December. Liddell Hart's writing is always a stimulant, often an irritant, to military thought. I have only a small fraction of his great knowledge of military history, and I am writing with no time to refresh my rusty memory at a military library. But the article has set me reflecting on the art of generalship and on its most noted exponents — a subject on which I have already presumed to publish some views — and has prompted the following footnotes to the subject.

'Genius' is a tiresome and misleading word to apply to the military art, if it suggests, as it does to many, one so gifted by nature as to obtain his successes by inspiration rather than through study. Nor does the definition of genius attributed to Carlyle as 'an infinite capacity for taking pains' suit the great commander, as it suggests the pedant or martinet. Good generals, unlike poets, are made rather than born, and will never reach the first rank without much study of their profession; but they must have certain natural gifts — the power of quick decision, judgment, boldness and, I am afraid, a considerable

[1] From *The Times*, Friday, October 23rd, 1942.

degree of toughness, almost callousness, which is harder to find as civilization progresses. Hamlet, the most talented of Shakespeare's creations — possibly the only one who would qualify for the title of 'genius' — would obviously have been a most indifferent general, quite unable to take a quick decision. Othello, the trained soldier, was, on the other hand, unfortunate in taking too quick a one in the matter of Desdemona.

Genius apart, I propose to lay down tests or standards for judging commanders and by their light to try to select some half a dozen as the greatest generals of all times. An ambitious aim, which Liddell Hart was shrewd enough to avoid. He commented but picked no team. I shall be rasher. I propose to lay down as qualifications for a place in the team that the candidate must have handled large forces in a completely independent command in more than one campaign; and must have shown his qualities in adversity as well as in success. Then the considerations which should, in my view, be taken into account in assessing the value of a general are these: his worth as a strategist; his skill as a tactician; his power to deal tactfully with his Government and with allies; his ability to train troops or to direct their training; and his energy and driving power in planning and in battle.

Before examining the claims of the outstanding candidates in the light of the above, it will be as well to develop the above qualities a little.

Liddell Hart, in his article, touches very lightly on the difference between strategy and tactics, and seems to imply that, with the increase in the size of armies and of the battlefield, strategy has gained in importance at the

expense of tactics. I cannot agree. I hold that tactics, the art of handling troops on the battlefield, is and always will be a more difficult and more important part of the general's task than strategy, the art of bringing forces to the battlefield in a favourable position. A homely analogy can be made from contract bridge. The calling is strategy, the play of the hand tactics. I imagine that all experienced card-players will agree that the latter is the more difficult part of the game, and gives more scope for the skill of the good player. Calling is to a certain degree mechanical and subject to conventions; so is strategy, the main principles of which are simple and easy to grasp. The one is dependent on the caller's holding of cards, the other on the general's resources in men, guns and munitions. There is, of course, wide scope in both for judgment, boldness and originality. 'Psychic' strategy, like psychic bids, is sometimes attempted and occasionally succeeds, as did the manœuvres of Belisarius at Carchemish or outside Constantinople. But in the end it is the result of the manner in which the cards are played or the battle fought that is put down on the score sheets or in the pages of history. Therefore I rate the skilful tactician above the skilful strategist, especially him who plays the bad cards well.

It seems also that he who devises or develops a new system of tactics deserves special advancement on the military roll of fame. All tactics since the earliest days have been based on evaluating an equation in which x=mobility, y=armour, and z=hitting power. Once a satisfactory solution has been found and a formula evolved, it tends to remain static until some thinking soldier

(or possibly civilian) recognizes that the values of x, y, z have been changed by the progress of inventions since the last formula was accepted and that a new formula and new system of tactics are required.

It may seem irrelevant to judge a general on his relations with his Government or his power to deal with his allies, yet these are almost always important factors; and a general who cannot obtain the confidence of his Government, and persuade them of the soundness of his plans or dissuade them from unsound strategy, or who quarrels with allies, may forfeit both fame and victory.

Military history frequently points out how the training and experience of veteran troops has led to some surprising victories over numbers or circumstances; and a commander who has succeeded in training his troops to a high pitch deserves credit for it as well as the victories it brings him.

Lastly, the energy, driving power and will force of a commander is perhaps the greatest factor of all in military success; and he who has it in the highest degree establishes a claim to be enrolled among the great ones.

I will take as my candidates those enumerated by Liddell Hart in his article, except that I must regretfully dismiss a proportion of his illustrious names because my knowledge of their character and exploits is insufficient. Gustavus Adolphus was undoubtedly a very great soldier, so were Wallenstein, Gonsalvo de Córdoba, Turenne, Condé, Villars and Saxe, but their wars and battles have faded from my memory and I cannot judge them. Eugène seems to pale in the light of his great contemporary and sometime colleague Marlborough; the same applies to

Narses compared with Belisarius. Though both Narses and Eugène fought independent campaigns, they appear, to me at least, as shadows or satellites of greater men. Jenghiz Khan and Sabutai were famous conquerors, but I do not know enough of the means by which they achieved their results, nor of that skilled and original tactician Epaminondas. The nickname of Fabius (*Cunctator*, the Delayer, i.e. the man of rearguard actions) seems enough to disqualify him; if he is to be considered, surely Marius, of the classical retort to Sulla, cannot be excluded; and he seems hardly 'class' enough.

I also for a different reason draw a regretful blue pencil through the names of three talented commanders of the American Civil War, two of whom are favourites of Liddell Hart — Sherman, Forrest and Stonewall Jackson — since though they exercised on occasions independent command they were never in supreme command nor had to bear the final strain of responsibility for the main armies of their Government. On similar grounds I omit another favourite of Liddell Hart, an undoubted genius, T. E. Lawrence. His field of action and exploits were on too small a scale, however great his natural capacity for war and however deep his study of it.

These arbitrary scratchings reduce the field to the following starters: Hannibal, Scipio, Alexander, Caesar, Belisarius, Frederick, Cromwell, Marlborough, Napoleon, Wellington, Lee, Moltke, Foch and Ludendorff. A good classical field, if somewhat limited.

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2. FROM HANNIBAL TO FOCH[1]

HANNIBAL must be rated high both as strategist and tactician. His victory at Cannae has become a model and symbol for the greatest modern military nation. He must also have been an efficient trainer of troops, for the Carthaginians do not seem to have been natural soldiers. His Government in the end betrayed and destroyed him, but it is hard at this distance to say how much of the fault for this lay in Hannibal. He sustained indomitable war against odds for many years. Hannibal, in spite of his eventual failure, must stand high on any list.

Scipio ('A greater than Napoleon', according to Liddell Hart) must also stand high. Hannibal has, as Liddell Hart points out, eclipsed him in the popular imagination, mainly because of his gallant struggles in adversity; but in military skill Scipio was at least the equal of, and must stand close to, Hannibal on the list of military fame.

By the side of Scipio the other Roman candidate, Julius Caesar, is less impressive. His earliest campaigns were those of a 'sepoy-general' (as Napoleon termed Wellington) against barbarian opponents, and his later ones were against his own countrymen who may not always have been wholehearted. An impressive soldier in offence and defence, a writer of dull and lengthy military reports, I think he goes below Hannibal and Scipio.

Our next candidate is Alexander the Great, the embodiment of youthful adventure and daring. He found a force ready trained, he was his own master and need answer to no Government, matters were all too easy for

[1] From *The Times*, Saturday, October 24th, 1942.

him, and he was unproved in adversity. A brilliant meteor in the military firmament, he must take place below the steadier stars, in my judgment.

Belisarius is a particular favourite of mine. He seems to have had more imagination and originality than any great commander of whom I have read. He was always devising means to outwit his enemy and to attain his objectives by stratagem as much as by fighting. Yet he was a great fighter and a great trainer of fighting men. He served his ungrateful master Justinian with loyalty and discretion; and certainly had the power of handling allies successfully. A very great commander in every way, with a very gallant heart in adversity, who must surely appear high up in any list, though Napoleon does not seem to have known of him.

Since I have disqualified Jenghiz Khan and Sabutai and no medieval soldier in Europe claims attention, there is now a large gap to Frederick the Great. He must be rated a great man of war in the grim efficient Prussian tradition. Like Alexander, he inherited a ready-made army and military system, but his oblique method of tactics seems to have been his own idea, copied possibly from Epaminondas. Like Alexander, he at once set about helping himself to slices of territory at the expense of his neighbours. But while Alexander brought with him an air of youth and chivalry and high adventure, Frederick was just a smash-and-grab Prussian. As a soldier, however, he must be given a high place. His policy of attack at all costs whatever the odds and circumstances has set a tradition for his nation.

Cromwell is next, the man who took to soldiering when

over 40 and found he had the way of it. He trained and inspired the New Model army, but there was nothing specially original or distinguished about his tactics. I am inclined to think that Liddell Hart in his book on the Indirect Approach reads rather more into his strategy than Cromwell himself intended. At Dunbar he was completely out-manœuvred by Leslie and was saved only by that general's tactical errors. On the whole, I do not think that Cromwell deserves a place in the final list, perhaps only for lack of opportunity to exercise his qualities in a wider field.

Of Marlborough's title to the highest possible military fame I have no doubt. He has the claims both of quality and of achievement. As strategist and tactician he was outstanding. Could any other have handled his troublesome Dutch allies with so much patience and understanding or persuaded the Government at home to continue its support of an unpopular war? He produced no striking innovation in the tactical art, but his movements on the battlefield always showed common sense, energy and boldness. I think there can be no question that he was the greatest military commander produced by the British race and that he has claims to be considered the most gifted of all time.

We come to Napoleon, whom many would without hesitation place in the seat of honour in the military Valhalla. I cannot rate him as high as Marlborough or certain others. Napoleon was a supreme strategist but on the whole an indifferent tactician. This may seem a surprising statement, but I believe that a study of his battles would bear it out. His early battles in Italy show

an impatience to take advantage of the situation that his strategical insight and boldness have brought him, and there is little manœuvring on the battlefield; his forces are hurried into battle by the shortest way. Marengo was a defeat, caused by rashness based on faulty intelligence, till Desaix's timely arrival turned the scales. Jena was a muddle; Eylau, Wagram and Borodino, had they been directed by another hand, would be stigmatized as unskilful butchery; nor do his later battles, Leipzig, Ligny and Waterloo, for example, show great tactical skill. Austerlitz will be cited to buttress Napoleon's tactical reputation, and was certainly a well planned and executed battle; it was, however, 'made' by the ground, and as an example of the tactical counter-stroke is nothing like as brilliant as Wellington's suddenly conceived masterpiece at Salamanca. At Friedland Napoleon was quick to take the opportunity offered by the blunder of a usually skilful opponent; but the tactics of the battle were straightforward. I may be wrong, but I cannot mark Napoleon high for tactics. He was for most of his career his own master and responsible to no Government; when he was, he disregarded their orders. Nor does he seem to have been successful in his dealings with allies, his foreign troops usually took the first opportunity to desert him. Nor did he pay much attention to the training of his troops, except his veteran corps. I give him full marks for strategy and for energy and driving power, in his younger days at least, but I put him in the second class as a tactician. It is interesting to note that he is the only general in our list who was trained in the artillery arm. It may be for that reason that his handling of cavalry and infantry on the

battlefield was often clumsy and wasteful — or is that merely the jealous prejudice of an infantryman?

Wellington, Napoleon's adversary in his last battle, was a complete antithesis. An able but somewhat cautious strategist, he had learned his warfare in India on a bullock-cart standard, and was sure and steady rather than brilliant. But as a tactician he was both sure and brilliant. He was above all a master of defence, but his attack at Assaye, his crossing of the Douro, the counter-stroke at Salamanca showed that he could be bold and aggressive when opportunity offered. The methods on which he used the British line to defeat the French column proved deep and sound tactical thought. His dealings both with his own Government and with his allies show admirable common sense and tact. He had less fire than Napoleon but sounder judgment. The soundest of all great generals possibly.

Lee, the outstanding military hero of the American Civil War, was a fine strategist and tactician, great in adversity, and possibly the best beloved and most attractive character of all great military leaders. From a purely military aspect his chief defect may have been a lack of hardness; he was possibly too much a gentleman for the ungentle business of war. A sterner man would surely have driven Longstreet into battle hours earlier at Gettysburg, which might have won the day, and perhaps the war, for the Confederate cause. Was there weakness, too, in his allowing Jeb Stuart to dash off on one of his spectacular rides in the enemy's rear before Gettysburg, which resulted in the absence of the cavalry from that critical battle at a critical time?

Moltke was a strategist, certainly not a tactician, and was only saved from a bad tactical blunder at Sadowa by the report of a reconnaissance which he had not ordered but which disclosed his erroneous conception. I do not think we need consider him as a leader, though he was undoubtedly a deep military thinker.

Neither can the moderns, Foch and Ludendorff, be admitted to the first rank. Foch made too many blunders though he retrieved them in the end with the indomitable spirit which was his principal asset. Ludendorff, on the other hand, with all his skill and knowledge, does not seem to stand up to the test of adversity. The greatest military nation of the last century, perhaps the greatest military nation of all time (and what a stupid business militarism is!), does not seem to have produced a really outstanding figure — it seems to be content with figure-heads like Hindenburg and Hitler, behind whom works The System with all its carefully trained managers, foremen, overseers, workmen — business-like, effective, irresistible, till something goes wrong with the machine.

Does all this bring us any nearer determining the greatest military commanders? Was Mynn a better cricketer than Grace, Grace than Trumper, Trumper than Hammond? The difference in conditions of pitch, bowling, outfield, etc., make any comparison most difficult.

In estimating military merit, the lack of detailed knowledge hampers us — we know practically nothing, for instance, of Hannibal's supply arrangements and difficulties. Perhaps if he had had another 50 elephants he would have marched direct on Rome after Cannae and changed the face of history. Nevertheless, I am going

to be bold enough to make my selection, and here it is.

Marlborough and Belisarius I put first as the two most gifted and ablest soldiers of whom I have read. Wellington and Frederick the Great I put next as two of the soundest and most single-minded soldiers; followed by Lee and Napoleon, two brilliant exponents of military art ('Gentleman' and 'Player'). Somewhere in the above company Hannibal and Scipio must find places, but I do not feel that we have enough detailed knowledge of them to determine their exact standing, so I leave them *hors concours* as representatives of the older school.

I do not expect to find general agreement with my choice, and I may be guilty of many inaccuracies, for I have had no time to verify my references. I have gained an hour or two or relaxation from the responsibilities of command in war by considering these great ones. Possibly my reflections may give others a rest from the present grim business by reminding them of older and better wars.

BELISARIUS[1]

CHICKENS, they say, come home to roost. I suppose Belisarius is in some sort my chicken. Seven or eight years ago, as a distraction in war time, I wrote an article on the qualities of great generals, in which I was rash enough to select some half a dozen names as the most outstanding military commanders of all time, and still rasher perhaps in putting Belisarius together with Marlborough at the head of my list. Now I have to justify, before this learned society, that choice, made without books at hand or time to consult them. I will say at once that after refreshing my memory by re-reading the exploits of Belisarius and reflecting on them, I am prepared to uphold my selection and will endeavour to justify it before you. I hold that Belisarius was one of the Master Minds of the military art. He was a very great fighting man, who preferred to win his battles with as little fighting as possible.

I must begin by giving you a brief sketch of the life and times of Belisarius. He was born at the beginning of the sixth century, at a period when the Roman Empire was declining rapidly towards its final fall. Belisarius may perhaps have been a contemporary with the legendary King Arthur of Britain; and like Arthur he had his Guinevere. Britain, Gaul, Spain, Italy, North Africa

[1] This is the draft of a lecture which Lord Wavell had prepared and was due to give by invitation of the British Academy on a date a few months after his death. He was still corresponding with various friends about it, and their letters contain some interesting points of criticism which he might have incorporated in his final draft. But this is the script as he left it.

were in the hands of the Barbarians; only the Eastern Empire with its capital at Byzantium (or Constantinople) was left. Speaking very generally, it corresponded in extent with the old Turkish Empire towards the end of the nineteenth century, and included Greece, the Balkans, the western portion of Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine and Egypt. Justinian was the Emperor during the whole of the career of Belisarius as a general. One of the most celebrated and intellectual of all the Roman Emperors, perhaps the last of the great ones, he was surely the most baneful master any great commander has had to serve. Ambitious yet cowardly and vacillating, avaricious yet parsimonious, quite ignorant of the military art yet obstructive to the plans of his generals, cold, suspicious and ungrateful, Justinian did not deserve to be served with such genius, such unselfishness and such unswerving loyalty as Belisarius gave him. The only military credit that can be accorded to Justinian is that he should have recognized the merits of Belisarius and later of his successor Narses. It is a singular reflection that a prince so utterly unfitted in every quality except greed and ambition to undertake war should have had at his disposal two generals of such genius. For Narses — eunuch, courtier, dwarf — may have been an unwarlike figure, but was no unworthy disciple and successor of Belisarius. Had their master had any real wisdom and magnanimity, he might well have recovered and consolidated a large portion of Rome's Western Empire, instead of plunging it into fresh misery and needless rapine.

From the military point of view it was a period of change. About 120 years before the birth of Belisarius

the battle of Adrianople had sealed the doom of the Roman legion, whose solid discipline had been the deciding factor of so many fights, so many campaigns. On that fatal field the Emperor Valens and a great Roman army had perished before the mobility of mounted barbarians; and a new era of warfare, in which cavalry was the decisive arm, had begun. It was to last for over a thousand years.

In my article on Great Generals, I wrote this about a system of tactics:

It seems also that he who devises or develops a new system of tactics deserves special advancement on the military roll of fame. All tactics since the earliest days have been based on evaluating an equation in which x=mobility, y=armour, and z=hitting power. Once a satisfactory solution has been found and a formula evolved, it tends to remain static until some thinking soldier (or possibly civilian) recognizes that the values of x, y, z have been changed by the progress of inventions since the last formula was accepted and that a new formula and new system of tactics are required.

Now whether Belisarius can be given the credit of originating the tactical method which was the principal factor in his military successes, I am not sure; but he was certainly the first general to make really effective use of it. The principal force on which he relied in all his battles was a comparatively small body of highly trained, well-mounted horsemen, clad in mail and armed with bow, lance and sword. They were trained to use the bow

effectively from the saddle. Now the hostile cavalry — Vandal, Goth or Persian — who fought against Belisarius could none of them use the bow from the saddle; their archers fought on foot and used lighter bows. Hence the horsemen of Belisarius were able without dismounting to take heavy toll of their adversaries before they could ever come to grips, and then complete their overthrow by a charge, or withdraw if heavily outnumbered. These horsemen of Belisarius are in fact the equivalent of the cruiser tanks of the late war, able to bring fire from a 'hull-down' position and then close or retreat.

Two other points must be borne in mind in considering the armies and campaigns of Belisarius. His forces were in no way homogeneous, they were drawn from all parts of the crumbling Empire. It was indeed the invariable practice of Belisarius after gaining a victory to enlist under his standard the most likely of his captives. Obviously such troops had no special allegiance to the Empire as such and no spirit of patriotism, their loyalty was a personal one to the commander. Secondly, with the disappearance of the legion, the famed Roman discipline went also. It was an age of licence and indiscipline, amongst the officers as well as the men. Reading the story of Belisarius one is shocked to find how often his strategems were thwarted, how often his plans miscarried from the insubordination of the commanders under him or the disobedience, even to mutiny, of his troops. It is so frequent a factor that one would be inclined to say that Belisarius was a weak disciplinarian, were there not many instances in his record to prove the contrary. But when subordinate commanders could, and often did, appeal to

the Emperor against Belisarius, and were able, in the modern idiom, to 'get away with it'; when the ties that bound the troops to a common cause were almost altogether lacking; and when the scanty reinforcements vouchsafed to the general were often wholly untrained and undisciplined, it says much for the personality of Belisarius that he should have held them together at all. Those troops whom he had under his command for some continuous period and could train were remarkable for their discipline. Two passages from Gibbon may be quoted here:

Disorder and disobedience were the common malady of the times: the genius to command, the virtue to obey, resided only in the mind of Belisarius.

In an age in which custom and impunity almost sanctified the abuse of conquest, the genius of one man repressed the passions of a victorious army.

I have time only for a short sketch of the career of Belisarius. I should preface this by saying that the chief authority for this is the history of one Procopius, who was the general's secretary and accompanied him on all his campaigns. This record is accepted by Gibbon as reasonably impartial and accurate.

The origins of Belisarius are obscure. He came from the borders of Thrace and Illyria, probably of small landowner or yeoman stock. He seems to have received a good education. It is generally accepted that he was of striking appearance, tall, active, handsome, frank and upright in bearing, the type at whom men looked twice

and women pretended not to look. He joined Justinian's Bodyguard, and was presently sent to the Persian frontier where he so distinguished himself in minor actions and showed such military shrewdness that he was appointed Commander-in-Chief on the Asiatic front, with the title of General of the East, at the early age of about 25. He soon won his first great success at Daras, a fortress between the Tigris and Euphrates near the Armenian frontier. In front of it he routed a Persian army twice his strength by tactics ingenious enough to find special illustration in Professor Oman's *History of the Art of War*. In the next campaign he showed himself as resourceful a strategist as tactician. By bold and skilful rapidity of movement he frustrated a Persian inroad against Syria and compelled the retreat of a superior force. He would have accomplished his purpose without fighting, had not the foolhardiness and insubordination of his troops compelled him to give battle against his will. The result was a tactical defeat in which only the personal courage and skill of Belisarius and his personal bodyguard extricated the force from disaster. The Persians continued their retreat.

Belisarius was now recalled to Constantinople, and a precarious peace concluded with Persia. The next two outstanding events in his life are his marriage with Antonina and his quelling of the Nika riots. The marriage is generally considered by his biographers to be the cause of the only stains on a noble character. Following the example of his imperial master, Belisarius married, so to speak, into the Chorus. Antonina had in fact been a companion and close stage friend of the celebrated Em-

press Theodora. But while the latter's fidelity to the Emperor after her marriage was never questioned, scandal accused Antonina of unfaithfulness to her general. Yet Belisarius never lost his affection for her; and she had undoubtedly considerable claims on it. She accompanied him in all the hardships and hazards of his campaigns, in which she more than once took an active part. Gibbon remarks of her: 'If Antonina disdained the merit of conjugal fidelity, she expressed a manly friendship to Belisarius, whom she accompanied with undaunted resolution in all the hardship and dangers of a military life.' Her morals may have been no better than Cleopatra's, but at least she would never have lost her general a battle by flight from the battlefield, as Cleopatra did at Actium. Her virtue may have been frail, but her heart was stout.

The Nika riots, which nearly resulted in the destruction of Constantinople, arose from the rivalry between two factions in the chariot races (a modern parallel would be if the supporters of Chelsea and the Arsenal took to continuing their rivalry on the football field by pillage, arson and murder in the streets of London). The mobs became completely out of hand; Justinian lost his nerve and would have fled but for the stouter heart of Theodora, who gave Belisarius the task of putting down disorder. He accomplished this with his usual courage and common sense though only after some difficulty.

Justinian now decided to attempt the re-conquest of North Africa from the Vandals, and entrusted the expedition to Belisarius. This was the only occasion in his career on which the general was given a reasonably

equipped and organized force; though it was small — 5000 horse and 10,000 foot, less than one-sixth of an army which had failed disastrously in the same object in a previous reign. After sailing he made the discovery that Justinian's villainous minister John of Cappadocia, always a sworn enemy to Belisarius, had lined his own pocket by providing biscuit imperfectly cooked, which went bad. The general revictualled the ships at his own expense. After a three months' voyage the expedition landed about 150 miles east of Carthage, against the opinion of many of his subordinate commanders who wished to continue the voyage to Carthage itself or near it. The arguments with which Belisarius overruled them were eminently sound. Briefly they amounted to this: here we are able to land safely and unopposed amongst a friendly population, it is surely better to do so now than to hazard an attack by the enemy fleet while at sea or having to carry out an opposed landing. We shall also be able to get our land legs before going into battle and settle into military formation after a long voyage in ships. For this it is worth while to sacrifice the possible chance of surprising the enemy by a landing nearer Carthage.

The battle which decided the fate of Carthage and North Africa was a confused affair, a soldier's rather than a general's battle, fought ten miles east of the city. But the soundness of Belisarius's order of march and dispositions contributed greatly to the victory. Gelimer, the Vandal King and leader, then forsook Carthage, which his conqueror entered unopposed and with perfect discipline. The first action of Belisarius was to repair the fortifications, which the Vandals had allowed to fall into

decay. It may be noted here that while Belisarius never allowed himself to be thrown wholly on the defensive, whatever his difficulties, he made the most prudent and skilful use of fortification to economize his troops and to give him a secure base from which to strike. As soon as his defences were in order, he advanced westwards to meet Gelimer, who had collected all available resources to recover his kingdom. In the battle of Tricameron he completely and finally routed the Vandals, and restored all North Africa to the Empire.

Jealousy and calumny, which seem to have followed Belisarius throughout his career and always to have found a ready listener in his suspicious master, now accused the victorious general of the intention to set himself up as an independent King of the newly recovered provinces. It would have been better for the happiness of the people had he done so, but loyalty to his unworthy prince was the outstanding characteristic of Belisarius. As the best means of silencing his accusers he returned to Constantinople, bringing with him his captives and treasure to lay at the feet of the Emperor. Even Justinian could not fail to reward the conqueror who had won such signal victories and shown such fidelity. Belisarius was granted a triumph, apparently the last Roman to be so honoured, and was given for the ensuing year the title of Consul, which had for long been in abeyance. It was the brightest hour for Belisarius, to be followed by disappointments, frustration and at the end persecution.

He was now given the tasks of regaining Sicily and Italy from the Goths, which he was expected to accomplish with a force of no more than 12,000 men. His boldness

and rapidity gave him Sicily with little difficulty. The only incident in this campaign that needs mention in this brief chronicle is the tactical expedient by which he captured Palermo, the garrison of which, apparently secure on their high walls, defied him. Belisarius was equal to the occasion; he sailed some of his ships into the harbour and contrived to have boats hoisted to the tops of their masts, so that archers in them could command not only the walls but the interior of the city. This quickly reduced the garrison to consternation and surrender.

From Sicily Belisarius had to make a quick dash to Carthage to quell a mutiny of the troops in North Africa. On his return he crossed the Straits of Messina and advanced up the Italian coast to Naples and then Rome. (You will observe that the Allied troops in the late war followed in the footsteps of Belisarius, by North Africa, Sicily and Italy.) At Naples, just as he was on the point of abandoning the siege, Belisarius took bold advantage of the observation of one of his followers, who discovered an entry into the city by a ruined aqueduct. Enlarging the hole under cover of darkness the general introduced 400 picked men who seized a portion of the ramparts, enabling the remainder of the force to scale them. The Goths had been caught unprepared by the invasion and abandoned Rome to the small force of Belisarius. As at Carthage, he immediately set both soldiers and inhabitants about the business of repairing and strengthening the walls. It was not long before the Goths collected a huge force and laid siege to the city.

Belisarius's defence of Rome with twelve miles of walls for over a year, with but 5000 trained soldiers and such

local militia as he could raise, against 150,000 warlike Goths would sound an incredible feat, were it not well attested. It was no passive defence, more fighting was done outside the walls than on them; the sorties of the garrison were frequent, well-timed and deadly, except on one occasion when the militia, emboldened by their success in defence, demanded to be led against the enemy. Belisarius yielded to their clamour only when he saw that their morale would otherwise suffer, intending strictly to limit the enterprise. But their over-confidence, impetuosity and ill-discipline involved them in heavy losses and almost disaster. It took all the skill and personal gallantry of the Commander to rescue them.

The Goths made one determined attempt at a general assault, early in the siege. Belisarius prevented the advance of their siege engines by ordering his archers to slay the oxen drawing them; but it was only after a long and anxious day of desperate fighting that the Goths at last drew back with very heavy loss. Of this battle Gibbon writes: 'This perilous day was the most glorious in the life of Belisarius. Amidst tumult and dismay, the whole plan of the attack and defence was distinctly present to his mind; he observed the changes of each instant, weighed every possible advantage, transported his person to the scenes of danger, and communicated his spirit in calm and decisive orders.' I think you will agree that a man who can draw such praise from the dispassionate, cynical Gibbon had impressed him as something beyond the ordinary. I would also call your attention to a parallel passage written by Voltaire about Marlborough — who shared with Belisarius the first place in my list — in which

he praises 'that calm courage in the midst of tumult, that serenity of soul in danger, which is the greatest gift of nature for command'.

While Belisarius displayed extraordinary personal prowess in combat when occasion required, he was also a watchful, prudent and resourceful general. His precautions against treachery during the siege are described in some detail, such as changing the keys on the gates three times a month. The care with which he guarded every possible approach in the long perimeter of the walls is shown by the fact that when the Goths attempted the same mode of entry as had given Belisarius Naples, by a ruined aqueduct, they found the garrison ready waiting for them. On the administrative side the efforts of Belisarius to keep the garrison provisioned were constant and ingenious, such as improvising mills turned by water-power in boats moored in the Tiber.

At last the Goths withdrew, and Belisarius by a sudden sortie inflicted heavy losses on their rearguard as it crossed the river. So ended one of the most remarkable sieges of history. I think that in some ways the eight months' defence of Tobruk in 1941 may be compared with it. There also the extent of the perimeter, over 30 miles, appeared quite unmanageable for the forces available; there also the defence was conducted on offensive lines; there also an early assault of the besiegers was only repulsed after long and doubtful fighting.

For some two years after the siege of Rome, Belisarius continued to campaign in Italy. Justinian had at last sent reinforcements but he had sent with them a multiplicity of commanders, who held themselves independent

of the control of Belisarius. Chief amongst them were Narses the Eunuch, and that John who went by the name of Bloody John; he appears to have been a good fighting man but a rash and insubordinate commander. (There are three Johns in the story of Belisarius. His enemy John of Cappadocia has already been mentioned; his downfall was eventually engineered by Theodora. There was also John of Armenia who appears as one of the best and most trusted lieutenants of Belisarius in the North African campaign; he was unfortunately slain by accident at the hands of a comrade.) The details of the campaigns in Northern Italy would be tedious to relate; for Belisarius it seems to have been one unending struggle with the vagaries and obstructions of the other commanders. Yet he succeeded in regaining practically the whole of Italy up to Ravenna. Once more he was tempted by the offer of a crown, a proposal by the Goths to restore the Western Empire with himself at the head. But he remained constant to his master, who, however, became suspicious of his intentions and recalled him. No triumph and no consulship were accorded to Belisarius on this return. His reception was cold; but he was given the Command in the East, where war with Persia had again broken out. The two campaigns brought him no striking successes, yet they saved the Eastern possessions. In the first of these, when he undertook a bold offensive with inferior numbers, he was once again frustrated by the disobedience of his subordinates. In his last campaign in the East Belisarius won a victory the more remarkable in that it was achieved without fighting. The Persian King, the great Nushirevan, had embarked with a huge army on a raid towards Syria

and Palestine. Belisarius, who had been recalled to Constantinople at the end of the first campaign, was hurriedly dispatched to meet the danger. He found an army quite insufficient in numbers or in spirit to engage in battle, so had to resort to stratagem. He collected what troops of any worth he could muster and disposed them on the Euphrates, as if to march against the flank and rear of the great Persian host which had already passed towards Syria. By all possible means he exaggerated his numbers and resources. The name and fame of Belisarius so alarmed Nushirevan that he halted his march, and sent an ambassador ostensibly to discuss terms of settlement with Constantinople, actually to ascertain the strength of his enemy. Belisarius, well aware of his object, set the stage to deceive the ambassador. He received him in a camp, round which all his best and most impressive troops were engaged on martial exercises or sports; and contrived that they should appear merely as an outpost or advanced guard of a much larger force. He replied to the ambassador's overtures with an air of complete confidence, almost disdain. The ambassador advised the Persian King that Belisarius was at the head of a most formidable host, whereupon Nushirevan, raised out on a bluff, abandoned his expedition and withdrew into his own kingdom. The Eastern provinces had been saved by the ingenuity of a master of war. I have always regarded this as one of the main proofs of the military genius of Belisarius.

At the end of the campaign, Belisarius was again recalled, and in the following year the Imperial Forces in the East suffered a crushing and disgraceful defeat at the hands of Nushirevan, who was enabled to make peace

almost on his own terms. Meanwhile Belisarius had been disgraced, not for any military fault but on a trumped-up charge of being concerned in a plot against the Emperor. He was stripped of his wealth and honours and subjected to humiliation, and presently to an even more humiliating pardon. A year later he was recalled to service. Just as disaster had followed his removal from the East, so affairs in Italy had gone awry in his absence. He was again dispatched to restore the fortunes of the Western war, but was denied any possibility of doing so effectively, since the Emperor would provide him with no troops other than those the magic of his name could draw to his standard. For five years he campaigned with varying fortune before his final recall. The details of these campaigns are of no special interest, though they contain many instances of Belisarius's ingenuity, resource and fortitude in adversity. Gibbon even remarks: 'In those campaigns he appears a more consummate master of the art of war than in the season of his prosperity.'

After his departure Narses, the court favourite, granted the reinforcements which had been denied to Belisarius, won a signal victory at Tagina. His tactics in that battle had obviously been inspired by the model of his great predecessor. For eleven years the hero lived quietly in retirement at Constantinople, until in his old age a desperate Emperor, faced with disaster which his own military improvidence had provoked, turned for the last time to his great general. A Bulgarian invasion had broken through the neglected frontier defences and penetrated to within twenty miles of Constantinople. Belisarius was adjured to save the capital. This last

exploit is in some ways his most remarkable. With no more than 300 veterans, hastily collected and equipped, he ambushed the Bulgarian advance and caused such panic that the great host retreated, such was the magic of his name and courage. He was acclaimed by the populace but received no thanks from his jealous master; and two years later was again disgraced and imprisoned on pretext of being concerned in a conspiracy. The story that he was blinded and reduced to begging is supported by no good evidence, and is only a picturesque legend, invented probably to emphasize the monstrous ingratitude of his master. Not long after his release from prison he died, some eight months before the Emperor whom he had served so well, who had treated him so scurvily.

Such is an outline sketch of the career of Belisarius. I hope you will agree with me that it entitles him to claim a high place amongst the great masters of war in any age. In the article to which I referred at the beginning of this address I laid down certain standards for inclusion in the Sixth Form of generalship. I said I would consider only one who had handled large forces in an independent command in more than one campaign; and who had shown his qualities in adversity as well as in success. I then proposed to judge him by his worth as a strategist; his skill as a tactician; his power to deal tactfully with his Government and his allies; his ability to train troops or direct their training; and his energy and driving power in planning and in battle. I do not know of any great commander who fulfils all these conditions more fully than Belisarius. He fought at least a dozen campaigns as an independent commander, all of them against odds and

practically all against adverse circumstances such as few could have surmounted. I have given you examples of his skill and boldness as strategist and tactician. Of his exceptional judgment, statesmanship, magnanimity and patience in his dealings with all sorts of men there are many proofs in the record. In this he was the equal of generals such as Marlborough, Wellington, Lee. He was not only a great man-at-arms himself but obviously had the ability to impart his skill; it was the quality of his personal troops, trained by himself, that was usually the deciding factor in his victories. Added to all this he had a fruitfulness in novel expedients to meet unusual emergencies which I have not found matched amongst all the great commanders.

I therefore present to you Belisarius as worthy of a place in your gallery of Master Minds, as one of the greatest of all soldiers and one of the noblest characters of his or of any age.

ROMMEL

Of all our enemies in the late war Rommel was the only one who appealed to the public imagination, both as a dashing commander in the field and, by all accounts, an honourable and generous enemy. There was an aura of romance and chivalry about him which was quite foreign to the rigid, grim efficiency normally attributed to German generals. There has always, too, been some mystery about his end, how it came about, and how far he was involved in the plot against Hitler's life in July 1944.

Desmond Young's book[1] gives a picture of the soldier and of the man which will be fascinating to all who fought against him in North Africa; which is full of military lessons for all officers; and which is as exciting and readable as many novels. The author has obtained his information at first hand, from Rommel's widow and son, from Rommel's own papers, and from his staff and close friends. There seems no reason to question the authenticity of the information and the accuracy of the facts. From them he has drawn a picture of an interesting and attractive personality, has resolved certain problems of war history, and has raised certain others which will provoke discussion.

To begin at the end: the story of Rommel's murder by S.S. agents at the orders of Hitler is simply but drama-

[1] *Rommel*, by Desmond Young. (Collins.) This review appeared in the *Sunday Times*, January 22nd, 1950.

tically told. Rommel was not involved in the plot to kill Hitler and knew nothing of it; but he had recognized that the war was lost and had agreed that approaches for peace should be made to the Allied commanders over Hitler's head. The conspirators, who realized that Hitler's death was a necessary preliminary to any peace offer, had decided, without informing Rommel, that he was the only personality whom the Army would accept as successor to Hitler, when the latter had been eliminated.

So that when the plot failed and some of the conspirators were tortured, Rommel's name was mentioned, and he was included in Hitler's revenge. He was given the choice between taking poison and trial by the People's Court with the practically inevitable result of a disgraceful death. His wife urged him to stand trial and expose Hitler. But Rommel's last 'appreciation of the situation', taken calmly and quickly as on the battlefield and with as good a judgment of his enemy, was surely correct: 'I know that I should never reach Berlin alive.'

The story of Rommel's personal relations with Hitler is interesting. As a regular officer he kept himself entirely aloof from politics, and never had anything to do with the Nazi Party. But Hitler read a book written by Rommel on infantry tactics, admired it, and chose Rommel as commander of the battalion responsible for his personal safety on the march into Sudetenland in 1938 — a curious choice, in view of Rommel's known disregard of safety considerations where he himself was concerned. Rommel had the same command during the invasion of Poland and till early in 1940. He had therefore good opportunities to study Hitler at close quarters. Though Rommel never

seems to have liked him, he was impressed by his qualities and among others by his personal courage.

But, as the war went on, he realized Hitler's megalomania and dishonesty; long before the end his distrust and contempt of his Fuehrer were complete. For Rommel was a simple, straightforward, honourable man. The following incidents recorded in Desmond Young's book should be noted to his credit. When in 1935 Rommel was attached to the Hitler Youth to improve their discipline, he soon fell out with Baldur von Schirach, saying that he objected strongly to small boys of 13 being trained as 'little Napoleons', and telling von Schirach that if he was determined to train them as soldiers he had better first go and learn to be a soldier himself. Von Schirach naturally had Rommel returned to the Army. A remark of Rommel's about the Italians is, as the author says, surprising in a German general: 'Certainly they are no good at war. But one must not judge everyone in the world only by his qualities as a soldier: otherwise we should have no civilization.' When Hitler's order to execute all commando troops reached Rommel in the desert he promptly burned it, though the order was signed 'Adolf Hitler', and though it threatened penalties under military law to anyone failing to carry it out or to communicate it to the troops. War under Rommel in the desert was waged hard and fiercely but fairly.

How highly should Rommel be rated as a general? To many who have studied his exploits he appears as an exceptionally brave leader who was a fine tactician and brilliant gambler on the battlefield, but who had little knowledge of higher strategy and a disregard for ad-

ministration. This book will certainly cause reconsideration of such judgment. It shows clearly that Rommel appreciated much better than Hitler and the Higher Command the importance of the Middle East to the British defence, and that success there should be a preliminary to any attack on Russia. He realized, too, that Malta was the key to the Mediterranean, and repeatedly pressed for its reduction.

He may not have been a highly educated soldier but he seems to have had an instinct for strategy as well as for tactics; and we can probably judge ourselves fortunate that Hitler and not Rommel directed the Axis strategy, and that Rommel's advice on the campaign in Africa was not taken. His imputed failure to recognize the value of logistics arises partly from the boldness with which he often pressed his advantage beyond his administrative limit, and also because he sometimes relied on promises of supplies which were not fulfilled. In his own notes on Desert Warfare, which form an Appendix, he wrote: 'An adequate supply system and stocks of weapons, petrol and ammunition are essential conditions for any army to be able to stand successfully the strain of battle. Before the fighting proper, the battle is fought and decided by the Quartermasters.' He also made the shrewd remark that the African war was determined by the result of the Battle of the Atlantic. A dictum of Rommel's on which it is worth while to ponder in these days when the lines of communication are loaded with cinemas, concert-parties, canteens and so forth is this: 'the best form of welfare for the troops is a superlative state of training, for this saves unnecessary casualties'.

Rommel lived hard and frugally himself and expected others to do the same. Perhaps he was too hard on himself, for he was a sick man by the time he reached El Alamein, and had soon to be sent to hospital in Germany. The story of how on October 24th, while still in hospital, he received a message from Hitler asking him to return and left at 7 a.m. next morning, to take over an already lost battle, shows the courage and loyalty of the man.

Space allows only the barest mention here of other matters related in this enthralling book; Rommel's opinion of the British soldier ('an extraordinary bravery and toughness combined with a rigid inability to move quickly'); his criticisms of the generals opposed to him and their tactics; his rules for Desert Warfare; his account of the campaigns of 1942; the revelation of the superiority of German tanks and equipment up till the final battles; and many more things of interest both to the military and to the lay reader.

If I may be pardoned a personal note, it has interested me to find in this book that my calculation in the early part of 1941, when the British expedition went to Greece, that I should not be counter-attacked before the beginning of May, was justified against any ordinary commander. Rommel was ordered by the Higher Command to submit a plan by April 20th for 'a cautious advance'. Actually he attacked on March 31st without ever submitting a plan, and caught me unprepared. I had not reckoned on a Rommel.

Rommel was a military phenomenon that can occur only at rare intervals; men of such bravery and daring can

survive only with exceptional fortune. He was as brave on the battlefield as Ney, with much better brains; as dashing as Murat, with more balance; as cool and quick a tactician as Wellington. Whether he had the breadth of vision to control the higher fields of strategy is unproved and perhaps doubtful. But I believe that anyone studying the facts in this book, which seem well established, will recognize him as a fine character and great soldier:

Among the chosen few,
Among the very brave, the very true.

slower broad front, on which Eisenhower finally decided. Like all great strategical decisions, it depended ultimately on the problem of communications, on the administrative factor. Without a detailed knowledge of this, it is impossible to pronounce accurate judgment. Nor was it a simple strategical issue, political considerations had also to be given weight. It is rash indeed of me to attempt any verdict on this issue; but for what it is worth my judgment — perhaps my guess would be a more appropriate word — is that Monty was wrong in this instance and Eisenhower right. I do not believe that the spear-head would ever have had the momentum to pierce the heart. And a narrow salient with long and precarious communications would have been a dangerous commitment against a determined enemy like the Germans.

The battle of Arnhem was a gamble with the weather, and the weather in Europe nearly always has the best of such gambles. Yet the gallantry of the airborne troops paid a reasonable shareholder's dividend, if not a gambler's dividend.

The rest of the fighting — the winter battles in ill-omened Walcheren and elsewhere in the Scheldt estuary; the Ardennes surprise packet; the battles west of the Rhine, the crossing of the Rhine, and the advance beyond the Rhine — presents less matter of strategical interest; though it will provide fresh examples for the much debated problem of how to make the best use of a river obstacle. The Germans surely did not, and Monty classes it as one of their three main blunders that they chose to fight a battle west of the Rhine in 1945 instead of withdrawing across it. Their other two great blunders he considers to

have been their counter-stroke early in August in the Mortain area, and the Ardennes offensive at the end of 1944. Both these seem to have been made by the direct orders of Hitler, one of his many 'flings at generalship' as Monty terms them. Judged by results, these were admittedly blunders of much magnitude. But the German High Command knew that the war was lost anyhow. The remaining counters they still had to stake could win them only a short respite from bankruptcy. It may not have seemed to matter much whether those counters went on red or black, on offensive or defensive. The German instinct has ever been for attack and counter-attack, and so the counters were thrown on red. The lesson those costly efforts brought home was that it is courting disaster to make a major attack without air superiority.

And that is a lesson which Monty has throughout his career as a general consistently emphasized, by precept and by practice.

The book is an impressive record, by a great master of war.

ALLIED CO-OPERATION

I HAVE been asked to write in this journal[1] on the subject of Allied co-operation and Command. Obviously it would require a book or books to deal in any detail with so large a question. All I can do here is to sketch some outlines, with a few marginal notes and illustrations from previous history, leading up to the experiences of Anglo-American co-operation during the late war.

The difficulties of combining the operations of allies in war are obvious. There may be divergence of political aims leading to dissensions on the strategy to be followed. These are usually for the governments concerned to resolve, except where the Commander-in-Chief in the field is also the Ruler, as often happened in old days; or himself directs the foreign policy of his country, as Marlborough did to all intents and purposes. Differences in population, in wealth, in economic development, in geographical situation will naturally tend to determine the share in operations to be undertaken by each ally. Again this is mainly a matter for governments, who are of course likely to seek the advice of their principal military advisers. The problems of the commander in the field begin with differences in organization, in tactical ideas, in equipment, in mobility, perhaps in discipline. Generally speaking, a commander will be wise to recognize these differences, to understand them and to make allowance

[1] *Fellowship of the United States and British Comrades Magazine.*

for them rather than to seek to alter or modify them, or to demand from his allies more than they can reasonably be expected to perform. There are instances where the weaker ally has allowed its troops to be actually assimilated into the army of the stronger, as the Portuguese were into Wellington's forces in the Peninsular War. A difference in standards of living may well be a source of embarrassment between allies. There is a curious parallel here in the experience of the British in the two World Wars. In the first, the British troops in France had a higher rate of pay and standard of welfare than their French comrades; while in the second they found the position reversed, the American troops in Britain having a higher standard than their own. Another possible source of friction is a difference of ideas on the question of secrecy and censorship; even the friendliest ally is prone to have doubts of the security system of a foreigner and to hesitate to entrust his closest secrets to him. Language is of course a handicap which may cause difficulties and lead to misunderstandings.

But there is no doubt of the principal stumbling-block to good relations and fruitful combination of resources: it is national pride and susceptibility. And there is also no doubt that the principal agent to resolve the difficulties and to create harmony is the personality of the leading commanders. A tactless commander can bitterly estrange an ally; there have even been instances of a mishandled ally leaving the field. A sympathetic commander can make himself accepted by suspicious allies.

Another principle of importance is that attempts to direct the operations of allies by a Committee usually lead

to friction and failure; if the allies cannot agree to serve under a Supreme Commander, it is better for each allied Commander-in-Chief to have the control of his own forces and work according to a common plan.

Let us now briefly examine how some of these principles have worked out in history. Marlborough's wars provide classical examples of the difficulties of handling allied forces and of the influence of the personality of the commander. In the Blenheim campaign there were three armies and commanders concerned — the Margrave of Baden, Prince Eugène and Marlborough, who had escaped temporarily from the stifling control of the Dutch, the most difficult allies of all. There was no supreme commander; the Margrave and Marlborough were working under a curious arrangement for joint command, while Eugène was independent of both. In actual practice Marlborough and Eugène, both outstanding personalities, combined their operations with complete understanding and goodwill. They succeeded in keeping the Margrave, a more difficult and less gifted personality, from the battlefield of Blenheim, engaged in operations elsewhere, although the absence of his army placed them in a numerical inferiority to their opponents. As Mr. Winston Churchill says in his life of Marlborough: 'Their decision was scarcely complimentary to the Margrave. His military epitaph for all time must be that the two greatest captains of the age, pre-eminent and renowned in all the annals of war, rated, by actions more expressive than words, his absence from a decisive battlefield well worth fifteen thousand men.' In his subsequent campaigns Marlborough had always the friendly

and loyal co-operation of Eugène, but was hampered by the excessive caution and selfishness of his Dutch allies. It was only by the most patient diplomacy that he could persuade them to the necessary military action. These campaigns are an outstanding example of the influence of the commander's personality in allied operations. They show also the folly of attempting to direct operations in the field by a Committee, as the Dutch did.

From the strategical and tactical point of view it is obvious that the area or point of junction of allied forces is vulnerable, and that the aim of an opponent is likely to be to drive in a wedge between them and force them apart to their probably divergent bases. This was Napoleon's aim in his first campaign in 1796 and in his last campaign of 1815, which ended his career at Waterloo. In 1796 he was completely successful, driving his Austrian and Piedmontese opponents apart and forcing them to make terms. In 1815 he struck similarly at the junction between the armies opposing him; and thought that by the battles of Ligny and Quatre Bras he had driven them apart and could deal with them separately. But Wellington and Blücher were sterner and more practised generals than Napoleon's opponents of twenty years earlier. Blücher abandoned his base and joined Wellington at Waterloo in time to complete the final ruin of the great Emperor. Again the combination of allies had depended on the personality and good understanding of the principal commanders. Wellington had had previous experiences of allied co-operation in the Peninsular War. He had, as already stated, been able to absorb his Portuguese allies into his own army. With the Spaniards it was different;

their national vanity forbade them to accept any foreign direction, and the military ineptitude of their generals made them dangerous allies on the battlefield. After one experience, in the Talavera campaign, Wellington refused ever again to risk his forces in combined operations with the Spanish armies. The stumbling-block of national pride was too much for him to overcome. Would Marlborough, with his unlimited patience and his prepossessing personality, have fared any better with the Spaniards, I wonder?

Coming to modern times, we have the practice of the two world wars for comparison. In the first, the Allies were gradually feeling their way towards a system of Combined Command. In Europe the French regarded themselves by reason of their greater numbers and military reputation as the senior partner of the alliance and entitled to take the lead in direction. But the original British Expeditionary Force was independent and in no way subordinate to the French. At the very beginning the cause of co-operation received a shock from the discordant personalities of Lanrezac, commander of the French Army next to the British, and Sir John French (afterwards Earl of Ypres), commander of the British Expeditionary Force. The solid, unruffled personality of Joffre and the intervention of Kitchener at a critical moment repaired what threatened to be a serious breach. When the line of trenches became stabilized at the end of 1914, the British had to deal with Foch as commander of the northern group of French armies, a personality much more sympathetic to the British than Lanrezac had been. But the British Army remained an independent force,

responsible direct to its own Government. Sir Douglas Haig (later Earl Haig), who at the end of 1915 replaced Sir John French in the British Command in France, was a most loyal and conscientious co-operator with the French but had a reserved, rather inarticulate, personality which did not show at its best in the Council Chamber. He was not on good terms with his Prime Minister, Lloyd George, who in 1917, at the time of the French General Nivelle's ill-starred offensive, attempted to place the British forces in France under French command. A compromise was reached which gave Nivelle some measure of control over British operations for his offensive. This failed completely, and the British Army resumed for all practical purposes its independent status.

The next step was the establishment of the Supreme War Council at Versailles. It served as a useful clearing-house for the plans of the Allies, amongst whom the United States and Italy were now included; but the attempt to direct operations by an Executive War Board of the Council was a failure, as all attempts to control operations in the field by Committees must be. It required the crisis in March 1918 caused by the German break-through to produce unity of command under Foch. As Haig is reported to have said at the critical conference at which it was decided to place Foch in control: 'I can deal with a man, not with a Committee.'

Foch's position as Commander-in-Chief of the Allied armies in France was, however, very different from that of the Supreme Commander in 1944. There was no integrated staff; and his control over the operations was more general and indirect. For instance, Haig's decision

to attack the Hindenburg line in the autumn of 1918 — a decision which ended the war in 1918 when the Allied governments did not expect victory till 1919 — was taken on his own responsibility, and against the more cautious views of his own Government, though it was in accordance with Foch's general directive. Haig's relations with Foch were good and he accepted his instructions loyally; but it was not always so with the commander of the neighbouring group of armies, Pétain, who was never a friend and proved himself later an inveterate enemy of the British.

General Pershing, the commander of the American Forces which arrived in France in 1918, was most insistent that they should maintain their individuality and not in any way be merged with the more experienced troops of their allies. But at the time of the crisis of March 1918 the Americans waived for the time being their build-up of complete divisions and brought over infantry and machine-gun units to assist their hard-pressed allies. Like Haig, Pershing co-operated loyally with Foch as Commander-in-Chief.

An instance where an overbearing and unsympathetic personality caused disunity was in the French General Sarrail's handling of the campaign in Macedonia. Here Sarrail was in unquestioned command, but caused so much friction that his recall was demanded by the British Minister on several occasions and eventually conceded.

It will be seen from this very incomplete sketch that the question of Inter-Allied command was never completely solved in the First World War, and caused much difficulty

and considerable friction. The main principles laid down at the beginning of this note — the chief stumbling-block of national pride, the influence of personalities, the inefficiency of direction by Committee, and the desirability of a Supreme Commander — are all illustrated in this war.[1]

We stand perhaps a little too close to the Second World War to be able to deal fully and freely with it. But it can safely be said that the arrangements built up by Americans and British for co-operation and command reached in the final stages of the war in Europe the closest integration between the forces of two proud and powerful nations that history has yet recorded. It is necessary to emphasize those adjectives, since national pride is the main obstacle to be overcome; and since there was not sufficient disparity of power to make either nation obviously supreme. Two great advantages must also be stressed; both forces spoke the same language, and both had to a great extent a common heritage of origin and ideas.

The story of Allied co-operation in the Second World War begins with the dispatch of the British Expeditionary Force to France in 1939. The British, mindful of the difficulties caused by independent command in 1914, went further than ever before, by subordinating their force not only to the French Commander-in-Chief, but also to the commander of the French group of armies operating in the north, General Georges. It is certainly open to question whether they did not go too far and accept without

[1] Anyone requiring more detailed information on this period will find it in *Lessons of Allied Co-operation 1914-18*, by GENERAL SIR FREDERICK MAURICE (Oxford University Press, 1942).

question a French strategy which had, to say the least, very serious defects.

After the disasters of June 1940 the British fought alone till the entry of Greece; and the question of Allied Command did not arise till the British expedition to Greece in 1941. In this the arrangements may be said to have approximated to those obtaining in France at the end of the First World War. The British Force was under the command of the Greek Commander-in-Chief, Papagos, but actually exercised a very considerable degree of strategical and tactical independence.

After the Japanese aggression and the entry of the United States into the war came the first attempt at the setting-up of a Supreme Command, in the short-lived ABDA Command in the South-west Pacific. It never had the resources to stem the Japanese attack. All that can be said is that the four nations concerned — Americans, British, Dutch, Australian — did succeed at very short notice in setting up an organization with commanders and staff from four nations and three Services, which worked harmoniously if unsuccessfully.

Some six months later came the formation of an Anglo-American headquarters under an American general, Eisenhower, for the invasion of North Africa. From this developed the final organization for the invasion of Normandy in 1944. The writer of this article is not qualified to deal in any detail with the working of that headquarters and its remarkable success. All he need do is to point out that the organization met fully the main principles which have been stressed in previous illustrations. There was a definite single Command, not a Committee;

the organization of that Command removed the stumbling-block of national susceptibilities by its composition and working, so that both nations were fully represented; and finally the personality of the Supreme Commander was such that his impartiality was unquestioned and that he enjoyed the respect, affection and trust of those who served under him.

UNORTHODOX SOLDIERS

I HAVE always had a liking for unorthodox soldiers and a leaning towards the unorthodox in war. Perhaps it is inherited; my grandfather was a soldier of fortune, who fought with the Spanish in the Peninsular War and later held high rank in the armies of Chile and Mexico during their wars of liberation. My father did some of his soldiering in command of irregulars in expeditions against natives in South Africa nearly seventy years ago; he then went to the Staff College, considered an almost more unorthodox proceeding in those days; my cousin, after shedding the garb of a regular soldier, which he found irksome in peace, did the pilgrimage to Mecca disguised as a Zanzibari, and in 1914 raised and led an irregular corps of local Arabs (generally known as 'Wavell's Own') with whom he held off a German attempt to capture Mombasa. Later he was killed at their head in an ambush. Lack of enterprise has prevented my straying aside from the regular path of soldiering; though some of my superiors have, I believe, occasionally criticized my methods as a little unconventional. Thus I have always had a keen admiration for the irregular soldier, professional or amateur; and I here record my impressions of two remarkable men, one an amateur soldier, one a professional, with whom I had some dealings in World Wars I and II.

I have sometimes traced a parallel between the various sects of the Christian religion and those of the Armed

Forces. In my parallel the Catholic Church corresponds to the Brigade of Guards, with perfect discipline, much ceremony, and strict adherence to the book in creed and drill. National Churches, such as the Church of England, represent the regular regiments of the Line, with less rigid discipline, less ceremonial, less absolutism than the Guards. Then there are the Territorials (Wesleyans, Baptists, and the like), considered as mere amateurs perhaps by the Guards and the Line, but stout and earnest fighters for the cause. Finally come the Irregulars, who may own no Church and subscribe to no orthodox religion, but whose sniping, ambushes, and pandourades against evil in the slums and dark places of life may be sometimes more effective than all the church-goings of the regulars.

I. T. E. LAWRENCE[1]

My friendship with Lawrence was not deep nor intimate: I never saw him at his heights of action nor in his depths of disillusion. The man I write of in this short tribute is an everyday Lawrence, a very charming acquaintance and friend — wise, witty and sympathetic, with the unmistakable stamp of greatness and goodness on him.

I met him first when he came to Allenby's headquarters in December 1917, just as Jerusalem fell. At the official entry into that city I walked beside him: he was gay that day, with jests at his borrowed uniform and at the official appointment that had been loaned him for the

[1] From *T. E. Lawrence, by His Friends*, edited by A. W. LAWRENCE (Jonathan Cape, 1937).

ceremony — staff officer to Bertie Clayton. He said as usual little of himself, and barely mentioned the great ride to, and unlucky failure at, the Yarmuk Valley bridge, from which he had just returned.

During 1918 I saw him once or twice only, on his appearances at Allenby's headquarters. Our next meeting — in Egypt — had a certain dramatic quality. On a day in the spring of 1919 Lord Allenby, then High Commissioner, sent for me and showed me a Foreign Office telegram. Lawrence, after leaving the Peace Conference at Paris, had been 'lost': and the fiddle-stringed French were persuaded that he was on his way to Damascus to aid Feisal in a revolt against them. Lord Allenby was very straitly enjoined by the Foreign Office that if Lawrence arrived in Egypt he was on no account to be allowed to proceed to Syria. Allenby in turn made me answerable with my head to him that Lawrence did not pass through Egypt without seeing him; I was to bring him to the Residency as soon as he landed. I went back to my office and telephoned the authorities at the various ports, telling them that their military careers, if any, were at stake if Lawrence landed without my knowledge. I also asked the Air Force to let me know at once if he reached Egypt by air. I did not know T. E. very well at that time, but I thought I knew him well enough to consider it highly unlikely that he intended to start, or take any part in, a war in Syria; and to be quite certain that if he did wish to pass through Egypt in secret he would not arrive or depart by the ordinary methods. Anyway it was probably only Foreign Office 'wind'. I had dismissed the matter from my mind, when one morning some weeks later I met a

friend outside the headquarters offices. In the course of casual conversation he remarked to me: 'By the way, isn't that Arab fellow Lawrence a friend of yours? I saw him at Shepheard's Hotel this morning.' I sent a staff officer to produce me Lawrence at once: he returned in half an hour with a rather ruffled T. E., dressed in uniform but without belt or cap — as a subaltern in something. He said that he had come to Egypt merely to collect his papers, and was distinctly aggrieved at the idea that he was suspected of any intention to cause trouble in Syria. I explained that the apprehensions were those of the French and Foreign Office only: he was soon appeased, and we went off to see Allenby together.

Our meetings after the war were occasional and our correspondence irregular, but his friendship was one of my most valued privileges and boasts; and it was always the greatest pleasure to see his outsize motor cycle parked in the drive of my father's house in Dorset — at the time when T. E. was a storeman of the Tank Corps at Bovington — or, later, at our house on Salisbury Plain or at Aldershot. His visits, usually sudden and unheralded, were always too brief; one could never have enough of his wise, kind and pungent talk, or cease to admire the impression of steady enduring strength that the stocky form, blue eyes and general air of decision conveyed. One felt always when he departed that one had wasted one's opportunities: with so keen and intelligent a mind one should have discussed weighty and serious problems. And one had spent the hours of his visits in talk of casual everyday matters, amused and charmed by his fresh outlook and shrewd comments on people and things.

He was witty and enlightening on any subject that was raised, was always at his ease, simple, sympathetic and unaffected. He never spoke of himself or of his own experiences unless questioned, and then answered straightforwardly and without affectation. His self-consciousness, so marked in his writings — especially in *The Mint* — and in his letters, never intruded into his talk. He thought much, brooded even, on himself but never *for* himself, to gain any personal advancement. This self-consciousness, his anxiety of the impression he produced on others, was a curious thing in one so strong and independent. He had many fairy godmothers at his cradle, with gifts of fearlessness, of understanding, of a love of learning, of craftsmanship, of humour, of Spartan endurance, of frugality, of selflessness. But at last came the uninvited bad fairy, to spoil his enjoyment of the gifts of her sisters, so far as in her lay, with the curse of self-consciousness. In my experience, it showed little, if at all, in his talk or in his actions: but his letters and writings show how heavy the burden was on him.

As a professional soldier, I should say something of Lawrence's military achievements and qualities, though I saw them at long range only. The quickening of Sherif Hussein's family revolt into the movement that poured into Damascus was something that no one else could have achieved, even with unlimited gold: it was a spiritual even more than a physical exploit, the value of which to the Allied cause was great. The appreciation on which he based his campaign; the conduct of the campaign itself; and his one 'battle' — the engagement at Tafileh — were brilliancies of which any master might have been proud.

But they are slender foundations on which to claim for him the title of a Great Captain. His name will live for his words and spirit more than for his wars. But had fate called him to the highest command, he would surely not have been found wanting. On the theoretical side, he had read more and thought more on military history and the military art than probably any great commander: physically he had courage and endurance beyond the ordinary: morally, he had the gift of inspiration and leadership, he had vision, determination in plenty, and an absence of the personal ambition that has marred the character of many great soldiers; he knew the common man; and, best of all, he had no hampering shackles of long professional training and prejudice. I discussed with him in talk and on paper his theory of irregular warfare, and of its antidotes; but on his ideas of regular warfare and the professional soldier we touched only once, and were interrupted: I had made notes on which to resume the subject with him when he had more leisure. But the day set for its discussion was a visit to him at his cottage early in June 1935.

How should he be judged in the end, this unwilling leader of a great adventure, this over-fastidious writer of one of the greatest masterpieces of the language, this cunning craftsman, this catholic scholar — as man of action or man of thought? I compared him once with Hamlet, a Hamlet who had slain his uncle neatly and efficiently at the beginning of Act II, and spent the remainder of the play in repenting his act and writing a long explanation of it to Horatio, and then retired to a monastery. In the East, he might have been Emperor or

Yogi, and, could he have controlled his impish sense of humour, would have earned veneration in either role.

He will always have his detractors, those who sneer at the 'Lawrence legend'; who ascribe his successes with the Arabs to gold; who view the man as a charlatan in search of notoriety by seeming to seek obscurity; who regarded his descent from colonel to private as evidence of some morbid *nostalgie de la boue*. They knew not the man. Those who did, even casually and sporadically, like myself, can answer for his greatness. The complexity of his character, the 'mystery' of Lawrence, on which so much has been written, seems to me to lie mainly in the fact that he transcended the ordinary heights in so many qualities: in courage, in knowledge, in self-discipline, in skill with his hands, in artistry of words, in sympathy with the common working man and with the scholar, in demanding so little from life for his body and so much — too much perhaps — for his mind. But I am not competent to analyse the man: all I can say is that he was cast in heroic but very human mould, and that it was good to know him.

2. ORDE WINGATE

I FIRST met Wingate when I took over command in Palestine in 1937, and found him on my Intelligence staff. The name drew my attention at once, since I had known and admired his relation, General Sir Reginald Wingate. I inquired about him and was told he was rather an oddity, clever but eccentric; he had been in the Sudan for

some years and knew Arabic well, but since coming to Palestine had developed pronounced Zionist tendencies and was now learning Yiddish or Hebrew. When I met him, I realized that there was a remarkable personality behind those piercing eyes and rather abrupt manner. He was obviously no respecter of persons because of their rank. I found him and his attractive young wife at Weizmann's house at Rehovoth when I lunched there one day. I left Palestine early in 1938 before he performed the exploits in defence of Jewish colonies which gained for him the D.S.O., but I carried away in a corner of my mind an impression of a notable character who might be valuable as a leader of unorthodox enterprise in war, if I should ever have need of one.

That memory was taken from its pigeon-hole over two years later when I wanted someone to organize efforts from the Sudan to support the efforts of Colonel Sandford inside Abyssinia to fan into flame the embers of revolt that had smouldered in parts of the Abyssinian highlands ever since the Italian occupation. Wingate came in response to a cabled request. One of his earliest actions was to fly into the heart of Abyssinia in November 1940 to interview Sandford. Luckily for his purpose most of the R.A.F. machines in the Sudan — there were very few — were old enough and slow enough to land in a small space; even so the exploit was an extremely hazardous one and only accomplished by the skill and daring of the pilot. It was a pregnant meeting for the future, and I have always wondered what impression the two made on each other. In appearance they were opposites. Sandford — stoutish, bespectacled and bland — did not

look the part of a leader of irregulars, but was in his way as bold and as active as Wingate, who — dark, fiery and eager — might have sat for the portrait of a leader of Spanish partisans in the Peninsular War. For the next few months Wingate worked vehemently at organizing support for the rebellion, he was much too good a soldier not to know that irregular enterprises require just as much preparation as any other operations of war. The constant burden of his messages to me and my staff was 'more men and more camels, or there will be no rebellion'. The men he wanted were picked junior Commanders and N.C.O.s, as leaders of minor enterprises and demolition squads — most difficult to obtain at short notice from a force already too small and engaged on at least three other fronts. The camels were to transport supplies and weapons up on to the Abyssinian escarpment across the low ground which would become impassable when the rains broke. Camels, too, were not easy to come by, and Wingate used them lavishly. We did what we could, Wingate worked unsparingly of himself and others; and the results are there to show that though much had to be left undone, sufficient for the purpose was managed. Of Wingate's brilliant performances in Central Abyssinia I knew little till afterwards. The enterprise once launched had to take care of itself while I directed the regular operations against the north and the south of the Italian East African Empire. These two regular wings eventually met near Amba Alagi in May 1941 at about the same time that Sandford and Wingate's irregular forces emerged from the centre. And so ended the Italian Empire of East Africa.

After it was all over, Wingate sent to my headquarters

a vehement memorandum of protest at the grievances and injustices suffered by him and his officers. Knowing Wingate and guessing at the strain which his efforts had imposed on him, I refused to allow any answer to be sent till I had seen him personally. I had matters out with him at a long interview. A few of his grievances were real and could be remedied, a few were imaginary, most were due to the fact that he and his men had been out of touch with official correspondence for months and it had been impossible to resolve matters of pay and allowances. I could see on him then signs of the strain that resulted in a long spell of hospital shortly afterwards.

Nearly a year later when I was struggling to hold the Japanese advance in Burma, I again summoned Wingate, to organize enterprises against the Japanese communications. He arrived too late to undertake anything in Burma, but in time for his quick brain to grasp the essentials of warfare against the Japanese in jungle country. After the evacuation of Burma, he sent me a memorandum on the formation of a 'Long Range Penetration Group' for action in the re-conquest of Burma. I approved his proposals, but warned him that I could give him no picked troops. Next time I met him was a day and a night spent with him to watch the training of his special brigade in Central India.

I decided at the end of 1942 to use the brigade in Upper Burma to penetrate behind the Japanese lines and cut their communications, as part of a large-scale incursion into the north of Burma. Just as the brigade was ready to start, it was decided for certain reasons that the larger operation could not take place. Wingate's expedition

would therefore have no strategical object, and there would be little to divide the strength of the enemy or to prevent him concentrating on the brigade. Was it therefore wise to dispatch the brigade at all? I flew up to Imphal and had a long discussion with Wingate early in February 1943. He was most anxious to carry on the enterprise, in order to test his organization and methods and to obtain intelligence of Japanese dispositions and of the situation in Upper Burma; and was confident that he could lead the brigade in and out without undue loss. This fell in with my ideas and, greatly to his relief, I gave permission to proceed. Next day I inspected the brigade and they marched towards the Chindwin and Irrawaddy.

I was summoned to England not long afterwards and only heard the results of the raid at long range. Though losses were heavy, and the columns of the brigade were for the latter part of the five months they spent in Burma the hunted rather than the hunters, the result fully justified Wingate's ideas. I had in fact sufficient confidence in them to order the formation of another similar brigade as soon as the first had disappeared into Burma.

By the time I received Wingate's report on his operations — a remarkably frank and interesting document — I had ceased to be Commander-in-Chief. Wingate himself had been called home and went straight to the Quebec Conference to expound his ideas. His personality and proposals made a deep impression there. I saw him in London on his return, and talked over with him the past and future of his operations. He was as alert and imperative as usual.

Our last meeting was when he spent ten days' convales-

cence in the Viceroy's House at Delhi while recovering from a severe attack of enteric which he had contracted on his return journey to India. The trouble was to keep him from over-working during his convalescence. I never saw him afterwards. The manner of his death was in keeping with the manner of his life — swift, meteoric, headlong. He was returning from a visit to his forward troops behind the enemy's lines in Burma. He never admitted danger as a deterrent to a commander's first duty, to know the dispositions and temper of his troops; nor storm and darkness as reasons for delaying a journey by air. What caused the disaster will never be known. It lost us a great leader, but his work and example remain.

The above account of my dealings with Wingate shows only one facet of his character. My contacts with him were mainly official and in the haste of war; I cannot claim to have known much of the man apart from the soldier. He was not, I think, easy to know. His forcible, challenging personality invoked antagonism, he often exasperated my staff by the vehement importunity with which his demands for priority of equipment and personnel were pressed; nor did his subordinates find him an easy man to serve. His troops had full trust in his ability, but he had not the power to win their affection, though his occasional addresses, which were vivid and compelling, could stir their imagination. The truth is, I think, that he had in him such a consuming fire of earnestness for the work in hand that he could spare no effort to smooth or conciliate those with whom he worked. He thought deeply on other subjects than war, and I had occasional glimpses of a mind with stormy and interesting views on

many matters, but there was never time to explore them before the warlike business in hand came uppermost again. It was not till the later stages of our acquaintance that I knew of his kinship with T. E. Lawrence. There were obvious likenesses between the two and just as obvious differences. Both had high-powered minds which seemed when working — and they almost always were — unable to run in any but top gear, however rough the going; so that they impelled the chassis of their bodies at the expense of rest and comfort and with tear and wear beyond the ordinary. Both had keen minds which drove straight to the heart of a problem, cutting through conventional practice and tradition where necessary and caring little for received forms. Both were widely read and had retentive memories, both had the gift of clear and forcible expression in speech or in the written word. Both had a consuming energy in action. But Lawrence, as I knew him, was certainly more restful than Wingate and had a keen sense of humour which I never found in Wingate. In their theories of irregular warfare Lawrence was the amateur. Wingate had a professional background. Lawrence, dealing with nomad Arabs, was apt to scoff at questions of transport and supply and to leave them to take care of themselves; Wingate, who had to use town-bred men for partisan warfare, supplied his forces by original methods, but he devoted the greatest care and attention to it. Both were men of remarkable power and genius, whose premature deaths were a grievous loss. Let us hope that Wingate's infant son will inherit a full measure of the fire and talent that inspired his father.

In reading military history not long ago, I found the

following description of that eccentric military genius, the Russian general Suvorov:

Suvorov was a leader quite above the ordinary rules of military criticism. . . . His energy was as inexhaustible as it was audacious. He taught his followers to trample, as he did himself, on every difficulty in their way. Obstacles only provoked him to strike out new resources; and wild and irregular as he was, he possessed in a remarkable degree that intuitive sagacity in the hour of battle which is one of the highest qualities of military genius.

The above passage would serve as no bad portrait of Wingate.

I may fitly end this short note with the last words of Wingate's order to his troops as they crossed the Chindwin on their great enterprise in February 1943:

Finally, knowing the vanity of man's effort and the confusion of his purpose, let us pray that God may accept our services and direct our endeavours, so that when we shall have done all we shall see the fruits of our labours and be satisfied.

3. SPENCER CHAPMAN

This is a story of endurance and survival beyond the normal human capacity for survival. The title of Colonel Spencer Chapman's work[1] implies that the Jungle is Neutral, i.e. that if human beings have the fortitude to

[1] *The Jungle is Neutral* (Chatto & Windus, 1945), to which this essay was the Foreword.

bear its malevolence and hazards and the resource to use what benefits it produces, it has no particular objection to their living in it. But the neutrality of the Malayan jungle, as Colonel Spencer Chapman warns us, is armed. He himself was on one occasion dangerously ill for two months on end, including a period of unconsciousness for seventeen days; he suffered at various times from black water fever, pneumonia and tick-typhus as alternatives or additions to almost chronic malaria; it took him once twelve days' hard marching to cover ten miles through the jungle; and he was marching barefooted six days without food on another occasion. Armed neutrality indeed! One can hardly help sympathizing with the six British soldiers who in such conditions died 'not of any specific disease, but because they lacked the right mental attitude'.

When one discovers that besides this 'neutral' jungle and declared enemies like the Japanese, Colonel Spencer Chapman had to combat doubtful ones like many of the local inhabitants, including such professed disturbers of the peace as Chinese bandits, the fact of his survival becomes still more surprising. He was twice wounded, once by a steel nut from a home-made cartridge; was captured both by Japanese troops and by Chinese bandits and escaped from both; and after nearly three and a half years 'out of circulation' emerged into civilization again so little the worse for wear in body or spirit as to return to the same jungle within a few months. 'The spirit truly is willing but the flesh is weak' is a poor text; if the spirit can endure, the flesh will practically always find the capacity to do so.

The story of Colonel Chapman's adventures is typical

of the British way of war; and therefore begins with a complete lack of preparation. He was posted in August 1941 to a school of guerrilla warfare in Singapore, which had as one of its main objects to organize parties to stay behind in parts which the Japanese might overrun. Since, however, the Malayan Command had no belief in the ability of the Japanese to invade Malaya, let alone overrun it, nothing was allowed to be organized till a considerable portion of Malaya had already been overrun. But when the inevitable tragedy had occurred and the return match had to be staged, British capacity both for improvisation and detailed organization asserted itself as usual — 'still as Saxon slow in starting, still as weirdly wont to win'. The un-coordinated efforts — because communication was impossible — of Colonel Chapman and a number of similar adventurers, the majority of whom eventually fell victims to their foes or to the jungle, caused the Japanese much trouble and loss. Colonel Chapman found the Jap, in spite of his boasted efficiency in jungle fighting, easy money for ambushes and sabotage, so long as explosives and ammunition lasted. Meanwhile unknown to them a great effort was gradually being built up overseas. In the end touch was established, and a powerful weapon was forged inside Malaya for the discomfiture of the enemy when the time for invasion came. The Japanese surrender made the return match in Malaya a walk-over; had it been played the result would have been an innings defeat for the Japanese, in which the guerrilla forces organized within the Peninsula would have played a large part.

We are inclined to believe that our armed forces are excessively professional and regular. This war has shown,

as others have done before it, that the British make the best fighters in the world for irregular and independent enterprises. Our submarines, commandos and airborne forces, to whom a special memorial was rightly unveiled in Westminster Abbey recently, have proved that where daring, initiative and ingenuity are required in unusual conditions unrivalled commanders and men can be found both from professional and unprofessional fighting men of the British race. The spirit which found its most renowned expression in the Elizabethan adventurers lived before them and still lives. It will surprise other foes in other wars, if wars are still to be.

Inevitably Colonel Chapman's adventures and achievements recall those of a famous character of the last war, T. E. Lawrence, who also endured greatly and survived by the high quality of his spirit. As Dogberry said, comparisons are odorous; but if anyone wishes to fortify himself by reading of feats of endurance and of the triumph of the spirit over the body, let him supplement this tale of Colonel Chapman's endurance from some chapters of the *Seven Pillars*, such as the camel rides in chapters 31 and 32, or 81.

Colonel Chapman can claim no such political and material successes as were Lawrence's as the fruit of his toil and endurance. Though his tale is well and simply told with many a keen and humorous turn of phrase, and though his pen has recaptured some sharply focused snapshots of the natural life of the jungle, he has not T. E.'s literary genius; nor his introspection. He does not reveal the innermost thoughts that came to him in the many hours he lay alone waiting for his fevers to pass over.

Colonel Chapman has never received the publicity and fame that were his predecessor's lot; but for sheer courage and endurance, physical and mental, the two men stand together as examples of what toughness the body will find if the spirit within it is tough; and as very worthy representatives of our national toughness and capacity for survival.

THE GOOD SOLDIER

I. THE SOLDIER AS INDIVIDUAL[1]

Not the bemedalled commander, beloved of the throne,
Riding cock-horse to parade when the bugles are blown,
But the lads who carried the kopje and cannot be known.
MASEFIELD

L'homme est l'instrument premier du combat.
ARDANT DU PICQ

I HAVE written somewhat of good generals and have been asked to supplement it by writing of good soldiers. Though I have visited my troops as frequently as possible while in high command, I have, to my sorrow and loss, been in direct personal touch during these late years more with generals than with soldiers. Still, in over 42 years' active soldiering I must have formed some opinion on the qualities which make the good soldier. I have seen a marked change in the type during my service, and I naturally know more of the older type, the regular soldier with whom I lived during my earlier service, than of the men of the citizen army of today. But the essential qualities remain constant.

When writing of generals I put robustness as the first quality. Similarly for the private soldier I rate toughness, endurance, as the prime requirement. 'Valour and sufferance', said a fine commander, Monk, when he was

[1] From the *Sunday Times*, August 19th, 1945.

asked to define the first essentials of a soldier. Soldiering in the ranks on active service always has been — is now, in spite of mobile canteens, rations comprising some hundreds of items, wireless sets, cinema-vans, E.N.S.A. entertainments, pin-up girls, and other comforts — a hard, testing business, requiring for success a hard, tough man. The difference between the old type of soldier as I first knew him and the modern type is that the old soldier *was* tough, the modern type has usually to be toughened.

The less civilized man has a natural advantage in war, his wants are simple, he is accustomed to hardship and frugality, often, too, his life is so laborious that he rates it comparatively lightly. When the Spartans were at the height of their military fame and glory, they sent a deputation to the oracle at Delphi and demanded arrogantly: 'Can anything harm Sparta?' The answer came: 'Yes, luxury.' It is interesting to note how standards change and how the toughness of the ancients seems always greater than that of the present generation. Thus Gibbon, writing more than 150 years ago, says of the Roman legionary that the weight he carried would 'oppress the delicacy of the modern soldier'; that is, of the soldiers of Gibbon's day — the men who fought at Minden and were shortly to fight in the Peninsular War — whom we should certainly hesitate today to class as delicate.

I should say that this quality of toughness is partly inherited, partly produced by training, and that inheritance is the more important. Not all the modern, easy ways of life have been able to eradicate the hard core of native toughness in the British race; though we did little enough to train it or keep it alive in the years between

the wars. The German, with a tough, but less tough inherited core, did everything possible during the same period to develop hardness and endurance by training — not only in the army but in the whole nation. (Might one define the German core as pig-iron, our own as steel?) The Japanese are tough, and have set up toughness as a fetish, just as did the Spartans, their forerunners in the worship of militarism. Mussolini did his best to display the Italians as tough, but the test soon proved how soft the inner core was.

The modern British soldier, once trained, is capable of feats of endurance as great as any of the past; as the Long Range patrols of the Western Desert, Wingate's raiders in Burma, the men of Arnhem, and many others have shown. The American soldier of this war is obviously a great fighting man — tough, daring and resourceful. His reputation will stand second to none when it is all over.

Skill at arms is the next essential after endurance; the soldier must know how to use his weapon or weapons effectively — a comparatively simple matter in the old days, a very complicated one now, when nearly every man must be a specialist. The modern soldier is certainly more capable of adapting himself to new weapons and new conditions than the old type would have been.

It is of interest to note how the stress laid on different types of weapon varies with different armies. Speaking very generally, the pride of the British Army has been in the controlled accuracy of its small-arms fire. It is illustrated by the success of the archers at Crécy and on other fields; by the cool deadliness of the close-range volleys which won the astonishing battle of Minden —

perhaps the greatest feat of British Infantry — almost won an equally astonishing success at Fontenoy, and enabled the British line to defeat the French column in the Peninsula: by the rapidity of rifle fire which allowed a handful of infantrymen to hold the front at the first battle of Ypres and to beat back the mass assaults of Germans, who reported that they had been opposed by the fire of numerous machine guns.

Nowadays the anti-tank gun must almost be accounted a 'small-arm'; our men have shown the same coolness and marksmanship in handling it. The French since Napoleonic days have relied much on their artillery fire; their infantry have trusted to vigour of assault rather than to musketry. The Spanish pikemen were famous in the days when Spaniards held a large share of the world (perhaps the matador of the bull-ring inherited this tradition). Suvorov, a great 'soldier's general', taught the Russians to rely mainly on push of bayonet and close-quarter fighting — expensive, but effective when the man-power reservoir is almost inexhaustible. The strength of the German has lain more in method than in individual skill, in painstaking staff work, preparation and training. Frederick the Great's famous 'oblique order' was the product of much precise thought and even more precise drill. There are two universal and important weapons of the soldier which are often overlooked — the boot and the spade. Speed and length of marching has won many victories; the spade has saved many defeats and gained time for victory. Even in these days of mechanization they are still essential. They are neither of them popular weapons with the British soldier.

To say that a good soldier must have discipline is no more than to say he must have learnt his trade well. I do not propose here to discuss in any detail the controversial matter of military discipline. Discipline is teaching which makes a man do something which he would not, unless he had learnt that it was the right, the proper, and the expedient thing to do. At its best, it is instilled and maintained by pride in oneself, in one's unit, in one's profession; only at its worst by a fear of punishment. The military manifestations of discipline are many and various. At one end of the scale may be placed the outward display, such as saluting and smartness of drill, the meaning and value of which are often misunderstood and misused both inside the Army and outside. Saluting should be in spirit the recognition of a comrade in arms, the respect of a junior for a senior — a gesture of brotherhood on both sides. Good drill should either be a ceremony for the uplifting of the spirit or a time-saver for some necessary purpose — never mere formalism or pedantry. No one who has participated in it or seen it well done should doubt the inspiration of ceremonial drill. No one has understood the effect of mass display better than our arch-enemy Hitler.

But pomp and ceremony should be for special occasions, not for every day. Drill learnt for a purpose on the battlefield has lost much of its former necessity, but by no means all. In the old days it was not merely the foundation but almost the whole edifice of regular warfare. It was close-order drill that made formidable the Greek phalanx, the Roman legion, the Spanish array of pikemen; the famous 'oblique order' of Frederick the Great depended on it; it

enabled the British line to defeat the French infantry column and the British square to hold off the French cavalry in the Napoleonic wars. Today it is still essential for many purposes; an effective artillery barrage could not be laid down if the movements of the gunners in loading and firing had not been practised by constant and exact drill; a bridge could not be built rapidly under fire unless all stages had been worked out and rehearsed to a high degree of certainty; unless airmen conformed to a regular drill in starting and landing their aeroplanes there would be many casualties.

These are examples of the outward, the mechanical side of discipline, learning by practice to do something so automatically that it becomes natural even in moments of stress. It is essential both to warfare and to orderly efficient civil life. If anyone doubts this, let him consider the discipline he employs daily in his rising up and his lying down — the time, for instance, that it would take him to knot his tie, if he came to it unpractised. Of the inner spiritual side of discipline something will be said later in this essay.

One great difficulty of training the individual soldier in peace is to instil discipline and yet to preserve the initiative and independence needed in war. The best soldier in peace (officer or man) is not necessarily the best soldier in war — though he is so more often than not — and it is not always easy in peace conditions to recognize the man who will make good in war. The soldier who is a thorough nuisance in barracks is occasionally a treasure in the field, though not nearly as often as Hollywood and the sentimental novelists would have us believe.

I remember one of the draft with which I first joined, a short stocky tough from some Glasgow slum. I got to know him well as the roughest and sturdiest of the regimental hockey team, a wing half who never gave the forwards opposed to him a yard of rope and revelled in a hard rough game. I knew him also too well in the orderly room; he was continually in trouble for his foul tongue and propensity for drinking and fighting. He was at least once nearly put up for discharge by an exasperated company commander; yet I should always have been glad in war to see that hardy irrepressible figure at my side, where I had so often found it in the hockey-field.

The best soldier has in him, I think, a seasoning of devilry. Some years ago a friend of mine in a discussion on training defined the ideal infantryman as 'athlete, marksman, stalker'. I retorted that a better ideal would be 'cat-burglar, gunman, poacher'. My point was that the athlete, marksman, or stalker, whatever his skill, risks nothing; the cat-burglar, gunman and poacher risk life, liberty and limb, as the soldier has to do in war. Doctor Johnson, who saw shrewdly into most things, once wrote some thoughts on the British soldier. He began thus: 'The qualities which commonly make an army formidable are long habits of regularity, great exactness of discipline, and great confidence in the commander.' He went on to show that regularity was no part of the English soldiers' character, that their discipline was often indifferent, and that they had no particular reason to be confident in their commanders; yet they were without doubt the bravest soldiers in Europe. He ascribed it to the indepen-

dence of character of the Englishman, who called no man his master. He ended his essay thus: 'They who complain, in peace, of the insolence of the populace, must remember that their insolence in peace is bravery in war.'

A good soldier will soon learn the 'tricks of the trade' — some useful, such as the proper care of his feet on the march, of his weapons and equipment at all times, the secret of making the best of uncomfortable conditions— some bad, such as scrounging, or looting.

To sum up, it seems to me that the essential qualities of the individual good soldier are endurance, skill at arms and the valour of discipline with some pungency of independence.

I will end this part of my essay with a few words on the first private soldier I knew well, who has remained in my mind as the typical 'good soldier'. McA—— became my batman when I joined a battalion in the South African War and went straight out on trek. He took complete charge of my personal comfort and within an hour had gone through my equipment with an experienced eye and named several articles of which I was deficient — a mug for shaving water was one, I remember. He produced them the same evening. I inquired whence he had conjured them; we were out on the veldt many miles from any shop or habitation. He merely said: 'There they are, sir, that's all you need to know, and you needn't be afraid to find your friends missing them.' I never asked questions again.

My bivouac shelter when we reached camp was always pitched in the best spot; the only difficulty that arose was when it was so obviously the best place that a senior officer

claimed it. Presently I was put in charge of the battalion machine gun and told to obtain a pony to ride with it if possible. McA—— procured both pony and forage. (The procurement involved a possibly nefarious transaction with the Australian troops who formed part of the column.) He was an intelligent man, a marksman, and had a clean character sheet, so I asked him why he had not gone in for promotion. Too much trouble and responsibility, was his only explanation. He was time-expired at the end of the South African War, and I never saw him again. I corresponded with him for a while, and then heard of him again in the 1914-18 war. He came back to the Army at once, and, finding that men of his knowledge were invaluable, he accepted the responsibility of rank and was a company sergeant-major when he was killed at Loos.

2. THE SOLDIER AS CITIZEN[1]

> If e'er my son
> Follow the war, tell him it is a school
> Where all the principles tending to honour
> Are taught, if truly followed. MASSINGER

> Nothing has ever been made until the soldier has made safe the field where the building shall be built, and the soldier is the scaffolding until it has been built, and the soldier gets no reward but honour.
>
> ERIC LINKLATER, *Crisis in Heaven*

HOWEVER good and well trained a man may be as an individual, he is not a good soldier till he has become

[1] From the *Sunday Times*, August 26th, 1945.

absorbed into the corporate life of his unit and has been entirely imbued with its traditions.

I almost headed this section 'The Soldier as Family Man', since to the good soldier the team to which he belongs is his family during his service. I have lately re-read a novel by C. S. Forester, *Death to the French*, a tale of the adventures of a British rifleman, cut off from his battalion during the retreat to Torres Vedras. Rifleman Dodd is a fine individual soldier, but all his skill and hardihood are directed to one end, to rejoin his battalion and to become again one of his military family.

'Will you tell me, Master Shallow, how to choose a man? Care I for the limb, the thewes, the stature, bulk, and big assemblance of a man? Give me the spirit, Master Shallow.' So spoke that old rascal Falstaff. His words were merely to mask one of his usual ramps, but they contain the truth; the spirit of the soldier is the ultimate factor of success in war. That spirit, which we call morale, is a collective rather than an individual quality. What makes the spirit and how far we can cultivate it is a subject on which many volumes have been written. Much is said nowadays of the necessity that the soldier should be convinced of the justice of his cause; and he certainly cannot escape propaganda. Yet many battles and campaigns have been won by men who had little idea of why they were fighting and, perhaps, cared less.

It is, I think, arguable that soldiers oftener fight well because they have a good leader than because they have a good cause. I am sure that they fight best of all when they are part of a good unit, and feel it. No body of men should in theory have had a more inspiring cause

than the Crusaders, yet the Crusaders were by no means always successful nor did they always fight well. Did the Frenchmen of the Revolutionary wars fight better in the first ardent impulse of Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood, than under the Empire and the aegis of their great leader Napoleon? It is questionable. Ney, whom most people would rate as a rough, unthinking hothead of a soldier, wrote thus: 'Our soldiers ought to be instructed about the course of each war. It is only when aggression is legitimate that one can expect prodigies of valour. An unjust war is utterly repugnant to the French character.'

Did Ney manage to persuade himself and his men that the Russian campaign of 1812 was legitimate aggression? One thing is certain, no soldier ever fought more gallantly than Ney himself in that campaign. Did the men who fought at Minden and performed one of the most surprising feats of disciplined valour in the history of war, know exactly why they were fighting? If so, they knew something that has puzzled many students of history. Did Cromwell's Ironsides win victories because 'they knew what they were fighting for, and loved what they knew', or because they were better drilled, better disciplined, and had a more trustworthy leader than their opponents? Does the Russian soldier of today fight more gallantly than in 1812 or 1914? I doubt it; he has always been a fine fighting man under whatever political system he fought, as that curious character but great leader, Suvorov, always insisted so vehemently. He cracked in 1917-18 not so much for political reasons as because he was tired of being thrown against strong, entrenched positions with little or no artillery support.

Whatever may inspire morale, it is an essential element of any military force. It is the inward spiritual side of discipline. It can be seen in such incidents as the sinking of the *Birkenhead*, when the soldiers on board stood in order on the deck, while the women and children were put in the few boats available, and the ship sank under them. This has been regarded as a perfect manifestation of discipline since the King of Prussia ordered an account of it to be read at the head of every unit in his army. 'The men of the tattered battalion which fights till it dies' must be inspired by an inward discipline, as were the troops on the beach at Dunkirk, and on many another stricken field, where men have held on against hopeless odds, not because of individual bravery but by the strength of their collective discipline and morale. Good team work and morale is now more than ever required when units fight over wide open spaces and not in close order when one individual can control them.

Although it is true that a high state of morale may attach itself for a time to a large formation, such as, for instance, the Light Division in the Peninsula or the Eighth Army in Africa, it depends, in the British Army at least, mainly on the regimental system. It has seemed to me that during this war some of our high military authorities have forgotten or ignored this fact. Our regimental system has been broken up and disregarded too often, many times unnecessarily. An entirely exaggerated idea of security has too often been allowed to prevent individual units being named and their exploits told when they occur.

I have never believed in the formation of commandos,

picked from a number of units. I believe that a complete living unit, taken and trained for the special work required, with the elimination, if necessary, of the weaker men, would produce better results. This is, I know, controversial, but I believe that all regimental officers — the backbone of any army — will support this contention. I hope it will not be forgotten when our military system receives its post-war overhaul and repair, or perhaps entire reconstruction. A wider link than the present regimental system may be desirable — a very half-hearted official attempt to make one was unfortunately abandoned some years before this war — but if we wish to maintain the true spirit of the British soldier we must continue to build on the old traditions and the old loyalties.

I have read much military history. There arise in my mind the images of some of those warriors who have won immortal fame during the ages of human conflict — Xenophon's Ten Thousand, the Roman legionaries who conquered the world of their day, the Mongol raiders of Jenghiz Khan or Tamerlane, Napoleon's 'Old Moustaches', the Russian soldiers of Suvorov's astonishing Swiss campaign, the men of Gettysburg or of the Wilderness before Richmond, the valiant warriors of India, the grim but formidable Boches. But above them all towers the homely but indomitable figure of the British soldier, the finest all-round fighting man the world has seen; who has won so many battles that he never doubts of victory, who has suffered so many defeats and disasters on the way to victory that he is never greatly depressed by defeat; whose humorous endurance of time and chance lasts always to the end.

The British soldier has, too, a quality of tolerance which extends even to the mistakes of his superiors. He will not easily withdraw confidence from his leaders, even if they fail to win success. A blessing on the British fighting man, on his endurance, courage and good humour.

The British standing Army is nearly 300 years old. For the first two and a half centuries of its existence, or more, it has been treated with contempt, dislike and neglect by the nation it served, even in the periods when it was saving its existence or protecting its trade and building the Empire. There was in the minds of the ordinary God-fearing citizen no such thing as a good soldier; to have a member who had 'gone for a soldier' was for many families a crowning disgrace. Yet the Army lived on. It established the finest traditions, the most illustrious history, and, above all, the closest relations between officer and man that any fighting force has had.

Now we have reached the end of another prolonged war in which the Army has again saved the nation. In this great struggle I believe that the Army has for the first time become truly a national possession, a national inheritance; and I trust that it will remain as such after the war. Our Army of today is simply the ordinary citizen in battledress. It is, then, worth while to examine the virtues of a good soldier in relation to his subsequent career as a citizen.

A very large proportion of those citizens who have served in this war have reached a standard of physical fitness they have not known before, and could not easily have acquired in civil life. But it is the inward qualities that count. It seems to me that the best qualities of a

good soldier spring from the sense of true comradeship, which is the supreme gift of the military life as a whole and of a good unit in especial. Self-sacrifice, loyalty to a cause and friends, staunchness and endurance in hardship and danger, these are fostered by military training and comradeship. They will be required in the hard, testing days of peace as well as in war. I trust that after the war the good soldier and the good citizen will be one.

I will conclude this very inadequate essay on a great subject with a story I have always appreciated. The old Duke of York (Commander-in-Chief, 1798-1809), 'The Soldiers' Friend', once found his footman turning a poor woman from the door. 'Only an old soldier's wife,' was the explanation. 'And, pray,' said the Duke, 'what else is Her Royal Highness the Duchess of York?' I hope that story will be remembered in days to come whenever old soldiers and old soldiers' wives require help.

A NOTE ON COMMAND[1]

I THINK that it may be worth while to set forth shortly what I regard from experience as the most important principles to be observed in the command of troops in the field. They are elementary, but I find that they are often disregarded.

I believe firmly in a 'personal' command, i.e. that a commander should never attempt to control an operation or a battle by remaining at his H.Q. or be content to keep touch with his subordinates by cable, W/T or other means of communication. He must as far as possible see the ground for himself to confirm or correct his impressions of the map; his subordinate commanders to discuss their plans and ideas with them; and the troops to judge of their needs and their morale. All these as often as possible. The same of course applies to periods of preparation and periods between operations. In fact, generally, the less time a commander spends in his office and the more he is with his troops the better.

There are certain rules a commander must observe when he goes forward to his subordinate commanders:

(*a*) He must leave at his H.Q. someone who can deal with changes in the situation and developments during his absence. This will nearly always be the senior General Staff officer. It is not enough that he should be at the H.Q. when the commander is away, he must be thoroughly in the mind of the commander, who should therefore discuss with him possible

[1] Issued in March 1942.

developments and leave him in no doubt of his intentions.

(*b*) He must leave a note of his intended itinerary and estimated time of return to his H.Q.

(*c*) On his arrival at his destination, word should at once be sent of his arrival, probable time of stay and further movements. This can be done in a simple code (e.g. 'X C 30 A' might be sufficient to announce that the G.O.C. had arrived at H.Q. 3rd Bde., proposed to remain there half an hour and then go to 1st Bde.) and should be a matter of drill, so that the whereabouts of the commander are always known to his staff.

The next best means of securing information and controlling an operation is by liaison officers, who must, however, be well selected, thoroughly trained in their work and properly used. They are the equivalent of Napoleon's staff of gallopers who carried his orders on the battlefield. Liaison officers must never be treated simply as messengers, as a type of officer D.R.; they must be the eyes and ears of the commander as well as his mouthpiece. The liaison officer must always be fully in the picture; when at Headquarters he should see all important messages, both operational and administrative, so that he is always fully abreast of the situation. The commander should keep him in his mind and confidence, and it is the duty of the liaison officer to convey to the commander on his return from a formation not merely messages, but impressions of the state of affairs in front. Obviously a liaison officer must be specially selected for energy, judgment and tact.

However much personal visits and liaison officers are

used, command has very largely to be exercised, especially in higher commands, by means of written messages sent by Signals. The error most frequently committed by commanders and staff is to assume that their responsibility ceases when the message is handed to Ciphers or Signals, and to take no action to trace the progress of a message. It should be a matter of drill that all important orders or messages are 'traced'. This means that Cipher branch reports when a message is handed to Signals, Signals reports when dispatched and estimated time of arrival at its destination. If acknowledgment is not received when expected, Signals must report and the commander be informed. It is vitally important that a commander should know when his orders have reached his subordinates.

A commander must also always know the state of communications between himself and subordinate and other H.Q. A suitable method is either to have a board on which state of communications is kept or a printed or typed form filled up at stated intervals. This board or form should contain the following information:

(*a*) Means by which communication to subordinate, superior and neighbouring formations is open, e.g. cable, telephone, W/T, D.R., etc.

(*b*) Average time taken for message to arrive by above means.

(*c*) Number of messages ('Most immediate', 'Immediate', etc.) awaiting dispatch.

(*d*) Position of liaison officers.

(*e*) Hour when last situation report received from each subordinate formation.

(Frequent punctual and informative reports must be insisted on: 'nothing to report' should seldom be accepted.)

There are certain principles in the use of Intelligence staff that are sometimes neglected. Intelligence must have as good accommodation as possible and peace and quiet. Too often Intelligence officers are given inadequate facilities and everyone on or off the staff crowds in to 'see the latest news'. Intelligence staff cannot function properly in such conditions. They must be able to sift information, refer it to previous reports, spread their maps, etc., in peace. As Divisional Commander I made it an absolute rule that no one except the G.S.O.I. or myself was allowed to enter the Intelligence office.

The above give some of the most important factors in the proper working of the machinery of command. As to the moral factors in command, it is always worth while to bear in mind the following:

(*a*) Two-thirds of the reports which are received in war are inaccurate; never accept a single report of success or disaster as necessarily true without confirmation.

(*b*) Always try to devise means to deceive and outwit the enemy and throw him off his balance; the British in war are usually very lacking in low cunning.

(*c*) Attack is not only the most effective but the easiest form of warfare and the moral difference between advance and retreat is incalculable. Even when inferior in numbers, it pays to be as aggressive as possible.

(*d*) *Finally, when things look bad and one's difficulties appear great, the best tonic is to consider those of the enemy.*

RUSES AND STRATAGEMS OF WAR[1]

Always mystify and mislead the enemy.
STONEWALL JACKSON

POSSIBLY because the British character is normally simple and straightforward, more probably because our military training is stereotyped and unimaginative, deception of an enemy does not seem to come naturally to us. Hence we are apt to suffer in the field through lack of guile and to fall too easily into the enemy's traps and to miss opportunities of setting traps of our own.

Some years ago in a public lecture I referred to the definition by a distinguished soldier of his ideal infantryman as 'athlete, stalker, marksman', and said that my ideal infantryman was 'cat-burglar, gunman, poacher'. The point of my definition, as against the other, was that the characters I named risk their life and liberty in the exercise of their profession and have to defend them with their wits, as does the soldier on service, while the athlete, stalker and marksman do not. In fact one is a peace definition of a soldier, the other for war.

The object of this note is to stimulate commanders of all grades to consider methods of deceiving the enemy, by outlining means which have proved successful in the past.

Practically all ruses and stratagems in war are variations or developments of a few simple tricks that have been practised by man on man since man has hunted man,

[1] Issued in July 1942.

i.e. since the existence of the human race. They can be roughly divided under the following heads (with the modern equivalent suggested in brackets):

False information or disguise ('Camouflage')
Feigned retreat ('booby traps')
Encouragement of treachery ('Fifth Column')
Weakening of morale ('war of nerves')

To convey false information to the enemy by some means or other is the commonest trick of all. It has many variations. To hoist false colours was a frequent ruse in older naval warfare; it has its counterpart today in Q-ships or disguised raiders.

Deception may be achieved by word of mouth. The Greek Sinon, posing as a deserter, persuaded the Trojans to pull the Wooden Horse inside the walls of Troy. The Wooden Horse itself has its modern equivalent in the German capture of Bergen and Narvik by soldiers concealed in apparently harmless merchant ships. Similarly in medieval times a castle was once captured by soldiers hidden under brushwood in a cart.

Two of Napoleon's Marshals secured an important bridge over the Danube simply by walking across and assuring the enemy guard at the other end that an armistice had been declared; meanwhile a party crept up behind them and finally rushed the enemy end of the bridge. There have been instances in this war of parties being bluffed into surrender by persuading them that they were surrounded, etc.

Doing the same thing many times till the enemy is accustomed to it and then suddenly doing something quite

different at the same time of day is sometimes effective in securing surprise.

Camouflage is the modern term for methods of concealment which have been practised by savages and others for many hundreds of years. In Shakespeare's *Macbeth* Malcolm made good use of the wood of Birnam; his instructions to his troops would, suitably paraphrased, be equally appropriate today:

> Let every soldier hew him down a bough
> And bear't before him: thereby shall we shadow
> The numbers of our host, and make discovery
> Err in report of us.

The effect of this ruse on Macbeth's morale was decisive.

The trick of putting one's cap or helmet on a stick and thrusting it out to draw the enemy's fire probably dates from the first day that warriors wore head-dresses.

The stratagem of feigned retreat to induce the enemy to leave a strong position and become disorganized in pursuit is a very old one. In the classic fight between the three Horatii and the three Curiatii, the surviving Roman by purposeful flight got his opponents strung out and was then able to kill them one by one. The feigned withdrawal of the Greeks put the Trojans off their guard; and a pretended retreat of the Norman horsemen broke up the Saxon formation and was the deciding factor at Hastings (1066). In 1918 General Gouraud disorganized a German attack at Rheims by a temporary withdrawal.

Drawing the enemy on to a minefield and the use of 'booby traps' are modern developments of this ruse.

MINERVA'S OWL

I AM greatly honoured by your invitation to deliver a lecture[1] in this series dedicated to the memory of Lord Haldane, a former President of Birkbeck College. I think that there can be no doubt that he was our greatest War Minister. That was due largely to the fact that he entered the War Office with the determination to do a good job of work; that he did not look on it merely as a step on the ladder of ministerial promotion, of which the War Office is regarded by many ambitious politicians as the lowest rung. Starting with no knowledge of military men or military affairs, Haldane became interested in the Army and took a liking to it, a liking which was reciprocated by all thinking soldiers. He did more for the Army than any other politician; and the Army, I think, gave more trust and honour to Haldane than did his political contemporaries, or the unjust popular opinion of his time, which labelled as pro-German the man to whom the Germans more than to any other owed their defeat in the First World War.

In no side of army life was Haldane more interested than in education. No side of it is of greater general interest at the present moment. It seems appropriate therefore to make education in the Army the subject of this Haldane Memorial Lecture.

I had no personal acquaintance with Lord Haldane, and never worked under him. I went to the War Office

[1] The Haldane Memorial Lecture, January 1948.

as a very junior Staff Officer in 1912, just at the time when Haldane left it. This appointment to the War Office, my first staff appointment, was as one of the nursemaids, so to speak, of a very healthy infant of Haldane's, the Officers' Training Corps. It was not exactly an educational appointment; but the inspection of O.T.C. contingents of schools in various parts of England, which was my duty all one summer, about thirty-five years ago, brought me into touch with many educational establishments and a varied selection of schoolmasters. So that this first experience on the Staff was in some ways a link between civil and military education.

Before I go further, I should perhaps explain the title I have given this lecture. Minerva is the Goddess of War and of Wisdom in the Roman mythology, and is fabled to have sprung fully-armed from the brain of Jupiter. She was wise and learned, and the owl was her favourite bird. Hence Minerva's owl is the crest of the Staff College, with the motto — 'Tam Marte quam Minerva' which may be translated — 'By fighting as much as by writing'; or 'By kill as much as by skill': a reminder in fact that Operation Orders do not win battles without the valour and endurance of the soldiers who carry them out.

I must also explain that while what I am going to say deals with Education in the Army, much of it applies also to the other Services — but I do not know their details.

In spite of the patronage of Minerva and her owl, the Army is not usually accounted by the layman as an intellectual profession. I believe that Haldane himself was agreeably surprised at the high level of efficiency and even of imagination which he found in his military

assistants at the War Office. But at about the same time as Haldane took over direction of the Army, another politician, of brilliant ability but of very different temperament, was expressing his views on the intellectual qualities of army officers in somewhat supercilious terms. Field Marshal Lord Birdwood has told how Lord Kitchener, then Commander-in-Chief in India, submitted to Curzon as Viceroy a proposal to establish a Staff College in India. Lord Curzon's reply was a lengthy one, written, I believe, in his own hand. He welcomed the proposal; and said that the need for it was apparent to him, since of all the officers who had served on his personal Staff, 'presumably the pick of the Army', he had yet to find one who could converse intelligibly on any other subjects than polo and shooting. He went on to add that the wording of the official letter requesting permission to establish a Staff College was in itself good evidence for the need of it, since it contained at least a dozen errors in composition and grammar, such as split infinitives. These errors Lord Curzon proceeded to enumerate and correct in detail.

If I may add a personal example of the esteem in which the military profession was held at this period by intellectual men, the Headmaster of Winchester wrote to my father to express his regret that I was joining the Army Class. 'I do not think,' he wrote, 'that you need take this extreme step, since I believe that your son has sufficient brains to make his way in other walks of life.'

Actually, the Army has, in the last 150 years or so at least, been usually well ahead of the rest of the nation in the matter of education. This may sound a surprising statement, but I believe that investigation will show it to

be true. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, fifty years and more before the foundation of this Birkbeck College, there were in many Army Units voluntary schools for the adult education of soldiers and for teaching the soldiers' children, some of these dated from about 1750. In 1811 the Duke of York ('The Soldiers' Friend', and one of the best administrators the War Office has ever had, though his reputation was clouded by the antics of his naughty little friend, Mrs. Clarke) gave these an official status by the appointment of Army School Sergeants. The Duke of York's School for the sons of soldiers was founded in 1803, and its Irish counterpart, the Royal Hibernian School, in 1808. Even in the Peninsular War Wellington ordered that regiments should give facilities for schoolmastering, so far as the exigencies of active service allowed. In 1850, twenty years before the introduction of compulsory civil education, an Army Order made two hours a day attendance at school compulsory for recruits. Certificates of education were officially introduced in 1854, but many regiments had before this issued their own Regimental Certificates.

Thus the Army seems to have been ahead of the nation in the matter of adult education during the last century — and, I think, still is. The truth is, of course, that the soldier, when he is not fighting, has much more leisure than the agricultural labourer or factory hand, and under wise officers can be induced or compelled to spend part of it in education. Adult education is the best form of education, since the subject has some experience of life, has often travelled and seen something of the world; and is able to understand and appreciate education which would be

lost on a boy. We are only really at the beginnings of universal adult education in this country; and the Services are leading the way.

To revert for one moment to the man whose memory we celebrate in this lecture, Lord Haldane, it is of interest to note that in 1920 he gave us the two main points in which he sympathized with the programme of the Labour Party, which he ultimately joined, firstly, the nationalization of coal — though not, he was careful to point out, of other commercial enterprises — and secondly, adult education.

Education of the soldier has to be considered from two angles — education which will be of value to him in his profession, and that which will be of value to him as a citizen. The former was naturally uppermost in the days of the regular long-service soldier, the latter assumes great importance at the present day, with compulsory service for the whole nation. I will begin with some consideration of the soldier's education for military purposes.

I must preface this part of my lecture with what may seem almost a contradiction of my advocacy of intensive education in the Army. For a soldier, certainly for the front-line soldier, physical and moral toughness are always more important than book learning. There is a saying that you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear; but one can make a very serviceable leather one; and in military service leather purses are more practically useful than silk ones.

The average fighting soldier has a natural suspicion of cleverness either of the tongue or of the pen, and is inclined to condemn it. In Shakespeare's play of *Othello*,

when Iago vents his grievance against Cassio, who has been preferred before him as the Moor's lieutenant, he speaks of him with scorn as :

> Forsooth, a great arithmetician . . .
> That never set a squadron in the field,
> Nor the division of a battle knows
> More than a spinster . . .
> . . . mere prattle, without practice,
> Is all his soldiership.

Soldiers have to take decisions and act emergently and cannot afford to let their actions be 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought', as another of Shakespeare's characters says. Hotspur's diatribe against Staff Officers in *Henry IV* is well known. Shakespeare understood well the mind of the fighting man, as of all other types of man. Some of the common fighting men of today, under the stimulus of education, are beginning to understand Shakespeare.

A British general, who rose to high command and played a considerable part in the conquest of our Indian Empire, is said to have known only two lines of verse, composed by himself, which he never tired of repeating:

> Damn your writing,
> Mind your fighting.

So that amongst soldiers also there is a prejudice against book learning. Yet education for the soldier had to come, and has to continue.

I have always remembered a passage in one of Kipling's early stories which I read more than fifty years ago. He

prefaced one of his military tales with a little homily on the effect of education on the soldiers of his time, that is of the 1880s and 1890s. He said something like this: that for butcher's work uneducated blackguards led by gentlemen were the most efficient; that you cannot educate a man to think *for* himself without causing him to pass through the stage of thinking *of* himself; and he implies that a man who thinks of himself is likely to take cover at the critical moment instead of going forward. Kipling prophesied that 'about thirty years hence, when we have half educated everything that wears trousers, our Army will be a beautifully unreliable machine; a little later, when we have educated it up to the standard of the present officer, it will sweep the world'. But the midway men, he said, are not to be trusted alone.

Kipling wrote this passage at a time when universal compulsory education had not long been the law. The soldiers of his day were, of course, the old long-service 'sweats', who had taken the Queen's shilling for a variety of reasons, not always the desire for a military career. His point was that toughness and lack of imagination were positive advantages for the soldier of that time, who still fought in pretty close order and was not required to think much for himself ('Theirs not to reason why: theirs but to do and die'), provided that his officers and N.C.O.s knew their job of leadership. But Kipling realized that having started on education we must go through with it. His apprehension that our Army of 'thirty years hence', i.e. of about 1914-18, would be 'a beautifully unreliable machine,' was falsified by the results of the First World War. But I think it is true that special steps have to be

taken to toughen the modern educated city-bred man and make him battle-worthy, which would probably not have been required in Kipling's time. And in many ways we are still in the 'half-educated' period of democracy. No one who thinks can really pretend to himself that we are yet a satisfactorily educated nation. My own definition of an educated democracy is one to whom it is unprofitable to lie at elections. We are still a long way from this ideal.

Other things being equal, there can be no doubt that the better educated man will make a better commander and soldier, though character and practical experience will always be the first requirements.

What are the subjects which should be studied by an officer desirous of perfecting himself in the military profession? History, especially military history, is an obvious subject, and geography another. Both Napoleon and Wellington carried with them a considerable library on these subjects. Napoleon's precept — 'read and re-read the campaigns of the great commanders' — is well known. A modest mathematical equipment, sufficient to handle figures easily, will be sufficient for all but the technical branches. Other subjects which may be of practical value include engineering, law, the principles of administration, political economy, foreign languages and in these days general science, especially physics. Thus the officer, the Leader, has a very wide range of knowledge in which he can improve himself; and he should never cease learning. I would always include in an officer's education knowledge of outside affairs, especially civil administration. This can to some extent be gained by organized visits to such institutions as the Docks, Post Office, industrial

factories and so forth. The modern officer must have a sound knowledge of civil affairs, which he has to discuss with his men in the course of their education, and be prepared to meet their arguments. I will come back to this point later. It has often been asserted that the Regular Officer has a narrow outlook. This is of course apt to be true of all professions. But the officer who has now to deal with the whole humanity of a nation, in peace and in war, must keep in touch with the life of the nation, if he is to carry out his work sympathetically and efficiently.

There is one quality above all which seems to me essential for a good commander, the ability to express himself clearly, confidently and concisely, in speech and on paper; to have the power to translate his intentions into orders and instructions which are not merely intelligible but unmistakable, and yet brief enough to waste no time. My experience of getting on for fifty years' service has shown me that it is a rare quality amongst Army Officers, to which not nearly enough attention is paid in their education. It is one which can be acquired, but seldom is, because it is seldom taught.

What of the men the officer leads? In the old days, if a soldier knew his weapons and his drill, and had learnt by practical experience to look after himself in the field, he had little need of book learning. Nowadays, of course, with all the variety of weapons and branches of the military art, which cover almost the whole field of human endeavour, a man must have sufficient book learning to be able to undertake the handling of intricate weapons and tasks. He, like the officer, needs at least some elementary scientific knowledge. The Greek Plato, whose

theories on education, though written some twenty-two and a half centuries ago, are still modern, insisted on a proper balance between mental and physical development. While for the scholar the tendency is to neglect physical development, for the soldier the balance naturally inclines to the other side. The scholar may be a physical weed and yet a great scholar; a weakling, physical and moral, can never be a good soldier.

I will now sketch briefly the recent history of Army education, beginning from Haldane's time. The period when he went to the War Office was one of great activity in the education of the Army. One of the main causes of our failure in the South African War was held to be the lack of education of our officers; and public clamour, anxious to find a scapegoat, pilloried the ignorance of our Army, and demanded that this defect should be removed.

It was, of course, all to the good that the education of the officer and soldier should be improved; but one of the unfortunate results was an examination complex which lasted up to the outbreak of the recent war. Someone in authority — not Haldane, I am sure — decided that if you examined the soldier often enough you educated him; as great a fallacy as that to take a patient's temperature cures his disease. The promotion and pay, both of officers and men, was made dependent on the passing of written examinations. T. E. Lawrence of Arabia, while a private in the Tank Corps, sheltered himself against any danger of being promoted by a self-professed inability to pass the third class certificate of Army Education. The efficiency of units too came to be assessed by the Inspecting General partly on the number of Education Certificates held.

Thus the efforts of Army schoolmasters, and later of the Army Education Corps, were devoted almost entirely to the passing of examinations, rather than to the production of general knowledge.

The careers of officers were governed even more by examination. They had to pass a written examination to qualify for every step of promotion. In theory, the examinations were such as should have caused little difficulty to an officer who devoted a certain proportion of his ample leisure to study the text-books of his profession. In practice, about 70 per cent of officers went to crammers to pass their promotion examinations; and having passed, one studied no more until the next step demanded another examination. Entry to the Staff College, the Mecca of every keen officer, also required the passing of a stiff written examination; and provided another harvest for the crammers. In fact many unfortunate or misguided officers received almost the whole of their military book learning at the hands of crammers. They crammed to pass into one of the Military Colleges, to pass for promotion, to pass into the Staff College. And crammer's knowledge is seldom good knowledge and seldom remains longer than the purpose for which it is undertaken.

The great scientist, Huxley, had an appropriate remark on this cramming for examinations: 'They work to pass, not to know; and outraged Science takes its revenge. They pass and they do not know.'

During the years before the late war, when I had attained general's rank, I did my best to have written examinations abolished or at least reduced.

As an instance of the results to which this examination

system may lead I remember an officer in my Division at Aldershot, shortly before the war, who had made several unsuccessful attempts to pass for promotion to the rank of Major. He had won the D.S.O. and M.C. in the 1914-18 war, and had subsequently been given a brevet majority for good work in peace as a Regimental Officer. I asked the War Office to excuse him from further examination, saying that he was one of the very best Company Commanders in my Division, and thoroughly efficient; but that he lacked book learning and got confused in these written examinations. The War Office was hard-hearted and insisted that he should have another attempt. The poor officer gave up his hunting all one winter to study with a crammer, and failed again. The War Office then agreed to promote him, which they might just as well have done at once. He justified my opinion of his efficiency by commanding a battalion and then a brigade with considerable success in the late war.

Apart from this fetish of examination, military education did make great strides in the period from about 1906 to 1939; and a great deal of this was due to Haldane's initiative. He took the education of officers from other Departments of the War Office and concentrated it under the General Staff, the establishment of which was one of his chief gifts to the Army. The admission of officers to the Army from the Universities received a considerable development and was encouraged by the granting of ante-dates to bring officers who entered in this way up to the same level of seniority as those who had entered through the Military Colleges.

In 1920 the Army Educational Corps was established

on an ambitious scale. Although subsequent economies reduced its size, and the examination complex cramped its style, much was accomplished.

On the whole I think it can be quite safely said that both officers and men of the old regular Army were on the whole better educated than the vast majority of the civil population, except, of course, those in the learned professions. The Services were in fact almost the only profession in which adult education was more or less compulsory.

A form of education which may be briefly mentioned was the introduction between the wars of Vocational Training on some scale for soldiers nearing the end of their service, so as to qualify them for civil life and to remove the reproach often made to the Army that the old soldier was turned out on the street with no provision for his further employment. This Vocational Training has now ceased to be the responsibility of the Army and has become that of the Ministry of Labour.

To come down to modern development, i.e. during the late war and at the present day. The main principles may be characterized as follows:

(*a*) The Army of today is a National Army and has to deal with a new factor, i.e. that every citizen is compelled to serve. Consequently the training of men as citizens has to be considered as well as their training as soldiers. It is now a fundamental principle of Army educational training that men and women serving in the Forces should have at least the same opportunities for further education as are available to civilians; and that such education should not be confined to subjects which are useful purely

from the military point of view. During the war, training as a soldier was, of course, the primary consideration; during peace, training for the responsibilities of citizenship must receive equal attention.

(*b*) The increasing complexity of modern war makes education a most important factor in purely military training.

(*c*) The responsibilities of the leaders in this complex modern war, and the requirement that all officers shall receive a preliminary training in the ranks, demand new methods for the selection and training of officers.

Let us consider the selection and education of the modern officer. The requirement of six months' service in the ranks, which was established just before the last war, is to some extent modified for those who have acquired a certain standard of education; so that a young man who has expressed his desire to become a regular officer before beginning his period of compulsory service in the ranks receives somewhat different treatment, after the basic period, from other militiamen. This, however, does not debar the ordinary militiaman, who joins with no such intention, from presenting himself for a commission if he shows the necessary aptitude and desire for a military life. There has recently been some controversy over the value, or otherwise, of this period in the ranks, but I think that on the whole the present system of a short period is useful. The ordinary institution for the training of those eventually selected as officers is the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, for all arms. But young men from the University are not debarred from subsequently adopting the military profession; and it is hoped many will continue to come from this source.

The selection of officers during the war was eventually based on a series of tests, mainly practical, which were designed to give an index of character, powers of leadership and intelligence more than of book learning. The final midwifery was in the hands of the medico-spiritual gentleman called a psychiatrist. How far his ministrations were absolutely essential for the successful delivery of a healthy child was with some people a matter of doubt. But that the general method of selection was on the whole an eminently sound and fair one admits, I think, of no doubt whatever.

During the war, the average officer, fully occupied with the leading, administration and welfare of his men, had usually little time for his own education. But those who wished to improve their education, and could find the time, had opportunities to do so.

I do not propose to give you any details of the subsequent education of the officer in peace after he has been commissioned, but I do understand, and am thankful to do so, that it will not be beset with frequent written examinations.

Now for the men. During the war there was, as you know, an elaborate scheme of education which included the training in civic affairs known as A.B.C.A. Few will question that it was a very remarkable achievement to have accomplished so much education during a war, not merely in units training at home, but in units serving actively in the field. A prominent factor in this scheme was education by discussion, all men being encouraged to take part.

Now I must tell you that these two features — education

in civic affairs, which is bound to include or verge on politics; and the method of general discussion, irrespective of rank — have aroused, and continue to arouse, misgivings in the minds of many experienced officers. They argue, and with some force, that politics are not the business of the soldier, and that there are many historical examples, past and contemporary, of military forces ruined by the intrusion of politics. They also say, and again with some right on their side, that for an officer or N.C.O. to enter into argument, even on non-military matters, with his subordinates, may be destructive of discipline; and that it will be difficult for an officer or N.C.O., who has been perhaps worsted by a subordinate in argument on an educational subject, immediately to reassert his authority and exact unquestioning obedience on a military matter.

Thinking officers recognize the dangers, and entirely agree that it would be fatal if politics entered into the Army, i.e. if the Army, whose business it is to carry out faithfully the policy of the Government of the day, showed any sign of allegiance to a particular Party. But the soldier is also a citizen and must be encouraged to take an intelligent interest in the problems of the day. Our type of democracy can only survive if freedom of opinion amongst free men is maintained. The potential risk to discipline of allowing general discussion regardless of rank is also a real one. It can only be avoided by the common sense and good humour of all concerned, and fortunately these qualities are usually found in the normal Britisher.

Advocates of this system of education maintain that while

the risks are considerable they are an inevitable part of education, and that the gains are greater. We have started on education and must continue with it, and simply cannot afford to neglect the opportunities offered for adult education during military service. The fate of our type of democracy will be decided in the next few years, and will depend in the end on the intelligence of the average citizen in understanding the issues before them, such as the wider pattern of world trade and international affairs. The Army has the opportunity to put these issues clearly before the men during their service. This is the real justification for the present system and aims of education in civic affairs in the Army.

To return to the history of Army Education. In the immediate post-war period, during demobilization, great attention was naturally paid to the requirements of men who wished to continue their interrupted education on return to civil life, and again much was accomplished in spite of many difficulties. The subjects in the curriculum were most varied; and included science, arts, music, the drama and technical courses.

I will now try to summarize as briefly as possible the main features of the plan for the future. It will include both compulsory general education in working time and voluntary individual education during a man's own time. General education will be designed where necessary to eliminate illiteracy, in special classes of six weeks' continuous education. (The number of men who were found practically illiterate during the war, amounting in 1943 to some 10,000, is a serious commentary on the deficiencies still existing in our educational system.) For others, the

principal subjects will be English, mathematics, history and geography, science, current affairs and citizenship. The time allotted for compulsory education will vary from two hours a week during basic training to three hours a week during the remainder of the first twelve months' service and four hours a week thereafter. Little enough perhaps, but many more hours than is given by the average citizen. The reduction of the period of compulsory service from 18 months to one year has naturally affected the time available for education. For the soldier, as for the officer, I am glad to say, the tight collar of examinations will be removed or loosened. There is, however, one examination, a voluntary one, which has proved useful, the Forces Preliminary Examination. This is set by the Civil Service Commissioners and has enabled soldiers to qualify for entrance to a University, and to the recognized Societies of many of the professions. It has given a new start to a number of men of ability, whose pre-war schooling ended at 14. Its continuance in peace would seem to be justified.

Facilities for voluntary individual education, in the individual's own spare time, will approximate as nearly as possible to those which would have been available to him had he remained a civilian. The work will be carried out mainly in four Army Colleges — two at home, two abroad — and a number of Army Education Centres. But there will also be War Office Correspondence Courses for those so situated as to be unable to take advantage of College or Centre. To show the wide scope of the scheme, the Correspondence Courses provide a selection of some 500 different courses, something like ten times the much

advertised varieties of Mr. Heinz. It is to be hoped that the hand of economy will not be laid too heavily on this scheme.

I will try your patience no longer. I have sought to give you a brief sketch of the progress of education in the Army and of its present problems; and to show you that, contrary perhaps to public belief, the Army has always been well to the fore in education; and has in fact been the chief organ of adult education in the nation. Thus it has been striving for the same objects for which this Birkbeck College, of which I have the honour to be President, was founded; so that I hope you may be interested in this account of its past and take a lively interest in its future — which is, indeed, the personal interest of every citizen, since our Army is now a truly National Army.

To recapitulate briefly the main points of this address. The Army has provided the best vehicle for adult education in the nation; it has had unrivalled opportunities for it in the greater leisure it has enjoyed compared with most professions, in the opportunities given to its members of seeing the outside world, and in the discipline which has made it possible to compel education. On the whole the Army has availed itself of its opportunities, though not perhaps always to the full extent. When did man anywhere, at any time, take full advantage of his opportunities?

I think it may be appropriate, in this College and in a lecture in memory of a man whose final political affiliation was to the Labour Party, to quote some words from another remarkable man who had a great belief in the education of the people, by the people, for the people.

T. E. Lawrence of Arabia, in one of his last letters, wrote of his service as an airman: 'I have convinced myself that progress today is not made by the single genius, but by the common effort. To me it is the multitude of rough transport drivers filling all the roads of England every night who make this the mechanical age. The genius raids, but the common people occupy and possess. Wherefore I stayed in the ranks and served to the best of my ability, much influencing my fellow airmen towards a pride in themselves and their inarticulate duty. I tried to make them see — with some success.'

In conclusion, I would pay a tribute to the titular subject of this memorial lecture, Lord Haldane, who gave so considerable an impetus to Army Education. I hope that as his benign and rotund shade — if shades do retain their rotundity — paces the Elysian Fields, puffing at a celestial cigar, in profound converse perhaps with Plato on theories of education, some recent military shade may greet him and tell him of modern progress in the Army, and of the growth of the plant he fostered so fruitfully, forty years ago. In the background, perhaps, will be playing a ghostly piper of my regiment, the Black Watch, who played Haldane to his grave, twenty years ago.

And here is my last word of all. Character will always beat mere brains. We have survived and shall survive as a nation, not because we have the best brains, but because we have on the whole more character. The Army, our National Army, must continue to be a school for character as well as for learning.

BATTLES OF THE FAMILY[1]

[Written by Lord Wavell during his illness. Apart from private letters, this is the last piece of writing he undertook.]

It was a happy thought of Colonel Burne to bring together in one volume[2] the principal battles fought on English soil over a period of approximately 1200 years, beginning with the half-legendary battle of Badon about A.D. 500 and ending with Sedgemoor in 1685. Of the nineteen battles described during this period, only four – Badon, Ashdown, Hastings and Flodden – were fought against foreign invaders; and since those who were foreign invaders at the time – Saxon, Norman or Scottish – became incorporated later into our United Kingdom, all nineteen battles can be justly described as family quarrels; and as such quarrels usually are, they were bitterly and fiercely waged.

Our long history of adventure abroad gives us ample occasion to study the qualities of the British fighting man in conflict with other races all over the world: in Colonel Burne's book we are given a unique opportunity to see him up against himself in the conditions of his own homeland. The result provokes some interesting reflections. First, we surely can claim to be a reasonably peace-loving people, if over so long and turbulent a period we can show an average of only one major engagement in every two generations; and no battle at all on English soil for more

[1] From the *Sunday Times*.
[2] *The Battlefields of England*, by Lieut.-Colonel A. H. Burne (Methuen).

than 350 years, since the ill-starred night onfall of Monmouth at Sedgemoor. Further, the proportion of the population who took part in these family battles was small, and the greatest part carried on their ordinary tilling, harvesting and trade with comparatively little interference. England has never suffered such devastation and misery as were occasioned to the whole land by the religious struggles in France or the Thirty Years War in Germany.

The clash of the armies in these battles usually strikes one as distinctly amateurish, with little skill of manœuvre or display of strategical or tactical art; we are not a military nation; but when it comes to the actual fighting our men lay on with right good will; almost every one of these battles was stoutly contested to the very end. The untrained, ill-armed west country peasants who followed Monmouth to Sedgemoor fought and died in a lost cause as stoutly as Harold's house-carls at Hastings. The professional regular soldier appears only in the last scene, at Sedgemoor, where fought our greatest soldier of all, John Churchill, later Duke of Marlborough.

All the pieces on the chess-board are represented. In every one of these battles at least one King was on the field, save at the last where there was a King's son and pretender to the throne. At more than one was a Queen, poor Henry VI's fierce Margaret (Colonel Burne seems inclined to credit her with the most original tactical manœuvre of all); Knights there are of course in plenty; and sometimes a Bishop; castles played a part in many of the battles. But it was the patient, plodding, sturdy pawn, represented by archer, pikeman or man-at-arms on his

feet, who was so often sacrificed for positional gain but was the deciding factor in most end games.

We may regret these fratricidal battles, fought sometimes for an unworthy cause; we may rate their manœuvre and tactics as clumsy; but we can be proud indeed of the fighting spirit and sturdiness displayed in them by the men of our race.

Colonel Burne has produced a most interesting and valuable book, the only serious fault of which is an excess of enthusiasm in clearing up some dubious point — the exact position and extent of a battle line, the place of a command post or hedge or ditch. His arguments, based on close study of the ground, are always worthy of respect but must always remain conjectural. To the ordinary reader they seem sometimes to absorb an undue proportion of the book. To those who can find time to study a battle on the ground Colonel Burne's volume will be an essential and fascinating companion.

NIGHT ATTACKS— ANCIENT AND MODERN[1]

Night attacks are not by any to be enterprised nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly or wantonly, like young subalterns that have no understanding, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly; duly considering the causes for which Night Attacks were ordained.

From the unpublished maxims of
GENERAL SIR HERCULES CROMWELLINGTON, K.C.B.

THE two night attacks here to be related were separated in space by less than fifty miles; in time by more than three thousand years.

I. NIGHT ACTION OF MOREH— CIRCA 1249 B.C.[2]

Except that I had to substitute science for divine inspiration, I worked somewhat along the same lines as Gideon.

GENERAL DUNCAN in *The Cavalry Went Through*

All that we know of Gideon, son of Joash, warrior and statesman, is contained in three chapters of the Bible — Judges vi to viii. But the record of his character and actions given in those chapters is sufficient to rank him very high: with the possible exception of Joshua, he was the best general and shrewdest head of the state that

[1] From the *Army Quarterly*, July 1930.
[2] This is the date given by the learned Dr. Angus, who is just as likely to be wrong as any of the many others who have tried their hands at Old Testament chronology.

Israel ever brought forth.[1] And he was no mere rough soldier. His reply to the men of Ephraim (Judges viii, 2) could not have been bettered by the sleekest and readiest diplomat that ever purred French; while his dealings with the 'non-co-operators' of Succoth and Penuel show that his diplomacy masked no weakness when he had to do with insolence and disaffection amongst his own people or tributaries. Wiser than Saul, he refused the crown of a hereditary kingdom which the Israelites offered him. Of his talents as a soldier we can judge from the account of how he carried out two of the most testing operations of war — a night attack and a sustained pursuit. His brilliant execution of these proves that his skill and determination were those of a really great captain.

And now to paint the picture of the opening situation (as umpires and directors of tactical exercises say) for his night attack. Gideon's enemies, the Midianites, nomad Arabs of the desert, probably differed very slightly indeed from their descendants of today. Sheik Faisal ed Dowlish, whose activities on the Iraq border our Air Force has lately been engaged in curbing, is direct in tradition from Gideon's opponents, Zebah and Zalmunna, gallant caterans who met their end unflinchingly. And the story of Israel's subjection to the Midianites has been common form round the borders of the Arabian desert for centuries. A raid or two by the nomads into the cultivated lands

[1] After which judgment, it is a little disconcerting to turn to St. Paul's catalogue of famous and faithful worthies of old (see Hebrews xi). He gives that frivolous but resourceful lady, Rahab, a verse to herself, while Gideon comes only in the 'amongst-others-present-we-noticed' class. Paul's catalogue need not be taken too seriously, however. It omits Joshua altogether. Paul was probably writing in haste to catch the last post to the Hebrews.

finds the settled peoples weak and divided, the gendarmerie and frontier guards inefficient and timidly handled. The raiders grow bolder and more numerous (some failure of pasture in the desert may urge them on) until at last the various tribes sink their differences, unite for once, and come up in the springtime 'like grasshoppers for multitude', with their tents and their cattle and their camels (just as described in Judges vi, 5), to eat up the pasture and the crops in the settled land.

The camp of the Midianites was pitched in the eastern part of the great plain of Esdraelon (not far from the modern El Afule, where Allenby's horsemen cut the Turkish communications). We must conceive of it as a laager rather than as a fortified camp, of the Midianites as armed guards to their cattle and camels rather than as an organized force, of their object as to pasture themselves and their beasts on the unaccustomed plenty rather than as to fight. It was, in fact, more of a gigantic annual picnic than an invasion. But it was a serious matter to the Israelites. Gideon's men occupied the western end of Mount Gilboa on the hills to the south. The battlefield is almost the same as that on which Saul was routed and slain by the Philistines some two hundred years later. In all fighting in Palestine water plays a chief part. And it was so, too, here. The only water available for the Israelites lay at the foot of the hills on which they had taken up their position, and thus close to their enemy. This explains the fitness of the test by which Gideon chose his three hundred (the same number, it may be noted, as made history under Leonidas at Thermopylae). The majority of his men, parched by the heat

on the bare, rocky hills, flung themselves down full-length by the stream when their opportunity came, and drank heedless and careless. Only the seasoned warrior, with experience of snipers and ambushes, kept his weapon in one hand and his eyes towards his foes, while he dipped the other hand in the water and lapped from it, ready for action at the slightest sign of danger. Gideon must have sorely felt the need of these trained warriors. The motley levy that had flocked to his standard[1] can hardly have inspired him with much confidence. Remember that for seven years the Israelites had hidden in the hills when the Midianites invaded the lowlands they had sown; that more than two-thirds of his original gathering had already shown that they had no stomach for the fight (Judges vii, 3); and that Gideon was an unproved commander and a man of no particular weight or influence (see Judges vi, 15). He had soon realized that his army was no fit instrument for a pitched battle, and that he must depend on stratagem and guile for success rather than on numbers. It was comforting to find even three hundred seasoned men whose discipline and steadiness he could trust.

But the mortar that bound together the various clans of his enemy was also loose and weak. The Arab of the desert is a guerilla, an irregular, accustomed to fight in small bodies with plenty of manœuvre room. The cramped conditions of battle within the great Midianitish

[1] Does any one now remember the speech of a well-known member of the Government some years before the war, who asked what need there could be of compulsory service for Home Defence? On the day that a German Army sets foot in England, said he, the people of this country will 'flock to arms' without any compulsion.

host must have given him a feeling of unease akin to claustrophobia. Close-order was not his style of fighting at all. Nor did religious fanaticism impel him to rush fiercely on his foes; he had still to wait some two thousand years for his revelation and his prophet, for his Paradise and his dark-eyed houris. So that when tales began to float down to the Midianite camp (as Gideon took good care that they should) of the marvellous signs and portents that had marked the rise of the Israelites' new national leader, they fell on nervously receptive minds. Manured by rumour, panic once sown would spring like mushrooms from such soil.

To return to Gideon. His whole plan was based on the possibility of creating such panic in his enemy's ranks. He prepared his attack, as all night attacks must be prepared, with the greatest care and attention to detail. First he organized his force. He divided the three hundred into three companies, which were doubtless subdivided into platoons. The remainder he sent off — the Book says 'Every man to his tent' — but, as subsequent events showed, he must at least have arranged for a part to hold the fords of Jordan and to complete the discomfiture of the enemy, once the three hundred had got him on the run. Gideon's next care was the issue of equipment — to every man a trumpet, a pitcher, and a torch, strange weapons to cause so complete a rout. Then he made his personal reconnaissance, taking with him his batman Phurah (who probably acted also as battalion runner). This reconnaissance showed him that the hostile patrols were inactive, while the nervous talk he overheard amongst the outposts proved that the

Midianites were ripe for panic. He now returned, issued his final orders, and gave out the famous password, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon'. Each man lit his torch and carefully concealed it within the pitcher, so that no light could give away the movement until the critical moment, slung his trumpet ready to hand, and grasped his sword or spear. So the companies moved off on an accurately worked-out time-table, to their appointed stations round the enemy's camp. Gideon's signal was to be given about midnight, at which time, it had been ascertained, the Midianites were in the habit of changing sentries ('they had but newly set the watch' — Judges vii, 19).

The success of the stratagem was complete. The startled Arabs suddenly found themselves, as they imagined, beset by a host on every side. Panic spread; the loose cohesion of the undisciplined horde broke up; and tribe fought tribe in the darkness, with those shattering trumpets, those waving torches, and that exultant battle-cry all around them. There was no need for the three hundred to strike a blow; they stood where they were while their enemies fought each other and fled.[1]

Slaughter overtook the demoralized Arabs in their flight, for Israel had seven long years of oppression to avenge, and the whole countryside rose now that their enemies were on the run. And when the remnant with their leaders had, as they thought, outdistanced the pursuit and were secure, Gideon, relentless and untiring, fell on them again and completed their disaster. So that

[1] One wonders whether memories of Joshua's trumpets at Jericho had any part in suggesting to Gideon the ruse he employed.

'the day of Midian' became a proverb in Israel for completeness of victory.[1]

The principles on which Gideon acted — the value of training and discipline in work at night, the need for attention to detail, the importance of personal reconnaissance, the moral effect of a night surprise — are all still valid today and will be illustrated in the next operation to be described.

A close parallel to Gideon's plan can be traced from our own naval history — in Drake's scattering of the Armada with fireships at Calais, or in Cochrane's similar though less-known exploit against the French Fleet in the Basque roads, April 11th, 1809.

2. NIGHT RAID ON THE EL BURJ-GHURABEH RIDGE, AUGUST 12TH-13TH, 1918

The second night operation to be described was a more prosaic affair. It is worth relating, however, as an example of a difficult operation over very rough ground successfully accomplished by training and by careful preparation.[2]

The scene is a rocky ridge in the Judaean hills, some forty miles due south of Gideon's exploit. It is about half way between Jerusalem and Nablus — approximately where the frontier between Judaea and Samaria, between the kingdoms of Judah and of Israel, once ran. Here

[1] See Isaiah ix, 4.

[2] Readers of that amusing fantasy, *The Cavalry Went Through*, will remember the surprising night enterprises of the Iron Division, ascribed to their methods of training.

the British and Turkish lines had crystallized opposite each other early in March 1918. At that time the purpose of the British had been an early resumption of the advance. But the German successes in the West on March 21st and the following days upset all calculations. General Allenby sent every British unit that could be spared to help stem the tide in France. By the end of May all British battalions, except a nucleus, had left Palestine. They were gradually replaced by Indian battalions from India with no war experience and often with little real training. Intensive work was done during the summer in fitting and welding these new parts into the old formations, but there was much untried material in the force when General Allenby decided to execute his ambitious plan for the overthrow of the Turk in the autumn of 1918.

The great advance was to take place in the middle of September. The raid to be described was planned and prepared in July and executed in mid-August. General Sir Philip Chetwode, commanding the XX Corps, who ordered the raid, had a double purpose, strategical and tactical. To make clear his strategical object, a brief reference to the chief topographical features on this part of the front is necessary.

The backbone of the Judaean range is narrow, and the spurs which run generally east and west from it are also narrow and steep, separated from each other by deep but dry *wadis*. So that a direct advance northwards would be rather like climbing along the edge of a giant saw, slow and painful. The front of the Corps extended for over fifteen miles across the Judaean range, with the Jerusalem-Nablus road running north and south through

the centre of the Corps front. This was the only metalled road in the hills, and the Turk naturally expected that the main advance northward in this part of the line would be made along it. His positions covering the road, therefore, were stronger and more thickly garrisoned than elsewhere in the hills. But General Chetwode had other views. He had no intention, when the time came for the great offensive, of advancing his Corps just where the enemy expected it, astride the main road. He planned to concentrate a division at each end of his long front and to make from either flank a converging advance on Nablus — *along* the ridges instead of *across* them, striking the main road several miles inside the Turkish lines, and thus cutting off, it might be, the defenders of the Turkish centre. The strategical purpose of the night raid on the formidable El Burj-Ghurabeh ridge — the bulwark of the Turkish defences astride the road — was thus to confirm the enemy in the belief that his centre was the threatened point. The tactical purpose was to 'blood' some of the new Indian units, to give them confidence, and to arouse emulation in the other Indian battalions of the Corps. An unmistakable and inspiriting success, therefore, was necessary.

General Chetwode entrusted the operation to the 10th (Irish) Division, commanded by Major-General J. R. Longley, who in turn selected the 29th Brigade (temporarily commanded by Lieut.-Colonel E. H. Wildblood of the Leinsters) to execute the attack. The task was a sufficiently formidable one. The ridge to be attacked was nearly 5000 yards long, it lay 2000 yards from our front line and was separated from it by a deep *wadi*. So that

the approach to the objective included, at the western end, a descent of nearly 1000 feet and a climb of over 800; at the eastern end descent and ascent were less abrupt. The Turkish works were mostly in the form of sangars, strongly built, and — for Turkish defences — well wired. The garrison of these works was estimated by our Intelligence, very correctly as it turned out, at about 800 rifles and 36 machine-guns. The plan of attack (the outline of which was drafted by General Chetwode and the details filled in by the 10th Division) was novel and daring enough almost to satisfy the exacting standards of our latest 'Stractician',[1] General Henry Berrington Duncan.[2] At each end of the long ridge an Indian battalion was to assault, followed by two companies of the only British battalion of the brigade, the 1st Leinster Regiment. These Leinster companies were to swing inwards from either flank and to pass along the Turkish line, attacking the successive posts from flank and rear, until the four companies met — if all went well — in rear of the centre of the Turkish line. This was to complete the operation, and the whole of the attacking troops were then to withdraw. It was decided that the withdrawal would begin at a fixed hour, midnight, whether the operation was complete or not. The fourth battalion of the brigade, another Indian battalion, supplied the necessary escorts for prisoners, carrying parties, and so forth. The attack was to have the support of the artillery of two divisions as well as of

[1] A portmanteau word, long overdue, for one who is equally eminent as a strategist and tactician.

[2] See *The Cavalry Went Through*, by Bernard Newman.

nine medium batteries, and of a brigade of mountain artillery.

The 29th Brigade had three weeks' special training before the attack, but behind the line. A feature was found in the hills towards Jerusalem sufficiently resembling the Ghurabeh ridge to serve as a ground for rehearsals, while a large plaster model of the ridge was made from aeroplane photographs, so that all might acquaint themselves with the general shape of the ground. Meanwhile a special map was prepared, mainly from aeroplane photos, and every effort was made to discover the position of the enemy's headquarters and the lines on which his artillery night barrages were laid.

The most delicate part of the operation was the approach march of the two columns to positions of deployment near the enemy's front line. They had to scramble down rough, stony tracks, so narrow and so steep that only movement in file was possible, and then to clamber up steep rocky terraces. That the movement was made without loss of direction, in sufficient silence to prevent alarming the enemy, and with such accurate timing that the two columns, some two miles apart, were able to assault at the same moment, is a high tribute to the foresight and ingenuity of the divisional staff and to the training and discipline of the troops. Some of the means taken to ensure the success of this approach may be of interest. To guard against loss of direction, white tapes were laid out by the advanced patrols wherever there was a possibility of going astray; or the track was blazed by splashes of lime; boards treated with luminous paint were also used. A night had been chosen when a setting moon would

lighten the advance up to near the positions of deployment; the actual assault was to be made in the dark.[1] To secure silence, the boots of the attackers were shod with special felt soles; and in the left column bundles of dry grass were laid down at certain difficult places in the *wadi* bed. To drown the inevitable noise of the deployment, a round of H.E. was fired on either flank at fifteen seconds' interval (the Turks had been trained to expect this as part of the normal nightly 'hate', and the reverberations of a heavy shell in these rocky hills were effective sound-drowners). The timing and rate of march had been the object of close and anxious experiment, both on the practice ground and by patrols over the actual route to be followed. It was fixed at 28 yards a minute (just under one mile an hour); and so difficult was the ground that the left column, in spite of all the preparations, was hard pressed to maintain this pace.

The artillery programme began at 9.55 p.m., by which hour the columns were timed to have completed their deployment. The first objectives were bombarded for twenty minutes, and at the same time all known headquarters were subjected to heavy fire; thereafter a moving barrage by field guns worked inwards from either flank in step with the Leinsters' attack, while the heavier artillery shelled the routes by which reserves were expected (these had been previously ascertained from prisoners or deserters).

A brief catalogue of some of the other expedients and

[1] The writer of this article, in setting a night attack scheme in a tactical examination paper, once allowed candidates to assume the moon in the phase that best suited their plan. One hopeful tactician postulated 'A full moon rising at 9 p.m. and setting at midnight'.

contrivances will serve to show the elaboration with which this attack was planned. A special type of jointed ladder was carried for crossing the enemy's wire, if not cut by the artillery; posts of stretcher-bearers for the wounded were arranged in relays along the return routes; a bomb-proof shelter was made in a deserted village that lay between the lines, to shelter any wounded who could not be removed by dawn; another village was illuminated, dummy gun flashes fired, and flares lit — all by electricity — to attract hostile fire during the withdrawal;[1] and large bonfires well behind our lines were lit, again by electricity, to give our troops the general direction of the withdrawal.

The raid was entirely successful. The right column carried out its programme practically without a hitch; the companies of the Leinsters with the left column, which had by far the more difficult ground, got a little behind time, and had not reached their final objectives when the hour came for withdrawal. Close on 250 prisoners, 14 machine-guns, and 10 mules were brought in, and heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy. Our total losses were 107. The Turks were completely surprised, and after the first assault were too greatly bewildered to offer much resistance. The Leinsters, attacking from flank or rear, found their enemy firing wildly to the front, quite unaware of what had happened. The moral effect was great. Liman von Sanders consoled himself by claiming to have repulsed a determined attempt to break through his centre

[1] Sad to say, all this well-planned display of fireworks was wasted on the enemy; his machine-guns and artillery were alike so much surprised and bewildered that they fired little and at random.

and reach Nablus. But his front-line troops, though they might deceive their German Commander-in-Chief as to what had happened, did not deceive themselves. They had been badly shaken, and mauled, and their morale, already low, had sunk still lower. To our Indian battalions, on the other hand, this success was a fine tonic, as was shown by the dash and spirit with which they assaulted the Turkish defences in the great advance some five weeks later.

EPILOGUE

> 'His greatest friend and ally was darkness.' 'I have never met or heard of troops who can withstand a Night Attack in the rear.'
>
> *The Cavalry Went Through*

> Or in the night, imagining some fear,
> How easy is a bush supposed a bear.
>
> *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

What moral can we draw from the tales of these two attacks? Their first lesson surely is that only well-trained and disciplined troops are likely to succeed in night operations. Gideon by an ingenious test picked out from his raw levies the men who had disciplined and broken themselves to war by hard experience, and would employ no others in his attack. The modern instance shows how disciplined troops brilliantly executed a really difficult operation (it broke the first rule of night attack, that the plan must be simple) after a period of special intensive training. Either operation would certainly have been a disastrous failure with untrained and unprepared troops.

The other special feature to note is the moral effect of night attacks. On untrained or partially trained troops

the effect may be annihilating; witness the unresisting panic of the Midianites. Even stout-hearted defenders of a position like the Turks put up a poor resistance in the surprise of a night attack. Yet a few weeks later in the daylight the Turkish rearguards put up a fine fight in these same hills.

Now the deadly effect of modern fire-power makes the ability to fight by night ever more valuable. Yet the number of troops in the principal armies of Europe with the training necessary to conduct operations in the dark will be exceedingly small at the outset of any new war. Our own Army and the German Army are the only two with a sufficiently long period of service in time of peace to be able to devote sufficient time to this branch of military training. In all the other great Continental armies the term of Colour service has been reduced to so short a period — a bare year — that the experience and practice required for night work are unattainable. Not only will such jerry-trained troops be unable to make any but the simplest movements by night, but also they will be themselves extremely susceptible to moral paralysis if attacked in the dark. We perhaps hardly realize the great asset given to us by our longer service and constant practice in night work. It is an asset that we must continue to cultivate.

Reference has been made several times in this article to a book recently published — *The Cavalry Went Through*, by Bernard Newman. The book is well worth reading. It is half jest, half earnest. In a fantastic and exaggerated form, it puts forward ideas well worth pondering on — the potency of a small, highly-trained, highly-educated

force over the ordinary body of armed men; the importance of the ability to manœuvre and fight at night; the extraordinary effect of the unexpected; the value of individual initiative. For more than a hundred years the cry of the strategist has been for quantity, for numbers. This cry had sense only so long as the rifle and bayonet of the individual foot-soldier remained the deciding factor in battle. When the fire-power of twenty riflemen and more could be concentrated into one small, inconspicuous machine-gun, the theory that had so long dominated so-called military science, the power of numbers, became doomed. Yet so slow is the process of evolution that military thought has hardly yet fully awakened to the change. It is quality that will count in the future, and mobility. The manœuvres of the imaginary General Duncan were little more daring and no more effective than General Allenby's annihilation of the Turkish Armies in Palestine in the autumn of 1918. Some day a comparatively small, highly-trained force, with an armoured brigade or two, may perform feats against one of the old-fashioned armies that will make General Duncan's manœuvres appear clumsy and wasteful of life.

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