

# The Military Maxims of Napoleon

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1

The frontiers of nations are either large rivers, or chains of mountains, or deserts. Of all these obstacles to the march of an army, deserts are the most difficult to surmount; mountains come next; and large rivers hold only the third rank.

2

A plan of campaign should anticipate everything which the enemy can do, and contain within itself the means of thwarting him.

Plans of campaign may be infinitely modified according to the circumstances, the genius of the commander, the quality of the troops and the topography of the theater of war.

3

An army invading a country may either have its two wings resting on neutral countries or on great natural obstacles, such as rivers or chains of mountains; or it may have only one of its wings thus supported; or both may be without support.

In the first case, a general has only to see that his line is not broken in front. In the second case, he must rest on the wing which is supported. In the third case, he must keep his different corps resting well on his centre and never allow them to separate from it; for if it is a disadvantage to have two flanks in the air, the inconvenience is doubled if there are four, tripled if there are six; that is to say, if an army is divided into two or three distinct corps.

The line of operations in the first case, may rest on the left or the right wing, indifferently. In the second case, it should rest on the wing which is supported. In the third case, it should fall perpendicularly on the middle of the line formed by the army in marching. But in all the cases above mentioned, it is necessary to have at every five or six days' march, a fort or entrenched position, where magazines of provisions and military stores may be established and convoys organized; and which may serve as a centre of motion and a point of supply, and thus shorten the line of operations.

4

It may be laid down as a principle that in invading a country with two or three armies, each of which has its own distinct line of operations extending towards a fixed point at which all are to unite, the union of the different corps should never be ordered to take place in the vicinity of the enemy, as by concentrating his forces he may not only prevent their junction but also defeat them one by one.

5

All wars should be systematic, for every war should have an aim and be conducted in conformity with the principles and rules of the art. War should be undertaken with forces corresponding to the magnitude of the obstacles that are to be anticipated.

6

At the commencement of a campaign, the question whether to advance or not requires careful deliberation; but when you have once undertaken the offensive, it should be maintained to the last extremity. A retreat, however skillful the maneuvers may be, will always produce an injurious moral effect on the army, since by losing the chances of success yourself you throw them into the hands of the enemy. Besides, retreats cost far more, both in men and materiel, than the most bloody engagements; with this difference, that in a battle the enemy loses nearly as much as you, while in a retreat the loss is all on your side.

7

An army should be every day, every night, and every hour, ready to offer all the resistance of which it is capable. It is necessary, therefore, that the soldiers should always have their arms and ammunition at hand; that the infantry should always have with it its artillery, cavalry and generals; that the different divisions of the army should be always in a position to assist, support and protect each other; that whether encamped, marching or halted, the troops should be always in advantageous positions, possessing the qualities required for every field of battle - that is to say, the flanks should be well supported and the artillery so placed that it may all be brought into play. When the army is in column of march, there must be advanced guards and flank guards to observe the enemy's movements in front, on the right and on the left; and at sufficient distances to allow the main body of the arm to deploy and take up its position.

8

A general should say to himself many times a day: If the hostile army were to make its appearance in front, on my right, or on my left, what should I do? And if he is embarrassed, his arrangements are bad; there is something wrong; he must rectify his mistake.

9

The strength of an army, like the momentum in mechanics, is estimated by the weight multiplied by the velocity. A rapid march exerts a beneficial moral influence on the army and increases its means of victory.

10

When your army is inferior in numbers, inferior in cavalry and in artillery, a pitched battle should be avoided. The want of numbers must be supplied by rapidity in marching; the want of artillery by the character of the maneuvers; the inferiority in cavalry by the choice of positions. In such a situation, it is of great importance that confidence should prevail among the soldiers.

11

To operate upon lines remote from each other and without communications between them, is a fault which ordinarily occasions a second. The detached column has orders only for the first day. Its operations for the second day depend on what has happened to the main body. Thus, according to circumstances, the column wastes its time in waiting for orders or it acts at random. It ought then to be adopted as a principle that the columns of an army should be always kept united, so that the enemy cannot thrust himself between them. When for any reason this maxim is departed from, the detached corps should be independent in their operations. They should move towards a fixed point at which they are to unite. They should march without hesitation and without new orders, and should be exposed as little as possible to the danger of being attacked separately.

12

An army should have but a single line of operations which it should carefully preserve, and should abandon only when compelled by imperious circumstances.

13

The intervals at which the corps of an army should be from each other in marching, depend on the localities, the circumstances and the object in view.

14

Among mountains there are everywhere numerous positions extremely strong by nature, which you should abstain from attacking. The genius of this kind of war consists in occupying camps either on the flank or the rear of the enemy, so as to leave him no alternative but to withdraw from his position without fighting; and to move him farther back, or to make him come out and attack you. In mountain war the attacking party acts under a disadvantage. Even in offensive war, the merit lies in having only defensive conflicts and obliging your enemy to become the assailant.

15

In giving battle a general should regard it as his first duty to maintain the honor and glory of his arms. To spare his troops should be but a secondary consideration.

But the same determination and perseverance which promote the former object are the best means of securing the latter. In a retreat you lose, in addition to the honor of your arms, more men than in two battles.

For this reason you should never despair while there remain brave men around the colors. This is the conduct which wins, and deserves to win, the victory.

16

A well-established maxim of war is not to do anything which your enemy wishes and for the single reason that he does so wish. You should, therefore, avoid a field of battle which he has reconnoitered and studied. You should be still more careful to avoid one which he has fortified and where he has entrenched himself. A corollary of this principle is, never to attack in front a position which admits of being turned.

17

In a war of marches and maneuvers, to escape an engagement with a superior enemy, it is necessary to throw up entrenchments every night and to place yourself always in a good position for defense. The natural positions which are commonly met with cannot secure an army against the superiority of a more numerous one without the aid of art.

18

An ordinary general occupying a bad position, if surprised by a superior force, seeks safety in retreat; but a great captain displays the utmost determination and advances to meet the enemy. By this movement he disconcerts his adversary; and if the march of the latter evinces irresolution, an able general, profiting by the moment of indecision, may yet hope for victory or at least employ the day in maneuvering; and at night he can entrench himself or fall back on a better position. By this fearless conduct he maintains the honor of his arms, which forms so essential a part of the strength of an army.

19

The passage from the defensive to the offensive is one of the most delicate operations of war.

20

Your line of operations should never, as a general rule, be abandoned; but changing it when circumstances require, is one of the most skillful of military maneuvers. An army which changes its line of operations skillfully, deceives the enemy, who no longer knows where his antagonist's rear is, or what are the weak points to threaten.

21

When an army is encumbered with siege equipage and large convoys of wounded and sick, it should approach its depots by the shortest roads and as expeditiously as possible.

22

The art of encamping on a position is nothing else than the art of forming in order of battle on that position. For this purpose the artillery should all be in readiness and favorably placed; a position should be selected which is not commanded, cannot be turned, and from which the ground in the vicinity is covered and commanded.

23

When you occupy a position which the enemy threatens to surround, you should collect your forces quickly and menace him with an offensive movement. By this maneuver you prevent him from detaching a part of his troops and annoying your flanks, in case you should deem a retreat indispensable.

24

A military maxim, which ought never to be neglected, is to assemble your cantonments at the point which is most remote and best sheltered from the enemy, especially when he makes his appearance unexpectedly. You will then have time to unite the whole army before he can attack you.

25

When two armies are in order of battle, and one, if obliged to retire, must effect its retreat by a bridge, while the other can withdraw towards all points of the compass, the latter has greatly the advantage. A general so situated should be enterprising, strike vigorously and maneuver against the flanks of his adversary; and victory is his.

26

It is a violation of correct principles to cause corps to act separately, without communication with each other, in the face of a concentrated army with easy communications.

27

When you are driven from your first position, the rallying point of your columns should be so far in the rear that the enemy cannot get there before them. It would be the greatest of disasters to have your columns attacked one by one before their reunion.

28

No detachment should be made the day preceding a battle, for during the night the state of things may change, either by a retreat of the enemy or by the arrival of strong reinforcements, which would put him in condition to assume the offensive and render the premature dispositions which you have made ruinous.

29

When you have it in contemplation to give battle, it is a general rule to collect all your strength and to leave none unemployed. One battalion sometimes decides the issue of the day.

30

Nothing is more rash or more opposed to the principles of war than a flank march in presence of an army in position, especially when that army occupies heights at the foot of which you must defile.

31

When you intend to engage in a decisive battle, avail yourself of all the chances of success; more especially if you have to do with a great captain; for if you are beaten, though you may be in the midst of your magazines and near your fortified posts, woe to the vanquished!

32

The duty of an advance guard does not consist in advancing or retreating, but in maneuvering. It should be composed of light cavalry supported by a reserve of heavy, and by battalions of infantry, with artillery to support them. The advance guard should be formed of choice troops; and the generals, officers and soldiers, according to the requirements of their respective rank, should be thoroughly acquainted with the peculiar tactics necessary in this kind of service. An untrained company would be only a source of embarrassment.

33

It is contrary to the usages of war to cause your parks or heavy artillery to enter a defile, the opposite extremity of which is not in your possession; since, in the event of a retreat". they will embarrass yoU and be lost. They ought to be left in position, under a suitable escort, until yoU have made yourself master of the termination of the defile.

34

It should be adopted as a principle never to allow intervals through which the enemy can penetrate between the different corps forming the line of battle, unless you have laid a snare into which it is your object to draw him.

35

The camps of the same army should be always so placed as to be able to sustain each other.

36

When a hostile army is covered by a river on which it has several bridgeheads, you should not approach it in front, for in doing so your forces would be too little concentrated and in danger of being broken into detached parts, if the enemy should sally from one of the bridgeheads. You should approach the river you wish to cross in columns disposed in echelon, so that there may be only a single column - the foremost one - which the enemy can attack without exposing his own flank. Meanwhile the light troops will line the bank; and when you have fixed on the point at which to pass, you must proceed rapidly to the spot and throw the bridge across. You must take care that the bridge shall always be at a distance from the leading echelon in order to deceive the enemy.

37

The moment that you become master of a position which commands the opposite bank, you obtain many facilities for effecting the passage of a river, especially if that position has sufficient extent to admit of your planting a large number of pieces of artillery upon it. This advantage is less if the river is more than six hundred yards wide, as the grape no longer reaches the other shore; and consequently the troops that oppose the passage can, by suitable precautions, easily render your fire of little effect. Hence if the grenadiers charged with the duty of passing the river to protect the bridge, succeed in crossing to the other side, they will be swept off by the enemy's grapeshot; as his batteries established four hundred yards from the termination of the bridge are near enough to pour in a very destructive fire, although more than a thousand yards distant from the batteries of the army which is endeavoring to pass. Therefore he has all the

advantage of the artillery. So in such a case a passage is not practicable unless you either contrive to take the enemy by surprise, or are protected by an intervening island, or avail yourself of a deep re-entrant bend, which enables you to erect batteries crossing their fire just in advance of the point where a landing is to be effected. Such an island or re-entrant forms a natural bridgehead and gives the advantage of the artillery to the attacking army.

When a river is less than a hundred and twenty yards in breadth and you can command the opposite bank, the troops that are thrown over to the other side derive such advantages from the protection afforded by the artillery that, however slight the re-entrant formed by the river may be, it is impossible for the enemy to prevent the establishment of the bridge. Under such circumstances, the most skillful generals, when they have been able to foresee the designs of their antagonist and arrive with their army at the point at which he was making his attempt, have contented themselves with disputing the passage of the bridge. A bridge being in fact a defile, you should place yourself in a half-circle around its extremity and take measures to shelter yourself at the distance of six or eight hundred yards from the fire of the other bank.

38

It is difficult to prevent an enemy provided with bridge equipage from crossing a river. When the object of the army which disputes the passage is to cover a siege, the commanding general, as soon as he is certain that he cannot successfully oppose the passage, should take measures to arrive in advance of the enemy at a position between the river and the place whose siege he is covering.

39

In the campaign of 1645, the forces of Turenne were hemmed in before Philipsburgh by a very numerous army. There was no bridge over the Rhine, but Turenne established his camp on the ground lying between the river and the place. This should serve as a lesson to officers of the engineer department in regard to the construction of bridgeheads as well as of fortresses. There should be left, between the fortress and the river, a space in which an army may be rallied and formed; as the entrance of the troops into the place itself would endanger it. An army pursued and retiring upon Mayence, must necessarily be in a precarious situation, since it would require more than one day to pass the bridge, and the works surrounding Cassel are too small to contain an army without crowding and confusion. Four hundred yards should have been left between the works and the Rhine. It is essential that bridgeheads before large rivers should be constructed on this plan; otherwise they will be of little utility in protecting the passage of an army in retreat. Bridgeheads, as they are taught in the schools, are good only before small rivers where the defile is not long.

40

Fortresses are useful in offensive as well as defensive war. Undoubtedly they cannot of themselves arrest the progress of an army, but they are excellent means of delaying, impeding, enfeebling and annoying a victorious enemy.

41

There are only two modes of prosecuting a siege successfully. One is to begin by beating the hostile army employed to cover the place, driving it from the field of operations and forcing its remains beyond some natural obstacle, such as a chain of mountains or a large river. This first difficulty overcome, you must place an army of observation behind the natural obstacle until the labors of the siege are finished and the place is taken.

But if you wish to take the place in the face of an army of relief without hazarding a battle, you must be provided with siege equipage, ammunition and provisions for the time during which the siege is expected to continue; and must form lines of contravallation and circumvallation, turning, meanwhile, the peculiarities of the ground such as heights, woods, marshes and overflows to the best account.

As there is then no necessity for keeping up any communication with your depots, you have only to hold in check the army of relief. To this end you should form an army of observation which must never lose sight of the enemy and which, while shutting him out from all access to the place, may always have time to fall upon

his flanks or rear, if he should steal a march upon you. By taking advantage of your lines of contravallation you can employ a part of the besieging forces in giving battle to the army of relief.

A siege therefore, in the presence of a hostile army requires to be covered by lines of circumvallation.

If your army is so strong that, after leaving before the place a body four times the number of the garrison, it is still equal to the army of relief, it may move to a greater distance than one day's march.

If, after making the detachment, it remains inferior to the army of relief, it should be posted at one short day's march from the place besieged, so as to be at liberty to fall back on the lines or receive succor in the event of sustaining an attack.

If the two armies of siege and of observation, united, are equal only to the army of relief, the besieging army must remain altogether within or near its lines and employ itself in pushing the siege with all possible activity.

42

Feuquieres has said that you should never wait for the enemy in your lines of circumvallation, but should go out and attack him. The maxim is erroneous. No rule of war is so absolute as to allow no exceptions, and waiting for the enemy in the lines of circumvallation ought not to be condemned as injudicious in all cases.

43

They who proscribe lines of circumvallation and all the aid which the art of the engineer can furnish, gratuitously deprive themselves of auxiliaries that are never injurious, almost always useful and often indispensable. The principles of field fortification, however, need improvement. This important branch of the art of war has made no progress in modern times. It is even at this day in a lower state than it was two thousand years ago. Officers of the engineer department ought to be encouraged to perfect this branch of their art and raise it to a level with others.

44

When you have a hospital and magazines in a fortified town, and circumstances are such as not to admit of your leaving a sufficient garrison to defend it, you should at least make every possible exertion to put the citadel in security from a coup de main.

45

A fortified place can protect a garrison and arrest the enemy only a certain length of time. When that time has elapsed and the defences of the place are destroyed, the garrison may lay down their arms. All civilized nations have been of one opinion in this respect, and the only dispute has been as to the greater or less degree of resistance which the governor should offer before capitulating. Yet there are generals - Villars is of the number - who hold that a governor ought never to surrender, but that in the last extremity he should blow up the fortifications and take advantage of the night to cut his way through the besieging army. In case you cannot blow up the fortifications, you can at any rate sally out with your garrison and save your men. Commanders who have pursued this course have rejoined their army with three-fourths of their garrison.

46

The keys of a fortified place are ample compensation for permitting the garrison to retire unmolested, whenever the latter evince a determination to die rather than accept less favorable terms. It is always better, therefore, to grant an honorable capitulation to a garrison which has resisted vigorously than to run the risk of an attempt to storm.

47

Infantry, cavalry and artillery cannot dispense with each other. They ought to be quartered in such a manner as always to be able to support each other in case of surprise.

48

Infantry formed in line should be in two ranks only, for the musket cannot otherwise be used with equal effect. It is admitted that the fire of the third rank is very imperfect and even injurious to that of the first two. But though the great body of the infantry should be drawn up, as has just been said, in two ranks, the absence of a regular third rank should be supplied by supernumeraries composed of one soldier out of nine or one every two yards.

49

The practice of mingling companies of horse and foot together is bad; it produces nothing but trouble. The cavalry is deprived of its capacity for rapidity of motion; it is cramped in all the movements; it loses its impulse. The infantry, too, is exposed; for, at the first movement of the cavalry, it remains without support. The best mode of protecting cavalry is to support its flank.

50

Charges of cavalry are equally serviceable in the beginning, the middle and the end of a battle. They should be executed whenever they can be made on the flanks of the infantry, particularly when the latter is engaged in front.

51

It is a function of the cavalry to follow up the victory and prevent the beaten enemy from rallying.

52

Artillery is more necessary to cavalry than to infantry, because cavalry does not fire and can fight only in close conflict. It is to supply this deficiency that horse-artillery has been resorted to. Cavalry, therefore, should always be accompanied by cannon, whether attacking, resting in position or rallying.

53

The principal part of the artillery should be with the divisions of infantry and of cavalry, whether marching or in position, and the rest should be placed in reserve. Each piece should have with it three hundred charges of powder and ball, besides the contents of the ammunition-box. That is about the quantity consumed in two battles.

54

Batteries should be placed in the most advantageous positions and as far in advance of the lines of infantry and cavalry as is possible without endangering the guns. It is desirable that the batteries should have a command over the field equal to the full height of the platform. They must not be masked on the right or left, but should be at liberty to direct their fire towards every point.

55

A general should avoid putting his army into quarters of refreshment, so long as he has the opportunity of collecting magazines of provisions and forage, and thus supplying the wants of his soldiers.

56

A good general, good officers, commissioned and non-commissioned, good organization, good instruction and strict discipline make good troops independently of the cause for which they are fighting. But enthusiasm, love of country and the desire of contributing to the national glory may also animate young troops with advantage.

57

It is very difficult for a nation to create an army when it has not already a body of officers and non-commissioned officers to serve as a nucleus, and a system of military organization.

58

The first quality of a soldier is constancy in enduring fatigue and hardship. Courage is only the second. Poverty, privation and want are the school of the good soldier.

59

There are five things which a soldier ought never to be without: his musket, his cartridge-box, his knapsack, his provisions for at least four days and his pioneer hatchet. Reduce his knapsack, if you deem it necessary to do so, to the smallest size, but let the soldier always have it with him.

60

You should by all means encourage the soldiers to continue in the service. This you can easily do by testifying great esteem for old soldiers. The pay should also be increased in proportion to the years of service. There is great injustice in giving no higher pay to a veteran than to a recruit.

61

It is not by harangues at the moment of engaging that soldiers are rendered brave. Veterans hardly listen to them and recruits forget them at the first discharge of a cannon. If speeches and arguments are at any time useful, it is during the course of the campaign by counteracting false reports and causes of discontent, maintaining a proper spirit in the camp and furnishing subjects of conversation in the bivouacs. These several objects may be attained by the printed orders of the day.

62

Tents are injurious to health. It is much better for the soldier to bivouack, because he can sleep with his feet to the fire, which quickly dries the ground on which he lies. A few boards or a little straw shelter him from the wind. Tents, however, are necessary for the leaders, who have to write and consult the map. They should be given therefore to the superior officers, who should be ordered never to lodge in a house.

Tents attract the observation of the enemy's staff and make known your numbers and the position you occupy. But of an army bivouacking in two or three lines, nothing is perceived at a distance except the smoke, which the enemy confounds with the mist of the atmosphere. He cannot count the fires.

63

The information obtained from prisoners ought to be estimated at its proper value. A soldier seldom looks beyond his own company and an officer can, at most, give account of the position or movements of the division to which his regiment belongs. A general, therefore, should not allow himself to be confirmed in his conjectures as to the enemy's position, by attaching any weight to the statements of prisoners, except when they coincide with the reports of the advance guards.

64

Nothing is more important in war than unity in command. When, therefore, you are carrying on hostilities against a single power only, you should have but one army acting on one line and led by one commander.

65

The effect of discussions, making a show of talent, and calling councils of war will be what the effect of these things has been in every age: they will end in the adoption of the most pusillanimous or (if the expression be preferred) the most prudent measures, which in war are almost uniformly the worst that can be adopted. True wisdom, so far as a general is concerned, consists in energetic determination.

66

There are certain things in war of which the commander alone comprehends the importance. Nothing but his superior firmness and ability can subdue and surmount all difficulties.

67

To authorize generals and officers to lay down their arms by virtue of a special capitulation under any other circumstances than when they constitute the garrison of a fortified place, would unquestionably be attended with dangerous consequences. To open this door to cowards, to men wanting in energy or even to misguided brave men, is to destroy the military spirit of a nation. An extraordinary situation requires extraordinary resolution. The more obstinate the resistance of an armed body, the more chances it will have of being succored or of forcing a passage. How many things apparently impossible have nevertheless been performed by resolute men who had no alternative but death!

68

No sovereign, no people, no general can be secure, if officers are permitted to capitulate on the field and lay down their arms by virtue of an agreement favorable to themselves and to the troops under their command, but opposed to the interests of the remainder of the army. To withdraw from peril themselves, and thus render the position of their comrades more dangerous, is manifestly an act of baseness. Such conduct ought to be proscribed, pronounced infamous and punishable with death. The generals, officers and soldiers who in a battle have saved their lives by capitulating, ought to be decimated. He who commands the arms to be surrendered and those who obey him, are alike traitors, and deserve capital punishment.

69

There is but one honorable way of being made a prisoner of war; that is by being taken separately and when you can no longer make use of your arms. Then there are no conditions - for there can be none, consistently with honor - but you are compelled to surrender by absolute necessity.

70

The conduct of a general in a conquered country is encompassed with difficulties. If he is severe, he exasperates and increases the number of his enemies; if he is mild, he inspires hopes which, since they cannot be realized, cause the abuses and vexations unavoidably incident to war only to stand out in bolder relief. A conqueror should know how to employ by turns severity, justice and leniency in suppressing or preventing disturbances.

71

Nothing can excuse a general who avails himself of the knowledge he has acquired in the service of his country to give up its bulwarks to a foreign nation. That is a crime abhorrent to the principles of religion, morality and honor.

72

A general-in-chief cannot exonerate himself from responsibility for his faults by pleading an order of his sovereign or the minister, when the individual from whom it proceeds is at a distance from the field of operations, and but partially, or not at all, acquainted with the actual condition of things. Hence it follows that every general-in-chief who undertakes to execute a plan which he knows to be bad, is culpable. He should communicate his reasons, insist on a change of plan and finally resign his commission rather than become the instrument of his army's ruin.

Every general-in-chief who, in consequence of orders from his superiors, gives battle with the certainty of defeat, is equally culpable.

In this latter case, he should refuse to obey; for an order requires passive obedience only when it is issued by a superior who is present at the seat of war. As the superior is then familiar with the state of affairs, he can listen to objections and make the necessary explanations to the officer who is to execute the command.

But suppose a general-in-chief were to receive from his sovereign an order to give battle with the injunction to yield the victory to his adversary and permit himself to be beaten. Would he be bound to obey? No! If the general comprehended the utility of so strange an order, he ought to execute it; but, if not, he should refuse to obey.

73

The first qualification of a general-in-chief is to possess a cool head, so that things may appear to him in their true proportions and as they really are. He should not suffer himself to be unduly affected by good or bad news.

The impressions which are made upon his mind successively or simultaneously in the course of a day, should be so classified in his memory that each shall occupy its proper place; for sound reasoning and judgment result from first examining each of these varied impressions by itself, and then comparing them all with one another.

There are some men who, from their physical and moral constitution, deck everything in the colors of imagination. With whatever knowledge, talents, courage or other good qualities these may be endowed, nature has not fitted them for the command of armies and the direction of the great operations of war.

74

To be familiar with the geography and topography of the country; to be skillful in making a reconnaissance; to be attentive to the despatch of orders; to be capable of exhibiting with simplicity the most complicated movements of an army - these are the qualifications that should distinguish the officer called to the station of chief of the staff.

75

A general of artillery should be acquainted with all the operations of the army, as he is obliged to supply the different divisions of which it is composed with arms and ammunition. His communications with the artillery officers at the advanced posts should keep him informed of all the movements of the troops, and the management of his great park must be regulated by this information.

76

To reconnoiter rapidly defiles and fords; to obtain guides that can be relied upon; to interrogate the clergyman and the postmaster; to establish speedily an understanding with the inhabitants; to send out spies; to seize the letters in the mails, to translate and make an abstract of their contents; in short, to answer all the inquiries of the general-in-chief on his arrival with the whole army - such are the duties which come within the sphere of a good general of an advanced post.

77

Commanders-in-chief are to be guided by their own experience or genius. Tactics, evolutions and the science of the engineer and the artillery officer may be learned from treatises, but generalship is acquired only by experience and the study of the campaigns of all great captains. Gustavus Adolphus, Turenne and Frederic, as also Alexander, Hannibal and Caesar have all acted on the same principles. To keep your forces united, to be vulnerable at no point, to bear down with rapidity upon important points - these are the principles which insure victory.

It is by the fear which the reputation of your arms inspires that you maintain the fidelity of your allies and the obedience of conquered nations.

78

Read over and over again the campaigns of Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, Gustavus, Turenne, Eugene and Frederic. Make them your models. This is the only way to become a great general and to master the secrets of the art of war. With your own genius enlightened by this study, you will reject all maxims opposed to those of these great commanders.

79

The first principle of a general-in-chief is to calculate what he must do, to see if he has all the means to surmount the obstacles with which the enemy can oppose him and, when he has made his decision, to do everything to overcome them.

80

The art of a general of the advance guard or of the rear guard is, without compromising himself, to contain the enemy, to delay him and to force him to take three or four hours to advance a mile. Tactics supplies the only means to attain such great results. It is more necessary for the cavalry than for the infantry, for an advance guard or for a rear guard, than for any other position.

81

It is exceptional and difficult to find all the qualities of a great general combined in one man. What is most desirable and distinguishes the exceptional man, is the balance of intelligence and ability with character or courage. If courage is predominant, the general will hazard far beyond his conceptions; and on the contrary, he will not dare to accomplish his conceptions if his character or his courage are below his intelligence.

82

With a great general there is never a continuity of great actions which can be attributed to chance and good luck; they always are the result of calculation and genius.

83

A general-in-chief should never allow any rest either to the conquerors or to the conquered.

84

An irresolute general who acts without principles and without plan, even though he lead an army numerically superior to that of the enemy, almost always finds himself inferior to the latter on the field of battle. Fumblings, the mezzo termine (the middle course) lose all in war.

85

A general of engineers who must conceive, propose and direct all the fortifications of an army, needs good judgment and a practical mind above all.

86

A cavalry general should be a master of practical science, know the value of seconds, despise life and not trust to chance.

87

A general in the power of the enemy has no more orders to give: whoever obeys him is a criminal.

88

The heavy cavalry should be with the advance guard, with the rear guard and on the wings and in reserve to support the light cavalry.

89

To wish to hold the cavalry in reserve for the end of the battle, is to have no idea of the power of combined cavalry and infantry charges either for attack or for defense.

90

The power of cavalry is in its impulsion. But it is not only its velocity that insures success: it is order, formation and proper employment of reserves.

91

The cavalry should compose a quarter of the army in Flanders or Germany; in the Pyrenees or in the Alps, a twentieth; in Italy or in Spain, a sixth.

92

In a battle like in a siege, skill consists in converging a mass of fire on a single point: once the combat is opened, the commander who is adroit will suddenly and unexpectedly open fire with a surprising mass of artillery on one of these points, and is sure to seize it.

93

The better the infantry is, the more it should be used carefully and supported with good batteries.

Good infantry is, without doubt, the sinew of an army; but if it is forced to fight for a long time against a very superior artillery, it will become demoralized and will be destroyed. It is possible that a general who is more skillful and a better maneuverer than his adversary, having better infantry, will gain success during a part of the campaign although his artillery park is very inferior; but, on a decisive day in a general action, he will feel his inferiority in artillery cruelly.

94

A good army of 35.000 men should in a few days, especially when supported by a fortress or a large river, make its camp unassailable by an army double in force.

95

War is composed of nothing but accidents, and, although holding to general principles, a general should never lose sight of everything to enable him to profit from these accidents; that is the mark of genius.

In war there is but one favorable moment; the great art is to seize it.

96

A general who retains fresh troops for the day after a battle is almost always beaten. He should, if helpful, throw in his last man, because on the day after a complete success there are no more obstacles in front of him; prestige alone will insure new triumphs to the conqueror.

97

The rules of fighting require that a part of an army should avoid fighting alone against an entire army that has already been successful.

98

When a general has laid siege to a place by surprise and has gained a few days on his adversary, he should profit from this by covering himself with lines of circumvallation; from this moment he will have improved his position and will have acquired a new element of power and a new degree of force in the general framework of affairs.

99

In war the commander of a fortress is not a judge of events; he should defend the fortress to the last; he deserves death if he surrenders it a moment before he is forced to.

100

Agreements to surrender made by surrounded bodies, either during a battle or during an active campaign, are contracts with all the advantageous clauses in favor of the individuals who contract them, and all the onerous clauses against the prince and the other soldiers of the army. To avoid peril oneself, while making the position of the rest more dangerous, is an act of cowardice.

101

Defensive war does not exclude attacking, just as offensive war does not exclude defending, although its aim may be to force the frontier and invade the enemy's country.

102

The art of war indicates that it is necessary to turn or envelop a wing without separating the army.

103

When they are thoroughly understood, field fortifications are always useful and never injurious.

104

An army can march anywhere and at any time of the year, wherever two men can place their feet.

105

Conditions of the ground should not alone decide the organization for combat, which should be determined from consideration of all circumstances.

106

Flank marches should be avoided; and when they must be undertaken, they should be as short as possible and made with the greatest speed.

107

Nothing can be designed better to disorganize and destroy an army than pillage.

108

Praise from enemies is suspicious; it cannot flatter an honorable man unless it is given after the cessation of hostilities.

109

Prisoners of war do not belong to the power for which they have fought; they all are under the safeguard of honor and generosity of the nation that has disarmed them.

110

Conquered provinces should be maintained in obedience to the conquerors by moral means, such as the responsibility of local governments and the method of organization and administration. Hostages are among the most powerful means; but to be effective, they should be many and chosen from the preponderant elements, and the people must be convinced that immediate death of the hostages will follow violation of their pledges.

111

The geographical conditions of a country, life in plains or mountains, education or discipline, have more influence than climate on the character of the troops.

112

All great captains have done great things only by conforming to the rules and natural principles of the art; that is to say, by the wisdom of their combinations, the reasoned balance of means with consequences, and efforts with obstacles. They have succeeded only by thus conforming, whatever may have been the audacity of their enterprises and the extent of their success. They have never ceased to make war a veritable science. It is only under this title that they are our great models, and it is only in imitating them that one can hope to approach them.

113

The first law of naval tactics should be that as soon as the admiral has given the signal that he is going to attack, each captain should make the necessary movements to attack an enemy ship, take part in the combat and support his neighbors.

114

War on land, in general, consumes more men than naval warfare; it is more dangerous. The sailor in a fleet fights but once during a campaign; the ground soldier fights every day. The sailor, whatever may be the fatigues and dangers of the sea, suffers much less than the soldier: he is never hungry nor thirsty; he always has a place to sleep, his kitchen, his hospital and his pharmacy. There are fewer sick in the English and French fleets, where discipline maintains cleanliness and experience has discovered all the means of preserving health, than in armies. Besides the perils of battle, the sailor risks those of tempests; but seamanship has so much diminished the latter that it cannot be compared with those on land, such as popular uprisings, partial assassinations and surprises by hostile light troops.

An admiral commanding a fleet and a general commanding an army are men who need different qualities. One is born with the qualities proper to command an army, while the necessary qualities to command a fleet are acquired only by experience.

The art of war on land is an art of genius, of inspiration. On the sea everything is definite and a matter of experience. The admiral needs only one science, navigation. The general needs all or a talent equal to all, that of profiting by all experience and all knowledge. An admiral needs to divine nothing; he knows where his enemy is and he knows his strength. A general never knows anything with certainty, never sees his enemy clearly and never knows positively where he is. When armies meet, the least accident of the terrain, the smallest wood, hides a portion of the army. The most experienced eye cannot state whether he sees the entire enemy army or only three quarters of it. It is by the eyes of the mind, by reasoning over the whole, by a species of inspiration that the general sees, knows and judges. The admiral needs only an experienced glance; nothing of the enemy force is hidden from him. What makes the general's function difficult is the necessity of nourishing so many men and animals; if he permits himself to be guided by administrators, he will never budge and his expeditions will fail. The admiral is never bothered since he carries everything with him. An admiral has neither reconnaissances to make, terrain to examine nor fields of battle to study. Indian Ocean, American Ocean or North Sea - it is always a liquid plain. The most skillful will have no advantage over the least, except for his knowledge of prevailing winds in such and such coastal waters, by foresight of those which should prevail or by atmospheric signs: qualities which are acquired by experience and by experience only.

The general never knows the field of battle on which he may operate. His understanding is that of inspiration; he has no positive information; data to reach a knowledge of localities are so contingent on events that almost nothing is learned by experience. It is a faculty to understand immediately the relations of the terrain according to the nature of different countries; it is, finally, a gift, called a *coup de oeil militaire* (the ability to take in the military situation at a glance) which great generals have received from nature. However the observations that can be made from topographic maps and the facility which education and habit give in reading maps, can be of some assistance.

An admiral depends more on the captains of his ships than a general on his generals. The latter has the opportunity to take direct command of the troops himself, to move to any point and to repair false movements. An admiral can influence personally only the men on the vessel on which he finds himself; smoke prevents signals from being seen and winds change or vary over the space occupied by his line. It is thus of all professions that in which subalterns should use the largest initiative.