livered to him is no longer a virtue than whilst he compre­hends and knows the intention of them, War, says a cele­brated author, is a business which, like all others, must be learned ; it ſuppoſes some qualities to be born with us, and demands others which are to be acquired : but since all theſe qualities must have the original ſource in genius, a man who propoſes war for his profession, should never en­gage in it without having consulted his natural bent, or without knowing the particular turn and power of his mind. Ability, whether in a general or an officer, is the effect of his genius, quickened by a natural liking to his buſineſs.

A quick eye, which is of great importance to a ſoldier, is natural to ſome, and in them it is the effect of genius; others acquire it by study or experience ; he who knows how to command himſelf, and has courage enough to keep himself cool on the most urgent occasions, has the readiest and quickest eye. A quick, hot headed man, however brave, sees nothing ; or if he does, it is confuſedly, and ge­nerally too late.

It is this quick eye which enables a general to judge of an advantageous post, of a manœuvre to be made, and of a good diſposition for the troops, whether with reſpect to that of the enemy, or to the ſituation and nature of the country.

The quick eye is no other than that penetrating genius which lets nothing eſcape it. A general who knows how to unite this quality with perpetual coolneſs, never is in want of expedients ; he will see how thoſe events, which to any other would be the preſage of his own defeat, may end in the overthrow of his enemies.

The choice of the general officers depends upon this ge­nius, which diſcovers every thing ; they ought to be the right-hand of the general, and as capable of commanding the army as himſelf. Whatever good diſpositions a gene­ral may make, they must prove ineffectual if not ſeconded by the general officers under his command ; he cannot be everywhere, neither can he forſee all exigencies that may ariſe. He is obliged to give only general orders ; it is therefore the buſineſs of thoſe who command under him to know how to take the advantage of a wrong movement of the enemy ; to take upon them to attack, or ſustain the troops which are engaged ; and, as circumstances vary, to make them advance towards the enemy, either to keep him back or to attack him.

But the qualities already mentioned would be uſeleſs, if order and diſcipline were not ſeverely observed : the most numerous and best composed army would ſoon become little elſe than a body of rangers, who being only united by the hope of booty, would ſeparate as ſoon as that motive ceaſed ; and trusting each to his own head, or indulging his own humour, would be cut in pieces party by party : ſo that if the general does not keep up ſubordination (the soul and strength of diſcipline), his army will be nothing more than a troop of Tartars acting more from the hope of plunder than the desire of glory. What art and what genius is there not requisite to maintain this ſubordination ? Too much severity disgusts the ſoldier, and renders him muti­nous ; too much indulgence sinks him into indolence, and makes him neglect his duty ; licentiousneſs cauſes that ſub­ordination to ſeem burdenſome, which ſhould never in any degree be given up : he loses that reſpect, and often that confidence, which he ſhould have with regard to his officer; and indulgence often makes a well-diſciplined body become a ſet of ſluggards, who march against their will, and who, on the most pressing emergencies, think only on their own ſafety.

Besides theſe qualities, which are essential to a general, and which all who would attain that rank ought of course to have, there are still many others necessary to make a great man. A general who would merit the title of a hero, ought to unite in himſelf all civil, military, and political excellence. It is by this that he will easily attain to make war with success : nothing will eſcape him ; he will know without difficulty the genius of every country, and of the nations which compoſe the enemy’s army, the abilities of the generals who command, and the nature of the troops under them ; he knows that he may venture a motion with ſome troops that he would not dare to attempt with others that are equally brave. One nation is vehement, fiery, and formidable in the first onſet ; another is not ſo honesty, but of more perſeverance : with the former, a single instant de­termines ſucceſs ; with the latter, the action is not ſo rapid, but the event is leſs doubtful.

No man is born a general, although he brings into the world with him the seeds of thoſe virtues which makes a great man : Caesar, Spinola, Turenne, the great Conde, and ſome others, ſhowed, even in their earliest years, ſuch qua­lities as ranked them above other men ; they carried within them the principles of thoſe great virtues which they drew forth to aftion by profound study, and which they brought to perfection by the help of practice : thoſe who came after them, with perhaps fewer natural talents, have by study rendered themselves worthy of being compared to them. Caesar and all conquerors had this advantage, that they were able to make their own opportunities, and always acted by their own choice. A man may be a good general with­out being a Marlborough or a Turenne : ſuch geniuſes are ſcarcely ſeen once in an age ; but the more they are raiſed above the rest of mankind, the more they ought to excite emulation. It is by endeavouring to ſurpaſs the in­tellects of the second rate ; it is by ſtriving to equal the most ſublime, that the imitation of them is to be attained. This passion in a ſoldier is neither pride nor preſumption ; it is virtue : and it is by this only that he can hope to be ſerviceable to the state, and add to the glory of his king and country.

How much ſoever the honour of commanding armies may be sought after, it degrades him who is not worthy of it ; this rank, ſo much desired, borders on the two extremes of glory and ignominy. A military man who labours to make himſelf capable of commanding, is not to be blamed ; his ambition is noble : by studying the art of commanding, he learns that of obeying and of executing. But it is astoniſhing in the highest degree to see ſoldiers thinking only on preferment, and neglecting the study of their buſineſs. It , is perhaps leſs ſurprising if we see others, without having been tried, proposong to themſelves to command in chief ; becauſe ſuch attempts ſuppoſe in the projector an abſurd temerity, founded on a profound ignorance of the talents he ought to have, and the virtues which he has not. Such boldneſs is the character of a man whoſe mind is too nar­row to perceive his danger : We ſhould rather approve the timidity that ſuffers itſelf to be dejected by terror, since it shows at least that he knows to what hazards he is expoſed; both one and the other are blameable : modesty is the only proper quality of a ſoldier ; it gives ſplendour to virtue, it argues diffidence of himſelf, and desire of arriving at perfection.

The title of general would be leſs tempting, if proper attention was paid to the qualities it requires, and the duties it impoſes ; it would then appear a very honourable, but painful burden. The most firm and intrepid genius might be diſcouraged, merely by thinking that on the conduct of a general depends the fate of the state, the glory of his prince’s arms, and his own reputation.