

from high places and hastens downwards.

30. So in war, the way is to avoid what is strong and to strike at what is weak.

[Like water, taking the line of least resistance.]

31. Water shapes its course according to the nature of the ground over which it flows; the soldier works out his victory in relation to the foe whom he is facing.

32. Therefore, just as water retains no constant shape, so in warfare there are no constant conditions.

33. He who can modify his tactics in relation to his opponent and thereby succeed in winning, may be called a heaven-born captain.

34. The five elements (water, fire, wood, metal, earth) are not always equally predominant;

[That is, as Wang Hsi says: "they predominate alternately."]

the four seasons make way for each other in turn.

[Literally, "have no invariable seat."]

There are short days and long; the moon has its periods of waning and waxing.

[Cf. V. ss. 6. The purport of the passage is simply to illustrate the want of fixity in war by the changes constantly taking place in Nature. The comparison is not very happy, however, because the regularity of the phenomena which Sun Tzu mentions is by no means paralleled in war.]

[1] See Col. Henderson's biography of Stonewall Jackson, 1902 ed., vol. II, p. 490.

VII. MANEUVERING

1. Sun Tzu said: In war, the general receives his commands from the sovereign.

2. Having collected an army and concentrated his forces, he must blend and harmonize the different elements thereof before pitching his camp.

["Chang Yu says: "the establishment of harmony and confidence between the higher and lower ranks before venturing into the field;" and he quotes a saying of Wu Tzu (chap. 1 ad init.): "Without harmony in the State, no military expedition can be undertaken; without harmony in the army, no battle array can be formed." In an historical romance Sun Tzu is represented as saying to Wu Yuan: "As a general rule, those who are waging war should get rid of all the domestic troubles before proceeding to attack the external foe."]

3. After that, comes tactical maneuvering, than which there is nothing more difficult.

[I have departed slightly from the traditional interpretation of Ts'ao Kung, who says: "From the time of receiving the sovereign's instructions until our encampment over against the enemy, the tactics to be pursued are most difficult." It seems to me that the tactics or maneuvers can hardly be said to begin un