

THE ART OF WAR

(RESTORED TRANSLATION)



SUN TZU

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translated by Lionel Giles, M.A.

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To my brother
Captain Valentine Giles, R.G.
in the hope that
a work 2400 years old
may yet contain lessons worth consideration
by the soldier of to-day
this translation
is affectionately dedicated

Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
I. LAYING PLANS	3
II. WAGING WAR	7
III. ATTACK BY STRATAGEM	11
IV. TACTICAL DISPOSITIONS	15
V. ENERGY	17
VI. WEAK POINTS AND STRONG	21
VII. MANŒUVRING	25
VIII. VARIATION IN TACTICS	29
IX. THE ARMY ON THE MARCH	31
X. TERRAIN	37
XI. THE NINE SITUATIONS	41
XII. THE ATTACK BY FIRE	49
XIII. THE USE OF SPIES	53

Introduction

SUN TZŪ WU was a native of the CH'Í State. His *Art of War* brought him to the notice of HO LU, King of WU. HO LU said to him: "I have carefully perused your 13 chapters. May I submit your theory of managing soldiers to a slight test?"

SUN TZŪ replied: "You may."

HO LU asked: "May the test be applied to women?"

The answer was again in the affirmative, so arrangements were made to bring 180 ladies out of the Palace. SUN TZŪ divided them into two companies, and placed one of the King's favourite concubines at the head of each. He then bade them all take spears in their hands, and addressed them thus: "I presume you know the difference between front and back, right hand and left hand?"

The girls replied: "Yes."

SUN TZŪ went on: "When I say 'Eyes front,' you must look straight ahead. When I say 'Left turn,' you must face towards your left hand. When I say 'Right turn,' you must face towards your right hand. When I say 'About turn,' you must face right round towards your back."

Again the girls assented. The words of command having been thus explained, he set up the halberds and battle-axes in order to begin the drill. Then, to the sound of drums, he gave the order "Right turn." But the girls only burst out laughing. SUN TZŪ said: "If words of command are not clear and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly understood, then the general is to blame."

So he started drilling them again, and this time gave the order "Left turn," whereupon the girls once more burst into fits of laughter. SUN TZŪ: "If words of command are not clear and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly understood, the general is to blame. But if his orders *are* clear, and the soldiers nevertheless disobey, then it is the