The Art of War

Sun-tzu
(Sunzi)

EDITED, TRANSLATED, AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY
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PENGUIN BOOKS
In memory of my father,

Leslie Minford
Be ready
For the unexpected;

Have a capable general,
Unhampered by his sovereign.

**Du You:** A Skillful General, well versed in military strategy, should be given full rein by his sovereign. As Master Wang said, "The sovereign gives broad instructions, the general makes battle decisions."

**Giles:** Napoleon undoubtedly owed much of his extraordinary success to the fact that he was not hampered by any central authority—that he was, in fact, general and sovereign in one.

These five
Point the way to
Victory.

Hence the saying
"Know the enemy,
Know yourself,
And victory
Is never in doubt,
Not in a hundred battles."

**Zhang Yu:** These words refer to both attack and defense. Knowing the enemy, you can take the appropriate offensive; knowing yourself, you can adopt the appropriate defensive strategy. Attack is the secret of defense; defense is the planning of attack. Know this, and you will never fail, not in a hundred battles.

**The Way and Its Power, Chapter 33:** To know others is wisdom; to understand oneself is enlightenment. To conquer others requires force; to conquer oneself shows strength.

**Translator:** The Greek historian Polybius said of Hannibal, "It is mere blind ignorance to believe that there can be anything of more vital impor-

Strategic Offensive

This, one of Master Sun’s most famous maxims, was endorsed by Mao Zedong: "This saying of the great Chinese military thinker of ancient times, Master Sun, includes [under knowledge] the stages of both theoretical knowledge and practice; it includes the observation of the laws of development of objective practice, and the process of determining one’s own actions in accordance with those laws, so as to overcome the present enemy. We must not underestimate [the wisdom of] this saying" (Selected Works, p. 166).

He who knows self
But not the enemy
Will suffer one defeat
For every victory.

**Li Quan:** If one is aware of one’s own strength and yet one has not estimated the enemy properly, victory is not assured. The prince of Qin, Fu Jian, in a.d. 383 led an army of a million soldiers south against the forces of Jin. Someone commented that the Jin had men of the caliber of Xie An and Huan Chong and that he should not underestimate them. To which Fu Jian replied, "I have the assembled forces of eight provinces in my army, a million horses and men. They could dam the Yangze River itself by merely throwing their whips into it. What have I to fear?" He was subsequently heavily defeated.

He who knows
Neither self
Nor enemy
Will fail
In every battle.