

PART-II

Q. 2 Make a précis of the following passage and suggest a suitable title.

(15+5=20)

Courage, physical and moral, a general undoubtedly must have. Voltaire praises in Marlborough 'that calm courage in the midst of tumult, that serenity of soul in danger, which is the greatest gift of nature for command'. A later military writer, who had no great admiration for Joffre, was compelled to admit that his stolid calm and obstinate determination in the darkest days of the retreat had an influence which offset many of the grave strategical blunders which he committed. Health in a general is, of course, most important, but it is a relative quality only. We would all of us, I imagine, sooner have Napoleon sick on our side than many of his opponents whole. A great spirit can rule in a frail body, as Wolfe and others have shown us. Marlborough during his great campaigns would have been ploughed by most modern medical boards.

Next comes the vexed question of age. One of the ancient Roman poets has pointed out the scandal of old men at war and old men in love. But at exactly what age a general ceases to be dangerous to the enemy and a Don Juan to the other sex is not easy to determine. Hannibal, Alexander, Napoleon, Wellington, Wolfe and others may be quoted as proof that the highest prizes of war are for the young men. On the other hand, Julius Caesar and Cromwell began their serious soldiering when well over the age of 40; Marlborough was 61 at the time of his most admired manœuvre, when he forced the Ne Plus Ultra lines; Turenne's last campaign at the age of 63 is said to have been his boldest and best. Moltke, the most competent of the moderns, made his name at the age of 66 and confirmed his reputation at 70. Roberts was 67 when he went out to South Africa after our first disastrous defeats, and restored the situation by surrounding the Boer Army at Paardeberg and capturing Bloemfontein and Pretoria. Foch at 67 still possessed energy and vitality and great originality. We must remember, in making comparisons with the past, that men develop later nowa- days; for instance, Wellington, Wolfe, Moore, Craufurd were all commissioned at about the age of 15, and some of them saw service soon after joining. It is impossible really to give exact values to the fire and boldness of youth as against the judgment and experience of riper years; if the mature mind still has the capacity to conceive and to absorb new ideas, to withstand unexpected shocks, and to put into execution bold and unorthodox designs, its superior knowledge and judgment will give the advantage over youth. At the same time there is no doubt that a good young general will usually beat a good old one; and the recent lowering of age of our generals is undoubtedly a step in the right direction, even if it may sometimes lose us prematurely a good commander.

Title

The Dynamics of Military Leadership: Courage, Health, and Age Considerations.

An ideal military general must have both physical and moral courage, as manifested by Marlborough and Joffe. Although health is crucial, a great spirit can overcome physical weakness, as seen in the case of Napoleon and Wolfe. The question of age in military leadership is complex; historical examples range from young conquerors like Alexander and Napoleon to seasoned leaders such as Caesar, Marlborough, and Moltke. The balance between the enthusiasm of youth and the wisdom of experience is challenging. The recent trend of lowering the age of generals is seen as a positive step, though it may result in the premature loss of skilled commanders.