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### Military Character

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MILITARY CHARACTER.<sup>1</sup>

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By VICE-ADMIRAL WM. S. SIMS, U.S. Navy.

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IN assigning me the task of delivering a lecture upon military character before the Civilian Naval Volunteers, the Navy Department directed that the lecture be informal and non-technical in character, and enlivened, where practicable, by ample illustration and anecdote.

The requirement that it be informal and non-technical is not difficult of fulfilment, but I am afraid it is a subject that does not lend itself to enlivening anecdote. Character is a moral attribute, and consequently an analysis of its elements, with the inevitable enumeration of our own deficiencies, must necessarily partake somewhat of the nature of one of those uncomfortable sermons which expose our many moral weaknesses—and if any of you have been to church recently and have heard one of those sermons, you know just about how enlivening they are.

In reality such sermons are unavoidably depressing, and so necessarily is a lecture upon character, either civil or military. The parson reminds us that we have left undone those things that we ought to have done, etc., and the lecturer on character presents such a formidable array of essential virtues that not even the most self-satisfied among us can claim to possess and practice all of them.

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<sup>1</sup> A lecture delivered to the Civilian Naval Volunteers, September, 1916, as deleted November 29th, 1916.

For example, to mention at random a few of the qualities that the various authoritative writers on the subject specify as essential to the successful training and leading of men in war, we have:—

Ardour, bravery, zeal, endurance, courage, fortitude, attainment, experience, knowledge, self-restraint, decision, combativeness, energy, caution, initiative, compliance, loyalty, fidelity, industry, studiousness, will, activity, self-confidence, responsibility, patience, resolution, imperturbability, cheerfulness, imagination, memory, circumspection, boldness, enterprise, foresight, discernment, perseverance, tact, good manners, system, thoroughness, etc.; and, finally, we find the official expression of the military ideal in our service in the first of the Articles for the Government of the Navy of the United States:—"The commanders of all fleets, squadrons, naval stations, and vessels belonging to the Navy are required to show in themselves a good example of virtue, honour, patriotism, and subordination."

From this you will see that the moral qualifications necessary for a good military character are much the same as those found in what we usually call a strong character in civil life.

Needless to say, a discussion of each one of the qualities enumerated, and their bearing upon the character required for successful leadership, would require a volume. Many volumes have been devoted to this subject. Almost all of the writers have confined their studies to the traits of character found in great leaders, but the literature concerning the character of the great body of subordinates is very scant. I will confine my remarks principally to the latter, because the character of the great body of officers and men is of more importance to us than is the character of that rarely attained ideal—a great leader of men.

During the summer of 1913, a conference upon this subject was held at the Naval War College. This conference was based upon the following question:—

Discuss the qualities of military character, the means of their development, and the method of their employment.

Discuss the relation of loyalty, initiative, and the spirit of co-operation to naval efficiency.

Explain in detail your view of, and suggest methods for, improving the present military character of our service.

In reply to this question, six papers were submitted by members of the conference. Three of them are included in a mimeograph volume issued by the college. They are by Colonel Henry C. Davis, U.S.A., Commander R. R. Belknap, U.S.N., and Commander Frank H. Schofield, U.S.N. I wish that you could all read these very able and interesting discussions. Unfortunately they are much too long for quotation or for much of their contents to be included in such a brief paper as this necessarily must be.

In addition to the above, the volume referred to contains extracts from 100 short papers submitted by officers of the Atlantic Fleet—by ensigns, lieutenants, lieutenant-commanders, and commanders—who

took an elementary course at the college. These were submitted in compliance with the following order :—

Each officer will submit to the President of the War College on Wednesday of the second week of the course a brief thesis on "Loyalty, Initiative, and Decision of Character," written from the standpoint of his own experience.

To any one who is studying this subject, these papers are of singular interest as showing the degree to which our service is beginning to grasp these essentials. In commenting upon them, the college stated that they "are worthy of the closest attention by officers of all grades and corps."

Of course I realize that, upon an occasion of this kind, I must be brief, on pain of being as much disliked as is the parson who preaches a long moral sermon in the middle of August. I will therefore refer but briefly to the essential qualities of the great leaders, and confine my remarks, as above indicated, principally to the military character of the subordinate, to his relation to his superior, to the conduct of the superior toward the subordinate, and to the duty of the superior in training his subordinates in such manner as to inspire their loyalty, develop their initiative, and thus secure their effective co-operation.

We all know in a general way that a man upon whom is placed a great responsibility in a great war, a Joffre or a Jellicoe, should not only be a model of virtue, honour, patriotism, and subordination, but that he should have a thorough knowledge of his profession, and the self-confidence which this renders possible. Also a strong will, great decision of character, resolution, energy, loyalty to his Government, his cause, and his subordinates, willingness to accept and ability to bear responsibility, fortitude in adversity, boldness in conception, caution in execution, imperturbability in council, thoroughness in preparation, besides personal courage, physical vigour, and many other secondary though essential qualities.

Each of these have been the subject of exhaustive analysis by the masters of war, and they make very interesting and instructive reading; but these writers have told us comparatively little of how we, the subordinates, are to conduct ourselves so as to inspire the maximum effort on the part of our subordinates, to the end that we in turn may render the maximum service to our superiors, and thus promote the maximum efficiency of the whole organization. This is the feature of military training that has been least understood in the past, and is making its way so slowly in some services even at present.

It involves the two wholly essential twin qualities of loyalty and initiative, and all those qualities that are necessary to inspire and develop them, as well as all those that flow from their combination. Loyalty in itself is always indispensable, but initiative without loyalty is dangerous. It is their intelligent and trained co-operation which is the vital characteristic of modern armies.

They of course involve the most complete subordination to the will and plans of higher authority, the development of the feeling of proper responsibility, the exercise of reasoned decision; and they operate in

conjunction with the manly and moral virtues heretofore enumerated, such as zeal, courage, energy, activity, fidelity, etc.

The most desirable material for military service is a man who possesses all the qualities which are usually associated with good civil character; but the point that it is my wish particularly to accentuate is that the possession of these individual qualities will not render the man efficient in a military sense unless they are employed in such manner as to promote the efficiency of the whole organization to which he belongs.

This may best be brought out by a comparison between the methods of military control in former, though comparatively recent, times and those practised at present in the most efficient modern armies, or nations in arms.

Briefly, the former system was rigid in requiring unquestioning obedience to explicit orders from superior authority. No initiative was allowed on the part of the subordinate. The latter was not informed of the mission or general plan of the leader. Orders were given in detail and were to be obeyed to the letter. The one idea of command of the soldiers of those days was "I order, you obey," for in their eyes unqualified and unthinking obedience was the first of military virtues. In operations of a certain magnitude this method of command frequently resulted in notable success, through the soldierly qualities of the personnel and its loyalty to the cause, its leaders, and its systems; but it broke down completely when opposed by a system that combined loyalty with the use of intelligent and trained initiative.

I am insisting upon this combination of loyalty and initiative, because I expect to show that a system of military education based upon it, applied from the leaders down to the last recruit, is the best possible school for training in military character, and in the art of war.

In order to illustrate the tremendous force of these two qualities when successfully combined, I will quote a few paragraphs from the "Science of War," by Henderson:—

"The study of war has done far more for Prussia than educating its soldiers and producing a sound system of organization. It has led to the establishment of a sound system of command; and this system proved a marvellous instrument in the hands of a great leader. It was based on the recognition of three facts: First, that any army cannot be effectively controlled by direct orders from headquarters; second, that the man on the spot is the best judge of the situation; and third, that intelligent co-operation is of infinitely more value than mechanical obedience.

"If those portions of the Army unseen by the commander, and not in direct communication with him, were to await his orders before acting, not only would opportunities be allowed to pass, but other portions of the Army, at critical moments, might be left without support. It was understood, therefore, in the Prussian Armies of 1866 and 1870, that no order was to be blindly obeyed unless the superior who issued it was actually present, and therefore cognizant of the situation at the time it was received. If this was not the case, the recipient was to use his own judgment, and act as he believed his

superior would have directed him to do had he been aware how matters stood. Again, officers not in direct communication with headquarters were expected not only to watch for and utilize, on their own initiative, all opportunities of furthering the plan of campaign or battle, but, without waiting for instructions, to march to the thunder of the cannon, and render prompt assistance wherever it might be required. It was long before the system was cordially accepted, even in Germany itself; and it had been fiercely criticized.

"The first step was to make a clear distinction between 'orders' and 'instructions.' An 'order' was to be obeyed, instantly and to the letter. 'Instructions' were an expression of the commander's wishes, not to be carried out unless they were manifestly practicable. But 'Orders,' in the technical sense, were not to be issued except by an officer actually present with the body of troops concerned, and fully aware of the situation; otherwise 'instructions' only would be sent. The second step was to train all officers to arrive at correct decisions, and so to make certain, so far as possible, that subordinates, when left to themselves, would act as their superiors would wish them to do. The third step was to discourage to the utmost the spirit of rash and selfish enterprise.

"In the German Army of to-day the means employed to ensure, so far as possible, correct decisions are, first, a uniform training in handling troops. Every German officer, practically speaking, is educated in the same school and taught to adapt his action to the same principles. The school is that of the General Staff. The principles, few but comprehensive, are those laid down by the Chief of Staff; and they are disseminated through the Army by his assistants, the officers of the General Staff, whom he himself has educated. Each army corps and each division has its own Chief of the Staff, all of them replicas of their teacher; and no General, so far as possible, is appointed even to the command of a brigade unless he is thoroughly acquainted with the official principles.

"The second means is a systematic encouragement, from the first moment an officer joins his regiment, of the spirit of initiative, of independent judgment and self-reliance. Each has its definite responsibilities, and superiors are forbidden, in the most stringent terms, to entrench upon the prerogatives of their subordinates. The third means is the enforcement of the strictest discipline, and the development of camaraderie in the highest sense. Despite the latitude that is accorded him, absolute and punctual obedience to the most trifling 'order' is exacted from the German officer; while devotion to duty and self-sacrifice, exalted to the same level as personal honour, and inculcated as the loftiest sentiment by which the soldier can be inspired, are trusted to counteract the tendencies of personal ambition.

"The benefit to the State was enormous. It is true that the initiative of subordinates sometimes degenerated into reckless audacity, and critics have dilated on these rare instances with ludicrous persistence, forgetting the hundreds of others where it was exercised to the best purpose, forgetting the spirit of mutual confidence that permeated the whole Army, and forgetting, at the same time, the deplorable

results of centralization in the Armies they overthrew. It is inconceivable that any student of war, comparing the conduct of the German, the French, and the Austrian Generals, should retain even the shadow of a prejudice in favour of blind obedience and limited responsibility.

“ ‘To what,’ asks the ablest commentator on the Franco-German War, ‘did the Germans owe their uninterrupted triumph? What was the cause of the constant disasters of the French? What new system did the Germans put in practice, and what are the elements of success of which the French were bereft?’ The system is, so to speak, official and authoritative amongst the Germans. *It is the initiative of the subordinate leaders.* This quality, which multiplies the strength of an Army, the Germans have succeeded in bringing to something near perfection. It is owing to this quality that, in the midst of varying events, the supreme command pursued its uninterrupted career of victory, and succeeded in controlling, almost without a check, the intricate machinery of the most powerful Army that the nineteenth century produced. In executing the orders of the supreme command, the subordinate leaders not only did over and over again more than was demanded of them, but surpassed the highest expectations of their superiors, notably at Sedan. It often happened that the faults, more or less inevitable, of the higher authorities were repaired by their subordinates, who thus won for them victories which they had not always deserved. In a word, *the Germans were indebted to the subordinate leaders that not a single favourable occasion throughout the whole campaign was allowed to escape unutilized.* The French, on the other hand, never even suspected the existence of so powerful a factor; and it is for this reason that they met with disasters, even when victory, so to speak, belonged to them by every rule of war. The faults and omissions of the French subordinate leaders are to be attributed to the false conception of the rights and functions of command, to the ingrained habit of blind and inert obedience, based on a principle which allowed no exception, and acting as a law, absolute and immutable, in all degrees of the military hierarchy. To the virile energy of the Germans they could oppose nothing but impetuous courage. Compensation for the more powerful fire of the German artillery was found in the superior weapon of the French infantry. But to the intelligent, hardy, and even at times somewhat reckless, initiative of the German subordinate leaders, the French had nothing to oppose, in the grand as in the minor operations, but a deliberate inactivity, always awaiting an impulse from above. These were the real causes of the numerous reverses and the swift destruction of the valiant French Army, and therein lies the true secret of German strength. Her foes of days to come will have to reckon seriously with this force, almost elementary in its manipulation, and prepare themselves in time to meet it. No well-organized Army can afford to dispense with *the initiative of the subordinate leaders, for it is the determining factor in modern war, and up to the present it has been monopolized by Germany.*”

I would apologize for the length of this quotation were it not that nothing but authoritative testimony can eradicate erroneous infor-



mation and false ideas from the minds of those who do no professional reading. Many civilians who have read amateur press accounts of the machine-like precision of the German General Staff assume that all operations are ordered in minutest detail by higher authority and that no initiative is ever allowed the subordinate. This is a very natural assumption for those whose business does not involve the study of war; but to my utter astonishment I ran across a lieutenant-commander of nearly twenty years' service in our Navy who did not know that the fundamental principle of the German military system is reliance upon the trained initiative of subordinates, and that our Naval War College training is based upon the same principle.

Practically all armies have adopted the German method of developing the initiative of subordinates, combined with a doctrine of war.

Several years ago the Naval War College began to apply the same system to our naval training. The order form in use in the German Army was modified and adapted to naval needs. These orders are invariable in form. They consist essentially of three paragraphs. The first gives the subordinate all the available information that would be of use to him in the execution of the order. The second gives the general plan of the superior—the object he wishes to accomplish. The third gives the forces assigned for the operation. He is told what he is to accomplish, but not how he is to accomplish it. Thus he must do his own thinking and must exercise his initiative to succeed; and as all orders for all operations, even of the most ordinary kind, are issued in this form, it affords continuous training in initiative, judgment, and decision.

The ability to reach a correct decision without delay is not an inherited characteristic, as many suppose. It is a habit of mind that is the result of systematic self-training in decisions applied to all situations, both great and small, as they arise in our daily occupations. A correct decision necessarily involves a logical consideration of all available information and experience. But many men who have both this knowledge and experience are comparatively unable to decide their line of action, simply because they have not trained their minds to do so. This training is essential to the development of this faculty. It is of great importance in all walks of life, but it is wholly essential in military life.

There is this difference, however, between decisions made in civil life and those required in military life. The civilian has usually a reasonable time in which to arrive at a conclusion, whereas a military decision must often be made at once to be of any use. The enemy will not wait for you to make up your mind.

Similarly, the power to exercise prompt initiative in large affairs can be acquired only by the habitual exercise of initiative in small ones.

Both initiative and decision flow from practice in logical thinking, combined with knowledge and experience. When Napoleon was a young student, he was asked by a companion how he always managed to decide so quickly in certain matters. He replied "*En y pensant toujours*," by thinking of them always.

Do not assume that the ability to make prompt decisions is not of great importance to men engaged in any occupation, for the lack of this power is as fatal to success in civil life as it is in military life.

In this connection I am reminded of a cartoon I saw very many years ago in the French paper *Le Rire*. It depicted a man standing on the banks of the Seine looking down into the water. He was ragged, dirty, and emaciated, and his dejected appearance and attitude clearly indicated that he was seriously contemplating suicide. Under the picture was this legend: "All my misfortunes have been due to never having been able to reach a decision."

There have, of course, been isolated cases in the past where naval leaders have trained their subordinates in the exercise of initiative. The most notable case was that of Nelson. His methods and their success are perhaps better known in all navies than those of any other of the great naval commanders. His method was that of the conference. He discussed his principles, methods, and plans with all of his captains so frequently that all were thoroughly acquainted with them. These principles and plans thus became those of the captains as well as of the admiral. They were the plans of the fleet—of their organization. This fleet was a team trained to work together with perfect loyalty to the fleet and to its leader. There was consequently no possible ground for criticism, except that which was invited and fully considered in general conference. Moreover, Nelson never spoke ill of his subordinates, but frequently praised them. He was the friend and protector of his officers and others who were in trouble. When a certain captain complained that the Admiralty had sent him several useless officers, Nelson said, "Send them to my ship. I can make a good officer of any decent man." When a young midshipman of his ship got a panic on his first attempt to go aloft, Nelson sprang into the rigging after him, said how sorry he would be for a midshipman who was afraid to go aloft, and encouraged him until he was over his fright. Upon another occasion he came on deck and found the ship in "irons," that is, caught head to wind and sailing backward, but instead of abusing the officer of the deck and telling him he didn't understand his business, he asked him what he thought he would better do. The officer said that he did not know, and Nelson replied, "Neither do I," and went below.

Under such conditions it is impossible to imagine disaffection, disloyalty, or failure to do his utmost on the part of any officer who served under this wise leader. Moreover, it is easy to understand how successfully his captains could fight a battle without his personal guidance.

The completeness of his victory over the French Fleet at Aboukir was the result of dispositions due to the initiative of his captains, the dispositions they made before his flagship arrived on the field.

Though his methods and the reasons for their success are better known to all naval officers than those of any other of the great commanders, yet the astonishing thing is that they have been so seldom imitated. I have given them somewhat in detail in order to bring out the great importance of the methods, the judgment, the justice, and

the tact of a leader in training his command in loyalty and in the exercise of prompt initiative.

As these principles and methods apply to all cases where officers of any grade are placed in command of a few men, or of many men, it may be useful to give a few illustrations of the effect upon an organization of the opposite line of conduct.

The following illustrations are of course derived from exceptional cases chosen as horrible examples of the disastrous effects that may be caused by bad manners, lack of sympathy and tact, ignorance of, or disregard of, the elementary principles of governing men, and mistaken ideas of punishment. They are selected from various navies.

Upon a certain occasion when President Lincoln was being shown over a man-of-war, he observed a closed, coffin-like box secured in a vertical position close alongside the ship's galley. He asked what it was, and was told that it was a "sweat box"; that for certain offences men were shut in the box and kept there until they sweated their toenails off. He got into it and had the door closed. In a few minutes he burst forth and gave an order that this instrument of torture be abolished for ever as a means of punishment in the navy.

About sixty years ago flogging was a recognised form of punishment, and was regularly practised in the navy. A man was stripped to the waist, his arms triced above his head, and given the number of strokes with the "cat" assigned to the offence he had committed. This cat was a whip of such power that it could readily be made to cut through the skin.

Together with many of our naval regulations and customs, this was an inheritance from the British, though I do not believe we ever applied it to such a savage degree as described by Sir Charles Napier, who states that he had often seen from 600 to 1,000 lashes given; that if the victim could not stand the whole of his punishment at one time he was sent to the hospital until he had sufficiently recovered to stand the remainder. In the Russian Army of old, men were sometimes sentenced to be flogged "without mercy," that is, flogged to death.

This form of punishment was believed to be necessary for the maintenance of discipline, and its abolition by act of Congress about 1854 was resented by many officers. When the new regulation was received on a certain ship in the Pacific, the commanding officer had all hands called aft on the quarter-deck to witness punishment. A man who had been sentenced to be flogged was doubly ironed with his hands behind his back and placed in front of the bilge pump, from which a stream of water was turned on his face until he became insensible. Each time he recovered consciousness the operation was repeated until the doctor reported that further punishment might endanger his life. Then the captain made a little speech in which he informed the crew that, though flogging had been abolished, he wished it clearly understood that he intended to maintain discipline on his ship.

The above incident was related to me by an officer who is still living, also the following incidents illustrating the savage nature of the punishments considered essential at that time, even for minor offences.

An executive officer was dissatisfied with the listless manner in which a man was sweeping down the deck. The man said he was not well, whereupon the executive officer had inflicted upon him the punishment of the "spread eagle," that is, he was triced up by the wrists inside the main rigging with his arms fully extended laterally, and allowed to hang there until he begged for mercy. He was then cut down and ordered to sweep the deck properly. He declared that he could no longer hold the broom, and was about to be triced up again, when, upon the suggestion of the captain, who had witnessed the occurrence, he was examined by the surgeon, who reported that both of his collar bones were broken.

Upon the same ship, a common form of punishment, then considered quite mild, was to lash a man's thumbs together behind his back, pass the lashing over a hammock hook and trice him up until his toes were just clear of the deck. My informant stated that this form of admonition never failed to bring the most refractory to terms within a very short time.

It seems to have been the general opinion in those days that the only forms of punishment that were effective were those that inflicted physical pain. Any man who was slow in obeying orders ran the risk of a blow from a rope end or a belaying pin in the hands of the nearest boatswain's mate. When hammocks were piped up, or all hands called on deck to make or furl sail, it was a common practice to station at the foot of each ladder a husky boatswain's mate, armed with the dreaded cat, and charged with the duty of slashing the last man on the part of his anatomy that was the last to disappear up the ladder. This was not considered as a punishment but simply as a reminder of the captain's desire to have a "smart ship."

To a certain extent this harsh treatment of enlisted men in the Navy was a reflection of similar methods in the merchant services of all nations, from which at that time many of our men were recruited. An admirable officer who came into the navy during the Civil War, after considerable service on American merchantmen, stated that when he first shipped as an apprentice on a deep-water ship, he was systematically persecuted and terrorized by the officers, particularly the bucko first mate. When he had been on board but a few days, the mate ordered him to replace a broken ratline in the main rigging, and when he replied he didn't know how, he had to fly for his life, as he thought, so savagely did the bucko chase him forward, roaring threats to kill him if he didn't find out damn quick and get up into the rigging and remain there until he finished. A sailor showed him how to turn in a splice and explained how to seize it on, and he set to work. Presently the captain came on deck, and, noting what a poor job he was making of it, ordered him down. He attempted to explain that the mate would murder him if he came down. Whereupon the captain seized a belaying pin, and exclaiming, "I'll show you who your Jesus is on board this ship," let fly and brought him down like a ripe apple. Through such instructions he obtained his knowledge of practical seamanship and sea manners.

You are doubtless familiar with the sea classic "Two Years Before the Mast," and similar accounts of life on board ship in the days of hemp and oak. Discipline was maintained through fear and physical force, and many sailors accepted their treatment without particular resentment, as all in the day's work.

When a classmate of mine was a young lad he was taken for a trip on a Lake Michigan schooner. One day he saw the captain step up behind the man at the wheel, glance over his shoulder at the compass, step back and knock him senseless, and take the wheel himself. When the man recovered consciousness, he got up and took the wheel again, and the captain walked away about other business. No word was spoken. The man understood that he was punished for being off his course.

Many officers conscientiously believed that it was their duty to keep a vigilant lookout for all violations of their numerous regulations, the majority of which concerned the minutiae of appearances and ceremonious forms rather than military efficiency. An amusing yarn is told of a captain possessed of this obsession who used to come on deck each morning, find all the fault he could, then go down to breakfast and easy digestion in the happy frame of mind that is the reward of duty well performed. One morning he could find not the slightest fault, as the entire crew and all the officers concerned, having determined to satisfy him for once, had left nothing whatever undone. All brasswork shone like gold, all sails were trimmed to a nicety, all gear coiled down, the decks as clean as a Dutch kitchen, and even the last grain of sand blown out of the seams of the deck. The "Old Man" got "madder and madder" as he paced the quarter-deck searching for a flaw and found none. Finally, he hailed the lookout in the topsail yard, and in reply to a prompt "Sir?" shouted, "I'm a lookin' at ye, dad gast ye!" and went below in a towering rage.

There still exist officers of this last type, though the necessity of achieving military efficiency, even at the expense of yacht-like appearance, is rapidly passing them into the discard.

There were not a few cases of vessels that were "shipshape from truck to keel," scrubbed, painted, and polished to perfection, but with gun crews untrained and gun gear "frozen." Such ships have been known to dump their target practice ammunition overboard to avoid having the paintwork tarnished by powder gases. This has occurred in various navies. I was present at a target practice where all but one round of the ammunition from a twelve inch turret was fired by the turret officer sticking his head out of a hatch in the roof of the turret and sighting over a ring bolt on the forward end. The smoke of the first shot had clouded the telescope sights, so that the pointers could not see the target, but the captain insisted that the guns be fired all the same. Of course no hits were made, but the object of getting the ship back into port on schedule time was attained.

As an example of treatment not calculated to inspire a very high degree of loyalty, the following was related by a foreign officer. A lieutenant reported for duty on a certain ship. The captain's greeting was: "Why did you come to this ship? I didn't ask for you. I don't

want you. What are your habits, anyway?" The officer very unwisely replied: "I usually get up at 3 a.m., shave and report for duty," whereupon the captain ordered that he do so every morning thereafter.

The following occurred in our service. Three midshipmen reported for duty on a seagoing ship, after having, of course, spent all their money. The executive officer stood them on a seam on the quarter-deck and informed the captain. The latter, after looking them over carefully, pointed to one and said: "I'll keep that one, put the other two ashore." This was accordingly done. A distinguished admiral, who was one of the three middies concerned, related this yarn during a call on a wardroom mess of which I was a member. We asked him if he was the midshipman selected, and he replied that he was not.

Shortly after I reported on my first ship, I learned that if I made out an official application for leave, and the captain approved it, I would be free to do as I pleased until my leave expired. So, having prepared the document in due form, I requested the marine orderly at the cabin door to hand it to the captain. This orderly was an old man who had had extensive experience with the temperamental idiosyncrasies of commanding officers. He glanced at the paper and at once handed it back to me with the following wise admonition: "If you'd be a takin' of my advice, now, Mr. Sims, you'd hand this here request in after the old man's had his lunch: he's in a h—l of a humour this mornin'." I followed this advice and my leave was granted, and since that time I have seldom if ever made any request of a superior officer until after he has had his lunch. I have related this incident to you gentlemen because I believe that a systematic avoidance of contact with the empty stomach will be found as advantageous in civil as in military life.

It would appear that in former times there was too often excessive severity in the exercise of authority, little or no attempt to control bad tempers, not much respect for higher authority, and excessive solicitude for personal dignity. The following are illustrations:—

A captain was assigned to relieve another in command of a ship. The crew and officers were mustered on the quarter-deck for the usual ceremony on such occasions. After the orders were read and the new captain had assumed command, he sent for the regulation book, tore all the inside out of it and threw it overboard, placed the cover over his shoulders, and, announcing that thereafter he would be the regulations, gave the order to "pipe down" and marched into the cabin. I have heard an admiral protest that there should be no regulations that applied to an officer of his grade.

Here is a yarn which, though a very ancient "chestnut" in the Navy, nevertheless will serve to illustrate, by contrast with present ideas, the great change which has taken place in the importance which officers attach to the ceremonious consideration shown their persons and positions.

One Sunday morning a pompous admiral in command of a navy yard was a trifle late at chapel. The chaplain was "just caught," that is, a young man whose conception of the relative importance of officiating divine in full regalia and his commanding officer was still so defective that he began the service before the arrival of the admiral,

who, entering just in time to hear the announcement that "The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him," promptly replied: "Sir, I would have you understand that the Lord is not in His holy temple until I have taken my seat." The admiral dozed comfortably through the remainder of the service until the chaplain announced that communion service would be held in the chapel on the following Sunday, "by order of the bishop of the diocese." The words "by order" brought the admiral bolt upright in his chair to demand: "By whose order did you say, sir?" The chaplain with grave dignity replied, "By the order of the bishop of the diocese." "Well, sir," replied the admiral, "Let me inform you that I'm the bishop of this diocese, and there'll be no communion service here next Sunday."

Though incidents such as the above refer chiefly to the manners and methods that pertained before the humane ideas of our times rendered them impossible, it is nevertheless true that there still exist in all military services some officers whose methods of discipline are based upon equally mistaken ideas, and are productive of equally deplorable results.

For example, there are those who conscientiously practise such precepts as the following:—

Never fail to punish all faults, including those of omission, if you want to have an efficient ship.

Always put at least two officers under suspension to insure a general order being carried out properly.

An executive officer should not be on speaking terms with any of the watch officers.

Never consult a subordinate. Give him an order and insist that he carry it out in detail as directed. He is not paid to think.

Nothing "brings a man to time" so quickly as solitary confinement in the brig on bread and water.

Such indiscriminating severity invariably leads to trouble, and when combined with disrespectful or contemptuous treatment sometimes causes such complete disaffection and resentment as to result in very serious failures of discipline. A single officer of the character indicated may cause this deplorable condition. I have in mind a successful and happy ship of the old Navy which, shortly after the reporting of a new executive officer, who treated the crew with great severity and positive injustice, became mutinous to such a degree that gun gear was thrown overboard, gear was cut, etc. Also a vessel where similar conditions resulted in a combination among the gun pointers not to hit the target. One pointer who in his enthusiasm forgot the agreement and made a good score was taken on the fore-castle and soundly beaten by the crew. Cases have been known where it was not safe for certain officers to go forward at night, and where attempts have been made to kill the master-at-arms or other petty officers.

In contrast with such cases is the happy and successful ship—for the happy ship is almost invariably successful. Both officers and

men brag about "their ship." They will not allow her to be beaten in anything if they can help it. Every man loyally does his best to help along, and is encouraged to exercise his initiative in so doing. Such a ship is a practical school in the development of the two primary essentials of military character; that is, loyalty and initiative.

Let me disclaim again any idea of implying that these cases are typical. They are wholly exceptional at the present time, though they were all too prevalent within the period of service of men still living. Nevertheless men of the type described above, and their mistaken methods of discipline, still exist, though in a somewhat more civilized form.

I refer to these cases because it seems to me that an understanding of the evil consequences of mistaken methods and defective character gives a much more impressive idea of the value of the opposite qualities than any academic analysis could possibly give.

It seems almost incredible that there should be men of marked intellectual capacity, extensive professional knowledge and experience, energy and professional enthusiasm, who have been a detriment to the Service in every position they have occupied. They are the so-called "impossible" men who have left throughout their careers a trail of discontent and insubordination, all because of their ignorance of, or neglect of, one or many of the essential attributes of military character.

I knew one such officer who was a polished gentleman in all respects, except that he failed to treat his enlisted subordinates with respect. His habitual manner to them was calmly sarcastic and mildly contemptuous, and sometimes quite insulting, and in consequence he failed utterly to inspire their loyalty to the organization.

A very distinguished officer said after reaching the retired list: "The mistake of my career was that I did not treat young officers with respect, and subsequently they were the means of defeating my dearest ambitions."

The services of this officer, in spite of this defect, and by reason of his great ability, energy, and professional attainment, and devotion to the Service, were nevertheless of great value.

Both qualities and defects of course exist in varying degrees. These sometimes counterbalance each other, and sometimes the value of certain qualities makes up for the absence of others.

Some officers of ordinary capacity and attainments have always been successful because of their ability to inspire the complete and enthusiastic loyalty of all serving with them, and thus command their best endeavours; but no matter what other qualities an officer may possess, such success can never be achieved if he fails in justice, consideration, sympathy, and tact in his relations with his subordinates.

Such men are invaluable in the training of the personnel of a military organization in cheerful obedience, loyalty, and initiative; and when these qualities are combined in a man of naturally strong character and intellectual capacity he has the very foundation stones upon which to build the military character.

The pity of it is that so many men of great potential power should not only have ruined their own careers, but have actually inflicted



continuous injury upon the Service, through neglecting to make an estimate of the situation as regards their characters and through neglecting to use their brains to determine the qualities and line of conduct essential to success in handling their men, and thus failing to reach a decision which their force of character would have enabled them to adhere to.

Such a reasoned process applied to the most important attribute of an officer, namely, his military character, would have saved many from partial or complete failure through the unreasoned, though conscientious, conviction that it was actually their duty to maintain an inflexible rigidity of manner toward their subordinates, to avoid any display of personal sympathy, to rule them exclusively by the fear of indiscriminating severity in the application of maximum punishments, and such like obsessions.

It would appear that such officers go through their whole career actually guided by a snap judgment, or a phrase, borrowed from some older officer, such as the precepts quoted above. Though they have plenty of brains and mean well, their mistake is that they never have subjected themselves and their official conduct to any logical analysis. Moreover, they are usually entirely self-satisfied, and frequently boastful of their unreasoned methods of discipline; and they usually explain their lack of success by inveighing against the quality of the personnel committed to their charge.

All this to accentuate the conclusion of the War College Conference that: "We believe it is the duty of every officer to study his own character that he may improve it, and to study the characters of his associates that he may act more efficiently in his relation with them."

This, then, is the lesson for all members of our military Services. Let us consider seriously this matter of military character, especially our own. Let us not allow anybody to persuade us that it is a "high brow" subject, for though military writers confine their analysis almost exclusively to the question of the great leaders, the principles apply equally to all individuals of an organization from the newest recruit up.

Above all things, let us not regard loyalty as a personal matter. It is due to our organization and our country under all circumstances and under all possible conditions. No faults on the part of superiors can excuse any failure in loyalty upon our part. This is easy to say, but sometimes very difficult to live up to. As it is of the utmost importance, let me illustrate it by an example.

Suppose that, upon the outbreak of war, you gentlemen enlist in the Navy, and are assigned to what is termed a "happy ship," where you are treated with courtesy, consideration, and helpfulness. Your officers and petty officers assist and encourage you in learning your duties and the ways of the Navy. You find loyalty and obedience not only easy but an actual pleasure. You begin to think you are a disciplined man, until one day you are accosted by a boatswain's mate who has a voice like a bull, a scowl like a thunder cloud and a jaw like the corner of a box. He asks with a sneer why in the hell you did such a blankety-blank thing as so and so.

You begin to explain that you thought. . . . When he interrupts to inform you that of all the blank-blank idiots you are the limit, that you have no business to think, etc., but must get busy and do so and so, and be damn quick about it.

You are naturally shocked and indignant, and feel a strong resentment against the treatment of such a beast (there are a few of them left). You feel that it is impossible to be loyal to him. But the point is that your loyalty is not due to him alone, or to any other person, but to your organization, your ship, your "team." Disagreeable though he may be, he represents, as far as concerns you at the time, the commander-in-chief, the President of the United States.

Once you have grasped this, it will be clear to you what your attitude and conduct should be; but could you bear such insulting treatment without open resentment? Could you obey such an order with a cheerful, "Aye, aye," and without even showing by your expression that you resent it?

If you could do so, and by reason of that, and similar experiences, you should acquire an attitude toward your subordinates that would inspire them with loyalty to the team, as well as to yourself, you would become a very useful servant of Uncle Sam, and you would be pointed in the right direction to accomplish as much as your natural ability would permit.

Of course no such affront to personal dignity should ever be inflicted upon any subordinate; but do not imagine for a moment that submission involves any loss of personal dignity and self-respect. Quite the contrary, for not only can you congratulate yourself that you have won a victory in self-control; that you have sustained the rights and functions of command; but that you have received an impressive illustration of the evil influence of abuse of authority, of injustice, of disrespect, or even of bad manners toward a subordinate.

Not infrequently the extent of this evil influence is under-estimated. It is hardly possible to exaggerate it. It is always dangerous if not checked in time. I have in mind the case of a large body of men under one command, but divided into, say, ten groups, each under its own officers. In one group the serious offences committed within a short period were twenty times as great as in the other time. The cause was found to be the manner and methods of a leading petty officer that were similar to those of the boatswain's mate described above, though less in degree. The defect was corrected and the trouble disappeared. If it had been allowed to continue, it might have spread through imitation, and might possibly have turned the organization into a "mad house" of the kind heretofore described.

A petty officer of this kind is a greater menace to discipline and loyalty than many "bad" men, and his conduct should therefore be corrected, or the man at once disgraced or dismissed. In the case of an officer the evil influence is of course much greater.

The point is that all those who exercise authority should remember that, in their daily contact with their subordinates, every order, as well as the manner, bearing, and attitude of mind with which it is given, has its influence in promoting or retarding the mission of the

whole organization, that is, its maximum efficiency in preparation for war.

The responsibility rests of course with him who is in chief command. He has the power to eliminate all detrimental subordinates, and if through kindness of heart or personal consideration he fails to do so, he must take the consequences. He is also responsible for the amount of initiative and loyalty displayed by his subordinates, it being one of his most important duties to see that they are trained in these invaluable qualities.

The methods of this training are therefore all important. They must be provided for in the organization, which should be such as to insure that responsibility is passed down the line, each subordinate being assigned the full share that properly belongs to his rank or station; and all should be brought thoroughly to understand what are the influences, whether of method or of conduct, which tend to promote loyalty or to discourage it.

In a military organization "good enough" is no good. War is a vitally important game of one great team against another, and if your team is not adequately trained it will suffer defeat. In civil life the law holds you blameless if you can prove that you have exercised reasonable diligence in carrying out a contract; but by military law a court-martial will hold you to account unless you have done your "utmost."

This utmost cannot be achieved unless there is loyalty throughout the organization. It is the one wholly indispensable quality. All officers desire it from their subordinates, and wish to accord it to their superiors, but unfortunately, through failure to study the important subject of military character, and particularly through failure to estimate the influence of their own characters, methods, bearing, and conduct, upon their subordinates, they often conscientiously pursue a mistaken course.

Let me, therefore, in conclusion, briefly enumerate a few of the most important things that should always be done, and a few of those that should always be avoided, in the effort to promote loyalty and initiative in those for whose training we are responsible.

1. Always let your general mission be understood. The American is willing to co-operate when his intelligence is enlisted.
2. Invite suggestions, and consider them carefully.
3. Hold conferences for this purpose. I have known valuable improvements in seamanship, gunnery, radio, etc., to result from such suggestions from junior officers and enlisted men. Moreover, consulting subordinates greatly increases their self-respect, and tends strongly to promote initiative and inspire the "team spirit," which is another name for loyalty.
4. Make use of competitions where practicable. It promotes interest in even the most strenuous drills.
5. Explain the necessity for constant drill.

This imperative necessity is so very generally misunderstood by new men, and all too frequently even by old officers, that it is worthy

of special explanation. Usually the recruit does not understand why he is subjected to daily drills after he has thoroughly learned his duties. For example, most of the operations of loading and firing a modern gun are very simple. The beginner learns his own duties in a few lessons, and learns in a few days those of the other members of the crew. He therefore very naturally questions the wisdom of expending considerable perspiration each day in performing these arduous duties over and over again, and, not understanding, becomes dissatisfied. This is a natural result of the intelligence of our men. They are accustomed to understand what they are doing and why they are doing it; and experience has shown that when they do understand this matter they will drill enthusiastically, but that when they don't, their dissatisfaction is acute. This condition of mind is a prolific cause of trouble that frequently leads to desertion. It is therefore essential that officers understand and explain that the object of drill is not simply to learn how to perform the various necessary operations, but to repeat them so often and so continuously that these operations will eventually be performed subconsciously, that is, without really thinking about them; or, as we sometimes say, by the marrow of the backbone instead of by the brain. The following incidents will illustrate this:—

An Indian camp follower out West knifed one of our soldiers in a quarrel, seized a rifle, and fled. An officer and two old soldiers pursued him. The latter had taken magazine sporting rifles instead of their regulation pieces. Both parties took cover and opened fire. Each time a soldier fired he brought his rifle to the prescribed position of "load," carried his hand to his waist line to get another cartridge, and, finding none there, remembered that he had a different rifle, swung the lever of the magazine and fired again, only to repeat the regular drill operations after each shot. These men were trained to the subconscious degree. That is, in using their regular weapons they could be depended upon to perform all the necessary operations almost automatically, no matter what the excitement of battle.

The operation of balancing a bicycle is another subconscious process, as is also that of putting on the brake. After riding for many years a bicycle having a brake lever on the handle bars, I found that it was two or three years after adopting the hub brake before I entirely ceased, when surprised at a street corner, reaching for the lever that was no longer there. The subconscious process, or "habit," of using the old brake was so strong that it was hard to get rid of, and as this necessarily delayed putting on the hub brake, it was thus a real danger. Let no one therefore assume that because he is expert in handling a certain type of automobile, he will not be in danger, for a while at least, when he buys a new model that has a different kind of control gear. I am sure that many serious accidents have been caused by failure to recognize this dangerous persistence of the impulse in question, and I am inclined to believe that the danger is even greater in the case of the experienced drivers who do not understand this matter, and are therefore over-confident, than in the case of the cautious beginner with his first machine. The manufacturer who makes a radical change in the control gear

of a new model thereby accepts a certain responsibility. We attempt to standardize the control gear of our naval guns so that a pointer transferred from one ship to another will not have to be trained over again.

Two old Erie canal boatmen, Jim and Mike, took a night off and went to a Bowery theatre. When the highly bedizened heroine appeared on the stage Jim said: "I believe that's Sal who used to be on the barge 'Pricklyheat' with us." Mike scouted the idea, but Jim offered to back his judgment with a bet and assume the burden of proof. This being accepted, he waited until the lady was engaged in the most impassioned scene of the melodrama, when he sang out sharply: "Low bridge!" and Sal went flat on her stomach, thus illustrating again the almost irresistible force of the subconscious impulse.

6. Be sure you know thoroughly the subject of all your instructions. Knowledge of your job always commands respect from those associated with you.

Two young officers who were sitting in the deck house on the old receiving ship "Colorado," noticed that every time the quartermaster, a man old enough to be their grandfather, came in, he laid his cap on the deck. They told him he need not even take his cap off, that the deck house was the same as out of doors. He replied: "You young gentlemen knows so much more as what I do that I just feels like takin' off me hat."

7. Encourage your men to come to you for information on any subject, and take pains to look it up and supply it. Help them in anything they want to study.
8. Train your men in initiative by "putting it up to them" on all proper occasions, and explain why you do it.
9. When you have inspired loyalty in all of your men, more than half your troubles will be over, for thereafter initiative will develop rapidly if you give it intelligent direction and adequate opportunity. Thus you will have developed a team in which the men will speak of the officers of their division or ship as "we," instead of "they."

A competent clerk who had just been dismissed asked his "boss" if he would please tell him in what respect he had been unsatisfactory. The boss replied: "In loyalty, in habitually referring to the administration of this company as 'they' instead of 'we.'"

10. Maintain discipline with the minimum reference to higher authority. If you succeed in establishing the relations indicated by the above, you will hardly ever need to appeal to higher authority.
11. Always be considerate of inexperience. When admonition will correct a small fault, it is almost always a mistake to inflict punishment.
12. Be absolutely just in all your dealings with your men. Hardly anything tends more strongly towards loyalty. All kinds of men respond to the "square deal."

13. Avoid harshness in manner or in methods. Let admonition or punishment be inflicted in sorrow, not in anger. Always give the man the benefit of any reasonable doubt.
14. Never destroy or decrease a man's self-respect by humiliating him before others. If his self-respect is destroyed his usefulness will be seriously diminished. A man who is "called down" in the presence of others can hardly help resenting it. Frequent "sanding down" of your men is an all too common mistake, and a very detrimental one.
15. Do not let the state of your liver influence your attitude toward your men.
16. Do not inflict severe reprimands for minor faults. Consider each case on its merits. Often an explanation of the result of faults is the most effective means of correcting them. Take pains to explain to the men what the effect would be upon the whole organization if faults were not corrected.
17. Remember that the purpose of all forms of punishment is correction—a correction of the offending individual and a warning to others similarly situated. Never let the spirit of revenge have any influence upon your decision in disciplinary matters.
18. Before you take any action, or adopt any line of conduct, that concerns one of your men (or all of your men), consider carefully its effect upon the man's loyalty, upon the development of his character, and its effect upon the discipline of the organization, whether a company, a division, a regiment, or a ship.
19. Remember that every single one of your official acts exerts a certain influence one way or the other.
20. Avoid, as you would the plague, hostile criticism of authority, or even facetious or thoughtless criticism that has no hostile intent. Our naval gunnery instructions state that "destructive criticism that is born in officers' messes will soon spread through the ship and completely kill the ship spirit."

Lord Jarvis said: "Discipline begins in the wardroom. I dread not the seamen, it is the indiscreet conversation of the officers and their presumptuous discussions of the orders they receive that produce all our ills."

Each individual contributes to or detracts from the sum total of Service character.

Napoleon declared that the importance of moral qualities is to physical as three is to one.

Admiral Knight in his address upon the occasion of the graduation exercise of a class of officers last June said that "our people as a whole do not realize that preparedness is primarily a matter of character; that the preparedness of a nation begins deep down in the individual soul of the individual citizen—that it is essentially a consecration of self to a cause."

To a certain extent this is also true of the Navy. Heretofore little attention has been given to this very important subject. I do

not recall that, until quite recently, I had ever known it even to be referred to officially, either during the term of instruction at the Naval Academy or in the Service since that time. While this may be an extenuating circumstance, it should be recognized that it is no excuse for those of us who have violated many of the essential precepts without realizing the gravity of our offence; for it was our business as military men to understand the effect of our acts and conduct. But now that attention has been directed to this matter by the Naval War College, we may be sure that the essentials of military character will hereafter be officially recognized as an important element of an officer's education.

