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Letter from
W.L.R.

To
W.W.C.C.

7 Feb. 14.

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U.S.S. Delaware,

Guacanayabo Bay, Cuba.

Feb. 7, 1914.

My dear Captain Little,

I hope all is going on prosperously with you at the War College. I see mention in the paper that the Secretary thinks of the College every now and then.

This ship is a fine one and in excellent condition; the crew willing etc., etc. It has all the virtues.

It is very interesting to observe the running of the Fleet after its theoretical consideration at the College.

One of the first things that strikes me is the necessity of sending officers to the College while still young. This is for a reason that never occurred to me at the College.

It is that all the executive work, all the details, are attended to by young officers, both in the Navy Department and in the fleet. A strong man in high position lays down general policy; a weak man's general policy is that of his subordinates about him. But in either case, the vast majority of details are attended to by members of the staff. It is physically impossible for the boss to do everything. Therefore, if young officers are not made acquainted with the principles of administration, as we teach them at the College, including areas of discretion, of superior action, etc., etc., these young officers are continually pressing on their boss, either in Washington or in

the fleet, to butt in and centralize. To such constant pressure, the best man yields more or less; and there is a great increase of paper work, a great tendency to short circuit intermediate authorities, and an increase of centralization since I was last afloat. The presence of Caskey on the C-in-C's staff has been a great advantage to the fleet, whereas other staff officers cannot write an intelligible order, and urge their superior to jump in by signal and attempt to manage details which distance and ignorance of cognate matters renders them incompetent to do.

Sims with his crowd from the War College is doing wonders with regard to the military development of the torpedo flotilla.

It will be very difficult to do much in the way of War College work in the fleet. The public school course adds 5 to 10 hours a week's work to the divisional officers.

It is surprising to see how well these young officers are responding to this new demand upon them.

The work in the fleet convinces one very quickly how sound the College course is. It depends essentially on the solution of problems followed by a critique of solutions.

Maneuvers come after a thorough course of problem solving. Yet, here in the fleet and in Washington, the idea is wide spread that exercises in chart maneuvers is the principal work of the College.

In problem work we learn to think and reason soundly. We are very deficient in such sound reasoning powers in the fleet.

Moreover, the necessity for the order form is most apparent. Officers give 'commands' when they should give 'orders'. They have little idea of utilizing the intelligence of their subordinates. They have no idea of established doctrine as able to supplant minute instructions.

As an example, when the blue jacket regiment landed just before dawn to attack the marines at Culebra two weeks ago, the regimental commander thought it sufficient ^a prearrangement to tell his battalion commanders to keep near him and he would give directions as needed (or words to that effect)

As a consequence, the boats under fire were trying to ascertain who their neighbors in the darkness were after landing, a battalion commander found himself at day break on a hill top without his command. He had no paragraph one or two in any instructions he had received. He did not know where to look for his command or for instructions.

As there was no critique after the manoeuvres everyone is either satisfied that things went off well, or else that it is not possible to do any better under the conditions.

So, let me urge on the College to stick hard to plenty of problem solving and order writing as the Foundation War College work. Then manoeuvres afterwards. Careful critiques after every exercise whether problem or manoeuvres. Plenty of young officers, because they have a deep influence on the details of work even when they do not control policy, and that influence is the wrong way, towards centralization, when they have not had War College training. Buddecke and

his staff officers working for the "old man" is the proper standard.

My regards to all at the College, and believe me

Very sincerely yours

/s/ W.L.Rodgers.