

Extracts from speech of Honorable Edwin Denby, Secretary of the Navy, to the graduating class, Naval War College, Newport, R. I., on Saturday, May 26, 1923.

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It is a very great pleasure and honor to be permitted to come here today, and to address you, and hand to you the certificates which testify to the successful completion of a year's engrossing work. Not alone have the studies in which you have been engaged been highly beneficial to you, but incidentally much good must have been done to you personally, through your tour of duty here. You have had an opportunity to pause in the midst of very active lives of engrossing daily tasks, and take stock of your mental equipment for command in the Navy. You have had that mental application which limbers up the brain at an age when it tends to become set in its reactions. You have had close association with a large number of experienced representative officers of all branches of the Naval service, and with able officers of the Army and Coast Guard, thus counteracting the tendency to mental non-receptiveness, difficult to combat in the isolation of command.

At no time in our history has close study of Naval science and earnest devotion to duty been more necessary than at this moment. It is a day when Naval strength is vitally necessary and a full grasp by Naval officers of world possibilities highly important. We think in terms of hope for continued peace; we strive through diplomacy, backed by power, to keep that desired peace; but we must neither be blind to facts nor forgetful of our obligation to be ready for defense in a world full of menace.

We know now beyond peradventure that war between great powers or groups of powers will always involve many other nations and we can not say with certainty that such a war may not come at any time. There need be no demand for excessive armament. There will be none for a great increase of our present establishment made by the Navy Department at the coming session of Congress. We shall ask for additional cruisers, allowed under the Treaty for the Limitation of Armament. We shall ask for additional light-draft gun-boats, the vital need of which is being demonstrated every day; and we shall ask for certain submarines and airplanes.

There will be nothing extravagant in our recommendations to Congress; and we hope to be able to keep the proposed appropriations approximately within the limits reached last year. While, therefore, we do not anticipate the need of a great building program, we do realize that what we have must be in constant readiness for effective use.

There should be no belittling of the scope and power of the various arms of our sea defense,--no exaggeration of the importance of one at the cost of another. On the other hand there should certainly be no lessening in the study and development and full supply of all new arms.

This splendid institution, the War College, is designed for the instruction of officers in the science of their profession and the larger aspects of Naval warfare. You use those



methods best adapted to improve the skill of experienced men in the handling of the tools of their craft. Your studies include Policy, Command, Strategy, Tactics, Logistics, International Law, and especially the working out of concrete problems of attack and defense. You study deeply the campaigns of the past, and from them extract and apply the unchanging principles of Naval warfare, with the variants in tactics made necessary by new conditions and modern weapons.

Speeds, armor, calibres, communications, and ships, upon, above and below the surface, change constantly, but one element in war remains the same. In his essential qualities the Naval officer of today closely resembles the officer of the past. John Paul Jones could not have anticipated our ships and guns, but his description of an officer and a gentleman is as apt today as it was when written. He stated to the Marine Committee, September 14, 1775:

"It is, by no means, enough that an officer of the Navy should be a capable mariner. He must be that, of course, but also a great deal more. He should be, as well, a gentleman of liberal education, refined manner, punctilious courtesy, and the nicest sense of personal honor. He should not only be able to express himself clearly and with force in his own language both with tongue and pen, but he should be versed in French and Spanish. - - - He should be the soul of tact, patience, justice, firmness, and charity. No meritorious act of a subordinate should escape his attention or be left to pass without its reward, if even the reward be only one word of

approval. Conversely, he should not be blind to a single fault in any subordinate, though at the same time he should be quick and unflinching to distinguish error from malice, thoughtlessness from incompetency, and well-meant shortcoming from heedless or stupid blunder. As he should be universal and impartial in his rewards and approval of merit, so should he be judicial and unbending in his punishment or reproof of misconduct."

The closer we live to the high ideals thus set forth, the better for the Navy and the country. The principles of leadership are immutable, and the specifications for a gentleman have not changed since the infant Navy first took the seas. Leadership not alone implies capacity to fight ships and men, to inspire enthusiasm, but it also implies sympathy and understanding. With these qualities and their application by officers and petty officers from the Captain down, many a man is saved from A. W. O. L. and desertion; many a man's life is changed from gloom to cheer; and many a man is saved to the Navy who might otherwise be lost. I hope to see a still closer contact between commissioned and enlisted men. It will result in benefit to both. Personally, I believe that within sound limits, the fewer courts-martial and other punishments, the better. A happy ship is a good ship.

As you leave here today, I hope and earnestly believe that your fitness for your professional duties will have been much increased and your love of your country and devotion to its service greatly quickened.