

DIGEST OF SELECTED ARTICLES

THE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF HIGH COMMAND

By Captain Harris Laning, U. S. Navy. 22 pages.—*United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, December, 1922, p. 2041.

This article purports to outline a practical method for insuring in naval forces the success of the high command. In the navy, there are two distinct types of command, high command and low command. The line of demarkation usually lies somewhere above the grade of captain. In the high command, the commander is a leader who creates ideas as well as directs the carrying out of them. In the low command, the commander is always a follower who merely carries out the ideas of another. The three fundamentals for success in high command are:—First, knowledge of exactly what is to be accomplished; second, ability to lay out the certain way to accomplish it with the forces at one's disposal; and third, skill in directing and leading the forces commanded so they will do the thing to be accomplished in the way decided on to do it. In other words, it means knowledge, planning, and execution. The first step toward high command is a study of war—what causes it, what constitutes a decision, and what principle of strategy and tactics should be followed to gain decisions. The second step consists in the application of principles in planning and carrying out successful operations pertaining to war. By such practice, an officer learns to estimate correctly situations and to reach sound decisions.

The principles of high command are embodied in the trinity—self-preservation, planning, and execution. No matter how well the commander may prepare himself, no matter how expert he may become in planning, these things go for naught unless he *organizes* his command to carry out his plan, *indoctrinates* it with the plan and method of carrying it out, *trains* it so it will act in coordinated effort in accordance with the indoctrination, and finally develops it in "the fighting spirit" and "the will to win"—or morale.