

RIFLE SHOOTING BECOMING A LOST ART IN AMERICA

Schoolboys Taught to Handle Military Weapons as Part of the Scheme of National Defence in Other Countries—How Increased Use of the Ranges Would Make an Army of Trained Marksmen Available in Case of War



By BURGOYNE HAMILTON.
FAILURE to grasp facts is one of our most dangerous faults. We read of the needs of our system of national defence, we see photographs and figures telling of its defects, which are unquestionably true, yet the majority of us give no attention to the matter. We pay high salaries to officials for their expert opinions, which are promptly consigned to the ever waiting pigeon hole or the waste paper basket.

We have been told that certain police departments were corrupt, that many of their members were worse than the bandits whom they were being paid to repress, yet that such was the case was not generally realized until the actual conviction of crime of some of these men.

A large percentage of Americans believe that we shall never have another war, while another contingent are thoroughly convinced that war is not an impossibility, but that if one should occur we could prepare for and carry out our purpose, whatever it might be. A very small proportion of us believe that we are still likely to take up the cudgels of defence, and these few are anxious to see plenty of cudgels on hand.

It is very difficult without being apparently unpatriotic to induce the average American to look our military conditions squarely in the face. Conceit, self-assurance, false optimism, call it what you may, has unquestionably blocked our progress in the defence of the land. If we are so fond of our ours why do we not afford it enough protection to prevent its being invaded by an enemy?

Would a sensible person hire a five-year-old boy to act as caretaker and watchman for his home? Would a university send a football team of three undersized players in against its opponents' eleven huskies? Such questions seem ridiculous, yet one pictures our present condition and the other our condition as it would be in the event of war with a first class Power.

It has recently been shown that our resources so far as field artillery and its ammunition are concerned are woefully lacking. Now let us turn to the question of military rifle shooting.

Of course it must be taken for granted that a man who has never fired a service rifle is certainly not fit to be rushed to the skirmish line; that he should first receive at least rudimentary instructions. It should also be conceded that a man who has had some training, but who cannot do better than hit the outer edge of a target at 200 yards in a friendly competition, is not a very valuable asset as an infantryman in action.

America as a rifle shooting nation ranks very low. To be sure we have rifle teams which have won against all other countries, but the members of these teams are specialists. They live to shoot, they are trained in a systematic way, they use the best ammunition in the world and their rifles are picked weapons, all star gauged. They make a study of wind velocities, mirages, bullets, powder, lights and sights, spending a great part of the warmer seasons on the outdoor ranges and in winter practising at indoor galleries.

These ultra experts constitute a very small proportion of our meagre rifle shooting population, and in actual hostilities it is doubtful whether their excessive ability would be of great value, that is on the firing line. It seems reasonable to suppose that a regiment made up wholly of sharpshooters would prove more efficient than one composed half of experts and half of marksmen. Military riflemen are divided into three classes—marksmen (lowest), sharpshooters (intermediate) and experts (highest).

To be termed a sharpshooter a man must indeed be a very good shot, and under conditions presented by modern warfare qualification for this class leaves little to be desired by the regimental commander. It is surprising how little the average American knows about rifle shooting. Give him his choice and he will take up the shotgun in preference to the more beneficial weapon. The reason for this is that clay bird matches are held weekly in most cities and towns, and are of easy access, while rifle ranges are about as accessible for civilians as Mount McKinley is for explorers.

A New York civilian desiring to spend a few hours at outdoor military rifle practice would have great difficulty in securing range accommodations. He could probably find his way to Peekskill or Blauvelt, but unless he had made previous arrangements, received permission and secured a man to tend his target his trip would be for naught. The militiaman has more opportunity, and rightly so, but at least he must spend time and money and take great trouble to obtain practice outside of that ordered for his organization on special dates.

To give an idea of how one Eastern State tries to teach its militia to shoot the following facts are presented. First a day is set for a certain company to occupy a certain range. The company leaves home at daybreak, goes by rail some forty miles, hikes two more, sends its own men to the pits to arrange targets and finally commences firing between 9 and 10 A. M., continuing

until about 5 P. M. excepting for an hour at noon.

The writer witnessed the performance of one of these companies, which was about fifty strong. The men all knew the manual of arms fairly well, but as to the real use of the weapon with which they were armed they were untrained, with the exception of sixteen who qualified as marksmen. Only sixteen out of fifty is a very discouraging record, but these men couldn't be blamed. They simply hadn't the facilities for learning. With proper training and with more than one day spent on the range probably the remaining thirty-four would have become marksmen and some of them sharpshooters.

desire to excel if proper facilities were supplied.

Accurate shooting teaches a lad to be steady and self-reliant. It is a character builder in every sense of the word. It discourages the use of tobacco and alcoholics and helps to produce a manly man.

If all public school boys throughout the country had a proper opportunity we would have inside of five years hundreds of thousands of marksmen who had attained that rating with no idea of war, with no intent to kill, and our idea of defensive power without militarism would be partially realized.

The United States has progressed more rapidly than any other nation

at the firing point. Ranges suitable for practice with the Government rifle and service ammunition are much more elaborate.

With a little encouragement on the part of officials and with very little extra expense State rifle ranges could be made so attractive for civilians as well as militiamen that they would draw thousands of men on Saturday afternoons and holidays.

That other nations realize the value of marksmanship may be shown by explaining briefly what they have been doing for the advancement of rifle shooting.

France in 1893 provided instruction in rifle shooting for boys of 10 years and

instruction for them and issues rifles, ammunition and targets free. At present 141 schools maintain courses of instruction in target practice; special low rates of fare on the railroads are given to riflemen going to the ranges.

Sweden appropriates annually \$210,000 for civilian rifle practice and in 1910 there were 2,169 rifle clubs in that country with a total membership of 129,820. Every village has its rifle range, and although the population of the entire country is only about five and a half millions there were over 148,000 active riflemen in 1911.

Little Switzerland, with a population of only three and a half millions, boasts of no less than 2,800 rifle ranges and

Records of the War Department show that in 1910 29,230 members of the regular army, exclusive of those in the Philippines, received rifle instruction, of whom 17,473 failed to make the qualifying score. In the organized militia 51,749 received rifle instruction, of whom 20,630 failed to qualify as marksmen. There were also 40,000 National Guardsmen who were not even taken to a range.

Out of the 25,320 students of colleges and universities supporting military departments only 7,710 received instruction in rifle practice during the year.

Including 39,400 sailors and marines and 3,000 members of civilian rifle clubs, the aggregate number of men between

in New York: "I am a great believer in the work of the National Rifle Association. Patriotism in the abstract is a very fine thing, but preparedness and vigilance born of such patriotism are vastly more valuable to the nation."

Bits of Wisdom and Philosophy
JUST for the benefit of his friends George Iles has prepared a volume of jottings containing many clever things. Some of them follow:

Obvious facts are apt to be overrated. System markets see the gravitation of history and fail to observe its chemistry, of greater though less evident power.

Is not excellence in the ranks almost as rare as excellence in command?

There may be a golden ignorance. If Prof. Bell had known how difficult a task he was attempting he would never have given us the telephone.

Much is thought and felt which must remain unspoken. Language is a mighty empire, but with bounds.

A man's own addition to what he learns is cement to bind an otherwise loose heap of stones into a structure of unity, strength and use.

"What does God do?" asks a sceptic. "If He is outside Nature, how can we know about Him?" "If He is Nature's informing spirit, then is not Science enough, finding out, as it does, what Nature is?"

"Depend on the priest for your theology, just as you go to the doctor for medicine, to the solicitor for law." If I observe the rules of health I shall need no medicine; if I am prudent and just I shall never go to law; if I am sensible I shall require no theology.

Chemists show us that strange property, catalysis, which enables a substance while unaffected itself to incite to union elements around it. So a host or hostess who may know but little of those concerned may, as a social switch-board, bring together the halves of pairs of scissors, men who become lifelong friends, men and women who marry and are happy husbands and wives.

We are apt to underestimate the force of unorganized conviction in politics and religion. Milk costs a city as much as water, for all that its supply is uncensored, so little impressive in any way, that the milk can have nothing monumental about it, but the lofty aqueduct is not of more account.

Honest men do not talk about their honesty; it is too deep to be in the consciousness.

A mine is dug deeper than a cellar and in more carefully chosen ground.

Teachers are limited by their pupils orators by their hearers. The depth of water in New York docks tells the ship-builder just how big a New York ship may be.

A good man is good on the outside because he is good all through.

Priestlings are enlisted long before the age or the opportunity for an intelligent comparison of religions and philosophies. What, therefore, is a priesthood but a childhood prolonged?

Some young folks have windfall minds, prematurely detached from the tree of knowledge for a lifelong sourness and pettiness.

The difference between Romanism and Ritualism is the difference between legacy and larceny.

There is no denying the power which size exerts upon the imagination. Compare the effect on the mind of Swedenborgianism and Buddhism.

An oblique and subtle flattery has come in with the reign of the people. We hear environment and institutions blamed severely, and with justice; but we hear not a word about what a man can do to make himself wiser, cleaner, better, more full of good will. And yet if he wishes the nation reformed where can he begin better than at home?

Love is the stronger for a dash of fear.

A great book is a mine as well as a mint; it suggests and excites as much thought as it presents in finished form.

A part may be more than the whole. In January a gentle clod with snow gives back all the sunshine it receives. In June because it levies toll of every beam, in the very deed of subtraction its blossoms glow with tints and hues of utmost beauty.

A century ago astronomers, geologists, chemists, physicists, each had an island of his own, separate and distinct from that of every other student of Nature; the whole field of research was then an archipelago of unconnected units. To-day all the standpoints of study have risen together to form a continent without either ferry or bridge.

Memory Erased by Sandbag
Writing on "Confessions of Self-Robbery and the Retroactive Amnesia" in *Case and Comment*, Prof. E. B. DeBarre of Brown University tells the interesting fact that a concussion or blow from a sandbag will erase and drive from the brain or the memory occurrences happening within from three to five hours previous to the concussion, but will not disturb the impressions on the mind of previous occurrences. The author describes the effectiveness of this knowledge in securing complete confessions from "self-robbed" individuals as follows: "I talked the matter over with J. B. Hume, at that time chief detective for Wells, Fargo & Co., and he forced a number of self-robbed agents who were short and reported sandbagging robbery, to confess, because a sandbag would not show any marks, but as they in each case told all particulars up to the blow of the sandbag he made them own up."



New York schoolboys on the Peekskill range.

Unquestionably there are many thousands of militiamen in the United States that are little better off.

The so-called natural rifle shots of America are certainly not much in evidence when it comes to using a service weapon, and in the event of war no other arm could be permitted.

If all American schoolboys were taught, as the youngsters of some other countries are, to use small rifles, graduating to the service arm when their accuracy and physique permitted, our efficiency in marksmanship would increase amazingly. Some schools have rifle teams at present and these are giving a good account of themselves, but the number of schoolboy shots is so small as compared with the total population as to be almost insignificant.

It is astonishing that so many parents object to their boys learning to shoot on the ground that it produces a desire for war, a desire to kill. As a matter of fact every boy should be made acquainted with firearms as a matter of precaution. If he is a feal boy he is bound some day to have a desire to shoot. If parents make it necessary for him to do his shooting surreptitiously the chances are that he will handle his rifle improperly or carelessly—a very dangerous matter in either case.

Rifle shooting is a sport just as baseball, tennis and running are sports, and thousands of youngsters could easily be trained annually through their own

particularly in population and wealth, but just because our geographical position is such that it would be difficult for a foreign Power to attack us, is that a sensible reason why we should not progress also in a military way? As long as we stand by the Monroe Doctrine just so long will we be exposed to the danger of war. The War Department has no desire to establish an army as huge as that of Russia, Germany or France, but it would like to provide us with more than a meagre police force, as our army might now be described. There are private enterprises in this country to-day which each employ twice as many men as there are officers and enlisted men in our army.

The cost of building ranges suitable for rifles of .22 and other small calibres would be small, because no great space is needed and small bullets of not exceedingly high velocity can be stopped by simple iron shields. Pits and markers are not necessary, as the bullet holes may be clearly seen through telescopes

upward in the primary schools. She spent during 1908 \$100,000 for ammunition alone for schoolboy rifle clubs. In the sixth national championship match of the primary schools held last year 862 public schools took part. The National Union of Shooting Societies of France has some 2,300 associated societies with a total membership of about 300,000.

Canada insists upon a course of marksmanship as part of her public school curriculum.

Australia annually appropriates \$500,000 for her reserve force of 50,000 civilian riflemen and railroads carry free of charge rifle club members travelling to or from rifle ranges. There are cadet corps in all the public schools, with a total membership amounting to 40,000, which are furnished with arms, ammunition and instruction by the Government free of cost.

Hungary has established a course of rifle practice in all universities and public schools and maintains camps of

3,600 shooting societies, containing 214,000 members. If there were riflemen in the United States in the same proportion as in Switzerland we should have approximately five millions to call upon in case of emergency.

Italy, Greece and Austria have realized the importance of rifle practice and are keeping pace with their neighbors in appropriations and instruction.

In Great Britain money is raised by popular subscription to provide instruction in rifle shooting for civilians.

In this country rifle shooting is fast becoming a lost art. Through the efforts of the National Rifle Association of America, aided by army officials and others, a bill to encourage rifle practice has finally been reported favorably by the Committee on Military Affairs of the Senate. This committee has recommended that the annual appropriation be reduced from \$100,000 to \$50,000. It shows, however, that we are at least opening our eyes to the serious side of the situation.

the ages of 18 and 45 who practised with the service arm during one year was 131,059, out of a male population within the enlistment ages of 16,000,000, or less than 1 per cent.

The greatest battle of the Spanish war commenced at its declaration and lasted until peace was signed. The name of it was "The Storming of Inefficiency." That was nearly fifteen years ago and unfortunately Spain was not powerful enough to show up our shortcomings more vividly. If she had been able to we would have unquestionably lost more men in battle and perhaps fewer in fever camps, but we would not have been left with such a severe case of national defence paralysis as we have now.

What the National Rifle Association has accomplished has been largely due to financial aid and influential assistance received from a small body of men, among whom have been ex-President Roosevelt, Robert Barron, United States Senators Root, Warren, Wetmore and Briggs; Seth Low, George von L. Meyer, Col. Robert M. Thompson, Gov. Hadley of Missouri, John Wanamaker, James A. Stillman, Gov. Osborn of Missouri, the late Col. John Jacob Astor, Gen. George W. Wingate, Gen. Robert Shaw Oliver, Gen. John C. Bates, Gen. James A. Drain and J. A. Haskell.

Seth Low, president of the National Civic Federation, said in a speech to the schoolboys in a shooting tournament



Right and wrong shooting positions.