

# Contributing Editor's Page



Hon. Lindley M. Garrison

# The National Sunday Magazine Section

## Train Young America to Shoot

By the Hon. Lindley M. Garrison  
Secretary of War

**I**N ANY war with a nation of first rank in military power an American army of at least half a million men would be required. The great majority of this soldiery would be volunteers. The regular army and portions of the organized militia would have to stand the first brunt of attack and hold the invader until the volunteers could be sufficiently trained to allow them also to participate, as without this training it would be a crime to them and their families to send them to the front; also perhaps an irremediable loss to the nation. I therefore plead for a systematic national schooling in marksmanship.

Modern wars are short; they come with little or no warning, and the first blows landed count enormously. Initiative and aggressiveness are first principles and early victory is a moral factor of immense import.

With intensive training a volunteer is made into a fairly efficient soldier in six months. A good part of this time is necessary for the special training of the officers and in perfecting the men in marksmanship. With officers already instructed and with a powerful and adequate force of militia reserves already familiar with the proper use of the rifle, the six months could in all probability be cut in half. This difference of three months might and probably would mean the difference between success and a very great prolongation of war, possibly even failure, as in that length of time, due to any one of many causes, the line of resisting troops may give way. It is our duty as citizens to provide against just such emergencies.

Up to the present time, however, no definite and satisfactory program has been inaugurated, and rifle practice, except in the military and naval forces, is now unfortunately almost a lost art in a nation that at one time stood, and took pride in standing, pre-eminently first.

Universal military service, while practicable in some European countries, is foreign to the traditions and policy of the United States. The system of military preparation existing in Switzerland is considered the best and most practicable model for us to follow. Switzerland has 3,600 shooting societies with a total membership of 214,000. A close study of their system is well worth the effort and is recommended to those interested. If a similar policy were adopted in this country, we would with our population muster a force of about five million trained marksmen.

**F**RANCE, with government aid, teaches rifle shooting in the primary schools, to boys of ten years of age and upwards. In Italy the Departments of War and Education co-operate in this teaching and include secondary schools. Australia has 40,000 schoolboys organized as cadet companies that receive arms and ammunition free. Canada has a private donation of \$100,000 for encouragement of military training and rifle practice.

In the United States, exclusive of those in the military or naval services, we have 3,000 members

of rifle clubs and about 8,000 students of military schools and colleges—a total of only 11,000 who have received outdoor rifle practice—a number almost negligible. To these might be added about 25,000 boys who have had indoor gallery practice of some sort or other.

The United States Government has so far aided in remedying this condition only by the appropriation of \$30,000 annually for ammunition for students of educational institutions to which officers of the regular army are detailed as instructors, and in allowing rifle clubs affiliated with the National Rifle Association to purchase arms at cost. Only a small number of rifles have been sold for this purpose. If as many as two persons used each rifle sold, the total number would not exceed 4,000.

There is now a bill before Congress to appropriate \$100,000 for the promotion of rifle practice in public schools, colleges, universities and civilian rifle clubs. If properly applied this will be of great help. Of the different educational institutions the public schools are the most important, not only on account of the greater number of students, but on account of the age of the students. Shooting in schools of this class should be made compulsory to the extent of at least two hundred rounds per boy, .22 caliber gallery rifle, with the necessary preliminary sighting and aiming drills, in such states as will so provide for by law. The National Board for the promotion of rifle practice is recommended to have supervision of this work and superintend such competitions as may be prescribed. These competitions to be similar to those now in force where the prospective teams shoot on their own home ranges.

For older students at colleges, universities, the students' military instruction camps, and for civilian rifle clubs, the old model service rifle, .30 caliber, will ordinarily be used where there are suitable and convenient field ranges. This practice will be confined for the purposes of this act to ranges not over six hundred yards, not to exceed one hundred rounds per man, and the same provisions as before in regard to instruction, supervision and competitions, with the expectation of such firing being made compulsory.

**A**LL of the above plans can not be carried out at present; the facilities are limited and the several states will have to aid in requiring this training in their public schools. I believe, however, this co-operation can be counted upon, as the benefit to their country, is so apparent. Every male citizen of the United States is, by constitutional law, a member of the unorganized militia and, in time of war, may be called upon to serve in the land forces of his country. It is therefore every man's or boy's duty as a good citizen to prepare himself to perform the service with credit to himself and the greatest amount of benefit to his country.

*Lindley M. Garrison*

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