

## **Physical and military training in schools.**

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## PHYSICAL AND MILITARY TRAINING IN SCHOOLS.

THE object to aim at is to teach from early youth discipline, bodily activity, accuracy, the habit of observation, and the skilful handling of arms; and to develop the intelligence of individuals in the direction of thinking and acting for themselves in reference to a common object, and especially with reference to mutual action.

The teaching should consist of :—

Physical Exercises.

Close Order Drills.

Firing Exercises.

Skirmishing.

Estimation of Ranges.

Scouting.

Shooting.

Such a system of physical exercises as Colonel Fox would devise is essential and would be invaluable.

Close Order Drills are of importance only in elementary work. Up to the year 1900 this class of training occupied perhaps nine-tenths of the time of the soldier, to the neglect of war practices, and in schools it is now the only class of training which is attempted. It is supposed to inculcate that most necessary of all military qualities—discipline—but it is nothing more than a survival of the days when men fought in close bodies, and it does not teach the discipline required in the present day, viz., that which is established by education and the cultivation of individual thought and intelligence. Close order drills are harmful by teaching a mechanical precision and a blind obedience which stunts intelligence. Applied with moderation, close order drills are necessary to teach elementary work, such as squad drill, firing exercises, etc.



The firing exercises, which teach the skilful handling of arms, and the correct firing positions, are always most laboriously acquired by the average recruit; they are rarely *thoroughly* acquired. The importance of these exercises cannot be over-stated, good shooting being entirely dependent on the manner in which they are learnt. Perhaps five per cent. of men will shoot well without any such preliminary teaching, but 95 per cent. have employed their muscles in a manner which has no connection with the handling of a rifle, and acquire the firing motions with great difficulty,

Taught early, the habit of handling a rifle, and of adjusting sights and firing becomes second nature. People may say that the Boers have had no such teaching, and still shoot well; but they have mostly been accustomed from youth to handle guns, and as a matter of fact their shooting is only *comparatively* good. The nation which takes up the proper training in handling arms and shooting will have an enormous advantage, for at present there is no army which gets anything like the full power out of the rifle.

As to training in the firing exercises the lessons are exceedingly simple. The official manual, abbreviated, is all that is needed.

Skirmishing is interesting and readily learnt if sharpness and individual initiation have not been dulled by too much close order drill. The official instructions, abbreviated and with a few explanatory additions, will meet requirements.

Estimation of distance is of no less importance than training in shooting. The official instructions are complete and very simple, and will readily be understood by children. The training is interesting and sharpens the powers of observation.

Scouting is of the highest importance. Everything connected with it is simple, but previous knowledge of skirmishing and estimation of distance are necessary. At the same time it is adapted to games for younger children.

As to Games—Skirmishing, judging distance, shooting with miniature rifles, and scouting, can all be adapted to games with great advantage, and skill might well be stimulated by prizes and competitions. Examples of such training, as adapted to



games, will be necessary in order to put those who have to arrange the details on the right lines.

A pamphlet dealing with the various heads of training will be needed, this I shall be very glad to put together.

As to scheme for training:—

The training should be progressive, and suited to the capacity of children and boys of various ages. Three Classes might be formed:—

(a) For the youngest children.

(b) For children old enough to fire caps, and to undertake a fair amount of exertion.

(c) For boys able to use miniature cartridges.

After (c) would come Cadet Corps.

For Class (a). The course might consist of physical exercises and elementary close order drills, the instruction being usually carried out with toy guns.

For Classes (b) (c) the whole of the subjects of instruction.

#### *Equipment.*

Two kinds of guns would be needed. A wooden gun (with arrangement for firing caps) for the youngest children; a miniature rifle, firing ball cartridges, for the older ones.

A range suited to the latter gun would be needed; this need not exceed a distance of 20 or 25 yards, and should be supplied with stationary and moving and vanishing targets. Cost, complete, need not exceed two or three pounds.

R. L. A. PENNINGTON (*Colonel*).







