

improvise to a very great extent, but rifled arms we cannot, nor can we learn how to use them without long and steady practice; and it is to this point that we ought immediately and earnestly to turn our attention.

The skill of the old English archers is one of the many facts in history, which everybody recognizes as a general proposition, but of the actual power which they wielded there is at this day but little realizing appreciation.

We know, generally, that many of the hardest fought battles of those days were won by the power and skill with which they plied the bow, but comparatively few people are aware how important a part that weapon has played in England's history, or to what an extent its use was encouraged and enforced upon the people. The social and military necessities of the present day are so changed from those which existed five hundred years ago, that it is as difficult for us to realize the feelings and interests which then held the most prominent place in the minds of the great masses of the people, as it would have been for them to anticipate the day when the knowledge of arms would be looked upon as a vain acquisition, unworthy the thought or attention of men who aspired to distinguished social or civil position.

In our zeal for the promotion of the objects which we now consider most essential for the advancement of civilization and happiness we have too much neglected the physical training which men thought a primary necessity for their preservation. Invennerated by the prosperity and luxury which we have enjoyed, we have certainly lost that taste for the skilful use of arms which alone is capable of imparting the individual confidence of power, which constitutes the vital strength of military discipline.

For a period of five hundred years succeeding the battle of Hastings, fought on the 14th October, 1066, the archers of England constituted a National Guard, whose efficiency was known and feared throughout Europe, and the most vigilant