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# EVERYWOMAN'S WORLD

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Trade Mark Registered 1913, Department of Agriculture, at Ottawa, by Continental Publishing Co., Limited, Toronto, Canada.



Entered as second class matter at the post office, Toronto, Ont. Entered as second class matter, Sept. 23, 1915, at the post office at Buffalo, N.Y., under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.

PUBLISHED THE 15TH OF THE MONTH PRECEDING MONTH OF ISSUE BY CONTINENTAL PUBLISHING CO., LIMITED, TORONTO, CANADA

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Vol. VII, No. 5

## EDITORIAL

MAY, 1917

# BUILDING UP THE BODIES AND MINDS OF OUR BOYS AND GIRLS BY MILITARY TRAINING

An Editorial by Lieut.-General Sir Sam Hughes, K.C., M.G., M.P.

(Former Minister of Militia)



HAVE been invited by EVERYWOMAN'S WORLD to express my views on National Military Training in the Schools throughout the Dominion. I must say that I appreciate the spirit in which the invitation is tendered for I have long desired to address the mothers of Canada through some effective medium on the great necessity of, and the many benefits which accrue from, proper and selective training as a prime portion of the regular daily curriculum used in our public schools.

I know that most mothers have an instinctive dread of

bringing their children into touch with matters of a military nature at too early an age. Yet I believe that, when all the arguments have been adduced, they probably may see that simple elementary training would be an added blessing to the correct up-bringing of children, rather than a hindrance to the life work of the young student. With these impressions in mind, I intend to make a hurried sketch of what, in my opinion, should be a comprehensive course for a National Military Training System in the Public Schools of Canada.

## THE CORRECT AGE AT WHICH TO BEGIN

The correct age to begin training boys in simple military movements is between ten and sixteen years of age, because between these periods of time the boy has surplus energy which can be utilized in the open in learning those things about which he has read, and which will employ his attention when otherwise his time might be wasted in something which would be of no use whatever.

The best place for implanting these lessons is in the Public and High Schools, where boys in sufficient numbers can be gotten together for company drills and limited field movements. Of course, previous to this time, light physical drill work with primary movements should be taken up with the younger children of from six to ten years of age.

There are many reasons for commencing early universal training. I might instance many, but several should suffice. Youth is always impressionable, and if the physique does not receive as much attention as the mind, the nation will, sooner or later, deteriorate in a physical way. It is easier to teach target shooting effectively to children than later on in life. One reason

for this is that they are keener on attaining proficiency in physical motion than are their elders. I have never known a great cricket or baseball player, or in fact any other kind of an athlete, who did not learn the elementary stages of his chosen pastime in his early youth. The biggest reason, however, is this: If a boy or girl does not learn, at an early age, the advantages of drill movements in the open air and the health-giving influence of camp life, it is ever so much harder to cultivate these in later years when the bones and muscles have more fully matured and the natural will-power has, to some extent, diminished.

Another important reason for a National Training movement is the fact that, in its earlier stages at least, there is relatively no cost to the country in the way of equipment or loss of time from work of producing units in the industrial world. Then again it does not involve any large expenditures for training camps or armouries, or any of those other expenses which must be had to train soldiers when their early training has been neglected. From the standpoint of national economics alone it will readily be seen that a course of preparedness in the school would be very much worth while.

## WHAT THE RESULTS WILL BE

One of the features which has always appealed to me as being one which was very much to be desired, is the effect that an early Military Training has on the boys who have been given that advantage.

In the first place, it moulds them into excellent physical condition, it teaches them the value of discipline, it shows them what can be accomplished by system, it strengthens their memory and powers of observation, it teaches them one of the first and greatest principles of economics—that the whole is only as great as the part, and the part as great as the whole—and it enables them more efficiently to play the part which they are destined to take in the service of their country, whatever form that service may take.

Another point is that when boys leave school after having

had a course of Military Training, they are better fitted to take part in effective volunteer service at any time they may be required, and it is an old military axiom that "You can do more in four days after primary training than you can do now in six weeks with raw recruits."

I know of no better record anywhere for Military Training than has been shown by the schools of the City of Toronto, where Military Training has now been effectively carried out for some years. The records throughout the school system of Toronto go to show that not a single child has ever gone seriously wrong who has taken this course from beginning to end. On the other hand, many of the pupils who have evinced the greatest interest have made the best success in other branches of the curriculum.

## DOESN'T MEAN PRUSSIANISM

By advocating Military Training in all the schools in Canada I make the statement, with great emphasis, that I do not desire the importation of the Prussian system into Canada. The training I have in mind is modelled after the Swiss system of improving the physical, mental, and moral citizenship of coming generations. This system is not intended to teach hatred of nations, but rather teaches the value of individual responsibility to one's self and to one's country. One thing is certain: It will most decidedly improve the physical preparedness of children to play a man's part in a nation's service should they ever be called on to do so.

I have repeatedly said, and I state it here again, that

if war were forever wiped off the face of the earth, I should still advocate Military Training for the youths of the land, because it makes children better physically, morally, and spiritually, and guarantees in perpetuity the sanity of the nation; it develops high ideals, love of home life, love of country, and a higher regard for the real inherent meaning of the word "liberty."

I have never heard a single cogent argument against Military Training in the schools, and I believe this branch of our national work should be immediately enlarged in scope, so that a more uniform basis of activity along this line could be carried out. It would do more to develop national consciousness than any other one thing I know of.