

WOMEN AND RIFLE CLUBS

Movement Which is at High Water Mark in the Malay States is Taking Hold in Canada, and Promises Valuable Aids to Patriotism, Union and Victory.

By G. C. MARY WHITE

RIFLE-SHOOTING among women is a comparatively infant industry in Canada. To thousands of women the mere mention of "gun" has meant shivers, and the proximity of a firearm has boded flights into hysteria. For all of which the men have only themselves to blame. Women have been more accustomed to seeing about the house the pink sporting extra, announcing the result of some "ball" game in the United States, than they have been to handling the firearms which should be the familiar plaything of every man and boy.

Here and there a good shot has made a companion of wife or daughter and imparted to her his love of the trigger; but the instances are rare, and the few women who could aim and hit were liable to suffer aspersions on their femininity.

War Changes View.

But a few short weeks changed the attitude of men and women towards a sport which gives poise in peace and provides protection in time of war. Men are realizing that the day may come when the cause of right may demand the service of every able-bodied male to bring about its triumph; and women of vision feel that theirs may be the task of abiding by the stuff and freeing the hands of their mankind that they may go forth to war.

Bodies of women trained to shoot for child and home protection and for self-defence would be not only a fine defiance to hurl in the face of an invading enemy, but also a source of comfort to the men whom duty has called away. Both seem worth while the obliteration of a little prejudice and the expenditure of a little effort.

A sense of this two-fold responsibility has already appealed to many women. Here and there, from coast to coast,

news comes of the formation of women's rifle clubs. Toronto's club, six years old—formed, by the way, to stimulate the flagging interest of the men—meets weekly and has more than a hundred women and girls upon its waiting list. Several of its members have "possibles"—or seven bull's eyes for seven shots—to their credit. Its membership includes all social outlooks, from the devotee of the smart set to the quiet little woman who has three supreme hobbies—husband, home and children.

One of the club's crack shots is Mrs. A. P. Bowes, who lived for some time in Singapore and was president of the club which had Lady Evelyn Young, the Governor's wife, as its most active member. All the Malay States have had flourishing clubs for years, and the "Ladies' Bisley" is a feature of the year's life in that part of the world. Monthly cup competitions between the States keep up the interest also.

An English Bisley Champion.

A member of the Singapore club, Mrs. Willis Douglas, did fine work at Bisley, the famous English range, some little time ago, making a possible at 900 yards. She was then challenged by the range officer, himself a gold medallist, and beat him over the same range.

A few weeks ago this crack woman shot was approached by a committee of Suffragettes, who asked her to undertake the training of a rifle corps organized in their ranks for home defence. Mrs. Douglas, who holds no brief for militant methods, feared that the corps might be used at the close of the war for other than protective purposes, and refused the Suffragettes' request.

Besides the activity of Toronto women, Winnipeg ladies have recently organized a rifle club amid great enthusiasm. Edmonton women are