

# Military Training Would Make Us a New Race

## Noted Medical Authority Says It Would Lift Us From a Sub-Standard Neurotic Nation to One of Highest Type of Manhood

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**T**HE recognition of our needs and national weakness is not new. Washington in his first annual address said: "To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace. A free people ought not only to be armed but disciplined." Later he said: "There is a rank due to the United States among nations which will be withheld if not absolutely lost by the reputation of weakness. If we desire to avoid insult we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure peace, it must be known that we are ready for war."

Jefferson said: "We must train and classify the whole of our male citizens, and make military instructions a part of collegiate education. We can never be safe until this is done."

Light Horse Harry Lee said: "That nation is a murderer of its people which sends them unprepared and untrained to meet men disciplined by training."

With this recognition of our duty constantly with us we have persisted in maintaining our very inadequate Army. All great authorities in our country are agreed that the solution of our difficulties will be found in the establishment throughout the country of a system of athletic training to make our youths able-bodied, and a sufficient general military instruction, like that of Switzerland, Australia or Argentina.

Switzerland, at an annual cost of only six million dollars, is able to put half a million trained citizen soldiers in the field. This military training is accomplished without interfering with the work or education of its young men. In addition, the training they receive has made the Swiss a wonderfully healthy, robust, alert, patriotic and temperate people, with great respect for law and order. Crime in Switzerland is proportionately less frequent than in the United States, and general physical efficiency far greater than with us.

And where does America stand? She stands unprepared, unready, apparently unthinking and without realization of her great danger.

Such is the situation as seen by patriotic Americans. But what special significance does the situation have to the medical profession of this country?

In the first place, we find the young men of this country far below those of many other countries in health and manly vigor, and with a terrible prevalence of bodily defectiveness. Even

among the West Point cadets—that splendid body of young soldiers, culled from the most martial, sturdy and patriotic of our youths, the rejections for physical defects yearly amount to almost 30 per cent. Of the 18,000 appointed to the United States Military Academy since its inception in 1838, about 50 per cent. have been rejected on account of mental and physical defects. Of those who passed the mental examination, about 30 per cent. were physically deficient.

At the Naval Academy, in 1914, '15 and '16, 3,419 have come up for examination, and only 1,016 admitted (30 per cent.) and this regardless of the fact that the law requires a preliminary physical examination at home, which eliminates the more grossly unfit! Of those who passed the Annapolis mental examination 21 per cent. more were rejected physically. Such is the record among the young elect. The conditions among the applicants for the enlisted ranks is still more disgraceful. Take for example the Marine Corps. Here is the record for the period from Jan. 1, 1916, to Sept. 30, 1916, at the recruiting station of New York:

Total number of applicants.....	5,082
Rejected without reference to medical officer.....	4,272
The number who came to medical examinations.....	\$10
Of whom there were rejected by medical officer.....	556
Accepted as physically fit for enlistment .....	254 (45%)
Of whom there were finally enlisted .....	167 (1 in 35 or 3%)

Those who have intimate knowledge of the medical entrance examinations of the various United States Services know the severity of these tests and will at once urge that many are turned down for only slight defects. This is true, but it has been rendered necessary by our outrageous pension laws, which enable one to secure a pension on trivialities.

Dr. Eugene L. Fiske's report, based on the thousands of examinations made by the "Life Extension Institute," shows that among employes of great industrial and commercial concerns physical defectiveness is widespread in this country as follows:

	Industrial Average Age 31.6	Commercial Average Age 27.8 Yrs.
Slight impairment or errors in living habits.....	27%	23%
Moderate impairment, needing treatment....	67%	72%
Advanced impairment, requiring strict medical supervision .....	5%	4%

Many of the defective conditions are easily corrected and cured by appropriate medical, surgical, or hygienic treatment, and the value of these routine examinations of the Life Extension Institute is now realized by great employers of labor and by large insurance companies, and widely made use of. Reports show that many serious conditions are thus discovered early and cured by timely treatment, but more important are the grave diseases which are prevented by the early cure of lesser diseases which lead to them.

As an example, the discovery of diseased tonsils, adenoids, and decayed teeth has a twofold value, viz.: Not only does it lead to their cure, but also prevents the development of rheumatism, heart and arterial diseases, Bright's disease, and other degenerative processes which so frequently come from these apparently simple affections of the mouth and throat.

An analysis of the cause of rejection in the United States service shows that in fully 50 per cent. of the cases early medical or surgical treatment would have removed the defect, and further study shows that if these individuals had participated in regular setting-up gymnastic exercises beginning with the age of 12 or 14 years, a large proportion of the defects and diseases discovered would never have been acquired.

Dr. J. A. Murphy in a classical paper says:

Observation on hundreds of applicants for enlistment in the navy, and particularly in the case of youthful candidates for Midshipmen at Annapolis, shows a most marked ignorance of exercise to improve defects in physique, these men being for the most part flat-chested, round-shouldered, with crooked spines and drooping heads, frail musculature and poor circulation. Of those well developed many are muscle bound, awkward, and sluggish.

Dr. Fiske remarks that

The stoop-shouldered, cigarette-smoking, physically degenerate college youths who sit on the side-lines and hysterically cheer their favorites drawn from the small number who go in for the teams are not elements of national strength. We must develop some system of universal athletic competition that shall call for the high ideals of physical prowess and physical excellence that characterized ancient Greece.

The death rate from diseases of the blood vessels, heart and kidneys, liver and brain—the so-called degenerative diseases—have greatly increased in this country and are chiefly responsible for our alarmingly increasing death rate in

middle-aged men. These "degenerative diseases" are largely preventable, and early systematic physical training and subsequent hygienic and sanitary education along with military training would be of incalculable benefit to our citizens—increase their vigor, effectiveness and productivity, materially lengthen the span of life and add much to the sum of human happiness and material prosperity.

General Wood, speaking of the Swiss plan, says:

These exercises are not of the nature of military drill, but furnish a progressive training, beginning when the boys are quite young, and continuing through school life. They not only lead to a symmetrical development, but accustom the children to the common action under skillful direction, fitting them to fall in readily with the later technical military instruction—which simply consists of training camps where they, at the age of 20 years, receive from 60 to 90 days military instruction. After this for 11 years the recruit is called out, to refresh his training, for 11 days each Summer. Surely this is no great hardship.

If our American boys could have such physical training under scientific supervision, what a different race we would produce. Minor defects and diseases would be discovered early and cured, thus removing the deformities or foci of infection which lead to the host of diseases and physical impairments which make us a sub-standard neurotic nation, with the highest middle-aged mortality.

The sad spectacle of only one man accepted in thirty-five applications for enlistment would be removed, and with rational laws, a few months' scientific military training at the age of 18 years, and a week or two yearly thereafter, practically all our young citizens would make excellent soldiers, and at the same time become patriotic, law-abiding, physically sound men.

From the standpoint of public health and national efficiency there can be no doubt of the prime importance—nay, absolute need—of a universal system of hygienic exercise and military drill to make our citizens what they should be mentally, morally, physically, and to instill into them that pride of country and love of native land without which no nation can continue to flourish and command the respect of the world. And this can all be done without imposing any serious burden upon any citizen, or creating a military class distinct from the civil population, and at a cost less than that of the present expenditure for our ridiculously small standing army.