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***Each Record Broken Adds to Country's War Strength***

Never before in the United States, nor probably in the world, has there assembled a finer aggregation of marksmen than that now breaking records at Shell Mounds. And as one watches them at their work, keen-eyed and iron-nerved, displaying the most delicate adjustments and subtlest judgments, one cannot avoid speculating on the part these men would play in modern warfare.

And right here let it be stated that these target knights are not knights of the carpet merely. In every war the United States has undertaken, the sharpshooter companies have been among the first to gird on their harness and go forth. And the work they have done has not been of the kind which may be classed as spectacular. A thousand men, molded into a huge projectile and sweeping irresistibly across the field of carnage, is something which catches the war correspondent's eye and which later blazons the pages of history. But the lonely sharpshooter, perched precariously in a tree or groveling in a scratch in the earth, fights his fight by himself. He must be General and army and observation corps all in one. He must do his own scouting, map out his own campaign and advance or retreat as he sees fit. And to do all this requires the highest individual efficiency, and to do it well is to make the extreme demand upon a man's courage. Men are bravest in bunches, and the man who could storm the ramparts of hell with a thousand fellows may falter at facing one foe in a lonely wood.

But to return. The sharpshooter has always played an important role in war, but never so important as now. The conditions of war have changed. Armies can no longer come into close contact. The bayonet and cavalry charge are obsolete. Cold steel is no longer possible. Where the squadrons once thundered to victory are now the barbed-wire fence, the electric mine field and the inexorable zone of fire.

Rapidity of fire, greater range, greater precision and smokeless powder have revolutionized warfare. The substitution of chemical for practically mechanical mixtures of powder and the reduction of calibers have given greater range, and by flattening the trajectory of the bullet, greater penetration. At half a mile a bullet will go as easily through a pile of men as through the body of one, and for a mile and a half it is deadly. And because of all this, the function performed by the sharpshooter in battle has become a hundred-fold more important.

Julian Ralph, writing from South Africa, said: "Place Germany in a trench, and all the world could not drive her out until her ammunition or her supplies were exhausted." And bearing this in mind, we realize the value to the community of the men of the Schützen clubs now in our midst. Several hundred of them, anywhere in our mountains, would block the passage of Europe's proudest army.

Nor is this an empty boast. From the facts of the case let us speculate. The development of the machinery of warfare has invested frontal attack with an overwhelming fatality. The British at the battle of Omdurman opened fire on the advancing dervishes at 2,000 yards, and

with deadly effect; and the nearest any dervish approached was 200 yards. The whole dervish army was slaughtered beyond that distance.

Our men of the Bund are disposed in the mountains, no one knows how. The enemy, not knowing how many men oppose it, would devote itself to skirmishing, scouting and tentative flank movements, all the while exposed to the withering, exasperating fire of the sharpshooters. The air would be filled with little invisible messengers of death, and, remember, at more than a mile smokeless powder makes no sound.

Watch a scouting party, a “feeler,” detach itself from the great army and fare forth to locate the mountain enemy. A half-dozen mounted men it is, and they push forward quietly and unobtrusively. There is nothing to be seen; so they must “feel”—that is, expose themselves to the enemy’s fire in order to discover the enemy, and, if possible, find out its force.

The horsemen ride out on an open place. The mountains and ravines, patched with clumps of trees and bare spaces, stretch out before their eyes. All is silent. Not a foe is in sight. They alone seem to draw breath in that wide expanse. They rise slightly in their saddles to search more closely the peaceful scene.

Suddenly one of the men grunts, whirls in the saddle with throat a-gurgle, and pitches to the ground. His comrades are shaken. Not a sound has been heard. There was no warning. They search carefully. No smokewreath floats slowly up to indicate the position of the hidden sharpshooter. There are a thousand spots in the field of vision where he may lie hidden, and with him may lie a thousand others. But where? Ay, that’s the agonizing question, for even as they ask it, for aught they know, the bullet that brings them death is on its way.

Another falls; a horse goes down; and they turn tail and fly madly. This is not war. There is nobody to fight. What else can they do but flee before the silent and invisible enemy? And their report to the waiting army—How many men? They do not know. Where? Up there, somewhere, they know not where.

In such a region, under such circumstances, several hundred sharpshooters could multiply themselves into many thousands. Always, between them and the enemy, would intervene a mile of death which the enemy would be chary of venturing into.

And if the exasperated General should send heavy “feelers” forward, with orders to go on and on; and if they did come in touch with the sharpshooters and charge, be it remembered, still, that with the new, self-charging, six-millimeter Mauser, a man can fire seventy-eight unaimed, or sixty aimed shots per minute. Thus, 100 men of the Bund, securely ensconced, could pour into the advancing force 6,000 aimed shots a minute!

But suppose things get too hot. All the sharpshooters have to do is to retreat a bit. There are many mountains, and for each of those mountains the enemy would have to sacrifice many men, as witness Buller on the Tugela. And each mountain would mean that the thing would have to be done over again. But time is precious, and large armies are expensive, and never was the economic problem of warfare so important as it is to-day.

But suppose the great army gives over and tries elsewhere. Large bodies move slowly, and the men of the Bund, in small detachments, could speedily outstrip the army and confront it again. And this is not theoretical. It is costing England a million dollars a day in South Africa. And the British are anything but cowards. A lesson is being taught down there, and the world is looking on and learning while Great Britain does the work and foots the bills.

In the evolution of the weapon from the first hand-flung stone to the modern rifle, the conditions of warfare have changed many times. What the next change may be we do not know. But just now, for to-day and to-morrow, the sharpshooter is one of the most important factors;

and in the battles to come, the nation with the largest number of sharpshooters and the best equipped, will be the nation, other things being equal, that lives. So all hail to the men of the Schützen clubs! Every record they break adds to our strength and fits us better to face whatever dark hours may betide.