

T H E
EXERCISE

F O R T H E
M I L I T I A

Of the Province of the
Massachusetts-Bay.

By Order of His EXCELLENCY.

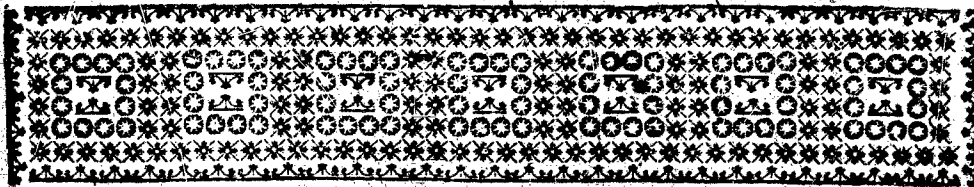


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B O S T O N . . .

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The EXERCISE

FOR

The MILITIA of the Province of the *M A S S A C H U S E T T S - B A Y*,

By Order of His EXCELLENCY.



S it is the essential Property of a free Government to depend on no other Soldiery but it's own Citizens for it's Defence; so in all such free Governments, every Freeman and every Freeholder should be a Soldier. A Freeman that is no Soldier does as much as in him lyes, that he should be no longer Free: For if the same Spirit was to become general, there would be no Soldiery within the Government; and it must either cease to be defended and secure in it's Freedom, or seek it's Defence in foreign Assistance, and so be no longer Independent. Every Man therefore that wilhes to secure his own Freedom, and thinks it his Duty to defend that of his Country, should, as he prides himself in being a Free Citizen, think it his truest Honour to be a Soldier Citizen. In such Governments, composed of such Men Slaves only and Aliens are forbid, the Use of Arms; while it is the Right, Priviledge and Pre-eminence of a Free Citizen to bear Arms in the Bands of his Country.

'Tis base and slavish not to be allowed to bear Arms in his Own and Country's Defence: 'Tis Perfidy and Treachery in a Free Citizen not to be willing so to bear Arms. But to affect to bear Arms, and not to know or learn the Use of them—is worse than Slavishness and Treachery; it is cruelly, with Aggravation, to mock his Country in it's Distress.

LET therefore every Man, that, appealing to his own Heart, feels the least Spark of Virtue or Freedom there, think that it is an Honour which he owes himself, and a Duty which he owes his Country, to bear Arms; to know the Use of them, and to be willing, with his Life, to bear them and use them for his Country. If he once is conscious that he ought to learn this Duty, he will soon know it. For there is neither Difficulty nor Mystery in it. There are many Things which a Soldier, whose whole Time is devoted to that Service alone, may learn and acquire the Practice of, that a Militia cannot spare the Time to learn. There are also many Things which are necessary for a Soldier who is instructed and in pay for that Service only, to learn, practice and do, which are not at all necessary for a Militia.

THE Regular Soldiery is composed of Men who for the most Part never bore Arms and are totally unskill'd in the Use of them: 'Tis therefore in the first Place absolutely necessary that they, as Individuals, should be taught to handle the Firelock; and as all have this to learn, 'tis right that all should learn one Method,—As this Method is not Natural but Artificial, it becomes necessary that they should be so constantly continued in the Exercise of it, that the Method may become Habitual and almost Natural; for Use is second Nature.

It is not so with the Men who compose the Militia of these Countries. Every Man here knows and is peculiarly expert in the Use of the Firelock: 'Tis almost as constantly in his Hand as any of his Implements of Husbandry or of his Trade: As an Individual therefore, he knows already better than six Days, or six Times six Days in a Year, would teach him the Use of his Arms. If it be expected that he learn the one uniform Exercise prescribed, while he has a peculiar Method of his own in handling his Arms; a few Days training in a Year may, during the Time he is training, make him perform it in an awkward constrained Manner; but it will no more habituate him to, or teach him to use that Exercise in Service, than making a Man, who is left-handed use his right Hand six Times a Year, will make him right-handed. It is therefore to be considered first, what is absolutely necessary to be done; and next, what Militia can be brought to do. For a little and well is better than a great deal that is stark naught.

ALL the Exercise of Arms therefore that I shall require of the Militia is, That Use of them which in Time of Action will indispensibly and necessarily be required: And as it is absolutely necessary that every Man should be able to load duely and fire steadily, so he who can load the quickest and fire with the best Aim will, as an Individual, do most Execution.

AND if in Action every Man was to fight as a single Person, I should wish every Man to load and fire his own Weapon in that which he has been used to; and think him the best Soldier who could throw the most Balls into a Mark in the shortest Time.

BUT as in Service the whole is to act as a one united Body, and against a Body of Men—something more and something different is required, tho' in my Opinion very little more with very little Difference will serve the Purpose.

AND first, Whatever Method a Man has of loading and firing by himself, when he acts in a Body of Men, it must be such as not to interfere with his Neighbour, nor to interrupt his acting, or obstruct his Arms: For so the Service of Both would be lost; and as far as the Obstruction or Embrangement of Arms reach'd, so far would the Service of all be lost. Every Motion therefore that he makes with his Firelock, must of absolute Necessity be right up and down directly before him, or in a direct Line from Front to Rear in the Space betwixt him and his right hand Man, as I will presently more particularly describe. The same is also absolutely necessary to be observed in every Motion he makes with his Bayonet, either while he is fixing it, or when it is fixed.

BUT further, When a Number of Men are acting together in a Body in close Order as they should, if one falls back to load while another advances himself to fire, the Consequences of such interfering Motions will be, as it has always been found to be, that they will wound and destroy more of one another than of the Enemy: It is therefore absolutely necessary that they learn to load and fire as near together at the same Time as can possibly be: For the Reason just

mentioned

