Exercise "Royal Road"
D.G.A.M.S. Annual Exercise, 1955

By
Major-General F. M. Richardson, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.D.

The editor has given me the privilege of adding this account to those of the series of exercises which I have reported in this Journal. In "Mushroom" (6), "Rubicon" (7), "Cambyses" (8) and "Avernus" (9), as Inspector of Training, I had a leading part to play, and I could not escape entirely this time, as anyone who heard the D.G. sum up his first three exercises may guess. He used to say that he had hardly moved into the D.G.'s office before I was at him about an exercise; and he came to expect me to say in the week after the exercise, "About your next year's exercise, sir..." The first key plan produced last November suggested "Alamein in reverse" as a study of breaching operations, supported by an amphibious assault or by an airborne landing; and, when I saw from the programme that both of these supporting operations were to be dealt with, I felt like a small boy at the end-of-term feast—delighted by the rich and varied menu, but doubtful of our ability to absorb, let alone digest, it all. But the rationale of the diet prescribed was soon apparent. Since November, 1954, the proposed new organization of our field medical services—the "New Look" as the D.G. called it—had been conceived, and it was his purpose to examine its application to various military operations. So first a brief word about this "New Look."

Previous exercises seemed to have given inescapable indications that our present system lacks the flexibility which nuclear warfare demands; particularly because it is based upon a requirement which may be becoming out of date—i.e., to collect casualties in forward areas and to transport them to the rear for surgical treatment. In the very likely event of casualties falling most heavily on rearward areas we have virtually no facilities there for collecting them, although arrangements for hospital treatment are excellent. In the divisional area, on the other hand, everything is geared for efficient collection, and facilities for holding and treating casualties are, intentionally, very meagre. Perhaps it is even out of date to speak of forward and rear areas. So far as the risk of casualties is concerned, nuclear warfare may abolish this distinction. Perhaps we should think in terms of what I have called the "two-way flow" conception of treatment in the field. Suppose that, as a result of atomic attacks on the communications zone, our C.C.S.s and general hospitals are in chaos and filled with casualties from these attacks. Night is falling, and for the battle about to begin a standard plan involving the evacuation of divisional casualties into this chaos is clearly impracticable. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that this is the nightmare threat which is forcing us to examine the provision of facilities for holding and treating casualties within divisions, and not only the much less frightening possibility that, in the dispersed battlefield of the future formations may get cut off or whose evacuation routes interrupted. If the divisions themselves sustain
heavy casualties from nuclear attack, various difficulties in collection and evacuation might well create a need for some method of bringing treatment to the scene of the disaster. For all our arguments in the past, we have yet to find a tidy method of earmarking a suitable medical reserve, without which our plans to meet nuclear attack cannot really be flexible. These are some of the reasons for the proposal to provide the collecting and treatment potential in the form of two units—a "medical collecting unit" and a "medical staging unit" (M.C.U. and M.S.U.) taking the place of field ambulances, field dressing stations, and field medical companies; adjusting the balance of our medical manpower throughout an operational theatre; and in their administrative H.Qs. providing nuclei upon which might be built up collecting and treatment elements in the required mixture to cope with changing situations. During "Avernus" after a description of a F.D.S. acting as "filter" to a C.C.S., Colonel Crosse made the pertinent comment that there must be something wrong with a unit which could not function without the help of another unit. Of course, the "filter" was needed particularly when two or more C.C.S.s could be located together in a corps medical centre; but none the less the Army Medical Directorate have felt that the C.C.S. is not ideally constituted, and hence have proposed a third new unit—the "Evacuation Hospital."

In explaining his object in the exercise the D.G. emphasized that the proposed new units were one possible solution to our grave problems, and were put forward as a basis for discussion. The exercise theatre of operations in which they were to be tried out was the Middle East—and above the stage hung a fine map of that area on which electric indicators lit up when required during the various serials. We were urged to imagine ourselves to be actually there, in 1960, and helped to do so by the occasional appearance of Egyptian waiters and fellahin, and a lovely pantomime camel. Veterans of "Cambyses," however, noted the absence of Jouf from the map, and of genuine camel dung, which in 1953 was purloined for us from Chessington zoo by Captain W. O'Brecht, R.C.A.M.C. Perhaps the usual threatened coal shortage prevented the reckless expenditure of this useful fuel.

Colonel Meneces, in a brilliant example of those polished performances which we have come to expect of him, gave us the exercise setting, perfectly blending a warm feeling for ancient history with a cold appreciation of the hard facts of the future. He told us that the Royal Road from which the exercise took its title was that between the valleys of the Nile and the Euphrates, which for over five thousand years has been followed by so many conquering armies—Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Jewish, Arab, Turkish, French and British. Those who served in the Lebanon will remember how many of these conquerors left their commemorative tablets at the Dog river crossing.

Colonel John Crosse, as D.M.S., 81 Army Group, General Careful, had his usual heavy task of expounding the medical plan for the whole theatre, which he did with his customary lucidity, and I could have simply referred you to my accounts of his fine performances in '52, '53 and '54 had he not designed the absolutely perfect climax for his serial. Having sketched in a portrait of his
devoted but rather truculent and difficult airborne A.D.M.S., he gave "Alastair" a ring, and asked him to drop in for a talk, and was almost immediately enveloped in a cloud of dust, and was seen struggling on the floor to escape from a parachute whilst his airborne A.D.M.S., who had dropped through the roof, did his best to brush and soothe him down.

The plan to break through the Alamein Line from our Libyan base in order to drive the Fantasians out of Egypt gave Lieut.-Colonel Marks, as A.D.M.S., of one of the assaulting divisions, a chance to discuss, in a conference with his D.A.D.M.S. and the C.Os. of his M.C.U. and M.S.U., how these proposed new units could best support a breaching operation. This playlet was preceded by a talk by Lieut.-Colonel Marks about breaching operations, and followed by one about minefields by Colonel F. M. Hill, R.E., who then staged a minefield demonstration, which ended with the whole audience having to walk to the tea tent through a miniature minefield which gave us a practical demonstration of the average chance of getting through unscathed. The first of the miniature explosions was touched off by a senior officer who took a lot of convincing that the D.G. had not personally flung a missile at him. This was amusing, but I am sure that during the demonstration, in which the feelings of a young M.O. faced with having to do something for the victims of a minefield disaster were most vividly portrayed, no one who had ever had the remotest connection with minefields could have failed to be slightly stirred by that feeling of cold fear which mines must bring to most normal men.

When teaching our soldiers about the residual radio-activity following a low-burst atomic missile, we should not forget that in war caution must sometimes be tempered by resolution. I remember a unit which had been very well trained, including much practice in taking cover. In their first serious action they did little else. Even in the presence of a high rate of radio-active contamination it may be possible to enter an area, move about in it for a time, and come out without getting more than a dose so small as to be acceptable as a legitimate war-time hazard in saving life. I wonder if the thought of what the radiations were doing to one's bone-marrow whilst one took that risk might not be less chilling than the expectation as one went againg through a minefield, that one might soon have no legs to have any marrow in. The first day ended with a talk, "The prisoner of war in Fantasian hands," by Brigadier Robinson, the Director of Army Psychiatry, followed by a play on this subject which he had written himself; the two constituting a serious study of an important problem which has lately been very much to the fore.

Some well-known members of the "Mytchett Repertory Company" appeared in the play. Captain Alan Critchley, who has delighted audiences in Paris as well as Mytchett with his playing of Fantasian generals, appeared as a particularly loathsome specimen; and our old comic Irishman standby, Staff Sergeant O'Sullivan, surprised his fans by turning on some tragedy for a change. What I described in my account of "Avernus" as the "warm transatlantic voice" of Captain Matt Cooper this time had to take on what I suppose a dramatic critic might call the ragged edge of hysteria, and did it very well. But who was the
impressive bearded figure in the kalpak, or whatever Fantasians do wear? Being the sort of mug who forgets to look at the programme till the lights are out, I was foxed and really thought it was one of those bright members of the R.A.D.A. whom from time to time we have imported from the Depot to help with our plays. But it was Brigadier Robinson again, not only a playwright, but a newcomer to the “Mytchett Rep”—along with two other successful new actors, Corporal Staples and Private Stewart.

The effect of these two serials was rather depressing, the dominant note being that everyone has his breaking-point. As we had reached the end of a very long day there was no time to discuss the prevention of break-down, which was in fact dealt with in “Cambyses.” Obviously anything which helps the soldier to withstand the growing nervous strain of modern war may help him to stand up to “brainwashing” and so on, even perhaps when influenced by drugs. The soldier does not fight for abstractions like “Democracy,” but for his home and family, and perhaps even more for the good name of his unit, especially of his own small group within it, his platoon—his own immediate military family, as it were. Fear of disgrace, fear of the contempt of his comrades, may help to steel his heart, but it is better if his resolution and self-control should stem from confidence in his comrades, as well as in his own military ability, and from determination not to let either down. This loyalty to the small group may be even more important than the wider loyalty to the unit—esprit de corps. By both of these loyalties the man’s personal instincts of self-preservation, which would counsel him to run away, are balanced by herd instincts directed to a common resolution to overcome danger and fear for the good of the unit. When “the colonel’s dead and the Gatling’s jammed,” the soldier will think more of his platoon than of the Blankshire Regiment, the Union Jack, or the United Nations. When he is a prisoner he will still be a member of a group, probably a different one, but one which by companionship in adversity might become an even more devoted one. One of the most interesting facts in reports from Korea is that some prisoners who were professed Communists, and had been so before their captivity, refused to become informers and to betray their fellow-prisoners. Presumably they gave to Communism an allegiance transcending their allegiance to their country, but their loyalty to their comrades transcended even that. If it is true that under hypnosis a man cannot be made to commit actions which conflict with his higher principles, it seems possible that “brainwashing” techniques, even the use of drugs, may have difficulty in breaking a man sustained by this cardinal military virtue of loyalty to his comrades. It was our purpose in “Cambyses,” as described in pages 76 to 84 of the report (11), to examine how by facing up to the dangers of break-down under the nervous strain of war and preparing for them by mental training, a man’s resistance to it could be raised, as can his resistance to bodily fatigue by physical training. We did not specifically mention enemy methods of interrogation, but much of what was said in “Cambyses” has a direct bearing on that difficult problem, which Brigadier Robinson so powerfully impressed upon us in “Royal Road.”

On Saturday morning we had a very comprehensive survey of airborne
operations compressed into three hours, beginning with a lecture by Lieut.-Colonel Alastair Young, who also described the medical plan for the airborne attack on Fayid. We then went to the Aldershot District Sports Fields for a demonstration by 16 Independent Parachute Brigade Group, which included a section of a parachute field ambulance jumping from a balloon at some 500 feet to land about 50 yards from the audience, and setting up a C.C.P. where they later demonstrated their equipment. We were very lucky that close to Mytchett was stationed this fine brigade, with its field ambulance, Lieut.-Colonel Young’s old unit, now commanded by Lieut.-Colonel John Kilgour. The whole airborne interlude was boldly conceived, meticulously planned, and faultlessly executed—as an airborne operation must be. I have called it an interlude because, as the D.G. said, the “New Look” is not applicable to airborne divisions.

For the rest of Saturday we were involved in the aftermath of an atom bomb explosion on Benghazi, a most interesting presentation based on an exercise run in Fayid by General Drummond when he was D.M.S., M.E.L.F. Before lunch in a series of playlets we heard first of the plans made by D.D.M.S., Communications Zone, for dealing with atomic casualties, and then after an atomic strike near Benghazi we watched the reactions of the C.O. of a 1,200-bedded General Hospital there, and learned how the time between the explosion and the expected arrival of the casualties was to be used in preparation for their reception. After lunch we saw a demonstration of how these arrangements might work, going first to where, near the scene of the incident, the O.C. of 5 M.C.U. was co-ordinating with a Provost officer and the O.C. of a M.A.C. the plans for collecting and sorting the casualties, the urgent ones being sent to the General Hospital, and the less urgent ones being admitted to a “Casualty Filtering Post” established near at hand by two companies of the M.C.U. Here a mobile bath unit had set up a cleansing station for casualties, including stretcher cases, in need of decontamination. At the hospital we were shown the organization for admission, assessment, resuscitation, and post-operative treatment of mass casualties; and also some details of the sterile supply system, the blood bank, and some of the wards. All of these aspects of the work of a general hospital were demonstrated by members of the medical and nursing staff of the Cambridge Hospital, and it was obvious at every turn what a tremendous lot of careful planning and hard work everyone must have put into making this splendid demonstration so interesting and instructive, and even moving, for they really managed to convey a sense of the human element in such a disaster. Their C.O., Colonel Drew, told me that though the staging of this demonstration had certainly involved much hard work, they had all enjoyed it and it had been a powerful stimulus to their training and morale.

Colonel Drew, rather to the surprise of his friends, who had never before seen him invested in the motley of Drury Lane in place of that of Harley Street, was the star turn of the playlets. How we all sighed at first that so attractive a matron should be wasted on such a doddering old re-tread! But as the action developed we saw that he was on top of his job, and we had to endorse the verdict of two wars, that there is good stuff in these retired officers still. General Drummond,
who had organized this part of the exercise, himself appeared in the opening playlet as D.D.M.S., Communications Zone; and we were glad to see General Careful dealing with his rather turbulent subordinate with all the aplomb acquired during experience as the D.M.S. of various Army Groups since 1952, albeit for only three days per annum. Perhaps he was helped by the fact that the real general was concealed behind an almost impenetrable thicket of black moustache. The Directing Staff, or perhaps it was only Captain Critchley, evidently thought that paragraph 1015 of the Queen’s Regulations would have been repealed by 1960. Major-General Careful could have referred to his officers as his “old moustaches” with as much justification as Napoleon, but perhaps with less envy, as he was himself notably hairy-faced, whereas Napoleon seems to have had a rather smooth face. I suppose that this could have been associated with the tendency to dystrophy adiposo-genitalis, from which Raoul Brice, a French surgeon lieutenant-general, has deduced that he suffered (1). An English Army surgeon’s eyewit­ness account of the post-mortem examination of Napoleon, quite apart from making short work of the rumour of cancer,* makes interesting reading, especially some details delicately camouflaged in Latin which, together with some reasonable deductions from certain aspects of his conduct, suggest the origin of those aggressive impulses which created Napoleon from Napoleone Buonaparte.

Anyway he was lucky if he was spared the tendency to “five o’clock shadow” which caused Wellington to shave sometimes as often as three times a day—and that with those rather inadequate-looking implements which one can see in Apsley House. It was enough to make anyone a bit testy, and this provides me with my own pet theory as to how it came to be believed that Wellington was unsympathetic to the medical services. That exactly the reverse was in fact the case is clearly shown in the autobiography of Sir James McGrigor (5), which is pervaded by evidence of a sympathetic and helpful Commander-in-Chief. But of course quarrels and disagreements do make more interesting reading, and tend to be remembered in gossip when the details of harmonious co-operation have been forgotten. So most of us have heard of that stupendous rocket which Sir James received, and indeed deserved, for he had been evacuating his casualties by a route other than the main administrative axis, and using transport which Wellington had earmarked for operational use; and it is well known how terribly starved of transport that army was. Wellington was in a rage, and began, “I shall be glad to know who is to command the army, you or I.” I have said that he had good cause for anger, but hardly for rage, which was common with Napoleon, but most uncommon with the Duke. And it seems to have been a proper rage, for the third person present in the room was so scared that he abruptly quitted it, and here is the point, for that third person was Goya, to whom Wellington was at the time sitting for his portrait. Could the Duke have already noted that this portrait, like some others, a Lawrence for example, was

* Brice, who says that “Napoleon was always in a state of chronic indigestion,” believes that at St. Helena he had an amœbic liver abscess, ending in perforation into the stomach, a gastric perforation, and peritonitis.
beginning to show that blue chin about which he must have been sensitive?—for even a reputation for neatness, which gave him his nickname of “the beau,” hardly demands three shaves a day in the field. Of course there are good reasons, and less speculative ones, to be found for the few occasions when he could not agree with his medical adviser’s ideas, and often Wellington gave these in detail himself. Even when planning the battle of Vittoria he found time to write a long two-page letter to explain why he could not comply with some of Sir James’s requests.

After this rather irrelevant cadenza on the theme of General Drummond’s moustache I would just get back to business by saying that “Bombs on Benghazi” contained lessons of great importance for us all, whether concerned with civilian or military practice, and, whilst each detail of it may not be appropriate to every situation, the précis in the official report of the exercise will be an invaluable blue-print for any scheme for dealing with mass casualties from the disasters of peace or war. The only previous contribution to this post-war series of D.G.’s exercises which I would personally rate as more important is the big demonstration during “Mushroom,” which I would put first because of its impact on the army as a whole. It must have been the first attempt on such a scale to demonstrate protection of troops against atomic weapons, because the D.G.M.T., General Sir Richard Gale, who saw it, ordered us to repeat it twice for senior officers; and later, when Commander-in-Chief of Northern Army Group, he sent one of his officers to Mytchett to export the demonstration to Germany. Abridged versions have been given several times every year to the Staff College and other audiences, including members of civilian organizations; but when we were finally asked to enact it for a training film in 1954 we felt that the time had come for the army to teach this protection itself. “Bombs on Benghazi” was purely medical, and this time it was General Dimond of the Ministry of Health who said that it should be filmed; so perhaps, after all, it should be put equal first.

On Sunday morning, the last day of the exercise, the cloth-model desert had become the Mediterranean Sea, on which the varied craft needed to put ashore one brigade in an amphibious operation were to be seen approaching the beaches near Haifa, on which a landing was to be made in support of our successful advance into Egypt, which by drawing off most of the Fantasian troops stationed in Israel had made such an operation a worth-while risk. Great sea-borne assaults on the scale of our Normandy landings may now be impossible because of the threat of atomic attack, and it was well that we should be reminded how considerable a fleet of shipping is needed for only one brigade. It was too easy to imagine the effect of the underwater bursts of even one or two nominal bombs, with their base surge and all, on the operation which we were watching. During Colonel Ahern’s description of the mounting of an amphibious operation I thought of his many powerful performances in ’51 and ’52. I would not like to imply that my mind wandered, for he spoke with all the clarity to be expected of a former C.O. of the Field Training School; but I will admit that I did just find time to recall a small Scots schoolboy’s definition of a “beach.” Having
defined an island as a piece of land entirely surrounded by water, and a lake as a piece of water entirely surrounded by land, he said that a beach was "a wee dog entirely surrounded by ither wee dogs." In the demonstration following Colonel Ahern's talk a DUKW was demonstrated by Major Thomson of the School of Amphibious Warfare, who even told us why it is spelt like that; and we then saw the sort of set-up which an M.C.U. and M.S.U. might establish ashore in support of a landing. Lieut.-Colonel Graeme Warrack looked in vain for a storm-boat in which to attack his speed record of 1952, and it was just as well that there was not such an assortment of craft as we assembled for "Rubicon," because after the drought Mytchett Lake barely provided flotation for a decorous DUKW-load of generals, escorting Dame Helen Gillespie.

Demonstrations of amphibious operations without sailors rather lack glamour. Inter-service co-operation, the keynote of success, is nowadays taken for granted, but it was not always so good, as Sergeant Robertson and some of his comrades of the 92nd found whilst they were making good their escape from Corunna (10). Even when they had reached the transport, after jumping from a height of twelve feet into the last boat just as it was pushing off from the shore, their troubles were not over, for when the French shelled them with two field pieces "the sailors not having been accustomed to that sort of work would not come on deck to work the vessels, but left the management of them to the soldiers who could not be supposed to be very proficient in nautical affairs." It seems that considerable chaos and loss of vessels resulted. But usually, far from letting the soldiers do their work, the sailors loved to dash ashore, cutlass in hand to try a bit of land fighting; like those who at Walcheren "pursued the enemy a considerable distance, and considerably annoyed them." (2). From other accounts of that wretched campaign* I think that the sailors referred to in that account were a party commanded by Captain Charles Richardson of Cæsar, who are said to have "made themselves conspicuously useful" (3). It was, of course, in a similar foray that Nelson at Calvi† acquired the blind eye which was traditionally so useful at Copenhagen. The management of all the shipping needed for a modern assault, and the organization of maintenance over beaches, once they have surmounted the difficulties of getting us ashore, keep the navy busy enough these days, and they have to confine their wonderful tricks with dismantled guns to swinging them over imaginary ravines in the Royal Tournament. The navy was represented at "Royal Road" by Surgeon Captain C. B. Nicholson, attending his third D.G.'s exercise, and, as he feared it might be his last, he said some nice

* When the navy brought home the Walcheren survivors it was the second time in eight months that they had had to do this for a powerful British Expeditionary Force. No wonder there was a tremendous public outcry and a Parliamentary inquiry. Readers of this Journal know what a part was played in this disaster by malaria, but may not have heard of the rather ridiculous bawdy note on which the House brought to an end some six days of debate and over twenty of inquiry by the Committee of the Whole House. Sir Home Popham was explaining why some ships had not gone where they were intended to go, but had had to put in to that part of the East Scheldt called the Roompot. The report ends: "'unexpected circumstances compelled the transports to go to the Roompot' (Here an universal laughter drowned the voice of the Hon. Member, and as soon as it had subsided, strangers were ordered to withdraw.)"

† It was on account of this action that he applied to the Secretary at War for the allowances of a Brigadier-General in the army, with results of which no soldier will be in any doubt.
things about us from which we learned that his feelings for his army colleagues are considerably warmer than the faintly amused tolerance which we sometimes suspect the senior service reserves for the “pongoes.” The D.G. was particularly struck by his apt comparison of the possibility of assembling the required companies of M.C.U.s and M.S.U.s to give a formation the collecting and treatment facilities which a particular operation seems to require, with the manner of forming naval squadrons to meet any particular task. This brought a dreamy look into the eyes of the Inspector of Training, Brigadier Franklin, who, unlike Sergeant Robertson’s highlanders, is “very proficient in nautical affairs.” In the last serial of the exercise, which was a report on A.E.R. and T.A. training, a less pleasing comparison was suggested by Colonel Meneces, who called these units a “meccano set.” For this act of apostasy on the part of a member of the Directing Staff, he said himself that he was expecting that his next appointment would be A.D.M.S. Rockall; and he has since sent me the following establishment:

ROCKALL (MEDICAL ESTABLISHMENT)

A.D.M.S.................................................. 1
Clerical Assistant (mermaid)..................... 2
Gannets (general duty)............................. 3
Albatross............................................... 2

Although it would be a lonely life, he should at least be assured of frequent visits by the Inspector of Training.

Each year the D.G. has said that his exercise has simply got to be the best yet, and I felt, especially during the Saturday’s demonstrations, that he had certainly pulled it off this time. Looking back over the six D.G.’s exercises which I have attended, I realize that each had its high-lights. Embedded in the official reports, like currants in a cake, are lectures and précis of discussions from which we have much to learn. Some examples are two valuable lectures in 1954, on “Burns” by Mr. Patrick Clarkson, and on “Resuscitation” by Colonel Stephen, and Sir Arthur Porritt’s lecture in “Horatius,” 1950—a lantern to light the military surgeon’s path, and one which, despite the passage of five years, needs no trimming of the wick, as Sir Arthur Porritt himself recently assured me. These accounts of mine in the Journal are intended only to whet your appetites for the full reports.

“Royal Road” followed logically after “Avernus,” for it was the picture painted in “Avernus” and sketched in on the first page of this article which made some reorganization on the lines of the “New Look” inevitable. Enjoying the irresponsibility of Opposition after four exercises on the Government front bench, I pointed out some of the flaws in the proposed new organization, which we in Germany think we detected during our autumn manoeuvres. I was supported on the Opposition front bench by Colonel P. J. Richards, and from a back bench by Colonel Leslie Keatinge, in his most avuncular elder statesman vein. This is not the place in which to develop these arguments, but it may be said that our exercises seemed to prove the validity of some of the claims made for the new units. Lord Wellington once said, “It is impossible to command a British
Army," and we found that we had to echo his cry in relation to the M.C.U., which in its present form we found impossible to command and control. But if anyone should feel tempted, and it is terribly tempting to all who have loved the field ambulance, which includes anyone who has ever commanded one, to say "Let's leave well alone, and rely on the units which have served us so well in two great wars," let him study again the "Avernus" picture of the possible shape of the battlefield of the future. Let him also remember that Sir Richard Gale has said, "The side which enters the next war with the mentality of the last will suffer from a disadvantage from which it might not recover." Another good motto for us is the saying of Scharnhorst, quoted by Herr Blank, the West German Defence Minister, when swearing-in officers and men of the new German armed forces: "It must be the tradition of an army to stand at the head of progress."

It is deceptively easy for those who are concerned principally with divisional and corps problems to say that the divisional area is no place in which to hold the casualties who in a modern army should surely be promptly sent by air to the proper place for surgery. But if that "Avernus" nightmare is a fair prophetic glimpse of the future battlefield, and the best authorities have not yet dared to say that it is not, there may be nowhere to send those casualties to, whether you have a squadron of helicopters, or a fleet of flying carpets operated by Michael and all angels. And we must also remember that without collecting facilities in rearmost areas, that shambles which is embarrassing our medical plan for clearing our A.D.S.s cannot be tidied up quickly. That is why we may have to tighten our belts and see how big a slice of our divisional cake we can give up to redress the balance.

There was so much ground to cover this year that the time available for discussion was only about half that of last year, but the D.G. indicated that discussions of these crucially important matters will be continuing actively in the following months, during study periods; and by a War Office working party—a term which even after three years at the War Office still obstinately brings immediately to my mind a picture of old ladies taking their knitting to the vicarage. A M.C.U. is to be formed under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Marks. Let's hope that, just as Wellington did, he may after all discover the secret of how to command it. And finally no doubt from all this should surely result some workable scheme for us, to try in future manoeuvres.

A rather tiresome innovation this year was the use during discussions of a portable microphone. The speaker, pregnant with some great thought, indicated that the time had come for it to be delivered to the world; but when one of the very efficient team of young soldiers handed him a sort of electric razor on a long cable, the effect, rather like being handed a deaf old lady's ear trumpet, was to paralyse thought, so that he could think of nothing to say but "Hallo." It might have been as well if some of us had said just that, and sat down. But only those who have had to record and subsequently make a précis of the discussions in past exercises will know the real value of this device. I noticed that one of the helpers, called up for his A.E.R. annual training, was Corporal Clarke, who used
to be one of those recorders who sometimes produced for us the most astounding remarks which speakers were alleged to have made. Last year, during a surgical discussion in which Lieut.-Colonel Stephen was being questioned, the D.G. prefaced a last question by saying, "Before we leave Bob alone . . ." This was typed out as "Before we leave for Boulogne . . ." We were often forced to put what we thought an intelligent speaker ought to have said. Perhaps it was not such a bad method after all.

The outdoor demonstrations, except for the airborne and minefield ones, were run by the A.E.R. wing of the Field Training Centre, and it was clear that they had learned a lot since last year, for things went with a swing worthy of their Field Training School wing, veterans of so many successful shows. I doubt if many of the audience realized that the vast majority of these actors were young reservists who had not been available for as much as a week of rehearsal—an indication of the hard work and careful organization which must have been needed to achieve such good results.

The unusually large number of nine American officers attended the exercise, and in addition to our old friend Brigadier-General Wilford Hall they included Major-General H. G. Armstrong, United States Air Force in Europe, and Major-General S. B. Hays, who had succeeded another General Armstrong as Surgeon General to the United States Army. General Hays gave the D.G. his only anxious moments of the exercise, when he went up in the balloon at the airborne demonstration and was said to be intending to jump out with a parachute. During the evening following this demonstration the Field Training Centre workshops made a special memento which was presented to the General next day to mark the occasion of his being the only general officer of the United States armed forces, so far as our records showed, to make a balloon ascent during a D.G.'s exercise. Thanking the D.G. for this memento, General Hays referred to a remark he had made on the first day of the exercise when the pantomime camel presented to him an address of welcome. He had then said that he wondered if he was intended to draw any conclusions from the well-known fact that this animal could go a long time between drinks. Now on the last day of the exercise he said, "How was I to know that the animal had diabetes?" I wonder if the general could have brought the house down with this sally if he had had to signal for a nursing orderly to bring him the microphone first. Mr. Gadsby of the Army Operational Research Group, a very regular attender at our exercises, was with us again, and Australia, Canada, India, and Pakistan were also represented.

After the D.G. had thanked those who had helped to make the exercise a success, Brigadier Roy Ward, D.D.M.S., Anti-aircraft Command, thanked the D.G. himself for all the enjoyment given to so many by his four exercises, and for the greatly increased opportunities for medical officers of the A.E.R. and T.A. to attend them. Though Brigadier Ward was the spokesman for the medical officers of the Reserve Army, he perfectly expressed what we were all feeling. We have all enjoyed these exercises and it is no secret that the D.G. has enjoyed them enormously himself. Not the least reason for this enjoyment has been the
chance of getting together with our colleagues from the whole army. There are many factors which make it difficult for us to train the National Service man as well as we would like to do during his time with the Active Army, and in many cases defects in his education remain to be filled in by the Reserve Army. In the early days it was not uncommon to hear complaints by Territorial officers that the Regular Army, with all its facilities, was leaving too much of its work to be done by devoted volunteers during the man's part-time service. Contacts during training, and above all this annual gathering of a representative cross-section of the senior officers of both Active and Reserve Armies, have enabled us to understand one another's problems and to iron out many possible sources of friction; and have welded us into one medical service. Having been Inspector of Training during three of the years of this process, I was in a good position to know how sincerely Brigadier Ward was expressing the feelings of Reserve Army officers, and to echo his sentiments from personal experience.

Now it is much less easy to praise someone who, as they say, is "still with us" than it is to write an obituary notice, when the victim is beyond the power of answering back, whilst the wildest statements are condoned by those who may know better, under the "de mortuis" rule. You all know the sort of thing I mean. "His single-minded absorption in his profession left him little leisure for outside interests or social contacts, but those who were fortunate enough to gain the sparingly awarded prize of his friendship recognized that his gruff and almost forbidding manner overlay a character of sterling worth." This may be freely translated as "I've done my best for the old so-and-so but you all know he was a dull, crabbed old bore with no friends." Try that sort of thing on the guest of honour in an after-dinner speech and you must surely be a bit cramped by the uneasy feeling that he is saying under his breath, "Silly ass ought to know me better." But I could have seconded Brigadier Ward's charming speech with no such uneasy feelings, for I am sure that the D.G. had forgotten that almost his last official act as D.M.S., M.E.L.F., was to launch in my direction a jet-propelled rocket with atomic warhead. I know that he had forgotten because his bite is worse than his bark—which is surely better than the other way round. After all, in the army one expects to be bitten now and then, but barking, which I think of as synonymous with nagging, for when does a bark become a yap?—barking is not an endearing habit. Give me the bite every time, preferably a bite free from Negri bodies and quickly healing. To those who wonder how I, of all people, survived three War Office years unbitten, the answer is that the training for war of our regular and reserve medical units is not only a matter in which the D.G. naturally took a tremendous interest, but one which, with its relatively straightforward problems, must have often been in welcome contrast to the intricate and worrying affairs, some of them affecting the future of our Corps as we know it, with which we all know he had to deal. When these weighty affairs kept him chained to his desk in the summer stuffiness of London he occasionally greeted my sun-tanned return from some lovely week amongst the camping and manoeuvring A.E.R. and T.A. with "Had a good leave?"; which made it a bit tricky to ask when I could expect to get a little leave. But he could always
F. M. Richardson

find time to ask all about our doings in the training field, and as I said last year, “he was always ready to escape from the cares of his high office for a frolic with the Fantasians.” Until the lessons to be brought out at the exercise and the methods by which these were to be taught and demonstrated had been clearly defined there were no frolics, but once such details were settled the D.G. himself led the revels.

In recent correspondence in the Press about the training of circus animals those who denied that any cruelty was involved pointed out that animals trained by cruel methods could not give the happy sort of performance which the public expects. As at Olympia, so at Mytchett.

And now many of our present D.G.’s troupe of performing seals have flipped their tubs for the last time, and, to the dying strains of their motor horns, will soon gambol off into the seven seas. There are as good seals in the sea as ever came out of it, and you may be sure that D.G.’s exercises will go on traditionally—each one better than the last. But, speaking for my fellow seals, we will always be proud to have been associated with four first-class performances (when were circus folk ever modest?), and we are giving the stories of them to our proprietor, with whom we stood “at the head of progress,” as a tribute of our affectionate regard, and in gratitude for all we learned and all the fun we had whilst preparing and staging Exercises “Rubicon,” “Cambyses,” “Avernus” and “Royal Road.”

REFERENCES

(2) Green, J., late 68th Foot, The Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s life. Louth (printed by J. & J. Jackson), 1827.