THE MEDICAL EXAMINATION OF A UNIT ON MOBILIZATION.

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On orders being received for mobilization one of the first duties of the medical officer will be the medical inspection of all ranks. It is obvious that this duty must be performed with the greatest despatch and with the minimum of disturbance to the mobilizing unit. Few medical officers could say off-hand how long the medical examination of, say, a battalion takes, and yet this is one of the first questions they will be asked and expected to answer. And the answer is one on which will depend the smooth working and co-ordination between ourselves and the regimental authorities. It is evident that some method of rapidly and accurately estimating the necessary time is very desirable, and it was with a view to arrive at some such data that the following observations were made.

To begin with, it is undesirable that the whole battalion should parade at one and the same time. Many of the men cannot possibly be seen for hours, and it is obviously unnecessary to keep them standing about when their services are urgently required for the hundred and one fatigue and duties connected with the transference of a unit from its peace to a war footing. It would seem that half-companies or units of about that size would be the most convenient. This arrangement will set free the greater part of the battalion for other duties and allow the minimum to be idle.

Now to arrange matters in this way it is absolutely necessary for the medical officer to know with a reasonable amount of accuracy what length of time is required to examine a given number of men; to make out a time-table from this knowledge; and then for himself and the regimental authorities to adhere to it absolutely.

At a recent experimental mobilization an exact time-table was kept and calculations made from it, showing the following results:

1. The examination of each officer took 1.2 minutes.
2. The examination of each man of A flight took 0.4 minutes.
   B = 0.9
   C = 0.5

One is at once struck by the amount of time taken over the officers, whose examination was in no way different to or more searching than that of the men. The reason was that each officer came into the inspection-room alone and undressed and dressed himself again before the arrival of the next. In practice it will be found necessary to make a liberal allowance when making out the time-table for officers. Another point to be observed with regard to officers is that they should be examined with their companies and not as is usually arranged at an officers' parade. The advantage of the arrangement is that they are kept with their men outside the inspection-room and maintain discipline and
Clinical and other Notes

silence amongst them. If all officers are examined *en masse* they soon melt away and the men left without adequate supervision are inclined to get out of hand. I well remember once trying to examine a regiment of special reservists. The men were collected in their barrack-rooms, without officers, and as far as I could see, without order or method of any kind. Time after time it was necessary to stop the examination and go out and order them to be quiet. This resulted in much wasted time and lost temper on the part of all concerned.

With regard to the examination of non-commissioned officers and men it will be noticed that while A and C flights took practically the same time B flight took nearly twice as long. In this case the fault lay partly with the men, who were rather slow at getting ready, and partly in some confusion with regard to a party who were segregated at the time for infectious disease. How serious this would have been in the case of a half-company will be realized when it is remembered that the delay would have disarranged the time-table to the extent of nearly three-quarters of an hour!

The last point to be considered is the loss of time between the completion of the examination of one company and the commencement of that of the next. There is bound to be a short interval while nominal rolls are being collected, signed, and handed over, and those of the newly arrived company received.

The times taken in the foregoing instance were:

1. Between officers and A flight 3 minutes.
2. A flight and B flight 3 minutes.
3. B flight and C flight 2 minutes.

This interval for purposes of calculation can be taken as three minutes.

We have now the following data to work upon in making up the time-table:

1. Each officer will require 1·25 minutes.
2. Each non-commissioned officer and man will require 0·5 minute.
3. The interval between companies will require 3 minutes.

So much for the time-table. It will be obvious that to keep to it there must be perfect co-ordination between the medical officer and the regimental authorities. The medical officer must undertake to examine each batch in the time arranged, and this can only be done if he keeps a watch on the table and sees that he gets neither in front of nor behind hand with his time-table. The point to remember is that time will not be saved by working faster than the time-table allows, as the next batch will not be ready.

In the inspection-room time will be saved and confusion prevented by internal arrangements on the following lines. One non-commissioned officer should stand at the door with orders that not more than a definite number of men, say four, shall be in the room at one time. Another wil
have a nominal roll, check the men as they come in, and see that they are ready for examination. Men should keep their caps on and see that they are not separated from their kit, otherwise there will always be one or two men dodging about looking for their belongings and getting into everybody's way. If the medical officer is in doubt as to the "fitness" of a man, he must not stop, but a mark can be made against his name on the nominal roll and all men so marked can be recalled at the end of the inspection for a final decision. The regimental authorities on their part must undertake to parade their men punctually to the time-table. They should provide nominal rolls, and the men must fall in as their names stand on the rolls. Lastly, they must see that perfect silence is maintained by the men.

Working on these lines an infantry battalion at war strength will require the following time for inspection:

- Officers (including attached)...
- Non-commissioned officers and men...
- First reinforcements (1 officer and 99 men)...
- Intervals between half-companies...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>37 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>910</td>
<td>7 hours 35 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>51 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9 hours 27 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may be possible to examine a battalion in a rather shorter time, and if a medical officer thinks he can do so it would be, easy to calculate at the rate of 0.4 minute per man. This alone would result in a saving of nearly an hour and a half. It must, however, be remembered that even a slight change like this means working at extra high pressure hour after hour, and any slacking off will at once react and spoil the smooth working of the time-table.

It is very necessary that time should not be lost in handing over the medical history sheets at the conclusion of the parade. These should be arranged according to the nominal rolls, and should be checked by an officer or non-commissioned officer during the examination of the men. A list of the medical history sheets not handed over, with particulars of where the sheets are (for example, those of men in hospital or away on detachment duty), should be attached and a receipt obtained.

In conclusion, I would urge medical officers to make all arrangements personally with the regimental authorities, and not leave the details to subordinates and then grumble if there is unnecessary confusion, delay, and loss of valuable time.