"**Drill**" as an end in itself died many years ago, but "drill" as a means to an end flourishes in every army. It is "drill" and its resultant attributes which make an army superior to an armed mob.

The modern tendency is to return to more elaborate and rigid drill for preliminary training purposes, in contradistinction to the somewhat free-and-easy methods in force immediately after the South African war, for there is no doubt that when really "up against it" the best drilled and so best trained unit comes out on top.

To a technical corps such as the R.A.M.C., "drill" *per se* is of course not so important as it is to combatant formations, at any rate in peace time, but nevertheless it is necessary, and what is worth doing at all is worth doing well. It is with the idea of arousing interest in drill as a means of training to greater efficiency that these remarks have been penned.

The points touched upon are of course known to and realized by all of us. Too often the weekly drill parade of a hospital company is looked upon as a fatigue by those highly trained in technical subjects. It is often carried through perfunctorily and with lack of attention to detail and correctness, with the result that little or no benefit is derived from it. This need not be, and I shall endeavour to indicate that the benefits of correct drill are more than counterbalanced by the little extra trouble involved.

"Drill" may be divided into two classes: (1) Ceremonial drill, and (2) practical drill (gun drill, fire drill, stretcher drill, and the like). The object of these two types of drill are different—they should never be confused. The original basis of all is, however, ceremonial drill.

*Ceremonial Drill* (company drill in our case) is designed *(a)* to make a display (not often very important from our point of view); and *(b)* to inculcate steadiness, handiness, and a spirit of manly obedience and discipline (very necessary for every branch of the Service). On the other hand, stretcher drill is intended to train men in the best methods of handling casualties with reference to their injuries, of carrying them on stretchers and loading them into ambulance vehicles. Quickness and gentleness are the attributes necessary. Stretcher drill, gun drill and fire drill are therefore unsuitable for ceremonial purposes, as rigid drill is not advisable in these. Ceremonial drill, as applicable to the R.A.M.C., partly consists of "platoon" and company drill. In this connexion we are at once up against an anomaly. The word "platoon" is derived from a
French military term, which meant a firing unit. To call a body of R.A.M.C. a "platoon" is therefore incorrect. One suggests that the older term "section" be reintroduced and substituted for "platoon" in the drill book, etc.

This again brings us to the subject of the nomenclature of medical units in general. The field ambulance "company" is a fairly large unit consisting of an "A.D.S. party" and a "bearer party." As far as I know, these subdivisions have received no official name. I suggest that the company be divided into three sections: No. 1 section to consist of one officer, one N.C.O., and five stretcher squads; No. 2 section to consist of one officer, one N.C.O., and four stretcher squads; and No. 3 section (the A.D.S. party) to comprise the remainder of the unit, including wagon orderlies and horsed transport, both ambulance and for stores. This would make the company more elastic and easier to detail and manœuvre. Written orders would also be shorter: "Nos. 1 and 2 Sections 'A' Company," is more compact than "'A' Company (less A.D.S. party and transport)."

The Headquarters is a still larger unit, and for purposes of manoeuvre should be officially divided into at least two sections, and always march as such. Infantry on the march are often practised in "air-craft formations"—little blobs get off the road and march in an irregular pattern. A similar formation is necessary for a field ambulance in order to increase flexibility and ease of control.

The physical benefits derived from ceremonial drill need not be touched upon; bodily co-ordination and control are the chief. It has also a highly beneficial effect on that elusive quality known as morale, as was realized during the war, when this form of drill was used extensively to "pull together" the remains of units which had suffered heavily in action.

Apart from this, ceremonial drill properly carried out makes a unit steady and handy, shortens the time taken to deploy, and makes such manœuvres as entraining, embarking, and getting in and out of billets easier for all concerned, by cultivating subconsciously readiness and alertness, and prompt obedience.

To gain the full benefits from ceremonial drill it must not be hurried, each movement, however small, must be led up to by an expectant pause, and succeeded by a pause. One movement must not be run into another, as this leads to unfinished drill and unsteadiness. The instructor must remember that a hurried stream of orders results in restlessness and often in inattention. Allowance must be made for the varying latent period of the men in the ranks. It goes without saying that restlessness or uncertainty on the part of the instructor is at once followed by unsteadiness and bad drill. His voice should be resolute and inspiring, not diffident, and certainly not a "snarl." Each movement must be finished and accurate. A few movements carried out correctly and with a "snap" and finish are far more beneficial than the whole gamut hurried through. Watch His Majesty's Guards on parade! A drawn-out caution like a
clarion, a tense pause, not a movement anywhere; every ear strained to hear the next order! Then an executive command, sharp, short and compelling. Crash! Another long pause, and so on—that is drill as it ought to be done!

We cannot hope to compete with such perfection—time and technicalities prevent—but at any rate we can improve and so gain some of the benefits. A pause of four beats should always be made between a “caution” and an “executive” command, with the possible exception of “Form Fours” and “Quick March,” which should usually be given in the cadence of the movement required, i.e., at a beat of 120 to the minute. Above all, an instructor should never “nag;” “Not very good, try it again, that’s better,” is quite enough as a rule to stiffen things up.

While on the subject of ceremonial drill, one would advance a plea for the reintroduction of the side-arm for “other ranks” of the Corps. It improved the men’s turn-out on ceremonial parades and guard mounting, fostered the military spirit and gave importance to a sentry who is nowadays often “armed” only with a stick or cudgel (the latter too often of the “H. Lander” pattern!).

Apart from this, it is sometimes necessary for our Corps to be armed, and such is expressly permitted by the Geneva Convention, provided that the arms are only used “for the protection of the unit and that of the sick and wounded under its care.” One has heard several tales of stretcher-bearers being held up by half-armed marauders, and I have myself seen a stretcher party fired on by Arabs and one man wounded—the Red Cross brassard meant nothing to them; fortunately the rifle of an R.A.S.C. H.T. driver was handy and had the desired effect. When brought to book and handed over to the A.P.M., one delinquent was found to be a notorious murderer and bandit who was badly wanted. I understand he was afterwards hanged! An incident such as this puts a soldier in an undignified position if arms do not happen to be available, whether he is a combatant or not. An officer of the Corps riding up to an advanced post after an action was suddenly confronted by two armed Turks who had been overlooked in the mop up; after some conversation between the Turks, the muzzle of a .45 revolver helped them in their original intention, which doubt was to surrender. They might have easily escaped as the country was broken, and as they were in rags and the officer was adequately clothed and had a useful horse, something else might have happened had the officer been unarmed!

During a “general” or other inspection of an R.A.M.C. unit, all that can be done is to call the company to “attention”; that is the beginning and end of the “compliment.” In the old days “swords” were drawn, “sloped” and “carried” and a better display was possible. As a rule the solitary bugler is so out of practice (I do not, of course, allude to the Depot) that he is better left to his ordinary duty of answering the telephone, as the “general salute” call to be properly rendered requires practice.
To return to our "muttons," i.e., ceremonial drill: The ceremonial type of drill which we are required to know is very simple, and consists of movement from "close column" or "column" of "platoons" into column of fours, and vice versa, coupled with the few evolutions necessary for "marching past." Yet how many of us could take a company through these evolutions correctly and with finish, although it requires very little practice?

During the great mobilization in 1914, the same scene was enacted almost daily on the depot parade ground. A unit would be paraded and taken over by its commanding officer preparatory to entraining. The unit having been inspected, its new C.O. would then walk out to the front somewhat uncertainly, and then sotto voce, "You might tell me the proper words of command to get 'em down to the station, will you?" Not a good start! and yet the necessary words could be learnt in five minutes. I now tread on delicate ground, but suggest with all diffidence that a week at our Depot to wind up the "Majors' Course" would be popular and help to get over the effects of much indoor study.

Follow the unit mentioned above to the station—the train comes in, excitement and rushing about ensue with their attendant delay instead of a quiet and calm. Tell off loading parties—tell off the guard. Form fours. From the right—two ranks to a compartment. Entrain! To a unit with the drill habit (even if inexperienced) such things as these are simple and not much practice is necessary. The steadiness and alertness fostered by correct drill is an asset which means a great deal, not only "on service," but in the more efficient carrying out of any duties, even those of a highly technical nature; it fosters attention and concentration and shortens the latent period.

Perhaps it is asking too much nowadays, but one would like to see certain "semi-military" events reintroduced into our Annual Sports. "Reveille" and "First Aid" inter-company competitions used to be popular items, and fostered keenness and a spirit of rivalry which was all to the good.

A considerable time is spent at our annual field ambulance training camps in rubbing up drill which should be known already, and thus wasting time which is all too short for the advanced training necessary, but until the drill is mastered it is useless to go on to field work and medical tactical schemes.

Stretcher Drill.—Stretcher drill is a "practical" drill and an "end" in itself; it is not a ceremonial drill, and should not be used to inculcate steadiness and control. More free methods should be employed; each squad should perform its own task semi-independently; quickness and accuracy should be aimed at, though in training recruits a certain amount of "ceremonial method" must be introduced in order that the rudiments may be learnt.

In the present drill a great deal of time is wasted in sizing and telling off squads, and in redundant and unnecessarily complicated detail. I
understand this is being altered in a new form of drill now about to be introduced. Permanent squads should be formed and the men paraded in these squads. More time is thus available for the actual stretcher exercises. This is a great advance.

As has been mentioned, the aim and object of all drill is to train men in discipline, steadiness, mobility, and alertness (ceremonial), and quickness in a special piece of work (stretcher drill). These attributes are essential before training in field work can be undertaken with any hope of good results. In our Corps we have the drill, but little or no attempt has been made to apply it systematically to field work.

Field Formations.—It is true that extended order for stretcher squads is taught in order that ground may be searched, but as there is no adequate system of control and inter-communication taught, the results are not very satisfactory, and the training in field formations generally is rudimentary. Sundry schemes of training have appeared in these pages from time to time, but although they have been found to answer their purpose in actual warfare have been allowed to die out for want of official recognition.

A point which is often not realized is that under the conditions of mobile warfare it is not enough for the field ambulance bearers to clear the regimental aid posts—all the wounded will not be there—as, if an advance is rapid, the most the regimental stretcher bearers can do is to “group” casualties under cover and leave them there; if they attempt more they will often lose touch with their own units. Also, casualties are likely to be missed altogether, and if unable to move are likely to die from exposure or for want of first aid. It is, therefore, up to the field ambulance bearers to find the “groups” and isolated wounded, and to do this they must be able to deploy in a widely-extended formation, and beat up the ground covered by the troops in their advance as soon as conditions permit. Even before a systematic search can be made, a few suitably trained squads in extended formation can get in many casualties which might otherwise lie out for hours. If squads are properly trained in extended formation and use of ground, coupled with a knowledge of visual training and the “clock and finger” method of describing landmarks, the use of a few simple signals, etc., earlier evacuation from the R.A.P.’s is also possible. Without proper methods of control and training in the use of ground and landmarks, an extended line of stretcher squads soon loses direction if advancing over broken ground, and individual squads may be lost altogether.

Such methods of control are outlined in “Infantry Training,” and with a little trouble can and have been modified to the requirements of stretcher bearers when searching ground. These should form part of our training, as has been proved by the experience of many of us in mobile warfare.

The field formations suggested for stretcher-bearers are two in number:

(a) The present extended formation, but with a minimum interval for practical purposes of twenty paces between squads, and

(b) a modification of this conveniently known as “second extension” in which the numbers
not engaged in carrying the closed stretcher form an extended line in front of the men actually carrying the stretcher or on each side of them. This second extension is useful when searching broken ground or at night, as lateral touch is easier. It is proposed to go into this matter more fully in a subsequent article.

All warfare is not of the semi-sedentary type, and experts tell us that the battles of the future will be highly mobile affairs over very wide frontages. Perhaps the day is not far off when mobile armoured aid posts and A.D.S.’s will follow the advancing line of tanks, evacuation being by special airplanes capable of rising steeply, with or against the wind, and so being independent of large landing grounds.

Whatever the future holds in store, the ultimate decision must rest with the foot soldier, who must be used to take, consolidate, and hold a position. His casualties must be searched for and collected by men on foot, even if based on an airplane or mobile armoured and gas-proof “aid post tank,” so that very many years will have to pass before the fundamental methods of searching for and collecting wounded can be radically altered. The stretcher squad and the (often) hidden casualty will always be with us. Armistices for clearing a field of wounded are things of the past. War will become more and more ruthless, and its few “amenities” will disappear until it becomes so dreadful that the force of public opinion will cause it to cease altogether—but that day is not yet.