

IT'S ALL GAS.

The late Editor's experience of a Gas Test.

"It doesn't matter whether you are proceeding to France on 'special' orders or not, you must take a gas course before going overseas." Thus spoke the Sergeant, and I, lately come down from the glories of a Staff-Sergeant to that of the humble (?) Private, had perforce to obey. It meant at least another week's sojourn at the Depot—somewhere in England—before going overseas. D—n, I quite forgot that the Kitchener boots must be worn for fourteen days before embarkation. So instead of seven days, at least a fortnight must elapse before I see France.

"Fall in—dress from the right, number. Move to the right in fours—form fours." I was one of a squad of 26, who, according to instructions, had reported at the "Gas" house at 9 a.m. on Monday morning, ready to be instructed into all the mysteries of gas, and how to combat it. We had been previously well prepared by some of the old hands, and fully expected to go through untold horrors during the coming week—but, as in everything else, in this world, the anticipation is decidedly worse than the realization, and not one of the 26 failed in the final tests.

The first three days were devoted to

mastering the box respirator, and to be able to place it in position in 6 seconds, and if instructions are carefully followed this is easy of accomplishment. To those whose sight is not of the best, and whose breathing apparatus is not up-to-date, the route march at night is somewhat of a disagreeable experience. Gas masks are placed in position, and are not to be taken off, under dire penalties, for two hours, the while you are marching over unfamiliar roads. For the first ten minutes you feel that whatever happens, you must take that d—d thing off your face or suffocate. A longing for Cooden Camp comes over you, and you think what an ass you have been, and just as you are about to surreptitiously take a breath of God's pure air—bang goes a gas bomb, and out of the tail of your eye you see a flame and a cloud of smoke. You forget all about removing that mask—in fact, you feel jolly glad you have got it on. And when, shortly after midnight, you get back to Barracks, and you have had a bounteous supper (?), you feel quite a hero, though you don't say so to your chums.

As with the night march, the gas chamber is not as bad as it is painted. You certainly have a horrid feeling just at first, and wonder if there is anything wrong with your mask, but you have hardly started wondering when it is all over, and your pay book bears the gas certificate—and you are 7 days nearer France.

—D.G.F.

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