

The Final Test.

We have had a few rather lively actions, and at times "gone through it" to some extent, but neither the anticipation nor the actual business seems to affect anyone to any great extent. But when that simple message reaches Unit Headquarters, "The G.O.C. will inspect the unit at—on—! then strong men pale and tremble. Then the stern O.C., before whom all men quail, starts as if stung by some venomous insect, and with a quaver in his voice calls for his S.M. And soon, through the unit, the dread news is spread like some insidious poison vapour into every nook and corner. The Q.M., harrassed by the fact that all the tall men need clothes, and that he has only 5ft. 6in. pants in stock, is at once assailed by an impetuous host, who noisily demand anything from a "housewife" to their identity disc. The canteen is swamped for cleaning material and brushes, and even those lords of creation, the batmen, condescend to turn out their officers with a little shine.

For a while the M.T. is prostrate, save for a continuous flexion of the right forearm, solving the problem of how to spend your days lying under a car in grease and mud while oil drippings tastefully mark your clothing something in the style of a faded leopard, and then to turn out like unto Solomon in all his glory, and all in the one suit of clothes.

Upon this fateful day the tension is terrible. The Sanitary Section beat it into the bush like rats deserting a sinking ship. Things soon become unbearable, and an earthly realisation of heaven would be to receive your leave pass on the morning of an inspection. Even at the eleventh hour one would hail the bit of green paper with whoops of relief.

Down at P—— the M.T. arrived on the square not with too much time to spare, and things were not improved by some of the boys showing a tendency to back their cars up the estaminet steps when lining up. After things had been straightened out a little, and regular breathing had been restored, up rushed one worthy who had been absent on detached duty. He was tastefully attired in hip boots, boko mud, and carried no tin hat!

He was told to allez for the love of Pete; to beat it, and to get put of here before the G.O.C. comes. Thunderstruck, he asked, "Where?" "Anywhere; go to h—l. Beat it!"

In the hurry to escape he dived into the nearest house, where he found, too late to escape, that the family had not yet completed their morning toilet, and so he had to sit through that long inspection trying to hide his furious blushes behind a cup of coffee.

By this time all was ready, and the drivers lined up in front of their cars trying to reassert "Buzzins" long misplaced by constant stooping over the steering wheel. Taking up a position at the right of the line I was devoting my time to wondering whether anyone had any buttons unfastened when I became aware that I had attained an unusual degree of popularity with the so called civil population. First a youth of some fourteen summers asked for a cigarette. Sternly keeping "eyes front," I ignored him; when he, thinking that I had not heard him, gently prodded

me in the back. This was too much, and I muttered, "Allez toute de suite!"

He was now joined by several little boys and girls, who started a game of tag, in which I figured as a sort of pivot. Finally an elderly lady appeared, carrying in her hand one of those tiny automatic lighters, and persisted in droning into my ear in a garlicky whisper, "Sergon Sompreessense you no compree ESSENSE; petit pur."

Thus assailed in the flank and rear this seemed too much, and so I made my escape to the other end of the line. Here I enjoyed a brief spell of peace, but alas, not for long. We all remember that delightful hound of Jimmy Goods, known as the "Hooten Pup." Naturally he insisted on parading with the unit, although he stood a chance of losing marks for "clothing," as his fur was in places conspicuous by its absence. Having been kicked away from the vicinity of the cars this gifted animal sought diversion by leaning up against my good self and wiping all the mud off his feet on my clothes. This completed to his satisfaction he hit upon the happy idea of inducing several other dogs to join him in a game of hide and seek in the cars—dancing around in the muddy square, and then bouncing all over the clean floors and cushions "scrubbed," so to speak, with our very hearts blood. This was too much. The inspection was now in progress, so again I stealthily deserted my post, and thirty seconds later it is probable that the G.O.C. heard a piercing prolonged howl as a somewhat mangy body sailed through the air, and then raced madly down the street.

Then back to parade and inspection in a soldierly manner.



Reinforcement: "Can I get a bath and a change of clothes up the line?"

Oldtimer: "Sure thing, you'll find a shell-hole handy, and the Q.M. keeps a stock of clothes on hand at the A.D.S., I.D.T."