

• N-20152.21

80<sup>th</sup> DIVISION

GAS OFFICER

REPORTS

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SEPT. 26, to OCT. 10, 1918.

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New

In the operations beginning Sept. 26, 1918 in the sector north of Bethincourt the 159th Brigade of the 80th Division (319th and 320th Inf. and 315th M.G.Bn.) was chiefly engaged. There was rapid advance, over broken country and thru thick woods. Considerable scattered fire of gas shell was encountered, but there was no concentrated bombardment at any one place or, apparently, at any one time. Green Cross (phosgene) and Mustard shells were used, and also more or less Blue Cross, in calibers 77 and 105. The casualties were chiefly due to the necessarily unfavorable conditions of protection--forced advance thru woods and other areas thru infected, taking refuge in shell holes, etc. Most gas was encountered on the 27th and 28th. The table of casualties (Sept. 1918) shows a total of 64 cases, most of which developed on the 29th and 30th. This includes all cases where men received any medical attention and where the cause was ascribed to gas. Approximately 75% of these cases were slight, and permitted the man to return to duty in two or three days. Most of these were mustard cases, and chiefly burns. There were no deaths.

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In the operations beginning Oct. 4 in the sector of Nantillois, the 159th Brigade of the 80th Division (317th and 318th Inf. and 313th M.G.Bn.) were engaged at first, later supported by the 319th Inf. and later relieved by the 160th Brigade. They were supported by the 155th F.A. Brigade. From the very beginning of the operations, early in the morning of the 4th, until the 10th, a great deal of gas was used by the Germans, not only upon Nantillois and the entire area north held by our troops, but at times, to a lesser extent, on the artillery and upon various back areas. Of the gas shells used the great majority were mustard, in caliber 77 and 105, the some phosgene was used and a good deal of blue cross was used. There were probably some 150 mm shells.

The artillery was harassed with mustard on the 4th and 5th intermittently; some of their positions were in low and even swampy ground between slopes, which could not be evacuated at the time, and everywhere the fog and damp and the absence of wind made gas very slow to clear away. There were, of course, no gas proof dugouts. A number of eye cases were caused by removal of masks while some gas persisted. Some body burns were received. But in general the gas discipline was very good indeed, masks being worn for 4 to 6 hours or with a short relief for 8 to 10 hours until the positions could be moved up, shell holes being disinfected in the neighborhood as far as possible as the shells fell. Triage reports show 5 gas cases from the 313th, 15 from the 314th and 2 from the 315th F.A. There were various other cases, but not serious enough to go to Triage. Considering the unfavorable conditions, the artillery came thru very well indeed.

The infantry and the M.G.Bns. met a far worse situation and consequently had much heavier casualties. On the morning of the 4th they were shelled with mustard as they formed for attack at Nantillois, and at frequent intervals thereafter, and at times heavily, throughout the operations. A great deal of mustard gas, some phosgene, and at times considerable Blue Cross was used. The 159th Brigade was held up in the area north of Nantillois and at the Bois des Osons under heavy shelling and Machine Gun fire for several days, advancing when it could thru broken ground and thru woods, taking refuge in shell holes, and with no chance to evacuate. There was much fog and dampness, and most of the time little or no wind. Aside from infected ground, the atmosphere was slightly infected by mustard gas over much of the area, and as men could not wear their respirator beyond a few hours, they were forced to expose themselves to the gas, which was

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usually not concentrated enough to cause immediate trouble but which in time more or less affected the eyes and throats of almost every one. Many such cases had to be evacuated. There were also a good many cases of burns from infected ground, and owing to the widespread scattering of the infection, and to constant fire, any effective disinfection was impossible. Advance thru infected ground and woods was necessary.

Some eye cases, which might have been prevented, were due to using only mouthpiece and noseclip, leaving the facepiece off for better vision; this was notable in the case of runners, especially in finding their way about at night, and in the case of machine gunners in using their guns more effectively. There was also unquestionably some carelessness in sitting and lying on infected ground, but with the constant shell and machine gun fire men took refuge almost anywhere, and the widely scattered infection made burns inevitable.

There was some complaint about the effects of Blue Cross, and there were about 10 cases evidently of phosgene poisoning at Triage. One death is reported. But the overwhelmingly larger proportion of casualties were from mustard gas. And of these the great majority will be returned to duty in a few days.

Triage reports, by organization, for the entire period Sept. 26 to Oct. 10 are given herewith. This does not include many slight cases given local treatment and returned to duty. The 318th Infantry was the hardest hit (209 cases), and this regiment with the 317th (117 cases) was in from the beginning on Oct. 4. The 319th, which came up in support and then relieved the others, had 104 cases. The 320th had 43. The 313th M.G.BN. had a great many slight eye cases, but only 45 back at Triage during this period. The total of all gas cases at Triage, Sept. 26 to Oct. 10, was 573.

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REPORT OF GAS CASUALTIES FROM  
TRIAGE HOSPITAL FROM SEPT. 26 to 6 A.M. Oct. 10, 1918.

<i>159<sup>th</sup> Inf. Brig.</i>	317 Inf.	117
	318 Inf.	209
<i>160<sup>th</sup> Inf. Brig.</i>	319 Inf.	104
	320 Inf.	43
<i>155 F.A. Brigade</i>	313 F.A.	5
	314 F.A.	15
	315 F.A.	2
	313 M.G.Bn.	45
	314 M.G.Bn.	0
	315 M.G.Bn.	13
	305 F.S.Bn.	6
	305 San.Tr.	9
	305 Eng.	2
	305 M.P.	1
	159 Bde.Hq.	1
	160 Bde.Hq.	1
	Total	<u>575</u>

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