

# EXPERIENCE OF A FORESTRY ENGINEER OFFICER IN FRANCE

BY MAJOR FRANK R. BARNES

COMMANDING NINTH BATTALION, TWENTIETH ENGINEERS (FOREST)

OUR arrival at the mountain village which was to be headquarters had been anticipated by an advance officer from the adjoining district so that despite rain, snow and separation enroute from our tentage, ranges and rations, we were able, through his practiced direction to secure billets, food and a large English truck, which though clumsy and worn, was a veritable lifesaver during the first few days.

Our troops, through the kindness of a local manufacturer, were soon quartered comfortably in a factory

units scratch for themselves, like a wise old hen with its chickens—except on actual essentials—and the supply officers were the busy little persons while learning from where and from whom the various supplies and equipment should come.

When finally the special forestry equipment and the pioneer Engineer equipment, packed and boxed by us with so much care over there (in America) arrived, we were all most heartily glad. The distinctive green stripe around the boxes and crates—originated by our Hibernian Supply Officer, had a homelike and intensely satisfying look, and the axes, saws, cant hooks and other woodstools were greeted with cheers; likewise the rubber boots, gloves, tarpaulins and other



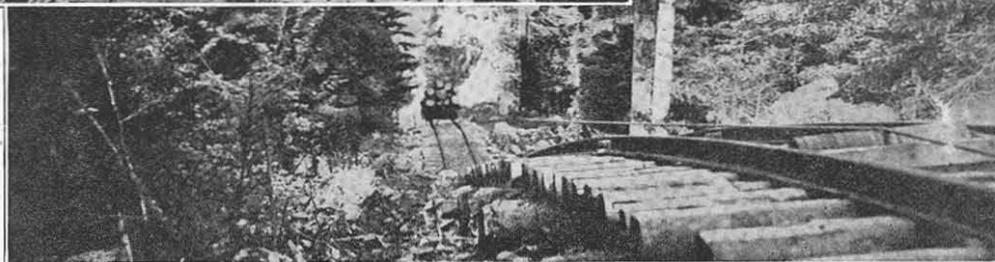
building, which luckily contained several stoves, running water and beds.

Some used tents arrived in a couple of days, and the troops moved to their site in the mountains; but the entire tentage caved in about ten o'clock one night under the weight of an especially heavy snow fall. The men

then took possession of a large barn close by and slept in the hay until the arrival of new tents a little later.

For six weeks we had daily rain or snow storms with hail and sleet thrown in for good measure. Mud—ankle, and in places knee, deep.

However, the sun finally appeared from out of the mists, dried our tents and the ground and put better heart into our rain-soaked woodsmen, who had worked continuously under the conditions mentioned. Our Headquarters had adopted the plan of letting the new Forestry



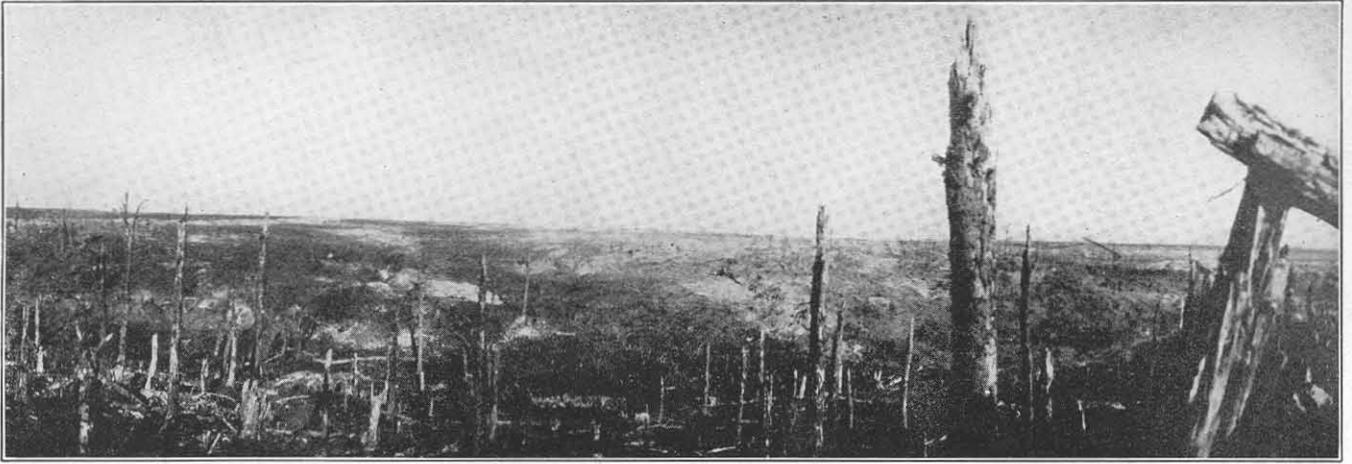
THE STEEP, INCLINED ROAD

This shows a section of the track built up one of the mountain sides in France. The logging is done at top of the mountain and the load is sent down a 72-degree drop, to the bottom for milling.

woods necessities provided through the experienced foresight of our organization purchasing officer in the U. S. A.

The trees came down, our horses, harness and log wagons arrived, and gradually organization and operation began to take shape. As weeks passed the piles of cordwood, ties and other hewn material grew; logs were banked around the mill site and logging trails.

Soon the mill machinery began to arrive, was placed, the mill frame went up and our saw sang its way through the first log and cut some good one and two



Underwood and Underwood—British Official Photograph

THIS IS A TYPICAL SCENE IN NORTHERN FRANCE TODAY

Beaumont Hamel, where the brutal mark of war is indelibly placed. Before the attack these hills were covered with beautiful trees and sheltered many peaceful homes.

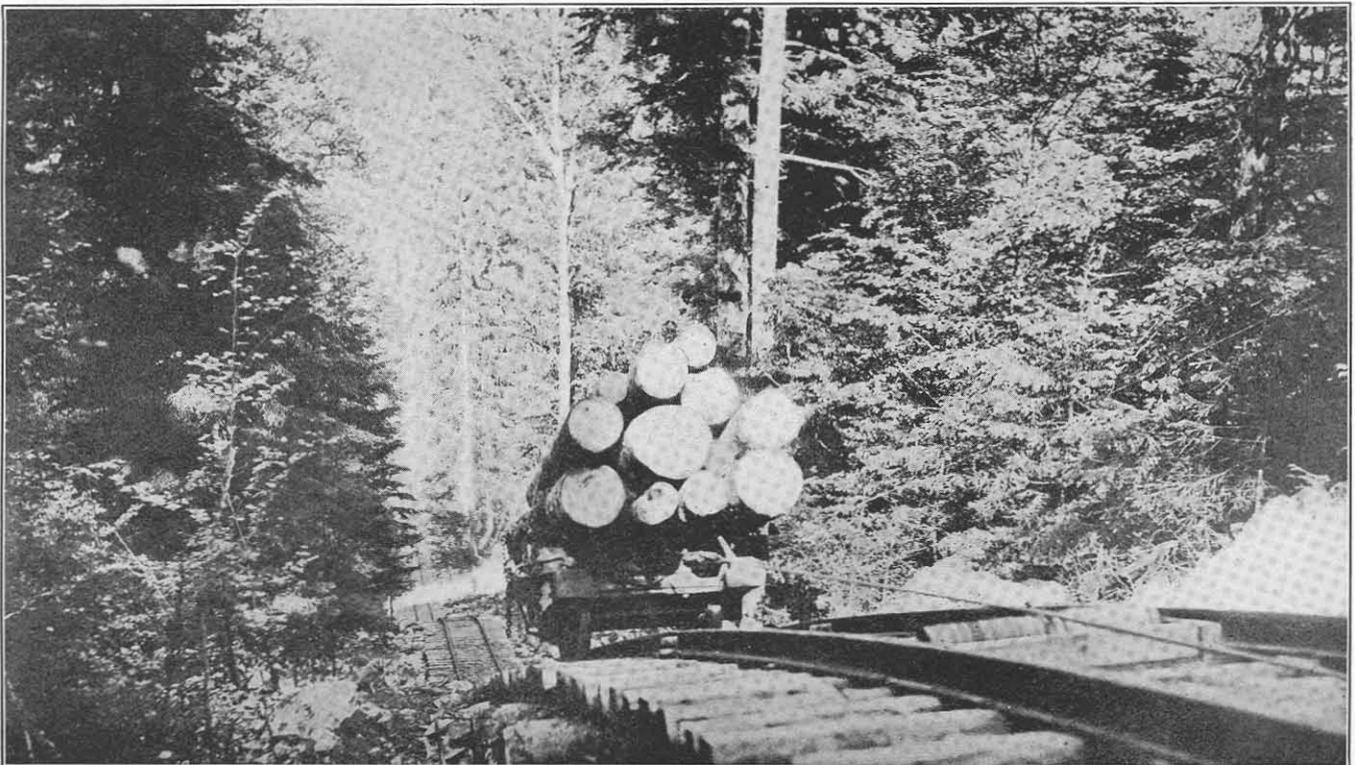
inch lumber which will do its bit toward taking the "I" out of Kaiser.

We have a fine, rugged lot of young Americans, toughened by three months of out of door work in the keen mountain air, and directed by officers trained through years of experience in the various branches of lumbering.

Our first Independence Day abroad was celebrated in true American style and our French neighbors closed their offices and stores and came en masse to look on with

keen interest as the intricacies of base ball and *la boxe* were explained to them in American French.

The importance of our work is realized by all officers and men. They feel that every stick of firewood, every tie, every piece of lumber furnished, may accomplish as much for the common cause as the bullets and shells, and therefore shall use every endeavor to shoot the stuff out of their operations relatively as fast as our boys at the front are handing Boches their pills from American machine guns.



A LOAD OF LOGS ON THE INCLINED ROAD

They are just about to start on the shoot to the bottom. The cable control is perfect. Engine compression is used as brake and it takes just seven minutes to make the descent from the top of the mountain. Note the dense and beautiful forests—in strong contrast to the utter desolation pictured above.