

FORESTERS TO THE FRONT

BY BRISTOW ADAMS

Far from Floridian sands and pines,
From Maine's dark-mantled, spruce-clad hills
From Klamath firs in serried lines,
From Coconino's lumber mills,

We see them come with saw and ax,
With wedge and peavy, hook and chain,
With hardened hands and sturdy backs
To hack and hew for trench and train.

CAPTAIN INMAN F. ELDRIDGE, of the Tenth Reserve Engineers (Forest) was peering through the eyepiece of a transit and directing the civilian contractor as to where the corner stakes should be driven for the barracks for housing the regiment to which he had been assigned. The time was late afternoon, and the place was the engineers' camp on the grounds of the American University, somewhere in the northwest quarter of the District of Columbia. If he had not been to the west of the structure, he could have been literally within the shadow of a white marble building, upon the face of which were deep-chiseled words "College of History."

Eldredge's deeds of the day were helping to make the history of tomorrow, but he did not feel like a historical personage—far from it. In getting the ground cleared of sassafras brush and blackberry bushes, he had become the host of a small army of chiggers, and although chiggers can get under them readily, one cannot scratch chigger-bites through leather puttee leggings. Moreover, his mess had partaken of some tinned food a day or so before and there had

been something wrong with that food. The field hospital was taking no chances, so it used up all of a barrel-and-a-quarter of perfectly good castor oil in dosing the Captain and his mess-mates. It was the first castor oil he had ever taken in his life without a preliminary licking and it was a man's-size dose. Military discipline counted for something after all!

Not that he had any objection to military discipline; he took to it like a hound to a rabbit track.

As Supervisor of the Florida National Forest he had required uniforms and insignia of rank for all his Forest officers. He knew the value of inspections and of strict lines of accountability. He had wanted to get into the war from the day it was seen to be inevitable, and on another day shortly after had passed the examination for a captaincy in the Engineer Corps. Small wonder that he was assigned to the popularly so-called Forest Regiment in May, as soon as its formation was assured.

It must not be thought that Eldredge had no ideas about history. Even the chiggers could not get his mind off the fact that he was demolishing a Yankee fort which was one of the defenses of Washington



LIEUTENANT COLONEL JAMES A. WOODRUFF

A regular who has been designated by the War Department to organize and command the first of the Forest Regiments.

during the Civil War. He was from South Carolina; his father had tried to do, in a different way, what he was accomplishing with ease and a plow and scraper



MAJOR HENRY S. GRAVES

Chief of the United States Forest Service, who has received a commission as Major in the Reserve Engineer Corps but has not been assigned to any command. For the past two months he has been in France preparing for the work which the Forest Regiments are to do when they arrive. Major Graves is a vice president of the American Forestry Association.

in the hands of two sweating negroes. This ground, tortured into earth-works and riflepits for Fort Gaines in 1861, was here being leveled off for the barracks of a new army made up of the sons of those who had fought against one another. The easy careless cadences of southern speech here met the tight twang of the northerner, and also the words of the westerner, which were of neither variety. Only a short distance away the earth was torn up anew, however, where engineer forces were putting into effect the lessons learned in the present war.

So here he was getting the barracks ready.

Here, too, was Captain E. S. Bryant, helping to lay out the company streets. Captain Arthur Ringland, who had formerly watched over the destinies of the National Forests of the Southwest, known to the Service as District 3, was quartered in Number 4 barracks nearby. Others were gathering from all over the continent; Benedict from British Columbia, Chapman from Oregon, Guthrie from Arizona, Mason from

California, Skeels from Montana. Some from the Forest service, some from forest schools, some from lumber companies. The head of the Forest Service, now Major Henry S. Graves, was on this day already in France, with Captain Barrington Moore, looking over the ground to make plans for the actual work at the front. Major Greeley, with some fourteen others, went over early in August.

Why a forest regiment? Any three of a number of reasons will suffice. In the first place, the War Department asked for such a regiment, being prompted to make the request by a suggestion from the British Commission, which visited this country soon after hostilities between Germany and the United States were officially recognized. In the second place it could be readily seen that the work would be of great use, not only to the United States and its Allies generally, but mainly to the French, whose forests were being terribly devastated. This devastation was bad enough in the zones of actual warfare, but it might



MAJOR W. B. GREELEY

Assistant Forester in charge of the branches of silviculture and research, U. S. Forest Service, who has been active in the organization of the Forest Regiment and who led the party of fourteen officers which sailed for Europe early in August. Major Greeley is a director of the American Forestry Association.

be lessened if the forests back of the line, which were furnishing timber imperatively needed for war purposes, could be cut with the least of permanent dam-



MEMBERS OF THE FOREST REGIMENT

These men, many of whom are newly arrived, lined up for inspection at the camp on the grounds of the American University, Washington, D. C. They come from all parts of the United States and are keen, efficient and skilled in forestry and lumbering.

age. In the third place, the field force of the Forest Service wanted to go.

The last-named reason furnished a considerable problem. At first it was understood that Mr. Graves didn't care to have members of the Service leave their work on the National Forests. They represented a fundamental need at home. The organization so ably started by Gifford Pinchot, upon whose broad foundations Henry S. Graves had continued to build, had become a permanent structure which had withstood a good many storms. It was strong and no one who had anxiously watched its growth wanted to see it

weakened. To put its best men overseas threatened just this weakness.

It may be said, therefore, that Mr. Graves desired to hold it intact. He had had a chance, during the very earliest stages of the trouble with Mexico three years before, to see what would happen. Then the Forest field force, almost to a man, wanted to organize itself into cavalry to sweep across the border. A roster of available men with the records of the special service for which each was fitted was in the hands of the authorities at Washington. Only a word was needed to put into the field a well-mounted, hard-



MAJOR C. S. CHAPMAN
Manager of the Private Lumber
Protective Associations of Western
Oregon.



CAPTAIN DORR SKEELS
Logging Engineer and Professor of
Forestry at the University of Mont-
ana.



FIRST LT. JOHN B. WOODS
Of the Arkansas Land and Lumber
Company of Malvern, Arkansas.



FIRST LT. ROBERT L. DEERING
Forest Examiner, United States
Forest Service, stationed at Albu-
querque, New Mexico.

riding, straight-shooting lot of men, not only familiar with hardship and the life of the open, but particularly capable of looking out for themselves, by themselves,



CAPTAIN ELDRIDGE AT WORK

Laying out the camp of the Tenth Reserve Engineers (Forest) on the grounds of the American University, Washington, D. C.

a long way from civilization. It was difficult to dissuade them from jumping into the fracas anyhow. The Mexican crisis passed, but then a bigger thing came along. District foresters wanted to get into it and said so; forest supervisors likewise, deputy supervisors the same, forest examiners and inspectors, ditto. Some did get into it, via the Officers Reserve,—witness Eldredge.

Foresters, from the very needs of their work, are red-blooded; they are used to doing things; they are accustomed to be where there are hard tasks to perform; naturally they are patriotic because their job is to look out for the "rocks and rills, the woods and templed hills." But counting only what may be called the least of their impulses, they have usually been where a good deal is going on; they didn't want to be out of the crowd where the most stupendous upheaval of the world was taking place. This may be no nobler spring of action than the one which prompts a man to go across the street to see a dog-fight, but to

those who have felt the urge, it was enough. Philosophers say fighting is a primal impulse.

With all these motives, plus the call for the defense of Democracy, the best way to hold the men of the Forest Service together, even though it be in France, was to organize a military unit of foresters. Mr. Graves became a willing convert to the call from the War Department; the organization of the Forest Regiment was undertaken forthwith, and Graves himself was prevailed upon to accept service with it.

One may ask, what are the foresters to do?

This can best be answered by a simple enumeration of some of the uses for timber, down to the smallest sticks, demanded by present-day warfare. Out in front of the very front line trenches are the barb wire entanglements stretched on wooden stakes driven into the ground. Three to five-inch round stuff with the bark on will do for these supports. Immediately in front of the trenches themselves, within arms' reach from the firing step, there are other stakes, projecting only a few inches above the ground. In the wall of the trench below them, footholds are cut and the short stakes provide a hand-hold to give ease and speed in climbing out when the order comes to "cross the top" and go forward on a charge.

A trench is not a simple, deep ditch. It has bastions and embrasures. It has advanced areas and recesses, all needing supporting timbers. What is apparently a slight mound in advance and to one side, is in reality a machine-gun dugout, with the gun so placed as to fire down a line directly in front of the trench itself, and all along the barbed wire. There is a cunningly built porthole, not high from top to bottom, but wide, at least at the outer opening, and narrow at the back or inner opening. Here a machine-gun spurts death fan-wise into the ranks of an attack. The frame work of this opening is made of logs.

Poles are in great demand, for field telephone service and for derricks and cranes in handling heavy loads. Bridge timbers are especially necessary, railroad ties are wanted, wood material for roads, repair lumber for transports, for field buildings and other construction work, all to be got out with the least possible waste and with the minimum damage to the forests. It will all represent a closer utilization of timber than most Americans have ever seen, even the smallest stuff going into fuel, and the tops into leafy screens for batteries. Eldredge and Bryant and the rest of them are getting pretty good practice in the camp construction itself. They have placed the barrack buildings at the American University grounds somewhat following the contours down the two sides of a slope or slight spur, upon the crest of which the main street lies, with the buildings running back on either side. On one watershed, divided by the spur, are the latrines; on the other watershed are the cook camps and mess buildings.

Most of the supervisors have directed similar con-



FIRST LT. RISDEN T. ALLEN
He is a member of the Allen-Medley Lumber Company, of Devereaux, Georgia.



SECOND LT. H. R. CONDON
Who was employed in the forestry department of the Pennsylvania Railroad.



SECOND LT. STANLEY H. HODGMAN
Logging camp foreman of the Potlatch Lumber Company of Potlatch, Idaho.



SECOND LT. JOHN W. SELTZER
Forester of the New Jersey Zinc Company of Franklin, New Jersey.

struction on their own forests, with bridges, lookout towers, ranger stations, and telephone lines. The materials of construction for these were taken right out of the woods on the ground.

The French timber will be taken out of forests of oak, beech, hornbeam, with some stands of pine; most of it is small—not over a foot in diameter. Since the forests are more nearly equivalent to the woodlot type of the Eastern states, it has been the aim of the recruiting officer to get the forces from the East rather than from the West, where woods workers are accustomed to handling larger stuff.

The men who will work this timber will be woodsmen. The officers are trained in forestry and lumbering and their task will be to see that the timber is efficiently manufactured and utilized. At the same time they are to make sure that there shall be no unnecessary destruction so that the forests will be left in the best possible shape for the future. The French forests have been painstakingly cared for, over many years, and French forestry has been an example to American foresters. Gifford Pinchot himself got part of his forestry training at Nancy, where the forest school has actually been under fire.

The men for the ranks are coming fast. Everard, back from New Orleans, his old home, reports plenty of applicants for positions as interpreters from the French population of that city. John Cobbs has been in the mountains of North Carolina; Kiefer in the big lumber camps of Michigan and Wisconsin; Reynolds is up in the Adirondacks, where he studied the fires of 1903, getting the plans explained to the lumberjacks there. Clifford Pettis, New York's state forester and one of the listing officers for the regiment, has been surprised and delighted with the type of men who

have applied for the rank and file—successful small mill operators and woods foremen,—men of ability in their fields of work and of standing in their communities.

Thus the enlisted men are picked woodsmen, and especial care has been exercised to get those needed for specific tasks. Ax-men, sawyers, tie-backs, skidders, teamsters, and blacksmiths have come in; millwrights, sawmill operators, engineers, filers, farriers, cooks and carpenters.

Reports now are that there will be six additional forestry regiments. This will give men like Coert DuBois and Redington, who have all along wanted to come in, the chance they have been looking for. All of the regiments, including this first one, will be under the direction of regular engineer officers, the "tie-hacking tenth," or the "fighting foresters," being organized and commanded by Colonel James A. Woodruff, Engineer Corps, U. S. A.

The foregoing, then, is a discursive sketch of the beginnings of the forest regiment. It does not give much in detail, and it leaves out many things that might go in. It mainly explains why Captain Eldredge, chigger-infested but cheerful, spent hot July days getting ready for a big undertaking and a most serious and necessary job, which will be attended with real risks, and will have its share of fire. The regiment is organized on military lines for military service, to be much in the thick of things, for that is where it is needed. Some of the fellows known to that great fellowship of foresters will not come back; but that is a hazard of war. At least, says Captain Eldredge, who claims to have read up on the subject, there are no chiggers in France,—which is his cheerful way of looking at the future.

We see them go where barricades
Are builded of the trees they fell;
Leaf-screens against the air-craft raids
And log redoubts 'gainst screaming shell.

Where France's forests bleed for France
They toil with hand and heart and brain
To help the Starry Flag advance,—
God send them safely back again!