# The Independent

### ACK 31

**FERGUSON** DAVID LE ROY

Ferguson is a negro Mr

Kentucky who has been at e, during the war, in charge to with the negro stevedore t St. Nazaire, e of Y.M.C.A. troops there at St. ance, duri



The stevedore band tained but nly the themen French also people

OST of the 0 American steveres never ship ur colored saw they for started France," says the Stars and Stripes, American army's overseas newspaper, "but they have proved their worth as cargo handlers. Working in the army's working in the hold of a ship with the August the hold or waves from heat sun from the isn't the job in the deck easiest job in army, but they are breaking rec-ords at it, and it it



hasn't dampened their sunny disposi-"On the same day that the infantry, treking in the wa "On the same us,
infantry, treking in the want
retreating Germans, gained the outskirts of Fismes, colored stevedores unloading a ship at one of the base ports

"ously won an important vicloading a ship at one of the base ports unostentatiously won an important victory by discharging 1200 tons of flour in 9½ hours, setting a record for the A. E. F. and a pace which is rarely excelled on the best equipt docks in the United States. The same group of stevedores over a period of five days discharged an average of 2000 tons of cargo per day from one ship, a record

cargo per day more notable still. "It is a twenty-four hour a day grind at the base ports now, where thousands of American colored troops are putting ashore the million and one articles, big and little, which are necessary for the

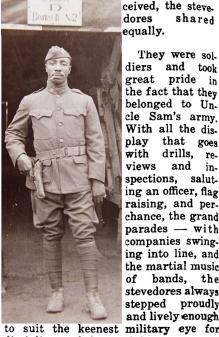
of maintenance

modern army. "With the same with which force American line units, in the last few weeks have last made their debut big scale warfare, have the other branches of service the upon whose efforts de pend the potency and effectiveness the of men in the trenches accomplished their less spechut equally spectacular portant work."
This vast army

stevedores in France is com posed mostly men who vo of volun ered at the first ll. The first en who came call. men



## With This Black Man's Army other men received, the steve



shared dores equally. were soi-They wer diers and great price great pride in the fact that they belonged to cle Sam's Un to army. With all the display that with drills, re-and inspections, saluting an officer, flag raising, and perraising, and per-chance, the grand parades — with companies swing-ing into line, and

the martial music bands,

stepped proudly and lively enough military eye

of

discipline and fine training. The stevedores also took great pride in their companies, their camps and all that belonged to the army, and because their work and contribution was always emphasized by officers as being essential to the boys in the trenches, the name stevedore finally became a the name stevedore finally became a dignified and distinguished term, representing part of the great American Army.

Naturally, many amusing stories and kes, with the war and France as a ckground, will feature the colored jokes, background, will feature the colored boys over there. One hears many funny "bon mots" and puns and clever stories "bon mots" and puns and clever swiles attributed to the colored soldier, until it seems that they brought and made most of the humor connected with the grim, frightful war. With that native talent and fun-making nature of his, the

fun-making ed soldier quick to see colored was whatever was over humorous the there: the army, the fir-ing line; even the serious and dan-gerous things that make others sad, he made the base of jokes, base of jones, and ofttimes rid-so that iculed, so that even his dangers and tasks seemed seemed to have been less difficult.

As to cheerfulness, the steve dore camps their share had share and songs, music that gaiety which characterizes a ul race.
thing the cheerful One most imprest those who were willing to observe, was that all thru those stressful days, and anxious, of work and the handle ammunities.



hru days, a. -k and f of work and the handling of cargoes and ammunition for the front became really one long grind for the stevedores, morning, noon and night, one could see them thru all sorts of weather and hours, swinging by companies into line, marching bravely to the difficult tasks, singing or whistling.

Frequently the base commander are other distinguished. the strain when

and distinguished officers visited other distinguished officers visited the camps and the public gatherings and Y. M. C. A. buildings. I have heard them repeatedly emphasize how much the army at the front depended upon the work and loyalty of the stevedores at the base. They also spoke to them in the highest terms about the way in which they were performing their tasks, without the show and excitement that inspire the soldier at the front. other

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### Vith This Black Man's Army





were doing the drudgery, the dun the monotonous labor; still they They the monotonous labor; still they foundation and groundwork upon outine, the the ere American soldiers and heroes!

Such patriotic sentiment to encourage them. I believe acted also as a spur to keep the morale up to the highest, and the energy with which they worked was all the more vital because they responded readily to the principle of patriotism that urged them on, believing that thru their efforts all the more quickly, victory and peace would come. urged neir efforts and per

en after the armistice was signed and thoughts naturally turned homeward. Even their

would come.

a new appeal was made to them to which they are responding loyally. The Army of Occupation now needs supplies and food, and the stevedores are over there still at work, far into the night. supplies

When it is considered to what extent with regard to different states and communities the huge army of stevedores was organized, and the various types and conditions of men represented ranging from city bred young men of school training to those often illiterate, from hamlets and small farms way down South, it is remarkable how they were all brought together and welded finally into a fine industrial

able how they were all brought to and welded finally into a fine ind army that made a wonderful record. Personally, I am amazed and in industrial frankly

Personally, I am amazed and frankly proud at this development under army discipline of hundreds of young men from crude farm hands, very raw material, indeed, to earnest, industrious soldiers, erect and alert, and I believe in them may be found a type of industrious and useful citizen for the future America.

They have learned remarkable lessons in this experience of war times, aside from the broadening view of life that travel and foreign contact give; the lessons of self-control, cleanliness, promptness, obedience, efficiency, and the value of time.

Another agency with the camp that greatly influenced the men and urged the development of mind, body and soul was the Y. M. C. A. In each camp wherever the stevedores were stationed there soon were established very homelike and commodious. Y. M. C. A. In each camp wherever the stevedores were stationed there soon were established very homelike and commodious Y buildings, all equipt with the same regular, standardized furnishings and supplies as others, under the able direction of colored secretaries. That the men received additional help and advantage here also is well recognized. Our programs were also well recognized. Our programs were elaborate and interesting. These fine influences must have reached the minds and hearts of the stevedores, and I know scores of men who came to the army illiterate, who were able after the training received, to write their first letters home.

ge were pulled from "The American Negro in the Great Wo (1919) by Wm. Allison Sweeney (Images on this pa