

sion. The attack was to be launched by the 4th and 1st Divisions, the former taking Bourlon Wood and the latter the high ground to the north of it. This was to constitute the first phase of the attack. The second phase aimed at reaching Cambrai, the Canal de l'Escault to the north and east of that city, and the high ground overlooking the Sensee River. This phase was to be carried out by the 3rd, 4th and 1st Canadian Divisions and the 11th British Division in line from right to left.

FEATURES OF THE ATTACK.

The attack presented many unusual features. In the first place the Canal du Nord was passable on the Corps sector on a front of 2,500 yards only. This meant that four divisions had to be got through this narrow "Defile," and in addition there were engineers, artillery, machine gunners and all the supply trains of various descriptions. To add to these difficulties the canal had to be bridged in many places, especially to permit the passage of guns and limbers. The next difficulty to be overcome lay in the conformation of the ground. Bourlon Wood and Village covered the crest of a dominating hill feature on the right, while on the left, all the valley of the Canal du Nord was overlooked by high ground in the vicinity of Pilgrim's Rest and the village of Epinoy. This meant that not only were all the forward assembly areas in full view of the enemy, but the entire attack would be under observation during most of its critical phases.

At the very outset, therefore, the success of the battle devolved upon the engineers. While the infantry, under cover of the artillery barrage, might carry the canal in the first rush, it was essential that guns and ammunition be brought forward across the canal as soon as possible. To do this bridges were a necessity. The task set the engineers was of vital importance.

In order to appreciate the task given the 1st Canadian Division a somewhat detailed description of the country is needed. The British front line on this front roughly paralleled the Canal du Nord, running north and south at a distance varying from fifty to 500 yards. The canal itself formed the first great obstacle.