

operating the light railway and they continued to do so until June 26, 1917, on which date the 13th Company took over the system under the British Fourth Army.

A great offensive was being planned on the Nieuport front, the object of which was to cut off the German northern army, and a great number of guns and men were moved up to participate in it. This meant plenty of work for the light railway, which had to be extended to take in the full area of operations, and it was one of the most important fronts on the battle line at that time, the best of equipment was supplied to the unit. Ammunition was hauled day and night to the batteries, the average being 1,500 tons daily for two months, with the other usual traffic in addition. Enemy shelling was constant and heavy, which greatly impeded the working of this traffic. The tracks had been laid alongside the roads, and not only suffered from shelling, but were continually being blocked by road transport.

On July 10 and 11, 1917, the enemy shelling was very intense all over the

The district around Croiselles, Mory and Death Valley was taken over on Nov. 10, 1917, and a rather quiet period was spent during the winter, the usual traffic being handled with very little shelling back of the forward lines, which were within range of the enemy's field guns.

It was the calm before the storm, however, as the memorable 21st of March, 1918, proved. On that day the great and final German supreme offensive was launched, commencing about 5 a.m., and it sounded as if all the pent up rage of the ages had been let loose. The air simply rained shells, and when our own guns opened up the whole ground trembled. As the enemy advanced, stations were abandoned one by one, all papers being destroyed, and telephones removed by the men before leaving, until all the personnel were back at Achiet-le-Grand. On Mar. 22, Achiet was evacuated, as most of the batteries which the unit had been serving with ammunition had evacuated or been put out of action, and in addition Achiet was being heavily shelled and bombed. It was necessary to get all the power and equipment out before the track

\$10,000,000.

The unit was to rest at Maroeuil for a few days, but in the early morning of Mar. 28, 1918, a shell landed in the middle of the camp, killing 24 and wounding 26 men. It was the hardest of luck to lose so many men, after coming through the offensive with only one casualty, but it was the fortune of war. It was a sad lot of men who arrived at Barlin next morning, drenched to the skin after travelling all night, as each one had lost a comrade or friend. Between Mar. 28 and April 13, the unit rested in the First Army Mine School at Houchin and then was ordered to Choques, to dig trenches, as the enemy had broken through the Portuguese army.

Before the work was begun, however, orders came to proceed by rail to Vignacourt, near the River Somme. Owing to the fact that the roads suffered most through the capture of more than half of the light railway system, the roads branch of the army claimed the idle light railway personnel, with the result that the 13th Company worked on roads around the village from April 17 to May



Track Gang on Light Railway Construction.

districts and the light railway tracks and personnel suffered accordingly. The enemy made an attack, captured a large number of prisoners and used the deadly mustard gas for the first time, the result of which is now well known. So much damage was done to the units headquarters camp and yards that they were moved back about a mile, but this did not interfere with the handling of traffic.

Towards the end of Aug., 1917, the proposed drive was called off and the unit was ordered to draw all the ammunition and supplies back to the railheads. Shelling still continued heavy, and camp was moved twice before orders were received to go south and report to the A.D.L.R. First Army. From Sept. 11 to Nov. 6, 1917, the main body of the unit was located at Lestram, on the Portuguese front, the remainder being scattered among various British companies, assisting in work of a particular nature. On the latter date, orders were received to proceed to Achiet-le-Grand in the Somme area, and report to the A.D.L.R. Third Army North.

was too badly broken, and this was only accomplished finally by running all the trains in convoy, with a track gang ahead of the first train. A new camp was established at Rettemoy Farm, and the operation of the line continued from there, the principle work being to move ammunition from Puisieux dump to Bucquoy village where it was taken forward by motor lorry. On Mar. 26, Bucquoy was occupied by the enemy, which put a stop to the transfer work, and the unit slipped quietly away north and arrived safely at Maroeuil, behind Arras, before dawn of the same day. The roll was called, and an inventory taken of the stock, which showed that only one man had been wounded, and all the power, equipment and tools had been saved, except one tractor and two hospital cars destroyed by shell fire and one locomotive which overturned during evacuation. The equipment saved included 16 steam locomotives, 15 gasoline locomotives, and 200 cars of all classes. All other light railway companies south of us lost their equipment, which was valued at about

30, 1918. On that date, a light railway system was commenced to run from Vignacourt to Poulainville, and the unit worked with a will, having been promised that it would operate the line on completion. Construction work continued until the 6th Battalion, C.R.T., arrived to take over the work, and the unit commenced to operate the construction trains.

On Aug. 8, 1918, the great allied drive was launched on the Amiens front, wounded began to arrive, and in three days 10,000 were handled through the casualty clearing station at Vignacourt by the unit. The advance was so rapid that the system then being operated, became a wash-out, a move was therefore made forward to Guillaucourt, where the operation of the recaptured tracks was commenced. In the period from Aug. 13 to Sept. 8, the unit moved a number of times, always forward, and finally came to a temporary stop at Peronne. The traffic out of Peronne was very heavy, as there was only one light railway company operating in the salient created by