

At that time there was a 14-mile break in the railway between Ludd and the Yarmuk river, and all material reaching us had to be carried in lorries across the gap. It was impossible to take any heavy material with the company, so it landed with only the lightest of its equipment: Some blocks and tackle, a few jacks and some gun-cotton. It was estimated that two weeks would be required to link up the railway, so that much time was available to clear away the obstructing truss. This was done according to plan sent, but only by strenuous effort. Two men were nearly killed by the snapping of a cable.

After the destroyed span had been rolled to one side, material began to arrive and the pedestals for the trestle were started. Cofferdams were made of sand bags. These merely quieted the water enough to allow the concrete to set. Gravel was brought from the shores of the sea of Galilee, and a very good concrete resulted. Each bent was supported on three concrete pedestals, which were tied together by two rows of railway rails, three rails to each row.

The altitude of the camp was about 690 ft. below sea level, and about this time malaria, which is so prevalent in the Jordan valley, began to show its effects, and the men began to go to hospital in batches. None were sent until their temperature reached 105°, but some days 30 men went. In the first two months, 108% of the total strength of the company entered hospital, so, naturally, the working strength was almost totally depleted. At one time only one officer, one N.C.O. and six working men were left.

The work was of the utmost importance. Desert corps had moved to Damascus and beyond, and this railway was

their main source of supply. Ammunition and rations had to get through, and, although supplies were brought up to Semakh by train and portaged across the break by 300 camels, the delays were costly and the amounts transported necessarily small.

A Royal Engineer officer and 24 other ranks were attached to the company. They did good work, but would not work off the ground, so their usefulness was limited. They framed all timber for the first bridge. Three hundred of the Egyptian labor corps, under a white officer, were attached to the company. They did all lifting and carrying and the manual work in connection with the concrete work.

This labor corps was largely responsible for the success of the British arms on this work. Stupid and slow as they were, when properly handled, they did enormous amounts of work. One native officer and 22 Egyptian army sappers were also attached, and

proved very good craftsmen. It was to the Canadians alone, however, that the erection of the trestle depended, and progress was slow during a period of six weeks until enough men returned from hospital to make a showing.

The first bridge consisted of five double bents, 28 ft., centre to centre, each bent resting on the three concrete pedestals, as already mentioned. At the top of the first deck were placed A-frames to subdivide the span, and the third deck consisted of bents placed 14 ft., centre to centre, the limit of span allowed by the stringers. Rapid progress was made when the men returned, and the first bridge was completed early in December. Rail was 85 ft. above water.

The second bridge was 1½ miles east of the first, and was identical with it. The centre truss had the three panels

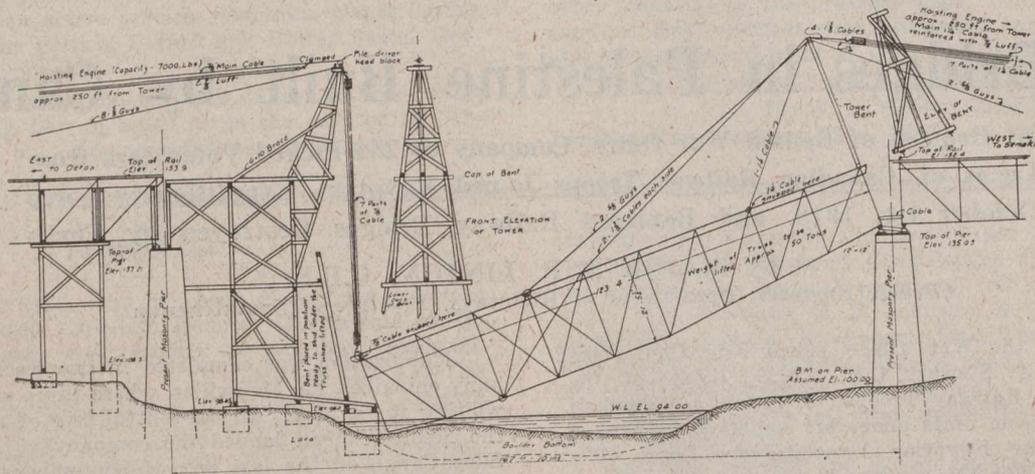
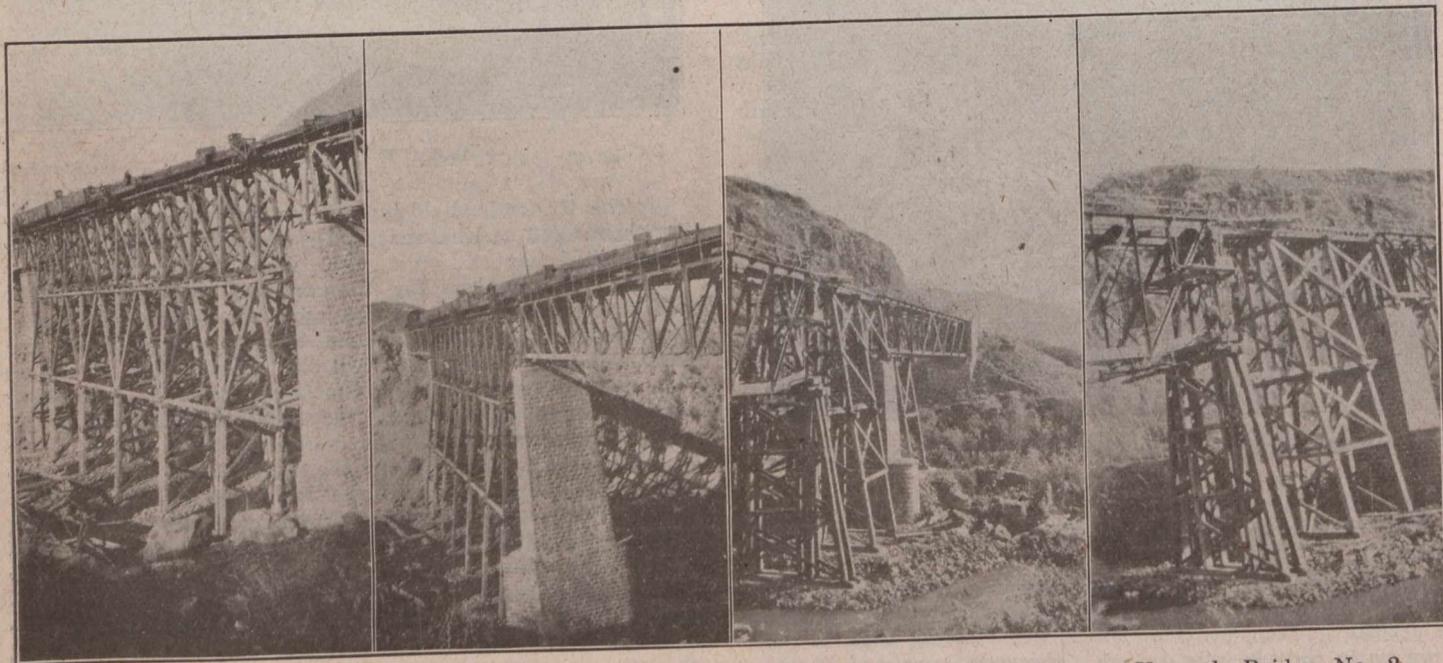


DIAGRAM SHOWING ARRANGEMENT FOR LIFTING UNDATED PORTION OF STEEL TRUSS, YARMUK BRIDGE NO. 2



Yarmuk Bridge No. 1

Yarmuk Bridge No. 1

Yarmuk Bridge No. 2

Yarmuk Bridge No. 2

A FEW VIEWS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE TWO YARMUK BRIDGES