

a 6-inch gun, without serious damage to the emplacement. A light railway system of 2 ft. gauge, 9 lb. rail was constructed for the carrying of supplies, ammunition and R.E. stores from Forthem, some 5 miles behind the lines, to Dixmude, paralleling the trenches in either direction from the latter point. This light railway, the first of its kind used immediately behind the front line,

ed to billets at Wippenhoeck, just southwest of Ypres, where a few weeks later it was joined by the company from Audruicq, on the completion of its work at that point.

The C.O.R.C.C. was then attached to the second British Army and started on standard gauge work in that army's area. Advanced railways for the regular handling of supplies, ammunitions, R. E.

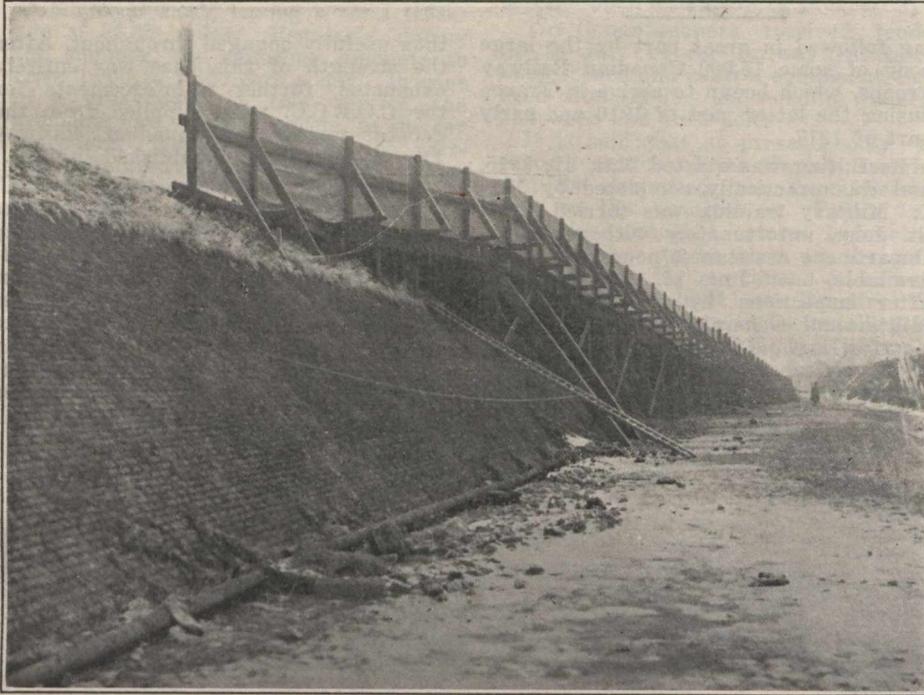
tion rail heads and gradually this idea was adopted and authority given for the construction of advanced rail heads on this line. It was on this area that the first really advanced standard gauge rail heads were used behind the British front.

By special request from the officer commanding the naval siege gun batteries on the coast, a small detachment was attached to that force, where it did much valuable work, remaining until practically the cessation of hostilities. Among the works of interest done by this detachment was the installation of the first 13 in. naval siege gun used behind the British front.

The corps remained in the vicinity of the Ypres salient until Aug., 1916, undertaking in addition to the works mentioned above, the construction of the Bergues-Vlamertingue line, later continued through to a connection with the old main line north of Ypres, various rail heads and branch lines in the Ypres salient and the construction of a meter gauge yard on the Belgian Railway at Ghyselde.

Early in the spring of 1916, the Canadian Corps conceived the idea of establishing a power operated 2 ft. gauge railway in the Ypres salient, and a detachment was furnished by the C.O.R.C.C. to lay track and generally assist in this work. This railway was built, to a great extent, from salvaged materials, and in its beginning was somewhat primitive, for instance the first power consisted of two 10-ton locomotives abandoned in the German advance and salvaged by the C.O.R.C.C. from Dickebusch Lake, but it probably served as an example of what might be done with railway transportation and was the forerunner of the network of light railways that was finally installed.

In Mar., 1916, shipments of steel box cars began to arrive at Audruicq from Canada, and other points, and as neither men nor plant were available for their erection, the C.O.R.C.C. was called upon for assistance in the work. The erection



Side view of Timber Ramp, from towpath, to dry bottom of Canal du Nord, to permit it being used as a highway for artillery and team transport. Built by Canadian Overseas Railway Construction Corps, Nov., 1917. The embankment was approximately 40 ft. high.

on either the British or Belgian fronts, was a somewhat primitive affair, being operated in part by horse and in part by man power, but was at least an improvement over horse and hand transport, the only other possible system under the conditions.

An extensive, power operated, 2 ft. gauge system, having 30 lb. rail, was strongly advocated by the C.O.R.C.C. at that time, but was not approved, such systems not being adopted until 1917, when all means of transport other than railways had failed. It was at this time that the extensive construction equipment of the C.O.R.C.C. first came into use in part, scrapers being used for preparing artillery positions in the sand dunes, concrete mixers for reinforced concrete work, and steam hoists for a transshipping plant from barges to the railway system, thus saving much labor.

In the latter part of Oct., 1915, the corps was recalled to England, under orders to proceed to Salonica for work on the Salonica-Uskub Railway. Just at that time, however, the break in the Serbian lines took place, the greater part of the railways in question were lost and the C.O.R.C.C. was returned to France via Southampton and Havre, reaching the latter point on Nov. 5. From Havre, one company proceeded to Audruicq, the central railway supply depot of the British armies, and undertook the extension of yards there. At that time this central railway depot consisted of some 40 miles of standard gauge tracks; at the signing of the armistice it had been extended to approximately 120 miles. The other company proceed-

stores, etc., were then practically unknown, being considered dangerous and unreliable. The average rail heads were from 15 to 25 miles from the front line.

The first work attempted by the corps in that area was the construction of a



Railway Yard at Bapaume, France, looking east; Nov. 29, 1917.

line from Wippenhoeck, on the main Hazebrouck-Voperingue line, to Dickebusch, a point south of Ypres, and about 1½ miles from the front line. The idea of the line at that time was that it would be used principally for railway mounted gun spurs, and possibly some small amount of stone traffic for repairs to roads. As the work advanced, and the corps became familiar with conditions, strong representations were made by it to the effect that the line should be made use of for advanced supply and ammuni-

of these cars was undertaken and the C.O.R.C.C. bridging plant, air compressors, etc., were set up and converted for the work. Some 1,300 cars were thus erected, by which time proper plant and other labor became available, and the work was turned over to the British army mechanical staff. During the period of this car construction, the detachment in charge of the work had the somewhat unpleasant experience of being present at the blowing up of some 15,000 tons of ammunition in the Audruicq