

# The Canadian Engineer

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## LONGITUDINAL RAILWAY OF CHILI

A DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING OF THE NORTHERN SECTION—A 450-MILE LINE THROUGH THE CHILIAN DESERT FOR PURPOSES OF PROTECTION AND DEFENCE.

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CHILI has long been the most powerful naval republic of any of the South American independencies. After the war of 1879, however, when Peru and Bolivia were despoiled of their territory by right of conquest, which included the vast nitrate beds of the Tarapaca Pampa, it was thought by the Chilean Government and politicians that it would be well to construct a longitudinal railway so that troops could be moved by land to protect their valuable acquisitions, if in the event of war the control of the sea was lost.

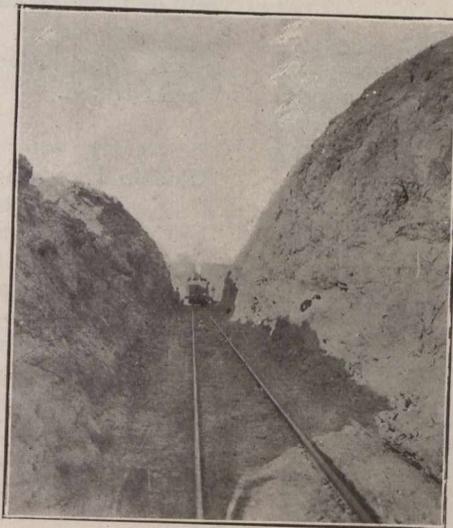
In the year 1888 the then Chilean Government, under the presidency of the late Don Jose M. Balmaceda, brought the issue into prominence by advertising the concession for the building of this railway, and among the contractors seeking the concession was the firm of Ross, Holt, Mann and Mackenzie, Sir Donald Mann and Mr. Holt going to Chili and entering into negotiations for the building of the road. But when everything was ready for the signatures of the contractors, the revolution of 1889 came into existence, and after fierce fighting at Santiago and Valpariso the Balmaceda Government was defeated and deposed, thus delaying the longitudinal railway enterprise for some years to come. It did not materialize again until it was carried into practical effect by the late President Don Pedro Montt, who, considering the railway essential to the welfare and development of the country, never rested until a contract was signed for the building of the north and south sections from Serano to

Pintados, a distance of some 700 miles. The northern section was first to be signed and is dated 23rd April, 1910. This contract covers the ground from Pueblo Hundido (which is one of the inland stations of the Chanaral Railway) to Pintados, on the main line of the Iquique Nitrate Ry., a distance of 450 miles. This concession was originally granted to the Chilean Construction

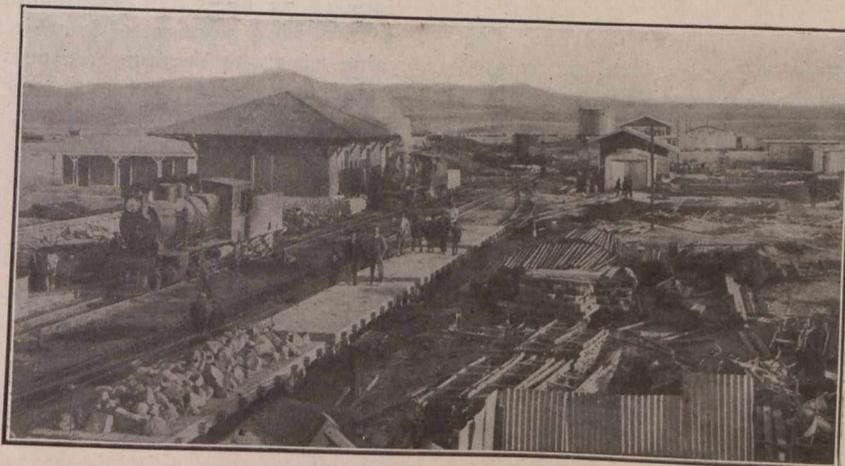
Co., Limited, who later transferred their rights to the Chilean Northern Ry. Company, the present holders, and who entered into a contract for the carrying out of the work with Messrs. Macdonald, Gibbs and Macdougall, Engineers and Contractors, New Broad Street, London, Eng.

For the purpose of convenience in the construction of the line, this firm decided to divide the work into six sections, each section being connected by railway from the coast, thereby giving a route for the transportation of supplies and material to the work. The sections were as shown in Table I.

It is worthy of note that of all the railways enumerated in Table I. the only one which is of the same gauge as the longitudinal railway, viz., one metre (39.37 inches), is the state-owned Chanaral Ry., the others varying from 2 ft. 6 in. to 4 ft. 8½ in., which involves transshipment at the point of junction in order to reach the ports. The country through which the road was built being a desert, nothing was indigenous to the soil. All material, supplies, plant, etc., was imported either from England, Canada, Germany or the United States. Chanaral was the



A Cut Near Pueblo Hundido.



Catalina Station and Yard.