

operations are now carried on. This means that our pine supply is by no means "inexhaustible," as so many are apt to think. At the rate at which destruction now goes on, the pine of eastern Canada will, in time, follow the pine of Michigan, which as many will remember, was spoken of as "inexhaustible" not so very many years ago. The more the waste by fire is prevented the better chance we shall have to keep our spruce as a perpetual source of revenue and to prolong the returns from our pine. And, if fires are to be prevented, it is not enough to maintain a fire-ranging system to put out fires,—the man who most frequently starts the fires, the pretended settler, must be eliminated.

Though I have dwelt upon the saving of the standing timber, that is not, by any means, the only point to be considered. No matter how valuable the standing timber, it would be disastrous to the country to turn it all into money. Upon the maintenance of the forest depends the proper balance in the flow of our waters. This is a vital point in agriculture and in all the industries based upon agriculture. But the point of immediate importance is the maintenance of our water-powers. Considering their force, their wide distribution and the ease with which they can be developed, the water-powers of Canada, I believe, are second to none in the world in immediately prospective value. People used to smile when they heard me say, some years ago, that, because of its timber and its water-powers, the Province of Quebec must soon be regarded as richer than any other Province or than any State of the American Union. Industry has now reached the stage of development at which the value of the rivers in Quebec that rush down from the mountains to the sea is about to be generally realized. Take away the forest and you take away these water-powers as commercially useful agencies,—the water may still flow, but it will be in the form of freshets in the spring and rivulets in the autumn, a form which could no more be made useful than the cyclones of Dakota can be made useful. There is no danger that lumbering, as it is now carried on by the best firms, will denude the country so as to unbalance the regular flow of the streams. The trees taken off are those which, while they are most valuable in the market, can best be spared from the forest. They are quickly replaced by younger growths which prevent the too-rapid melting of the snows and preserve the forest floor which acts as a vast sponge in keeping back the too-rapid outflow of the waters.

The problem of our forest wealth can be answered by keeping down the ravages of fire; and the problem of keeping out, or putting down, fire can be answered by our present methods together with the elimination of the timber pirate who operates in the disguise of a settler.