

THE FOREST FIRE WARDEN

From the Christian Science Monitor.

Like the keeper of the light in a lonely tower anchored to the rocks possibly fifty miles off the coast, the warden of the forest, particularly in the mountainous sections of the northeastern part of the United States, keeps his lonely yet interesting vigil. As the keeper of the light is versed in the lore and traditions of the sea, so the sentinel in the forest tower reads and interprets the language of the woods and forests. He knows the mountain paths and byways, can tell, at a glance, the geographical position of every hill in the distance, and can point out and name the score or more of villages hidden in the valleys behind sheltering trees or intervening ridges. In his months or years as a ranger or travelling supervisor, he has learned the topography of the region over which he watches, and is able to read it as he would read an open book. But he has other aids, of course, and is not compelled to depend entirely upon his memory. In the centre of his observation tower will be found a circular map, showing in detail the topography of every acre of woods and forest land within his district.

The extent of this district varies, of course, the area depending upon the range of vision possible from the tower, which is naturally placed upon the highest point available. Practice in observing and "locating," supplemented by the right kind of knowledge, makes it possible for the towerman to indicate, by reference to his map, approximately the exact point at which smoke or fire appears. Previous information furnished by the local fire warden may have assured the sentinel that the smoke may come from a brush fire made by a farmer or woodsman in clearing land, or from the camp-fire of a tourist or hunter. Lacking these assurances, the towerman acts promptly and effectively. With his telephone in the lookout tower, he calls, in a moment, the deputy nearest the point under observation, with the result that the fire is stopped before any considerable damage results. These details, furnished by the local warden, are recorded, along with such other facts as are regarded important, in the towerman's logbook, to be in turn submitted to state and federal authorities.

A casual visit to the quiet observation tower of a warden in the great wooded sections of the New England states, for instance, perhaps on a

day when the clouds are low and the thin mists from the coast are idly drifting inland, may convince an uninquisitive sightseer that his quest has been vain, if he has come in search of the unusual and exciting. But if the visitor has known the lighthousekeeper, the prototype, in many ways, of the quiet man who sits in the warden's tower, or if he has himself, at some time, lived and dreamed dreams in solitary places, he will not find it difficult to persuade his host to talk. It has been said, and no doubt truly, that those who talk little quite often say much. Perhaps they say much because they talk only of the things about which they know much. So, at any rate, it seems to those who listen to the quiet story which the towerman tells of his work and his experiences, of the co-ordinate efforts among states and federal departments for greater efficiency in the important undertaking in which he and others are engaged. He seems, almost unconsciously, to speak the language of the forests and mountains, not in dialect or colloquialisms, but in the language of the man of books and of the vast open places, where expression is free and men are unafraid. The story has ended in the hour which has quickly passed. Within that hour there has apparently been wrought a strange but unmistakable transformation. Where sat the towerman, one, perhaps, of a legion of his fellows, sits a sage, a scholar, a teacher.

A BREAK-PROOF 'PHONE LINE.

The construction of the forest protection telephone lines in New Brunswick is proceeding satisfactorily. About 22 miles have been built, leaving 18 more to construct in order to reach the Bald Mountain Lookout Station. Since the arrival of snow the transportation of wire and provisions has been rendered much easier. The construction party consists of seven men and necessary teams. Mr. H. C. Kinghorn is in charge. The line is being built in the most modern method of tree construction. Tie wires are stretched across the road between opposite trees; the main telephone wire is attached to the tie wires by split insulators in such a position that it remains suspended over the centre of the portage and about 15 to 18 feet from the ground, very similar to the method in which