

The Dominion Forestry Branch

Past, Present and Prospective Developments.

When, in 1900, the Honourable Clifford Sifton, then Minister of the Interior, asked for a grant of \$15,000 to establish a Forestry Branch, the proposal met with considerable opposition in the House. It was an experiment, the success of which was doubted. But from the very start the Branch amply justified its existence, and each succeeding year has seen an amplification of its activities. In the short period of thirteen years a forest fire protection system has been developed, which, measured by results, is second to none on the continent; forest surveys have been carried on, which have revealed the previously unknown timber resources of the Canadian West, and have secured the setting aside of thirty-six thousand square miles of Dominion forest reserves; a Tree-planting Division has been built up, which annually distributes more trees for prairie planting than any similar agency in America, and, exclusive of the annual Branch Reports, over forty comprehensive bulletins have been published, containing information on Canada's forest resources and the industries dependant thereon, of acknowledged value to layman, lumberman and forester alike.

The year of 1913 was marked by the greatest progress in the history of the Forestry Branch, due, in large measure, to the appropriation for forestry purposes being increased to \$541,720, almost double that of 1912. This permitted a large increase in the personnel, which had a summer strength in 1913 of over 400, of whom 27 were technical foresters. It also made possible the carrying out of proposed improvements, the extension of fire-patrol, and the developments of new phases of forestry work. 'Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the development of Dominion Forestry work recently,' as pointed out by Mr. R. H. Campbell, the Director of Forestry, 'has been the consolidation of the forest reserve administration on a well organized basis, and with a fair proportion of scientifically-trained foresters, with the result that it will be increasingly possible to apply good forestry methods in the handling of the timber and other resources of the reserves. This is a development made possible by the fact that technical training in forestry is now being provided by some of the colleges in Canada, and when this is supplemented by ranger schools, in which the forest rangers

can also be given special instruction, it should not be long before the Dominion Forest Service will be as well organized an institution as in any other country which has reached the same stage of development.'

Mr. Finlayson, Chief Fire Inspector, refers to this 'distinct improvement in organization and administration' as the chief reason for the remarkably low loss from forest fires on Dominion forest reserves and fire-districts in 1913. On the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve, which has an area larger than that of all the reserves in Ontario combined, the total value of the mature timber reported destroyed by fire was only \$150. Even in the fire-districts, where the fire-rangers were unaided by lookout-towers, telephone lines, trails, fire-guards and other fire-fighting facilities found on the Reserves, the fire loss was the lowest on record. It is true that rains were frequent, but so were also fires. In one district in the Railway Belt of British Columbia, 110 fires occurred during the three summer months, yet owing to the alertness of the patrol, all were extinguished before any damage was done to standing timber. It is probable, when complete records are available, that the area burnt by forest fires, and consisting principally of natural meadows and cut-over land, will not exceed one-fiftieth of one per cent. of the total area of Dominion forest lands under protection, a result even better than that attained by the United States Forest Service, which also had the most successful fire season in its history.

In the summer of 1913 the Dominion Forestry Branch had eleven survey parties in the field, and over 15,203 square miles of wooded country were examined, at an average cost of only eighty-nine cents a square mile. The technical foresters in charge of these parties are qualified to report not only on the forest conditions, but also on the geology and character of the soil in the regions examined, and if the latter is clearly unsuited for agriculture the area is recommended to be re-ture the area is recommended to be reserved in order that the young trees may be better protected from fire, which, in the last fifty years, has destroyed over half the original stand of timber on the area examined by the Branch. This area comprises about 25% of a belt from 40 to 150 miles wide, stretching from Lake