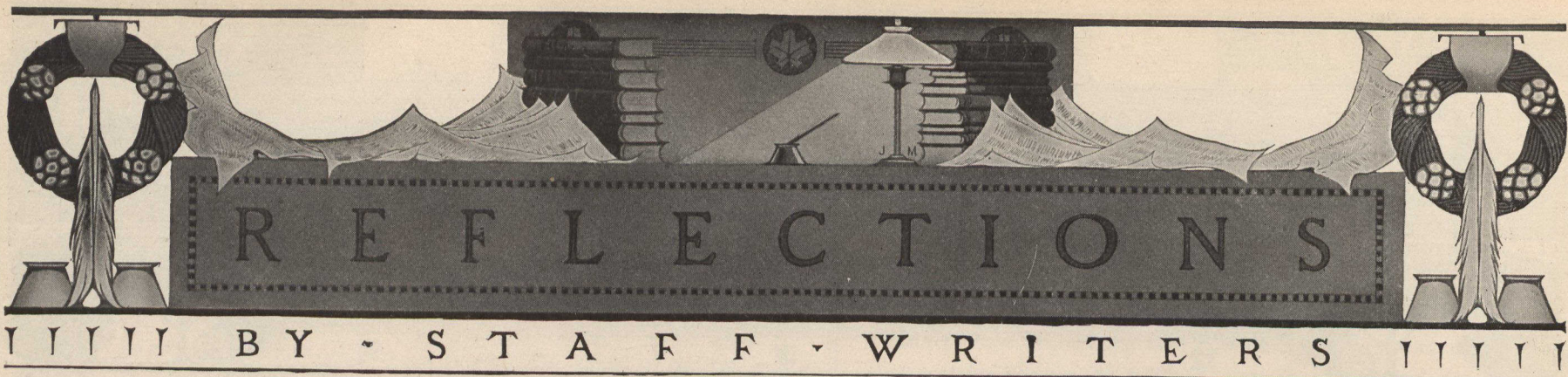




FOREST RANGING

CANADIANS talk a great deal about preventing forest fires, but the measures taken seem entirely inadequate. The loss by fire this fall will probably total fifty millions of dollars, of which one-half has occurred in British Columbia. If some department of government, provincial or federal, pays \$200 for a boiler that might have been bought for \$150, the legislature or parliament will spend a couple of days talking about it. Yet the question of preserving our valuable forests would tire the same body of wise legislators in about an hour and a half.

An explorer who went north through New Ontario last summer tells of the fire rangers he met. The first pair were two young men out for a holiday who were having a bully time camping and canoeing. The next were two old men about seventy years of age, of whom one was sick and the other was busily engaged as nurse. The third pair were two preachers seeking diversion and the fresh-air cure. Fire rangers are a joke with most of the provincial governments. The appointees know little if anything about their duties, are not under any central overseer, and are usually personal friends of some influential member. The appointments are purely political and the money appropriated for this purpose is thus mostly wasted.

Until very recently, the Dominion Government has taken little interest in the preservation of the forests in the new provinces and territories. According to the *Edmonton Bulletin*, Mr. Oliver's paper, "the Forestry branch [of the Department of Interior] has never had any direct information as to the forest areas of the two provinces [Alberta and Saskatchewan]. What information it has to hand has been gathered from other branches of the service and from private sources." This summer, however, it has had men inspecting and surveying these areas with a view of estimating the amount of timber and what precautions are necessary for their preservation. It is probable that as a result of this investigation, the force of fire rangers will be increased. This, however, will be of little avail, if the Forestry Branch follows the policy pursued by the provincial governments and appoints careless, untrained civilians instead of properly trained and organised rangers.

It is a reasonable assertion that during the past ten or fifteen years, the timber consumed in forest fires was of sufficient quantity and value to have sold for enough money to build the Grand Trunk Pacific. While our members of parliament and members of legislatures are wrangling over petty matters of patronage, the public domain has been burning up for lack of some efficient system of protection. The question as to who should have the contracts for supplying bread to the asylums, military stations and penitentiaries is of more importance to the average member of parliament than the question of forest preservation. The advanced methods which have been introduced, for certain improvements have been effected, are due more to department officials than to the average minister or member. If Canada had less politics and more efficient public administration, the outlook would be more encouraging.

MILITIA EXPENDITURES

IN their famous report laid before Parliament last session, the Civil Service Commissioners undertook to criticise the Department of Militia and Defence. This was to be expected, but unfortunately their criticism was not directed wholly towards the civil service portion of the department, but included comment upon its general policy. They said that the expenditure had been going up by leaps and bounds; every person who was well informed knew that and also knew that Parliament had authorised the expenditure. They proposed that this expenditure should be fixed at so much per capita and

should increase only as the population increases. This is a rather curious usurpation of the province of Parliament.

When they came to deal with the matters which were really within their purview, they made serious mistakes. They say that the Headquarters Staff numbers 40, whereas General Lake states it is only 27. They place the Permanent and Headquarters Staff at 220, and General Lake says it is only 52. They condemn the high pay given to the military officers at headquarters, a criticism they are entitled to make, even though it is not justified by circumstances. When, however, they condemn the pensions to officers and their widows and recommend it for all other branches of the civil service, they are delightfully inconsistent. They say the desertions from the permanent force are one in three, probably intending to show that it is badly officered. In 1905, this was so; in 1906, the desertions were one in six; in 1907, one in nine.

All this is pointed out in a Memorandum by General Lake, recently issued. A perusal of this reply to the Commissioners is well worth while. It also contains General Lake's explanation of the increased expenditures and his justification of them. There will be divergent views on this point, but the defence offered by the General is decidedly interesting as well as informing.

It is probable that there have been military expenditures for which the country did not get value. It is certain, as in most other departments, that there are "patronage" lists and that friends of the Government have been favoured. This, however, is a practice which the people have not yet condemned. It exists in all Canadian governments, provincial as well as federal. It is also probably true that there are a few men on the permanent pay-list who are not earning their salaries. The great difficulty seems to be that the appointments to the permanent force are occasionally "incompetents." If a family with political influence have a son who has not brains enough to earn a living, they try to make a soldier of him. Not all the "incompetents" are Canadians, however. Several are Englishmen sent out here with "ducal" recommendations. Graduates of the Royal Military College are forced to go to Great Britain to get appointments on their merit. Perhaps these are the points the Commissioners had in their minds, but they might have been more precise in their language.

The general expenditure on the militia has increased by "leaps and bounds," but it must be remembered that the cost of living has forced up the rate of pay, that Canada has assisted the cause of Imperial Defence by assuming the cost of maintaining Halifax and Esquimalt, that the permanent force has been increased from 800 in 1905 to 3,311 in 1908, that in the same period the active militia has been increased from 35,835 to 57,718, that the number of men trained has increased from 19,000 to 46,000, and the number of horses from 2,872 to 11,798, and that cadet corps with 8,000 members and rifle associations with 38,000 members have sprung into existence. This justifies much of the increased expenditure, though it may not justify it all.

THE NEW C. P. R. STOCK

BETWEEN 1902 and the end of 1907, eighty-five million dollars' worth of Canadian Pacific Railway common stock was issued at par. It is now proposed to issue fifty millions more, also at par apparently. If that 135 millions had been issued at an average of \$125 instead of at \$100 for a hundred dollar share, the company would have \$34,000,000 in its treasury. Instead of doing that, the stock is issued at par and that thirty-four millions goes, or will go, to make rich men richer. Truly, unto him who hath, shall be given.

Even now it is not too late to save some of this money, to prevent the latest stock-watering proposition. The fifty millions now ready for issue could be sold at \$150 a share, and twenty-five million dollars extra cash realised. A stock selling at \$172 should be sufficiently