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## WESTERN FOREST FIRES.

THE forest fires in Idaho and Montana are the most destructive that have happened for many years to property; and the loss of human life is unparalleled in the history of forest fires. Over two hundred people are known to have been killed. Most of the victims were the forest rangers employed for the purpose of preventing these conflagrations. The work is at all times hard and often dangerous, but it is necessary work. If ever there was a service in which men are justified in risking their lives; it is in such service as this—in saving whole communities from danger of being wiped out by fire; in saving national assets of almost priceless value, and in preventing irretrievable loss to the nation by injury to climatic conditions. So far Canada has suffered relatively little from forest fires this year. In this part of the Dominion, the phenomenally heavy rains have made forest fires almost impossible. But we cannot afford to depend altogether upon the clouds for our protection. Our fire-fighting force needs greatly strengthening and public opinion will justify the Dominion and Provincial Governments in spending a good deal of money on forest conservation. It is irritating to think that the careless hunters or campers who are directly responsible for such a colossal misfortune are not likely to be brought to the bar of human justice. Of course, it is just possible that they may have perished in the fire they started. The man who makes a camp fire in the woods assumes a great responsibility unless he knows his business, and is willing to take a little trouble. Even to throw down a lighted match on a thick bed of dry tinder is a risky experiment. The culprit puts his heel down on the match and thinks he has extinguished the fire. In many, perhaps most, cases he has done nothing of the kind, he has only forced the fire down to where it can smoulder and spread unseen, until conditions favour an outburst. The probabilities are, however, that most of the fires are caused by men who are absolutely indifferent to the consequences provided always that they are not involved in the consequences. The forest conservation laws should be vigorous to a fault, and they should be rigorously enforced. The penalties for infringement should be severe enough to give the offenders something to think about the next time they go into the woods. Every man whose business or pleasure takes him into the woods should be a volunteer fire-fighter and a

special constable for the enforcement of the forest regulations.

MEN are being recruited for the Canadian navy in English ports. This need not be matter for surprise. It is exceedingly hard to get recruits for a Canadian standing army in Canada. It is almost entirely a question of pay on both sides of the Atlantic. The men who enlist in the British Army do so, most of them, because they cannot get anything better to do. To "go for a soldier" is the last resort of the young man who has failed at everything else he has tried or has pretended to try. The general rate of wages in England is lower than in Canada, and consequently the soldier's pay compares more favourably with the average. The general rate of wages in Canada is too high to permit the recruiting sergeant to compete successfully with the ordinary employer of labour. Looking at the matter purely from a monetary point of view, it would pay Canada to have the Dominion garrisoned by British troops even if it had to pay for their cost. On the same principle it would pay Canada to spend its money on the naval defence of the Dominion in the market in which it can get the best return for its money. This is not a principle of universal application. It is better to pay a little more for the benefit of the home industry, but in the matter of military and naval defence, the margin of difference in cost is so wide, as to justify putting the dollar where it will get the best dollar's worth. Both in construction and maintenance the cost of the navy will be enormously greater in Canada than in England. This does not mean that Canada can never hope to build its own navy. But we are beginning our ship-building at the wrong end. England did not become the ship-builder for the world by starting with battleships. Our facilities for ship-building are equal to those of England with the important exception of cheap and skilled labour. By all means, let us encourage the building of graving docks and iron ships; by subsidies, and by welcoming the highest class of skilled labour from abroad. In twenty years' time, we may be in a position to produce second-class cruisers at cost not more than twenty-five per cent. in excess of what they would cost on the Tyne. Five hundred per cent. extra will not begin to pay the extra cost of the infant Canadian navy.