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### The Forest Fires Warning.

THE unfortunate victims of the recent forest fires in the States doubtless never dreamt of the calamity which overtook them being possible. In the same happy state of unconsciousness as to risk from bush fires, are some of the inhabitants of several villages and towns in Canada. During this summer a large village in the West was in imminent danger of being swept away by the flames of an extensive bush fire which reached close up to the houses. Happily the fire occurred in the day time when a large force of men were available for protecting the place; had it been in the night, the whole village and the outskirts of a neighboring city would have gone up in smoke, with probably a serious disaster to the service of one of our main railway lines. The proximity of a bush must always entail this contingency to settlements. Those who have not seen such fires would not believe it possible for flames to spread so rapidly as we have seen them do in autumn, after a drought. The dry leaves and grass carry fire in an ever widening circle, until in an amazingly short time a wide area is a flame which it is most difficult to isolate unless a large body of men are on hand. We trust our rural municipalities situated near the bush will take warning by the disasters in the States, and guard the community from like sufferings. A wide space should be cleared between settlements and the bush, and special precautions taken to prevent boys and tramps making fires in places where the embers are likely to spread. The one we refer to was caused by boys gipseying, who had left a fire unextinguished in their camp, some sparks from which were carried by a wind to places where dead leaves abounded that soon raised a very alarming bush fire.

### The Canal Conference.

In a few days a conference will be held in Toronto, for the purpose of furthering a projected enlargement of the water ways westward of this port, so as to permit the passage of ocean vessels through the great lakes. The agitation for this vast scheme is chiefly confined to Toronto. We do not see, however, why that city should take any deep interest in the project, as if vessels of a sufficient tonnage and build were enabled to make their way from Lake Superior to the sea, they would certainly not enter the harbor of Toronto *en route*, save under stress of weather; they would be seen passing from the Welland canal towards Kingston in a direct course, just as grain boats now do. On the other hand, vessels with westbound freights would find it far more economical in every way to unload at this port, as the light loads they would have, after unshipping what was consigned direct to Montreal, would never pay them for a tedious trip through one or two hundred miles of a canal, and a return trip over the same course with another half load. Already our Southern neighbors are indicating their policy should the water ways westward be so enlarged. They would meet this by making the Erie canal capable of heading off to New York the new class of large vessels proposed to be accommodated; and were this done, the St. Lawrence route westward of this port would, to a very large extent, be used for local freights. The enormous expenditure this scheme involves is a dead weight which it will be very hard, indeed we are inclined to think, it will be found impossible for Canada to lift. Certainly the outlay will not be less than \$100,000,000, a sum which, with the annual extra cost of working the canals when deepened and widened, would add at least five or six million dollars a year to the expenditures of this country, and therefore to its taxation, for which the national benefit to be derived would be doubtful. It is, however, proposed that the American government be asked to share the expenses of this canal enlargement scheme, and that the present water ways so increased be under the joint control of the authorities of the two countries. If, to any extent, the proposed scheme hinges upon this idea, it must be regarded as chimerical. A proposal to give a foreign power any proprietary rights over a canal in Canadian territory would meet with a stern refusal by the people of this Dominion.