

negligent action—a danger which is practically non-existent, for proof in such cases is impossible.

It is a fact which has often been stated, and is now pretty well accepted by those who have made even a cursory study of the subject, that, for every tree which has been cut down by the lumberman and manufactured into articles of commercial value, at least twenty trees have been destroyed by bush fires—absolutely wasted. I speak with confidence on this subject so far as the forests of Eastern Canada are concerned, and I believe that those familiar with conditions in the great forests of the West will agree that the proportion of waste that I have given holds for that portion of the country also. The loss to the country in this way is beyond all calculation. There is no more saddening example in our country of needless waste than this destruction by fire of immense tracts of timber which, if now standing, would form one of our most valuable assets.

The public formerly regarded forest fires as natural phenomena or as visitations of an inscrutable Providence. But, just as it has been learned that epidemics of disease are due to human ignorance or carelessness, and can be prevented, so it is now pretty generally understood that forest fires, as a rule, have their origin, not in natural and ungovernable causes, but in the heedlessness or negligence of men. And, of all those who are guilty on this count, the worst by far is the man who makes pretence of settling as a farmer on land which should be continued in forest growth. In 1904 I made the formal and deliberate statement to the Quebec Commission on Colonization, that, in my opinion, at least ninety per cent. of the forest destruction in Ontario and Quebec had been due to settlers setting fires for the purpose of clearing the land. I have not changed that opinion nor do I see how one can reach any other conclusion who has had means of estimating what fearful destruction even one careless person can cause. I quoted to the Quebec Commission one case within my own knowledge, the destruction of a large portion of the most valuable pinery on the River Eagle, a branch of the Gatineau, by a settler clearing land for a potato field. It would be laughable, if it were not so sad, to think that, while the settler raised a crop worth, perhaps, \$5.00, the public suffered a loss of at least \$1,000,000. This is not an isolated instance, even in the amount of waste, for equally destructive fires, arising from the same cause, are known in many portions of Eastern Canada.

There is a way to clear land by burning without destroying the country. By setting the fire in proper relation to the direction of the wind, carefully watching the fires set, and taking other simple precautions, fire can be restricted within any desired area. The bona fide settler, the man who is really making