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CONVEY THEIR REGRETS

Premier McBride Receives Message From Winston Churchill

The premier has received through the governor-general the following message of sympathy from the Right Hon. Winston Churchill, president of the board of trade:

"Cannot refrain, after our many pleasant meetings over here, from sending you expression of my most sincere sympathy with you in your anxiety and with the people of B. C. in their misfortune."

Premier McBride replied as follows:

Victoria, B. C., Aug. 4, 1908.

His Excellency, the Governor-General, Ottawa, Ont.

Will feel graeful if you will convey to Right Hon. Winston Churchill very high appreciation of his message, and on behalf of the people of British Columbia thank him for his kindly sympathy. RICHARD M'BRIDE.

A telegram from Mayor D'Arcy Scott, Ottawa, states that the city of Ottawa has voted $2,000 to the British Columbia fire sufferers. Premier Whitney of Ontario has also wired the premier asking for details of the fire and what relief seems to be necessary.

The following telegram has been received by Simon Leiser as president of the local board of trade:

Your expression of sympathy greatly appreciated. Would greatly appreciate any cash donations available.

W. W. TUTTLE, Mayor.

WHEN FERNIE BECAME A SMOULDERING RUIN

Was But as a House of Cards in the Path of the Leaping Flames

Cranbrook, B.C., Aug. 3.—The morning of August first opened clear and calm in Fernie and later on, about ten o'clock, the wind began to pipe up from the southwest. Fernie used to sit in the mouth of the pass, the jaws of which contracted the current like the tuyeres of a smelting furnace. It is a place around which there should be a cleared area of at least a mile by way of a safety belt. The public will call for those safety belts one of these days before the terror of the Fernie experience will have become a memory. They will then forget all about it, and things will slip back into the old style of "anything will do as long as nothing happens."

On the morning of the memorable first of August no one thought of the smouldering fires over to the west of the city, in the limits of the Cedar Valley Lumber company. Fire had been prowling around there, but the rain had put it out twice, the second time, so they thought, for keeps, but the wind woke up the devil of ruin and destruction in the ashes.

Danger's Mutterings.

About eleven in the morning things began to look a little threatening, but nothing to worry about. The neighbor's house was alight, but the chance of fortune might head it off, and by the same token it was a good time to get something to wash the dust out of one's throat. Later the wind grew stronger, and when it got away with a roof off a building under construction some one thought of the fire down in the Cedar valley, some six miles away. Inside of twenty-five minutes ruin was upon them. It had got its foot inside what is known as the Goat ranch, licked across it into the old town, over which it passed in a surge of flame into the brewery, and then a perfect tornado of fire flew from the old town bounds clear into the centre of the business district, setting the concerns of Burns and Co. on fire. The tornado no mere bit of fancy descriptive work. What is meant is that when the fire caught Fernie the wind was in truth and fact a perfect tornado, blowing this way and that, circling and of strength enough to lift a man of two hundred pounds clear off his feet and dash him around like a leaf. That was the kind of wind it was, the worst ever remembered in Fernie.

Fire's Fierce Leaps.

Burns & Co. was on fire. Then what one man called a blanket of flame seemed to leap across from Burns' buildings to the Roman Catholic church, and then the houses began to catch up wind from the fierce radiant heat. Left and right before the wind and behind the wind leaped the fire. Never was there a horse that could fly from that racing stream of ruin. Fernie was gone inside of ten minutes and that city, the home of seven thousand people, a centre of progress and advancing industry, was in its death agonies. Thereafter the tale of ruin was to be told, not by what was destroyed, but by the pitiful trifle that remained. Home, fortune, property was gone. The vital matter was to save the life. You or I might think that you could so much accomplish with some calm, but when a torrent of panic stricken, foreigners come pouring out on a similar mission flying howling, beastlike, the panic becomes a riot. Children were trampled down by the heavy shoes of craven brutes who ran breathlessly to a shelter for their hides. To the hills and river, but mostly to the latter, with its cool island and bars. They got there somehow, men, women and the poor little children, of whom there was a multitude. The good men stayed and fought the fire best as they might and did things heroic, forgetting all about them because the necessity was to fight on. But the foe was not to be beaten this time.

Valley of Death.

The Kootenay Indians, strangely enough, call the pass the Valley of Death. No use to seek the why or the wherefore; that is its name, and not an Indian of them will erect a tepee in it. They say it is cursed and is of malign and sinister habits, begotten of the spirit of its presiding genius. Death lies in wait there, they think. They say that some time the mountains will close in. Taking note of the happenings at Frank, at the other end of the pass, the old men especially shake their heads and predict things for the white men in the pass. Twice before was Fernie swept by fire and sore distressed, but the third visitation left not a trace behind. The work of the fire spirit was thorough and complete, Fernie is no more. It is erased from the map, and not, as far as population and the number of houses is concerned, worthy of being at this minute a flag station on the C.P.R. But her men will call her into life again, watch you and see.

Its Awful Sweep.

At eight o'clock in the evening when the work of destruction was over, the fire went on up the valley to the very summits of the mountains on each side of the Elk river as if to make an end of Hosmer and Michel, but at that hour the wind had fallen to a very little breeze. Good people who never seen a forest fire at close and dangerous range, don't have any ambition for the experience. At 8 o'clock of the evening of Aug. 1 there was not a single business concern, shop, store, bank office, church or jail in existence, in what was a few hours before Fernie. There remained by actual count two and twenty buildings, consisting of a cluster of residences down at the extreme west end. Some ten or these are little painted cottages, one storey concerns, and a few are good residences, amongst them those of Dr. Bonnell, W. R. Ross, M.P.P., and Sherwood Herchmer. With them escaped the offices of the coal company, the warehouse of the Trites Woods Co. and the depot and water tower of the G. N. railroad. In plain terms, the damage can be gauged by what remains rather than what is gone. In a city that could accommodate from seven to nine thousand people there is not accommodation now for a hundred. Of the ruined concerns, only the walls remain of the Bank of Commerce, the post office and one or two back walls of so-called fireproof stores. It is the very mockery of the theory of fireproofing. The city might just as well have been of match wood. Cement and steel girders went the way of paper.

Enormous Loss.

The loss will run well into the millions. The insurance is guessed at about three and a half millions, and the loss will run to fully six million dollars. Of the sufferers the chief are the coal company, the C.P.R. the G. N.R. and the lumber companies. The Trites Wood Co., wholesale merchants, will also suffer heavily, even though they carry heavy insurance. The C. P.R. will lose about half a million, or may be more. They lost about 100 cars and everything they had in Fernie. The G.N.R. lost over 200 cars of coke and coal. The lumber companies lost their limits, their mills, and their manufactured lumber to the extent of twenty-five million feet. The lumbering industry is killed for many a day in the Pass. The insurance companies will necessarily be heavy sufferers, the Norwich Union, so it is said, especially.

Courageous Telegrapher.

How it was done by a young chap with glasses, who made the trip down from Hosmer along the line of the C. P.R. with an instrument and batteries will perhaps be told hereafter, but he got down and cut in a wire just to windward of the fire. He selected the corner near what used to be called the Park, and set up his instrument to let the world know of what had happened. First of all he called up Cranbrook, and Cranbrook responded. The streets became alive with people that called for action, and our mayor, Jake Fink, a great quiet man of terrible earnestness when the occasion requires it, spoke and the people answered it.

Two trains loaded with everything that experience could suggest, were got away inside of an hour. The C.P.R., to its great credit, be it said, turned its resources open to the public free gratis. Our mayor ran the system east to Fernie on his say-so. Soon a third train was underway with a perfect horde of section men, Italians, Slavs and whatnot aboard. And that train carried all manner of meats, carcasses of beef, hogs and sheep, given by P. Burns & Co. The manager for that concern here sent word to Mayor Tuttle of Fernie that every beast he had would be killed on Sunday if the necessity existed for so doing. And they were killed and more sent for around the country here. Then the relief committees got to work to receive the refugees, to house, clothe and feed them. You should see our little city rise to the occasion. You should see the men and women revel in the luxury of doing good to the suffering. It gave one a better faith in the big-hearted majority of the wonderful Canadian people.

About 11 o'clock the first train with patients who had been in the Fernie hospital came in. A staff of doctors took them in charge and hurried them to the Eugene hospital, where the Sisters of Charity held out hands of healing to them. Even the patients of our own institution vacated their beds to provide for those that needed the beds more than they did. Then came the poor people, and many of those who a few hours before were rich enough in this world's goods, but who were now as poor as the poorest. Theatres, churches, stores and public halls were flung open. All the friendly societies vied with the others to see which would, at their own expense, best provide for every necessity. Meantime the various committees were organized, and as fast as the refugees came in they were made comfortable. Many of them were never so comfortable before.

Offers of Aid.

The news got to the outside and Spokane, Nelson, Moyie, Rossland, and Kaslo called for us to send on all we could accommodate. They took sent on relief. Spokane sent one carload value for $5,000. Another is 28 follow and the secretary of the chamber of commerce of that city says we have but to name our requirements and we will have the money. Little gallant Moyie called for 250 people. They would provide for them. And they did so in a splendid style. Nelson got jealous of other places and said we were living up our refugees and not sending them enough. This is a sample of British Columbia and Washington for you. Now comes Idaho trying to share in the good work. We shall have a great struggle on our hands, but we shall accomplish our duty easily when we have such a backing as is mentioned.

We are providing for about 3,000 people who for all practical purposes are destitute. The ladies have opened a bureau for the special necessities of the women and children. The foreigners are trying to make the best of the situation by getting their babies clothed and then stripping them to get another supply. It has its humorous aspects. We have amusements in full blasts for the young people, and a baseball game is on between the kids of Cranbrook and the kids from the outside.

Ice cream is being handed out at the street corners for the little people, and ice water is on tap everywhere. We have sent on several cars of lumber to help put up all the temporary shelters for stores, etc., that the Fernie people may require.

Calgary, Alb., Aug. 4.—There have just arrived here from devastated Fernie two survivors, Mrs. George Crossman and her sister, Miss Maud Hogan, who relate a thrilling story of the awful sufferings through which the people of the stricken town passed on Saturday night last.

On Saturday afternoon Mrs. Crossman and her sister were engaged in the ordinary work of the house, when Mr. Crossman came in to say that the fire which had been raging in the bush for the last few days was threatening the city itself. Hastily they collected the few things that it was possible to take, and with Mrs. Crossman carrying her little baby, they all took refuge in the Western Canada Wholesale company's new fireproof building, where it was thought they would be safe from the terrible flames which were then rising from every part of the doomed town.

Soon, however, the awful shower of sparks and burning pieces of wood began to have effect on the building, and it was decided to remove all the women across to the freight sheds, where a train was being made up to carry them to a place of safety, if such could be found. Mrs. Crossman waited until the very last, as her husband thought that they would be safer where they were than anywhere else. At last the outlook became so threatening that it became imperative for them to seek another place of safety.

They therefore determined to cross to the sheds, which were a mass of flames, and board the train. Mrs. Crossman and her sister were both soaked with water, and the baby was wrapped up in a wet blanket, that its clothes might not catch fire on the way across.

The journey was made in safety, and when they reached the train their clothes were quite dry, and as the distance was only across the street it may be imagined how great was the heat. On the train were men, women and children of all nationalities, all mixed up together and sitting three and even four on a seat. The babel of sounds was terrible, men shouting, and frantic, hysterical women separated from their children, shrieking in vain for their lost ones.

It was a most pitiful sight. Some were dressed in all their finery and others had scarcely anything to wear at all. There were some women dressed only in petticoats, wearing the most gorgeous hats, and others with nothing on their heads at all. There were scores of children, some with their parents and some who had lost them in the confusion. The scene was almost indescribable, says Mrs. Crossman.

The train then pulled out and made for Hosmer. Part of that town was in flames when they reached it. The original intention had been to get through to Michel, but shortly after leaving Hosmer they heard that the Michel bridge was burned. The train then backed again to stop for the night between Hosmer and Fernie, passing on its way back through the greatest danger, for they had to pass for about a mile between blazing brush on both sides. The windows of the cars became so hot that it was impossible to touch them, and the heat and smoke were absolutely stifling. All this time the foreign women were shrieking prayers at the top of their voices, all adding to the terrible confusion of the scene.

After passing through this fire-belt, the train reached a safe part, and stopped there for the night. While they lay there, condensed milk was brought out from Fernie for the women and children by volunteers. After spending a heartrending night of anxiety and misery the train returned to Fernie on Sunday morning and found that the fire had burned itself out there during the night. They found that the building where they had been on the previous evening had not been burned after all; thanks to the heroic and untiring efforts of firemen to whom sufficient praise cannot be given for the desperate and successful fight they put up against the flames.

The ruins presented a most melancholy spectacle; in nearly every case nothing was left except the walls and even these in most cases had disappeared. The streets were full of debris, trunks, beds and other belongings which had been pulled on to the streets in the hope of saving them, were all charred masses of cinders. The dead bodies of horses were also lying here and there.

The dead bodies of several little girls had been found in different parts of the city and there are doubtless many that have not been found. In one part of the bush sixty men and two women are said to have been suffocated to death through attempting to save themselves by backsetting the fire.

In the midst of all these scenes of misery there were not wanting a few amusing incidents. There was one lady who had been able to save nothing but her little pet dog, and who went about petting it and saying: "I saved my dog, my precious pet; thank God I saved him."

Another who had carried away her old tom cat kept saying: "Do look at my poor cat; why it's quite worn out, poor dear."

And there was one little girl who had spent the night in the woods with an old rooster as her companion which has doubtless been put to a different use by this time.

Mrs. Crossman speaks also of many who had to ford the river to reach a place of safety. There were women, too, who had to do this, and it is feared that many who went down to the river to escape the scorching heat only went to their death for the brush was burnt right down to the waters' edge.

Altogether the unhappy inhabitants of Fernie have had such an experience as may well last in their memory all their lives, and they may be thankful that the fire did not come upon them as they slept, in which case the result would have been infinitely more disastrous.

C.P.R. Earnings.

Montreal, Aug. 4.—For the period ending July 31 the earnings of the C.P.R. decreased by $292,000 compared with last year.

PRECAUTIONS TAKEN AGAINST SMALLPOX

Teachers Are Instructed to See That the Children Are Vaccinated

(From Wednesday's Daily)

Reports have reached the board of education from the Provincial board of health that smallpox has made its appearance in several parts of the province, and in order to prevent any possibility of an epidemic of the dread disease among the children upon the reassembling of school, a circular letter has been sent out to the secretaries of the various boards of school trustees throughout the province. Such a contingency has been provided for by statute, and the teachers are instructed to enforce the provisions of the act.

The letter reads as follows:

To the Secretary, Board of School Trustees:

Sir:—I beg to inform you that notification has been received from the provincial board of health that owing to the prevalence of small-pox in many parts of the province, section 15 of the regulations of that board adopted the 5th of February, 1900, is to be enforced. Section 15 of the regulations reads as follows:

"15. It is now deemed necessary, and is hereby ordered, that teachers in public schools or colleges shall require a certificate of successful vaccination from each child attending at such school or college, or a certificate that such child is at that present time insusceptible to vaccination. The certificates shall be presented on demand to the teacher or other proper authority."

You are hereby requested to give due notice of this regulation to the teachers in the employ of your board and to instruct them to demand certificates as called for from every child presenting himself at school.

Exceptions to this rule may be made in favor of the child or children of parents who object from conscientious motives to having their children vaccinated. In all cases where such valid objection is offered as a reason for the non-compliance with section 15 the child must present to the teacher a written statement from the parents giving clearly the reason for non-compliance.

All communications and inquiries regarding the compulsory vaccination of children should be addressed to the Secretary of the Provincial Board of Health, Victoria.

H. E. YOUNG,
Minister of Education.

INSPECTOR GILLIS VISITING VICTORIA

Former Resident Back From Interior—Educational Officials Change Stations

After an absence of many months Inspector J. D. Gillis, of the provincial education department, has returned to town for the purpose of spending a brief summer vacation renewing acquaintances. At present his headquarters are at Nelson and his district comprises the whole of the Kootenays. He reports that conditions throughout that section are flourishing, in a comparative sense, there being a marked improvement over the financial condition of last year. The farmers are looking forward to reaping bumper crops and outsiders in larger numbers than for many seasons are taking up land. Inspector Gillis states that, even in the short time he has been away from the capital, noticeable progress has been made which, he trusts, will continue.

It is announced that in taking up the educational work for the pending year there will be some changes made in the placing of the different provincial inspectors. Mr. Gillis will be stationed at Vernon and will be in control of the Yale-Cariboo country, taking the position now occupied by Inspector Gordon. The latter will come to Vancouver Island while G. H. Dean, recently appointed inspector, will go to the Kootenays. The vacancy has been created through the retirement of D. Wilson, who has been appointed to take charge of the distribution of the free school books, which the provincial government intends furnishing the school children of British Columbia, commencing on the re-assembly of the schools after the summer holidays.

Mr. Gillis will spend several weeks here before leaving again for the interior.

OFFERS SUBSCRIPTION

Governor-General Wishes to Contribute to Fund for Fernie Sufferers

Premier McBride yesterday received a telegram from His Excellency Earl Grey, the governor-general of Canada, asking if a subscription list had been opened in aid of the sufferers through the conflagration at Fernie. If a subscription list is opened his excellency wishes to send a contribution.

This practical exhibition of sympathy from distant Ottawa was much appreciated at the Parliament buildings. A suitable reply thanking his lordship was despatched.

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