

The Aeroplane in B. C. Forests

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The wonderful achievements of the aeroplane during the Great War foreshadow its use in many peaceful lines of industry and development.

One of the greatest assets of the Province of British Columbia is its enormous stand of merchantable timber which is valuable on the coastline in proximity to tidal water, owing partially to its ease of transportation and particularly to its density of growth. The greatest enemy to the forest is fire. Under unfavorable conditions, immense valuable tracts of timber may be destroyed within a few days from an outbreak of fire of small beginning. Frequently these conflagrations are initiated by the carelessness of campers and loggers. British Columbia is the greatest forest province of Canada. Her forests contain approximately half of the entire stand of the timber of the entire Dominion and twenty-four per cent. of the total stand of the Pacific Northwest.

The economic importance of the timber to British Columbia and to Canada as a whole may be realized when it is stated that the forest revenue of this Province is already larger than that of any other province of the Dominion; aggregating approximately \$2,500,000 annually from provincial crown timber lands alone.

The manufactured value of forests products of the province is from thirty-five to forty million dollars annually, and in 1917 the value exceeded the entire output of the mines of British Columbia.

It is therefore quite obvious that the most essential factor of the exploitation of our forest growth is protection from destruction by fire.

The British Columbia Government operating under the Forest Act, maintains a staff of forest guards, and patrol men which, immediately prior to the war, consisted of 395 men. War conditions and the financial situation have made it necessary

to institute severe retrenchment, and in 1915 the staff was reduced to 218 and further reduced in 1916 to 200.

The fire situation during 1917 and more particularly during the current year demonstrated conclusively the disastrous results that may be logically anticipated from the policy of letting the forest so largely take care of itself. Every citizen is directly interested in this important matter, as will readily be seen from a moment's consideration of the local economical importance of lumber. For this reason any factor which will tend to afford better fire protection than is at present feasible is of prime importance at the present time.

A realization of this point unduced the Department of Lands to make the experiment of patrolling the coast area by means of hydroplanes. An order was given to a local firm—Messrs. Hoffar Brothers, Vancouver—for the construction of a flying boat or hydroplane which was completed and ready for delivery in August of this year. It was taken over by the Government on the first of September and made several successful trial flights over Burrard Inlet and Vancouver. On September 4th a trial flight under the pilotage of Lieut. Bishop, R. A. F., ended disastrously by the machine making a nose dive of twelve hundred feet, crashing on to the roof of a house in the West End of Vancouver and smashing the hydroplane to matchwood. The pilot miraculously escaped death or even severe injury, but the seaplane was irretrievably damaged.

Great regret is expressed at the untimely end of the first hydroplane constructed for this purpose, as its use would have been experimental and, if successful, would undoubtedly have led to a larger employment of this means of forest protection. It is stated, however, that the Government will immediately have con-