

In 1901 a system of forest patrol and guardianship on Dominion lands was started which has been somewhat extended since. I cannot give details of the system; suffice to say that rangers are assigned certain territory where it is deemed their work is most required. Each of these men is under the supervision of someone in the district, usually the head forest ranger, crown timber agent, or someone known to the Department. It is the duty of this supervising officer to instruct the ranger when to start work and when to quit and to certify to his time of service before his account is paid. In case of a dangerous fire starting, which requires more men to control it, the ranger has authority to engage such men for that particular purpose.

During the past season we had about forty regular rangers employed, principally in the Railway Belt in British Columbia, along the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, along the North Saskatchewan River and country north of that river, along the Athabasca, and in the wooded districts of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

As to the result of such a service, the railway belt in British Columbia furnishes the best example. Prior to the adoption of the fire service five years ago, there was annual destruction of large quantities of merchantable timber, while during the past five years practically none has been lost, notwithstanding that they have had a succession of very dry summers, and outside of this railway belt hundreds of millions of feet of magnificent timber have been destroyed.

No better investment of public funds can be conceived of than in this protective service. What town or city would be guilty of such folly as to refuse to afford some system of protection against fire for its buildings, and why should the nation fail to take similar precautions to protect its own forest property? The buildings in a town or city can be replaced in a year while a century or more would be required for the restoration of a forest.

Within the past year the Forestry Branch has started making a careful examination of the forest reserves, and it is the intention to continue this work till we have a complete knowledge of the timber on them, the quantity, varieties and quality, rate of growth, etc., with a view of removing the dead and down timber and harvesting the full grown crop and fostering a permanent reproduction. It is also hoped to be able to employ expert men in the examination of other timber areas, in order to obtain information as to what areas it is desirable to further set aside as reserves.

One difficulty in our work is to know what we have. We know practically nothing of our timber and other natural resources extending over a large proportion of our possessions.