



Little Journeys to Timber Land

By Robson Black, Manager, the Canadian Forestry Association

WHEN JOHN MUIR, the famous Naturalist, was strolling one day through a California park, he saw a group of axemen chopping down a mammoth Cedar tree. To learn the age of the monster Mr. Muir counted the rings. It was a painstaking task but when he arrived at the outer edge he had established the tree's age as four thousand years. In the same grove stood many members of the Sequoia family that had weathered from two to three thousand years of history.

It taxes our imagination to think that in our own day we could gaze upon a living thing that has breathed the same air as the Pharaohs. Yet that very fact is a happy illustration how this old world never outgrows its need for trees and forests. We have thousands of Canadian trees that are mere children today and will probably witness the unimaginable events of two centuries hence. Similarly, we have many a Canadian tree that could unfold strange tales of Indian warfare even when Champlain was planning new defences for Quebec.

In the office of any great Trust Company, you may see tiers of steel boxes. Each contains the story of an estate, placed in the hands of the company for careful management. The heirs of each estate are looking to the company to safeguard and improve each piece of property — whether a farm or a row of houses or the cattle on a ranch, or a mine — with such close attention that the estate will return a profit year after year and if possible, the profit must never grow smaller.

We Canadians, children or grown-ups, are a good deal like that trust

company. We have been given by our forefathers a splendid country, not as spending money but as a sacred trust, a savings account. That is the way the people in France and Switzerland and Sweden look at it. France has forests probably four times as rich as they were a hundred years ago. They do not burn down their forests in Europe as we do, but prefer to keep them green and thriving in order to provide employment and keep everybody prosperous. There are towns in France and Switzerland that pay all their taxes out of the profits of pieces of forest much smaller than those we burn up year by year in nearly every province of Canada.

Some of you may have seen a mammoth bridge that conveys the commerce of millions of workers and hundreds of factories high above a rushing river. And you have marvelled at the four or five huge pillars, anchored to bed rock by masses of cement and steel, bearing up with ease the great superstructure of metal and resisting every strain.

Well, we Canadians owe everything to five great pillars upon which our nation is built. I refer to the agricultural lands, the forests, the mines, the fisheries and the water powers. In this article we are talking chiefly of the forests. There is a very special reason why we should select the forests. We may misuse and waste the fisheries and the mines and the lands and water powers, but certainly they cannot be burned down. But with forests, a thousand square miles may be turned to charcoal in a few days and all that looked so useful and so

beautiful transformed to an ugly smoking ruin. That is why so much is heard of forest protection these days, because of all the bountiful gifts we Canadians have inherited, the forests are the most easily and quickly destructible.

About Forest Fires.

I want to tell you about some forest fires that have occurred in Canada. The worst as regards loss of life was the 1916 disaster in Northern Ontario when 223 persons lost their lives and 800,000 acres were swept bare within about three days. In 1911 the Porcupine fire destroyed 84 persons. The Minnesota disaster of 1918 brought death to nearly one thousand men, women and children. Perhaps the worst of all forest fires was the Peshtigo holocaust of 1871 in Wisconsin when 1,500 lives were sacrificed and flames devoured everything on 1,280,000 acres. The famous Miramichi fire of New Brunswick occurred in 1825 when the population was comparatively sparse. Commencing with a small blaze that any boy could have extinguished, the great conflagration swept in nine hours across 3,000,000 acres and demanded the lives of 160 people.

How big do you suppose the forests of Canada are? An acre field is quite a large playground, isn't it. You would do well to kick a football across an acre width.

Well, Canada has 500 million acres of forest lands, but of course only about half that is covered with really good-sized trees. Russia has the greatest forests in the world, then comes the United States with three