

More Prairie Population—One Way to Win It

A talk on the secret of success in farm irrigation - Forest fire damage on watersheds imperils supply of water so necessary for irrigation.

By ARCHIBALD MITCHELL, Lecturer of the Canadian Forestry Association.

IN THESE days of irrigation development in southern and central Alberta, too much importance cannot be placed on the maintenance of the Forest on the Eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

Irrigation on these farms is not a localized matter for the application of water to another half-million acres of first class land in Southern Alberta, with the probable addition of as much more in the near future, is something that is of no little moment to the east as well as the west.

Irrigation farming is intensive farming; and intensive farming means many small farms producing to the utmost, the work of many families.

A Nature Benefit

Many families on the land means the consumption of much manufactured goods from Eastern Canada and the development of a chain of industry and prosperity which will embrace eastern factories as well as western farms, not to mention the railroads that link them together. It means more, too, for irrigation on a farm means a crop every year, and regular annual crops means the assurance of that steady round of business that is the aim and the mainstay of every industrial concern, no matter what it is, or where.

The Source of Water.

But! and here is the important matter, and one that is so often lost sight of. All this depends on the

maintaining of a steady flow of water in the irrigation canals during the irrigation season, the months of May, June, July, August and September.

The ditches are not enough; there must be water in them and enough water, too, to do the work required.

Occasional occurrences sometimes point the way to general conclusions and in the dry summer of 1919, this was brought out very clearly in connection with this same matter of irrigation.

A Lesson in Point.

A friend of the writer had occasion to go and come by car several times that summer some hundreds of miles, south of the line. On his trips he crossed and re-crossed no fewer than five different irrigation systems, and as the summer went on he found less and less water in these ditches until several of them were delivering not more than half the necessary supply to the farms depending on them. On the Canadian side, everything was as usual and no irrigated farm suffered because of shortness of the water supply. The canals were carrying their usual quantity even in the driest months. The difference was very striking, but to any one who has seen the difference between the sparsely forested watersheds of Montana and the denser forests of the eastern slopes of the Canadian Rockies, (the sources of our rivers) it was not surprising.

The snows of winter were rapidly

melted and lost down the southern streams, while in Canada the closer forest cover retarded both the melting and the flow, so that the supply of water carried down by the rivers and delivered to the canals was very little different from a normal year.

The Future of Irrigation.

The forests made the difference; and in view of these new irrigation schemes, how important it surely is, that every precaution possible be taken to preserve and perpetuate them.

Irrigation is only in its infancy in Western Canada. Only one or two of the tributaries of the South Saskatchewan have been tapped so far, but without any doubt the day is not so far distant when the waters of both the North and South main Saskatchewan Rivers, will be called upon to do their full share, and that not only in Alberta, but also in Saskatchewan.

Must Preserve the Forest

The forest has been called 'Nature's Balance Wheel', but on the Western border of Alberta it is more, for it is destined to be the centre upon which the prosperity of a great part of the country will turn; first the farms, then the towns and cities tributary to them. It is the store-house of the life-blood of the land, and whatever can be done to preserve it from destruction and maintain and develop it in perpetuity is well worth the interest and support of every thinking Canadian.

BY MOTOR TO THE MOUNTAINS



The highway from Calgary to Banff—One of the modern improvements which each year is attracting a greater number of transcontinental tourists.