

devastation of our forests has been attended by many serious consequences.

An important function of wooded land has always been to hold the rainwater and distribute it according to the season's requirements. The spongy masses of leaves and wood which cover the soil in the forests, absorb the water as it descends from the clouds in the form of rain or snow, to impart it gradually in small streams, or by the process of evaporation. When the forests are removed, destroying this natural reservoir during the spring months, the season's supply of water is dissipated in floods and freshets. The overflow of the streams and rivers often causes serious damage, it is true, but is the source of less damage than the droughts which follow later in the summer as an inevitable consequence. In other ways the value of a fair proportion of forest to agricultural land might be shown, but enough has been said to emphasize the importance of efforts by Government and people to conserve our forest wealth.

In this connection, we observe with interest the decision reached last month by the Government at Ottawa, to change the policy regarding the timber regulations applicable to the Northwest and Manitoba. It is now announced to be the aim to maintain permanent timber reserves. With this object in view, the heavy timber belts will be withdrawn from settlement, to preserve the young growing trees and to foster a growth to provide for the future. In pursuance of this policy, guardians will be appointed to protect the reserves, particularly at Moose and Turtle Mountains, from fire, and to prevent the cutting of the young trees by the settlers. Another step in contemplation is the devoting of labor and money towards the laying out of a proper fire guard, a sum having been voted last session for this purpose. On the tops of the above mentioned reserves are numerous lakelets. These are to be connected with wide roads, which, when completed, will form a complete barrier to the progress of a fire. The theory is that the open space and the lakes should effectually prevent any further ravages and act as a reliable fire break. Such movements as these in needed directions are very satisfactory. We trust to see the best results from them.

HALIFAX AND ST. JOHN.

A contract has been entered into between the Government and the Beaver Line of Atlantic steamers, under which there will be a weekly service between Liverpool and Halifax and St. John. The principal business of the line is freights, which St. John is expected to take, and for which the old subsidy of \$20,000 is continued, while \$500 additional per trip, is given for carrying mails to Halifax. This arrangement was foreshadowed some time ago. The city of St. John has raised a vigorous criticism of the details of the arrangement, the great objection being, that the steamers are to call at Halifax. The necessity for taking the shortest route for the mails is ignored or denied.

According to some the objection of St. John is not so much about the mail, as that the freight trade having been built up by St. John, Halifax is to be allowed to share it. The case is one of those rivalries of commerce in which neither rival has much consideration for the other. St. John deserves credit for having spent a large sum of money on her harbor, while others have been largely built up with public money; but St. John now has a virtual promise of a substantial Government grant for this purpose. If the Government tried to please both Halifax and St. John, it has not succeeded in the impossible task, and has apparently pleased neither. The present indignation expressed at St. John

shows the danger of importing politics into questions of this kind. There is reason to hope that the arrangement now made will turn out better for St. John than the fears of many foretell. Those who say that it would be better for St. John if the arrangement under which freight line went to Portland had been continued, cannot be taken seriously. Many criticisms made in haste will be soon forgotten, and the reality is likely to be better than the gloomy prospect of despondency paints it in the dim light of the distant future.

OUR EXPERIMENTAL FARMS.

A tribute is paid by Prince Kropotkin to the Canadian Experimental Farms, which, or some of which, he visited when attending the Toronto meeting of the British Association this year. In the November issue of the *Nineteenth Century*, in one of a series of articles on "Recent Science," the Prince speaks of the scientific, no less than the practical, value of the Experiment Farms of this country. The sites for them were not chosen without care and a definite purpose, but, as he points out, each is surrounded by a large area of territory in which typical conditions of soil and climate prevail. He adds, that "while in Europe the work of the experimental farms too often remains little known to those who toil on the soil, in Canada, as in the United States, a whole machinery has been worked out for diffusing the knowledge that has been won from scientific research, down to the remotest village." This last is not a small or unimportant portion of the work of the Canadian Government in connection with these farms. And his perception of its value is significant of the Prince's closeness of observation.

BANK CLERKS AND OTHER CLERKS.

We have received an unusual number of communications on the subject of our article of October 22nd, entitled "Bank Clerks and Other Clerks." And in the main, they approve the views therein expressed as to the maintenance of a standard of morals and habits on the part of young men of the present day. For example, a banker in Brantford wrote on October 28rd: "I read with a good deal of interest and approval, your item on 'Bank Clerks and Other Clerks.' Think it should be framed and hung up in every monetary institution in the country." And a Montreal business man expresses the opinion that "while your editorial remarks appear to be addressed mainly to bank clerks or bank authorities, and are probably appropriate enough to those institutions, I should like to see them applied more widely, for I recognize that there is much room for improvement in the modern habits of young men of business. I can see this, not only in our warehouses, but in our insurance staffs and other offices. Too many youngsters are forming costly habits—costly in more ways than one."

A Toronto communication takes the ground that bank clerks should be better paid, while a Napanee writer essays, with much feeling, but poor success, to defend the gushings and rejoicings to which our previous article took exception. Passing over some letters from Quebec, Winnipeg, etc., on the general subject, some blaming the "enthusiasm of generous youth" for its extravagance, some defending that extravagance as being "at any rate better than close-fisted miserly meanness in a youngster," we quote a portion of the letter of a former bank employee, who dates from Ottawa:—

"There is, I make bold to say, Mr. Editor, hardly a bank agency in the country in which the clerks, and often the manager, too, if he is