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Protection of the Forests.

The destruction caused by forest fires in this country almost every summer and especially in dry seasons, is so great that if means can be adopted to prevent this loss in large part, it is evident that it would pay well to provide them at considerable cost. A good deal of attention has been devoted to this subject in Ontario and, it would appear with favorable results. "At the annual meeting of the Canadian Forestry Association, Mr. Aubrey White, Deputy Commissioner of Crown Lands," says the *Toronto Globe*, "gave an instructive review of the growth and extent of the present system of fire protection. The first act to provide for the preservation of forests from destruction by fire was passed in 1878, when Mr. Pardee was Commissioner. It provided penalties for carelessness in the handling of fire, but there were no officials to enforce it except the few forest rangers in the employ of the department. It was about seven years later that a force of brush and fire rangers was appointed, the Government freely advising with the timber license-holders and giving them authority to select the men. The cost was apportioned evenly between the Government and the licensees. Each ranger was required to keep a diary detailing his movements from day to day, and also such information as he could gather regarding the limits on which he was employed. Provision was made for the enforcement of the law, and for empowering rangers to act as Magistrates for the purposes of the act." In 1885 there were 37 rangers employed in the woods at a cost of \$7,911, and this force has been increased from time to time until in 1902 the report showed a force of 234 rangers employed at a cost of \$34,200. While Ontario forests still suffer severely at times from the inroads of fires, it is said that the presence of the rangers "has had an excellent effect in making the restrictions of the law known to the settlers, hunters, campers, prospectors and explorers, and creating a wholesome respect for its provisions. They have also been able to extinguish many incipient fires which would have proved destructive if neglected. The secret of safety is found to lie in continuous vigilance during the danger period, which extends from May to October."

Harbin.

The city of Harbin which has been chosen as the principal base of Russian military operations in Manchuria is a place of which we are likely to see very frequent mention in despatches relating to the Russo-Japanese war. Harbin is said to be a city of sixty thousand inhabitants situated in the midst of a great wheat-growing district. The adjacent country is said to include also forest and mineral lands of great richness. The immense water-power which Harbin possesses, as well as its situation in the midst of a rich grain-producing country, affords special facilities for flour manufacturing, and it has already become an important centre in this respect. It is reported that when the mills now in course of construction are completed the capacity of the mills of Harbin will equal a million pounds of flour a day. The location of Harbin is at the point where the Trans-Siberian Railway crosses the Sungari River which is a tributary of the Amur and joins the larger stream some 200 miles from the city in a north-easterly direction. From Harbin the Railway runs eastward to Vladivostok—a distance of 350 miles, and a branch is extended southward through the ancient Mukden to Port Arthur—the distance being about 600 miles. Harbin has been largely built by the Russians and it is said to be a fine city, with many handsome commercial and public buildings and attractive residential streets. Its importance to Russia is evident and doubtless it will be defended with her full strength.

Mercy for the Horse.

Two bills have been introduced in the Ontario Legislature aiming to discourage and re-strict the practice of docking horses. One of these bills is in the form of an amendment to the Municipal Act, extending the present regulative authority of Municipal Councils so as to empower them to prohibit docking. The other bill is an amendment to the Agriculture and Arts Act, and provides that no prize, diploma or other award shall be given at any exhibition for any horse which has been docked. The proposed legislation would seem to be justified on grounds of humanity.

The operation of docking is said to inflict a very considerable amount of pain, and it involves a still larger measure of cruelty to the animal by depriving it of its natural weapon against flies and other insect pests. Docking would seem to have become more common in Ontario than it has in the eastern Provinces. The *Toronto Globe* says: "Last fall a record was made of 567 horses in the stables of the Industrial Exhibition, and of these 316 were docked and 251 in a natural condition. The practice was found to be most prevalent among owners of heavy draught horses, for of this class there were 176 docked horses out of a total of 225 examined. In the general purposes class there were 28 docked out of a total of 151. The balance was more even in the thoroughbred class there being 95 docked and 73 natural. Of the ponies examined the proportion docked was about three in four." A still more cruel practice than that of docking, and one which should be rigidly prohibited, is the use of the tight overdraw check. It is a far too common thing to see horses with their heads thus forced into an unnatural position and trying by constantly moving in one direction and another to obtain some relief from the pain which this instrument of torture inflicts. If the man who thinks that the overdraw check does not inflict much pain upon the horse could have his own head tied up in a similarly unnatural position for a few hours, it would, we venture to say, effectively cure him of his delusion.

Port Arthur.

Port Arthur, which was at the outbreak of hostilities between Russia and Japan Russia's headquarters and base of military operations in the Far East, occupies a naturally strong position on the end of the Liaotung Peninsula and is well fortified. Whether or not it is strong enough to withstand the forces which Japan is preparing to bring to bear against it remains to be seen. In her war with China Japan succeeded in taking Port Arthur, but she is likely to find it a more difficult matter now, both because the place is now more strongly fortified and because it is defended by a more formidable power. The entrance to Port Arthur is well guarded by nature, being extremely narrow—in some places not more than two hundred yards wide. The harbor lies at right angles to the main channel. The outer harbor is deep but in the inner harbor there is not sufficient water to float the largest vessels, so that all ships having a draught of twenty-four feet must lie in the outer roadstead where they are open to attack. After Russia took possession of Port Arthur in December 1897 she strengthened the fortifications known as the Hwang-Chin-shan forts which command the entrance of the harbor to the east, and directly behind she has built a chain of batteries which are intended to pour shot and shell into the inner harbor. The Laomuchu battery is so placed that it sweeps the approach of the port diagonally and commands both the outer and the inner basins. Japanese strategists are said to hold, however, that despite the favorable situation and strong defences of Port Arthur, the fortress can be stormed and taken by a combined land and sea attack. In 1894 the Japanese pursued such tactics successfully, and it is perhaps, not improbable that they may do so again, and especially in view of the fact that Russia has already abandoned Port Arthur as a main base of operations.

Why the Judges

The Hon. John W. Foster, who acted as the agent of the United States Government during the proceedings before the Alaskan Boundary Tribunal, has lately given a lecture on course of lectures on American Diplomacy in Columbian University, Washington. Mr. Foster spoke of the Boundary question and noticed especially the Canadian protest against President Roosevelt's selection of Messrs Root, Lodge and Turner as "impartial jurists of repute." He contended that, as a matter of fact, the American members of the tribunal displayed a judicial temperament at least equal to their Canadian colleagues and were as susceptible to the arguments of opposing counsel. This may be a matter of opinion. Mr. Foster however makes a contribution to the history of the Alaskan case in stating that President Roosevelt offered the appointment as commissioner to one of the justices of the Supreme Court, and that the judge declined the appointment, as is understood, on the ground that he did not regard the post as in the proper line of his duties and that it was not just to his associates to accept a position

which would impose additional labor upon them. A second justice was approached with a like result. Mr. Foster explains this unwillingness on the part of the United States judges to act on the tribunal by saying—"There seems to be a growing sentiment in this country that the members of our highest court should not be called upon to discharge functions of a semi political character, such as those relating to boundary disputes, nor that they should be burdened with additional duties when their labors are already sufficiently onerous. It seems then that President Roosevelt appointed politicians to the tribunal because judges of repute could not be secured. The reasons given by the judges for declining to serve may be all right so far as they go, but probably their principal reason is not given, which well might be that, in view of the tension of public opinion on the subject in the United States, judges of the Supreme Court were unwilling to incur the obloquy which might result from giving a judicial decision in the matter. It is not likely that Lord Alverstone would covet the honor of serving on another Commission of a similar kind."

Irrigation in the Calgary District.

The proposal of the Canadian Pacific Railway looking to irrigation on a large scale in the Calgary district has already been noticed in these columns. This undertaking is expected to result when completed in converting a very large tract of comparatively arid country into fertile, grain producing lands. It is now announced that the Canadian Pacific has awarded to the contracting firm of J. J. Nickson and Company of Vancouver a three million dollar contract for the construction of an irrigation canal near Calgary. The contract is to be commenced in the spring and will require two years for its completion. It calls for the construction of twenty miles of canal, the principal part of which is within four miles of the railway and parallel to it. The canal is to be forty feet in width and will run across a prairie which is practically level. This however is only a beginning of the undertaking in the line of irrigation, which the C. P. R. Company has in view. It proposes to construct four hundred miles of canal for irrigation purposes along the Bow River to carry the water to the lands adjacent to its railway.

The War.

So far as the land forces are concerned the conflict between Russia and Japan is still in its preparatory stages. What the situation on land is cannot indeed be definitely learned from the despatches, but it is believed that Japan is massing large bodies of troops in northern Korea while Russia is marshalling her forces in Manchuria. The neighborhood of the Yalu River which forms the boundary line between Korea and Manchuria is likely to be the scene of important operations, and an engagement may occur at almost any time. Conflicts of an unimportant character have been already reported south of the Yalu between Russian cavalry scouts and small bodies of Japanese. The most sensational movement of the week was the attempt of the Japanese on the night of February 23, to sink a number of old merchant vessels at Port Arthur in such a position as to close the mouth of the harbor. This attempt to bottle up the Russian fleet at Port Arthur was unsuccessful as the approach of the Japanese vessels was discovered by the Russians, and under the fire directed upon them the Japanese vessels were unable to reach the points where it had been intended to sink them. They were sunk, but not in a position to obstruct materially the entrance to the harbor. According to Japanese reports, the vessels were sunk by their own crews who managed to make their escape with the loss of only one man. Reported bombardments of Port Arthur by the Japanese fleet are reported, but the Russian fleet and forts at Port Arthur appear not to have suffered much harm. The most important news received during the week relates to an agreement which is said to have been ratified between Japan and Korea, by virtue of which Korea becomes the ally of Japan, and Japan guarantees the independence and integrity of Korea. The importance of the agreement lies in its possible effect upon the action of other powers. As it is understood that the treaty between France and Russia provides that if either is attacked by more than one nation the other shall come to the help of its ally, and as Great Britain is bound in like manner to come to the help of her ally, Japan, under similar circumstances, it will be seen that much depends on whether Korea, before making this alliance with Japan, was properly to be regarded as a sovereign and independent power. It is not likely, however, that either France or Great Britain will wish to establish the validity of this proposition. It is reported, though how much truth there is in the report cannot be definitely known, that the people of Manchuria are showing pronounced hostility to the Russians.