

the entire summer, destroying thousands of square miles of valuable timber to the south of the central watershed. In 1894, he wrote: "These fires are due to various causes, but the majority of them can be traced to the Indians, who start them either through carelessness or intentionally;" also: "At least one-half the forest area of the interior has been totally destroyed by fire within the past twenty-five or thirty years." This is a most alarming state of affairs, and causes the Bureau of Forestry a great deal of anxiety, as the general public seems perfectly apathetic about the matter. When Canadians begin to look upon the forest as belonging to the nation—as an extremely valuable national asset—they will insist upon having it better protected from fire. Meantime the Bureau has done some very effective work in diminishing the number of fires in the forests of the far north and north-west. At every portage along the principal canoe routes, notices, printed in English, French and Indian dialects, have been posted, warning travellers of the danger to the forest from fires which have not been completely extinguished, and there is plenty of evidence to show that these warnings are heeded. The greatest danger seems to be from settlers, hunters and tourists, very few of whom seem to understand the extremely inflammable nature of these northern forests. In hot weather the moisture is thoroughly dried out of the gummy leaves and branches, and the mossy ground is as dry as tinder. A tiny spark at such a time as this may give rise to one of the wildest scenes of destruction of which the world is capable. The resin and turpentine in the leaves burn with great rapidity, and the trees stand so close together that an irresistible front of flame is soon developed and sweeps forward, devouring the forest before it like dry grass in a running prairie fire. The pitchy trees burn almost explosively, great sheets of flame extending to a height of two hundred feet from the ground, and darting forward to bridge over open spaces, such as lakes and rivers, and start afresh in advance of the main column. The speed of such forest fires is almost incredible, one of them being known to travel 130 miles in 12 hours, or nearly eleven miles an hour. In a few hours millions of dollars worth of timber may be swept out of existence, and the soil impoverished for centuries. Most of the provinces have excellent laws regulating the cutting of timber on crown lands, but in all cases the protection from fire is entirely inadequate. In 1903 the Province of Quebec spent \$9,694 (\$17,000 less a fire tax of \$7,306) to protect a revenue of over a million dollars, but where will the revenue for the next fifty years come from if fire gets into the timbered areas? In the Gatineau district each fire ranger is held responsible for 360 square miles, on the lower Ottawa for 585 square miles, and in the St. Maurice district, for 1,316 square miles! This is certainly better than no rangers at all, but which of my readers would like to be held responsible for so great a