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Established 1883

THE TAXPAYER

By ROBSON BLACK.

"I never knew how much red blood there is in Figures until the Council made me Chairman of the Finance Committee down at the City Hall. When a fellow realizes as I soon did, that every dollar in the local treasury rings a bell in the taxpayer's pocket, he gets an uncanny feeling that tax money belongs to a different tribe from any other money.

"Last winter I spent a week on the borders of the Temagami Forest Reserve in North Ontario. Two miles from the village a lumber firm were taking out pine logs for their mills in Quebec. I said to the woods superintendent one day: "This business looks like easy money; Nature does all the work, and you step in and lift the crop." And then I began telling him about the hard time I had, running a Finance Committee in a city of fifteen thousand.

"You don't know how much harder it would be," he replied, "if this forest-crop was left unharvested a few years."

"What difference would that make?"

"You are a taxpayer?" I nodded.

"And provincial administration is not paid for direct by municipalities, but by special revenues."

"Quite true."

"Did you know that the Ontario Government takes from \$1,500,000 to \$2,500,000 tolls from the timber every year?"

"I certainly never heard of that."

"And that British Columbia gets \$2,300,000 and over from her lumbermen?"

"Sounds impossible."

"While Quebec is made richer by about \$1,500,000 a year from the same source—the timber."

His knowledge of plain facts had me at a disadvantage.

"New Brunswick collects a cool half-million and more"—

"That much?"

"With about \$400,000 coming to the Dominion Government from Crown forests on the prairies."

He must have noticed my growing interest.

"If the forests were not developed by lumber and pulp and paper mills, all that money—seven and a half millions a year—would have to be collected from taxpayers direct."

I assure you I went home with the germ of a new idea in my head. For years I had put aside the forests as the property of wealthy corporations. I thought the governments had "given away" all the country's timber. I was satisfied that the general public had no concern what happened to the big storehouse of wood supplies. Did you ever think that way?

Promptly I set to work to learn the truth about these forests of ours, who owned them, who got the money. Now—

No lumberman gets a dollar bill out of a felled tree until he has spent three other dollars for labor and supplies. That is, the workman, together with the food, clothing, hardware and other manufacturers and dealers have three shares in the profits to the lumberman's one. If the man working the limits does not first advance the worker and the supply-man their part of the cash, the woods operations come to a standstill and the whole investment may be thrown away.

Look this over! \$40,000,000 a year are paid out in wages in the making of timber and its manufacture.

Investors have backed Canadian forest industries with over \$260,000,000 of capital.

110,000 men get their livelihood from living forests. A Dead Forest means a Dead Paysheet.

Where do these men live? One hundred and fifty of them and their families are in my own little town. Have you seen our cooperage and box mill, the boat works and the saw mill? There are 3,500 of them on the pay list of a single firm in Ottawa during an average season. Look over your own town. See what would happen if wood supplies suddenly ceased. Count the mills and the workmen affected. Figure out what wood means to you as fuel, lumber, furniture, railway ties, boats, boxes, flooring, paper—I cannot begin to count the jobs that a tree performs in an average town.