

value of timber. In one of his latest reports, Mr. Low, of the Geological Survey, gives the following information about these fires :

"At least one-half of the forest area of the interior has been totally destroyed by fire within the past twenty-five years. These fires are of annual occurrence and often burn throughout the entire summer, destroying thousands of square miles of valuable timber, to the south of the central watershed (in Eastern Quebec). The regions just devastated remain barren for many years, especially towards the northern limits, and the second growth of black spruce, Banksian pine, aspen and white birch is never as good or as large as the original forest. 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. The Nascaupée Indians of the semi-barrens signal one another by smoke made by burning the white lichens that cover most of the ground in the interior, and these signals cause many of the fires. The southern Indians signal in a similar manner, but do not practice it to such an extent as their northern brethren, having found that they are rapidly destroying their hunting grounds. Careless camp fires in dry seasons are another common cause of these forest fires, and many of these ascribed to lightning, if closely traced, would be found to have been set by wandering Indians, who are only careful of their own hunting grounds. From what is seen on the explored routes of the southern watershed, it would appear that at least one-

half of the forest has been removed by this cause.

The greatest fire of modern times occurred in 1870 or 1871, and swept the country south of the height of land from the St. Maurice to beyond the Romaine River. The second growth is just beginning to cover up the traces of this great conflagration, which ruined the pioneers of Lake St. John, and it will be years before the country is generally again well wooded. The upper Romaine River Valley has been totally burned over within the last ten years, and the margin of that great burnt area has been extended southwards during the summers of 1893 and 1894, so that now practically no green woods exist along the course of this river from the St. Lawrence to its source. The country surrounding the Hamilton River is in a similar state ; except patches of original forest, along the lower part of the river valley and about Hamilton Inlet, only blackened stumps or a small second growth are seen along its course, with an occasional oasis of large green wood to break the monotony. In this region great fires occur annually ; that of 1893 covered a hundred square miles of the tableland between the Hamilton and North-west Rivers. Similar remarks apply to the forests of the western watershed, more than half of which has been burnt."

It has been found by means of recent explorations of the Geological Survey that the immense spruce forests extending eastward to the Straits of Belle Isle, northward far beyond the height of land westward as far as the Rocky Mountains, and far beyond the