

Within the last few days I have been informed that the Government has decided to act upon the report of the Committee, and that a Bill for the purpose is now in course of preparation by the Minister of the Interior.

In the northern district of Ontario there is need of action. Of late years, the Governments of Ontario and Quebec have set apart large forest reserves. I am not fully conversant with the policy pursued by Quebec, but I understand that the Government of that Province has lately initiated an advanced policy on the subject, and has been conducting expert investigations into the question of preserving the source of supply of head-waters. We shall have a discussion of that subject from one of our members who is thoroughly competent to speak upon it. The Government of Ontario is pursuing a progressive and praiseworthy policy, having for its object the conservation of its valuable merchantable timber. The principal obstacle in the way of carrying out this policy is destruction wrought by fire. The enactment of more stringent laws on this subject should be considered.

But there is a field for work in the northern districts of Ontario in relation to the territory which does not bear high grade merchantable timber. Consider the position of the vast region stretching from Sudbury to Port Arthur and lying to the south of the height-of-land. A comparatively small part of this great tract bears merchantable timber. A further very small fraction is fit for cultivation. As to all the rest, apart from minerals, the only use to which it can be put is the growth of timber. So far as can be ascertained, prior to 1850, this tract was probably covered with timber, most of it of merchantable value. Fires, sometimes running for hundreds of miles, have travelled over it.

I quote from the above-mentioned pamphlet of Mr. Whitson.

"To-day you will scarcely find a township in the white and
"red pine country that has not been burned, or partly burnt over,
"and, in many instances the fire has swept over them several times.

"The fire of 1871 started almost at every point of the compass
"along the north shore from French River to Kaministiquia on
"Lake Superior.

"This fire swept with fierce energy over an area of more than
"2,000 square miles, leaving blackened and giant pines to be a
"reminder for more than half a century of the immense destruc-
"tion there and then caused, converting a virgin forest into a barren
"and desolate wilderness."