

Havoc by Forest Fires.

Damages Heavy in All Parts of the Country.

The losses from forest fires this year have already reached great proportions. During the month of June there were serious conflagrations in many parts of the country, the most serious being in the vicinity of New Liskeard. Bush fires harassed the settlers, and lumber mills were saved with great difficulty. One million feet of rough lumber were destroyed on June 16th.

The conditions of drought which prevailed all over the country in the first week in July started the flames on their work of devastation once more. In New Brunswick the month of June was an unusually dry month, as showed by the statistics prepared by the Dominion Meteorological Station at Fredericton. As against an average rainfall for the month of 3.6 inches for the last thirty-nine years, there was this year only 1.86 inches.

The worst fire was at Cedar Brook, Victoria County, where over 5,000 acres of Crown timber lands were burned over, and a lumber camp with \$3,000 worth of supplies. Another bad blaze broke out on the lands of the Inglewood Pulp and Paper Company.

Another large fire is reported this season in the province of New Brunswick. This was set in the McLaughlin limits in the upper St. John River by two unknown prospectors. They had been warned by the fire warden, but neglected the caution. Camps and camp supplies to the extent of \$4,000 and 200 square miles of spruce timber land, half of which had been logged over, were burned.

In Northern Ontario the worst losses so far recorded this year occurred following a series of small blazes throughout the whole Northland, which for the period totalled higher than for any preceding year.

The town of Biscoe, 60 miles west of Chapleau, was completely destroyed on June 13, and its 500 inhabitants rendered homeless. The mills of the Booth and Shannon Lumber Company at Thief River Falls, Minn., on the Soo line of the C.P.R., were burned out, at a loss of \$250,000.

Fires of immense proportions broke out during the latter part of June in the vicinity of Cochrane, Ont., and on the 20th of the month it appeared that the whole country would be swept. Settlers were sending their effects out of the danger zone, and many hundreds of people were almost suffocated by the acrid smoke. A rain which came as a godsend began to fall on the 31st and saved the territory which seemed doomed.

At South Porcupine the wind died down at a critical moment, which gave the fire-fighters an opportunity to do effective work. At Hearst, which is surrounded by bush and which has no water supply, the lack of wind helped in the fight to confine the flames to the bush.

Among the losses reported were a dwelling valued at \$2,000 just outside Cochrane, 500 cords of wood belonging to the Foley-O'Brien mine at South Porcupine, 100,000 logs owned by a saw mill company at Jacksonboro; a lumber mill, 30,000 feet of lumber and eight dwellings at Charlton, \$20,000 worth of property owned by the T. & N. O. Railway at Englehart. This in addition to the loss at Earleton, ten miles south of Englehart, which was practically wiped out.

According to the official reports received by Chairman Englehart of the T. & N. O. Railway, the fires extended intermittently from Sudbury to Kenora, principally in the spruce and pulpwood districts. By an almost inestimable stroke of fortune the government reserve, extending from mileage 42 to mileage 82, and embracing the great pine region, escaped notwithstanding the fire which raged all about it. Outside of the spruce forests the heaviest loss reported was practically confined to the town of Earleton. It was at this point alone that the railway directed its relief operations, and Mr. Englehart reported that everyone was cared for. South and southwest of Cochrane the fire was raging in the marsh and muskeg, and the residents of the town had to steadily fight off the flames.

All down the Ontario Government Railway line from this point to Matheson forests were on fire. The town of Matheson seemed doomed for a time, but it eventually escaped. Swastika and Kirkwood Lake were not touched, though the fire had been bad in the woods nearby.

The long jump down the line to Earleton was reported as practically fire free. Thornloe for a time was seriously threatened, but hard work saved the town. Fires raged around Heaslip, but not in the immediate vicinity of buildings. Of the spruce and the pulp wood wiped out by the fire, it is estimated that one-third belonged to the Government and two-thirds to settlers or land-holders. A large amount of the fire-swept territory belongs to militia veterans who received it in land grants.

Reports from the West show that toward the end of July a bad fire laid waste about twenty-five miles of territory between Tete Jaune Cache and Fitzhugh, Alta.