

# The Riding Mountain Forest Reserve.

By Geo. King, Editor Dauphin (Man.) Press.

When one reads of awful forest fires such as last summer and autumn raged in the states of Montana and Idaho, and to a less extent in the state of Minnesota and the provinces of British Columbia and Ontario, it is a matter of more than usual interest to come in touch with what is being done in our own northwest by the forestry department, under the minister of the interior.

While much work is being done to protect the timber belts of the west from fire, undoubtedly the most important work is being carried on in the Riding Mountain forest reserve. This reserve is one of the largest in the west. It takes in 42 townships and is over 100 miles in length. It has a thick growth of spruce, poplar, birch and some tamarac and oak. While fires have done great damage to the timber along the foot of the mountain, no great damage has been done in the reserve, which of late years is attributable to the energy and the watchfulness of the forest rangers under the direction of the chief forest ranger with headquarters at Dauphin.

## Start of the Work.

The practical work of protecting the reserve started in the year 1908, when a line, which might properly be termed a survey line, was started west of Norgate in township 20, range 15, and run for ten miles northward by Forest Ranger McLeod. This line was run in the first place with the object of demarcation.

In the following year, 1909, the work of continuing the line was started and 25 miles were covered in a northwesterly direction, carrying it to a point seven miles west

of Ochre River. This line was cut a width of eight feet, and might be called a good road, which also acted as a fire guard.

When the heavy fires were running last spring in the poplar timber in the mountain the rangers found that where they had room to work they could do good work in this class of timber in suppressing the flames. With the knowledge thus gained in fighting the fires so successfully, it was decided to widen the line from eight to sixteen and twenty feet. In making the clearing the trees are cut down close to the ground and all parts removed, as well as the underbrush, the fire being thus prevented from spreading when it reaches the opening. This opening presents a pretty appearance when the leaves are on the trees, somewhat after the form of an extended tunnel, as one glances down it.

## Country Traversed by the Line.

There have been ten miles of this wide line cut this year, through belts of heavy poplar and birch with thick undergrowth. The line in many places crosses big gulches and cuts, some of these, according to surveyor's notes, being two hundred and fifty feet deep. The great tract through which the line runs is regarded as the hogback of the mountain.

The formation of the mountain is bed rock, being of heavy slate and shale, covered with a layer of boulder clay. On the top of the clay is the usual covering of loam and leaf mould.

## Use of the Reserve.

The land surrounding the mountain is of the best for the pursuits of