

## Slacker Lands in War Times

By J. A. MITCHELL, U. S. FOREST SERVICE

The *great* menace of fire unquestionably is to the future of our timber supply. In the piney woods, particularly, repeated fires are fatal to the establishment of reproduction; while in the hardwoods the trees, though not always killed, are stunted and deformed and laid open to fungus and insect attack. As young growth seldom has an immediate commercial value, its loss is usually ignored—the fact that a *crop* has been destroyed, being overlooked. The loss in such a case is as real as if merchantable timber were destroyed—the destruction of a ten-year-old stand postponing under present conditions, the date of a possible harvest from fifteen to twenty years, if not indefinitely. At the same time, the land burned over has, to all intents and purposes, been rendered unproductive for a corresponding period. Herein lies the importance of fire protection from an economic standpoint, for no potentially productive land should be allowed to lie idle. The community has a right to and will, sooner or later, demand that it be producing something.

### Ontario Fire Rangers

Of the personnel of the Ontario fire ranging force this year the Toronto "News" says:

The force this year consists of 1200 men, about seventy-five per cent. of those engaged coming from northern Ontario, many of them being experienced woodsmen. The remaining twenty-five per cent. is composed chiefly of returned soldiers. In the last two or three years fewer students have been engaged for this work and this year none have been taken on the staff.

Last year a number of returned soldiers, suffering from shell shock, were placed on the staff. They were taken from hospitals where they were being treated. The work in the north was found very beneficial to them, and this year an additional

number has been engaged. No men who have been exempted from military service or boys under military age are being employed this year. The department feels that if men of those ages are fit for fire-ranging they are fit for farming, too. Most of the men are married or are over military age. They range in age from thirty-eight to fifty-five. It is necessary to secure the men by April 15, otherwise some of them would be away hunting.

This year the department is adding further equipment to several of its stations. Last year automobile trucks were experimented with, and they were found to be very satisfactory, as it is possible for a truck to carry twelve men with all equipment. These trucks are stationed at such places as Cochrane. This year five more trucks have been added.

### FOR BETTER PRAIRIE HOMES

"The demands that were made during the year on the Mitchell Nurseries at Coaldale, twelve miles from Lethbridge, for trees, shrubs and small fruit plants give evidence that farmers' households are improving their home surroundings and adding to their material comfort. The men folks on the farm are usually indifferent in such matters, and they do not seem to appreciate the fact that the money value of a farm is greatly increased if the house and buildings are surrounded with trees; for so long as the human eye will invitingly wander to a bluff of trees, so long will an asset of this nature have an actual money value; the farm animals and poultry, too, appreciate the shade.

The womanfolks have too long been contented with promises that the trees will be planted "next year"; but trees do not grow on promises, although they always do well on summerfallowed land.

The bleak and uninviting appearance of the country school houses