

ALGONQUIN PARK.

BY E. B. FRALECK.

IN the northern part of Ontario, to the south of Lake Nipissing and the Upper Ottawa, lies a vast unbroken wilderness, hundreds of miles in extent, known only to the trapper and the lumberman—the domain of the lumber kings at Ottawa. Huge rocky ridges traverse the country, generally from north-east to south-west, with lakes and streams everywhere enclosed within their giant embrace, the whole country being one vast network of lakes, varying in size from the small lakelet to those of several miles in extent, with waters clear as crystal and very deep.

The Muskoka on the west, and the Madawaska, the Bonnechere, and the Petawawa on the east, afford ample facilities to the lumbermen for floating their pine down to market. Three of these rivers take their rise within a radius of about four miles, so that the "voyageur" from the Georgian Bay, following up the Muskoka to its source, is enabled by a short portage, to place his canoe on the Madawaska, or the Petawawa, both affluents of the majestic Ottawa. In this region exist vast tracts of valuable pine. On the higher plateaux, hardwood forests teem with black birch, beech, ash, and other valuable timber, while here and there, on lower levels, large swamps of cedar or tamarac cover the surface of some long ago filled-up lake. Besides a few lumber depôts, there is nothing in this vast wilderness except the surveyor's "blaze" or the "limit line," to disclose the footprints of civilized man.

Here is the home of the bear, the deer, and the moose, the beaver and the otter. In the deep, cool waters of almost every lake sport the trout (ouananiche), king of the inland fish, while shaded pools quiver with speck-

led trout in every mountain stream and brooklet, and here in unbroken solitude the wild duck rears her young.

Of late years, it has been the policy of the Provincial Government to appoint "Fire Rangers;" one for each limit, who must be an experienced "*coureur du bois*," to protect the forest from fire during the dry season. His duty is to be on circuit within his limit, and promptly endeavor to extinguish any incipient blaze left by campers, fishing parties, or Indians, and to prosecute the offenders.

Too late, however, has this feeble attempt been made to stem the torrent of destruction annually taking place in our forests. The lumber wealth of Ontario, which is still of vast extent, has been enormously impaired by forest fires. For every tree cut, hundreds have been burned. During the last thirty years, hundreds of millions of wealth has been recklessly destroyed, which, with ordinary care, might have been saved to the country.

The cutting by the lumbermen leaves the woods prepared for the torch. After them come the settler and the pot-hunter, and within a very short time the ruin is complete. Of a once noble forest, nothing remains but miles upon miles of dead trees, or charred, blackened trunks lying about in endless confusion, huge chains of rocky hills, once clothed with moss and verdure, now scarred and bare, and a ruined soil. Wealth equal to a king's ransom is destroyed in order that some miserable squatter, under the name of settler, may clear a patch of worthless soil, which, within a few years, he abandons.

Upon land once burned over, the white pine will never grow, and even the hardwood lands grow up with