

ruples the perils of the next dry season. These escaped fires caused the horrible swirl of destruction that passed across 1,200 square miles of Ontario a few weeks ago, causing the loss of more than 250 lives, with a recurrence last week in the vicinity of Haileybury which took an additional toll of 12 lives and caused a further large exodus of settlers from the country.

### *Origin of Disasters.*

Government control of all settlers' fires means a safe Claybelt. A controlled fire, as understood by forest protective systems in nearly all parts of the world, spells careful, safe, economical burning of slash, as opposed to the imperilling of thousands of lives and millions of dollars' worth of property by indiscriminate burning at any time the settler may choose.

Many settlers in Northern Ontario exert great care when burning off their slash. Others deliberately encourage the fire to do its worst for themselves and neighbors by lighting their fires in times of drought and wind, and "coaxing" the flames beyond their clearings. From these careless and thoughtless people the wise and cautious settler has absolutely no protection under present Ontario laws or administration. As an individual, he can watch only his own conduct. For the criminal conduct of other people he reasonably looks to the Ontario Government, the trustees of his lands and personal safety, the designated guardian against the menaces of forest fire.

### *Two Evictions by Fire.*

Life and possessions are as precious to the North Ontario settler as to the southerly townsman. He is being asked to-day to return to his home in the bush, to make a fresh start after two evictions by forest fire in 1911 and 1916. Is his request excessive that he should enjoy as

good fire protection through the bush areas as his fellow settlers in parts of Quebec, and New Brunswick, or the whole of British Columbia and Nova Scotia?

Is this a reasonable proposal? Since settlers' fires are admittedly the most formidable source of trouble, the remedy must start precisely at that point. The wise and careful settler must be encouraged. His conduct must be made the standard of the whole Claybelt.

First of all, the Legislature of Ontario should pass a law—there is none in existence to-day—prohibiting the use of fire for clearing land in those spring and summer months of highest danger throughout the North Country, except by consent of a skilled ranger. How will such a law affect the settler?

### *How the Plan Works.*

Look into British Columbia or Nova Scotia or sections of Quebec! A law is, of course, merely an instrument. It requires tactful but thorough enforcement by competent and experienced officials, to be of the slightest avail. The settled parts of Ontario's forested territory will have to be organized for patrol purposes. No one even pretends that the public-owned and partly settled bush lands of the Claybelt bordering the T. and N. O. and Transcontinental Railways are adequately patrolled, aside from the railways' right-of-way. In other provinces, fire rangers are assigned to such districts, and these men quickly make themselves known to all settlers under their jurisdiction. Their presence itself is an advertisement for carefulness. When a settler is prepared to make a burn he hails a ranger, satisfies him that he has complied with the simple conditions of safety, such as piling part of his slash or making fire guards about the edge of his clearing, and gets forthwith a written "permit," providing the weather conditions are