

Address of Mr. R. L. Borden, M. P.

Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons

Your Excellency, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Gentlemen,—I welcome the opportunity of being present at this convention, and of expressing my appreciation of the importance of our forest resources. To men familiar as you are with the subject, all that I can say must seem trite and commonplace ; but I venture a few remarks merely for the purpose of indicating my interest in this great question.

Canada is remarkable not only for the extent and variety of her resources, but for the diversified nature of the country and for its remarkable beauty. In the east we have Quebec and the maritime provinces with their magnificent coast lines, their forests, their agricultural and their mineral wealth. Thence there extends inland through Quebec and through the sister province of Ontario the greatest inland waterway in the world, connecting the ocean with the broad prairies of the west. Great rivers reach down from the forests of the north. On the western coast we have another great maritime province abounding in forest and mineral wealth.

Of all our wonderful natural resources none are more important than the forests. Their conservation is undoubtedly more vital to our future than generally realized. "How foolish", says a great authority, "how foolish does man appear in destroying the mountain forests, for thereby he deprives himself of wood, water and soil at the same time."

We are apt to regard our forests as limitless and our forest wealth as unbounded ; but public attention has already been directed to certain dangers and to some of the more threatening elements of destruction and waste. Something has been done to check forest fires, yet what devastation they have wrought. Practical men tell us that twenty times as much has been sacrificed to flame as to the lumberman's axe. An illustration mentioned at the last session of the Canadian Forestry Association may be given. A settler in the province of Quebec in order to clear the ground for a five-bushel crop of potatoes started a fire that destroyed three hundred million feet of pine, which to-day would be worth \$3,500,000. Measures have been taken in many of the provinces to prevent such destruction, but those who can speak with knowledge declare that much yet remains to be done. Many of us, although not actually concerned in forestry or in the lumbering industry, have had occasion to tramp perhaps for half a day or more through forests ravaged by fire. There one can see the very abomination of desolation spoken of in Scripture. Then follows erosion of the soil consequent on the destruction of tree and plant life, and this in turn works similar havoc. The waterways cease to be highways. Rivers cease to be channels of commerce and become raging instruments of destruction.

The importance of the subject has been most forcibly expressed by Dr. Fernow, director of the New York State College of Forestry, and an eminent authority on the economics of forestry. He says :—