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THE PORCUPINE DISASTER.

It was with sincere relief that the public learned, a few days after the Porcupine region had been swept by fire, that the loss of life was not nearly so large as was at first reported. In the excitement of the moment fears became rumours, and rumours became apparently authenticated facts. But before three days had elapsed the list of fatalities had dwindled from the hundreds to less than seventy-five.

Amongst the many Canadian cities and towns that immediately contributed to the relief of Porcupine, it were invidious to select any for special mention. No second appeal was necessary. Supplies and money flowed into the stricken town from every quarter. Even from London and New York money contributions were sent.

It is not invidious to express warm appreciation of the prompt action of the Temiscaming and Northern Ontario Railway Commission. Under the direction of Chairman Englehart, the orders were at once issued to exact no railway fares from the survivors of the fire. In short, the whole service was placed, as far as necessary, at the disposal of the sufferers.

On other pages of this issue are personal accounts of the tragedy. It is needless here to recount the details. The loss of life has been stated. The property loss cannot be more than very roughly estimated. In all probability it amounts to \$2,000,000. This is serious enough. But the loss of time is quite as serious.

On the credit side of the account is the fact that in future much greater care will be taken, both in prevention of fires and in the construction of permanent buildings. It is already announced that the Dome Mining Company will erect an entirely fire-proof mill to replace the building that was destroyed. No doubt other companies will follow this example. Doubtless, also, the Ontario Government will reorganize its forest-protection system. It will also do its duty in the matter of enforcing restrictive regulations upon the storage of explosives. It is only by sheer good luck that many lives were not lost through the explosion of large quantities of dynamite. The control of this question must be taken up at once.

* * * * *

Porcupine is being rebuilt with all haste. Next year hardly a trace of the havoc wrought will remain. The way of the prospector has been made easier. Large areas, almost impossible for the prospector before the fire, have been cleared. Yet it will not do to forget the awful lesson of July. Human life is infinitely more important than property. Places of refuge must be supplied at every forest-surrounded mine. The most practicable refuge is the "cyclone-cellar." In course