

way through fire-killed timber. Fires are driven with such fury in this country that even the rivers are insufficient to stop them. A fire which occurred three or four years ago burned both sides of the quite wide Fox river. Repeated fires destroy all seed-trees, all seed and much or all of the rich upper layers of soil and render it impossible for another valuable forest to start naturally, except after a long period of time. Mr. Blackford observed that this had been the case over large areas in the Oxford House district, that the whole country had been fire-swept many times, chiefly within recent years, that the soil had been impoverished, that where there had been valuable stands of spruce and tamarack there was now nothing but willow, poplar, birch and scattered small spruce. Where fires had been exceptionally fierce or frequent, the country was burned to prairie. Tamarack seems not to be coming in after fires, but where fires have not been frequent there is good natural reproduction of spruce and jack pine, the jack pine usually occurring on the ridges.

On several extensive trips Mr. Blackford never saw the limit of the burned area. Fires have evidently been much more frequent in the country tributary to the routes followed by the York boats than elsewhere.

The muskegs carry fire and have nearly all been burned over.

During the summer Mr. Blackford found no commercial timber of any quantity, but he states that, except for fire, the whole country would be covered with timber two or three feet in diameter.

Around Knee lake, along Loaf river, around Nest lake, Mossy lake and God's lake, there is timber five to six inches in diameter—spruce, tamarack, poplar and balsam fir. On the islands in these lakes timber is two to three feet in diameter.

Around Oxford lake the timber is all of very recent growth.

On the shore of Minnihik lake, where it has been naturally protected from fire, is about two hundred acres of the best timber in the country.

One small grove of timber near Rat lake contained spruce trees thirty eight inches in diameter and eighty feet high. There were here 320 trees per acre over seven inches in diameter, and 844 trees over four inches in diameter. On a jack pine ridge there were 775 trees per acre over five inches in diameter. These small patches are typical of what the whole country would be if it had not been burned.

On the shore of Minnihik lake there is a strip of timber five miles long, and three quarters of a mile wide, containing trees from eight to twenty inches in diameter, and about seventy five feet high.

For twenty miles northeast from Oxford House there is a strip of timber, mostly spruce with some jack pine and very little tamarack and balsam fir, averaging from eight to ten inches in diameter. Along the Deer river there has been good timber, but it is all burned. Around Deer lake there is a belt of scrubby spruce twenty five miles wide.

It has been represented by travellers following Fox river that the river flowed through timber. Mr. Blackford found only a very narrow fringe of trees along the shores; behind these the country has all been burned. The Indians near Fox river say that as far as they have travelled in any direction the country is all burned. Between Oxford House and Norway House the timber is larger than any near or north of Oxford House. Unfortunately the best of it has been burned. There is much poplar along the waterways.

Mr. Blackford attended the council meetings of the Indians at God's lake and Oxford House. He explained that the government was sending out men to protect the forest from fire, and that it was to the interest of the Indians to prevent and ex-