

## 7.—Forest Depletion and Increment.

**Fire Losses.**—No accurate summing-up of damage due to forest fires has ever been made for Canada, but it is estimated that 60 p.c. of the original forest has been burned and 13 p.c. cut for use, and that 27 p.c. remains; moreover, that one-third as much mature timber has been burned in the last six years as has fallen to the axe.

The historic Miramichi fire, in 1825, burned along the valley of the Miramichi river in New Brunswick, and on a belt 80 miles long and 25 miles wide almost every living thing was killed. One hundred and sixty people perished, 1,000 head of stock were killed, and a number of towns, including Newcastle, Chatham and Douglastown, were destroyed. The damage to the forest was not even estimated. Damage to other property was placed at \$300,000.

About 1845 vast areas were burned over west of lake Superior; many of them still remain bare of tree growth. Some years later a very extensive fire burned along the Height of Land from lake Timiskaming to Michipicoten. In 1871 a fierce fire swept more than 2,000 square miles of forest from lake Nipissing westward along the north shore of Georgian bay, while many smaller fires north of lake Superior completed a chain of desolation across the province. About the same time the greater part of the Saguenay and Lake St. John district, in Quebec, was swept by one of the most destructive fires on record. Two other fires in 1891 and 1896 devastated over 2,000 square miles of country in the southern Algoma district. In Quebec, the country along the line of the Quebec and Lake St. John railway also suffered by a number of disastrous forest fires, while millions of dollars worth of timber in the Ottawa country also fell a prey to the flames.

During more recent times, a series of disastrous fires swept over Northern Ontario. A number of isolated fires around the mining camp of Porcupine culminated, on July 11, 1911, in a conflagration which resulted in the loss of 72 lives and property damage estimated at \$3,000,000. In 1916, fires in the same general region were responsible for the deaths of at least 224 people, the exact number never having been determined. During 1922, a third fire, covering in part the areas burned over by the previous fires, destroyed the town of Haileybury and other centres and caused 40 deaths. In 1908, a fire originating in the forest around Fernie, British Columbia, destroyed that city, caused 25 deaths, rendered 6,000 people homeless and damaged property to the estimated extent of \$5,000,000. These are a few of the outstanding historical disasters. Every year thousands of acres are devastated by fires of less individual importance, which in the aggregate are rapidly depleting our forest resources. From 1922 to 1926, 742,772 acres of merchantable timber were burned over annually, and the average amount of timber destroyed annually is estimated as equivalent to 4,105,600 M feet board measure. In addition there were 891,254 acres of young growth and 500,944 acres of cut-over land burned over, on which the increment of perhaps 30 years, on the average, was destroyed.

Speaking generally, there are two annual periods in Canada when the forest fire hazard is highest—in the spring, after the disappearance of the snow, when the forest floor is dry and the green underbrush has not yet developed, and again in the fall when the green growth is dead and the ground is covered with dry leaves. Statistics collected by the different government administrations and the Quebec