

NORTHERN ONTARIO SWEEPED BY FIRE

The Number of Dead May Reach 200--Cochrane, Matheson, Iroquois Falls, Nushka And Porquis Junction Wiped Out.

Englehart, Ont., July 31.—Forest fires, which for several days had been threatening the northernmost towns and outlying settlements of northern Ontario, Saturday and Sunday culminated in a holocaust which has wiped out entire communities, licked the fringe of larger towns, and levied a death toll which cannot at present be accurately computed, but which may range from 140 to 200, with scores of persons suffering from injuries, many of whom are likely to succumb. The loss of life so far reported is as follows:

At Nushka, a French-Canadian settlement, fifty-seven.

Cochrane, eighteen dead, thirty-four injured.

Matheson, thirty-four dead.

Iroquois Falls, fifteen dead and many injured.

Porquis Junction, number unknown, but the town wiped out with the exception of the station.

Ramore, fifteen dead. In addition to the known dead there are many outlying places, which it is feared, will materially swell the list of victims when the rescue parties return. It is thought that at Tashota and Kowkash many prospectors may have been trapped.

Settlers' Fire in Clay Belt

And still the horror grows. This is a settlers' fire, and for the most part it has been confined to the clay belt. Early today it was learned that seventeen houses had been burned on the outskirts of Timmins, but the fire had been stopped, and there is a thunderstorm brewing all over the north, and South Porcupine has been untouched outside the sawmill at the station, which has been burned.

The fire has covered most of the scattered settlements of the north many miles from a railway. It is most certain that there will be many more to add to this list as the rescue parties go out to fetch them in.

It is feared that at Tashota and Kowkash prospectors may be trapped, although they are much better able to take care of themselves in an emergency than settlers.

Nushka Completely Cut Off

The worst loss of life has been at the French-Canadian settlement out at Nushka. It was a flourishing village built along the railway tracks, and consisting of a score or so of dwellings and stores, all of frame structure, that would burn fiercely. It has been enveloped in smoke and flame for the past week from settlers' fires, and at last these got clear out of hand. There was no escape. Fires to the south cut them off from Matheson. A great sheet of flame barred their escape to the north, as Porquis Junction was aflame. No lake or river near, they were caught unprepared. Almost the entire population perished, running wildly to and fro as the flames closed in on them on every side. Matheson is totally destroyed with the exception of two houses, after a brave fight, and thirty-four bodies lie on the station platform awaiting burial.

The stories are almost too horrible to recount. One settler with ten children perished in one shack. The father was away and the mother went out to get help. She returned to find her husband and ten children enveloped in smoke and flames.

Town of Cochrane Wiped Out

Cochrane is all burned with the exception of Second and Third avenues, that is to say, all the principal part of the town has gone. Profiting by past experience in 1911, the people of Cochrane hurried to the T. & N. O. tracks and the lake, but eigh-

teen are reported dead and thirty-four injured in settlements outside.

Refugees Pouring South

Refugees destitute of food and clothing are pouring into the more organized towns to the south, the first draft of them having arrived in Englehart last night, 125 strong. Citizens of the town worked all night long, in the terrific heat, providing them with food and clothing, and they left for the south well nourished and clothed. They are being distributed to be taken care of at New Liskeard, Cobalt and Haliburton, and other points farther south.

At the great paper mills town at Iroquois Falls nothing remains but the mills and one store. There was a flourishing town of over a thousand people, but there was ample protection from loss of life in the Abitibi River and the cleared section around the mills. The townsite, however, was laid out on the most approved lines, and the loss must run into many thousands of dollars.

At Ramore, a small settlement of two or three houses in the centre of a farming district, it is reported that fifteen lives have been lost, and the bodies buried already.

Energetic Measures for Relief

The T. & N. O. adopted energetic measures in providing relief. They outfitted a relief train and sent out to all principal towns along the line hurried calls for immediate needs of the refugees. Men and women at Cobalt, Haliburton and New Liskeard set to work to pile up necessities with a will, so that when the relief train pulled in in the early afternoon the goods were piled up on the platform. Two baggage cars were loaded with goods, and one refrigerator car was filled with ice and perishables.

Further Horrors Feared

The confusion and horror of this awful disaster is as yet indescribable. Devastating fires have swept hundreds of miles of bush north of here, and with it pioneer farms. Dozens of points have not been heard from yet, and it will be surprising if the loss of life is not much higher. Hundreds of settlers took to the rivers and lakes, but they are nearly destitute and in despair. The belt of flame did not extend south of Sesekinika, although the country is full of smoke. There have been some local thunderstorms, but nothing but several days' downpour would be sufficient to flood out the raging fires in the bush. Nothing else can stop it. Until such time the extension of the area of the fire is to be feared, and the ashes of the wrecked towns will not cease to smoulder.

Help From Winnipeg

Ottawa, July 31.—The Department of Railways is making every effort to ascertain the extent of the disaster at Cochrane and Matheson, reported to have been swept by forest fires, and to relieve the sufferers along the line of the National Transcontinental Railway. Superintendent Brady left Winnipeg in charge of a fully equipped relief train. The T. Eaton Company, of Winnipeg, have donated three thousand dollars' worth of food supplies.

The Mayor of Cochrane telegraphed the Department that although the business section of Cochrane has been destroyed, the residential section has escaped. The buildings of the National Transcontinental and the T. & N. O. have not been burned. A railway trestle just outside Cochrane has been destroyed.

View of District Swept

The forest fire which is now raging in northern Ontario is worst, apparently in the same section which was swept by the disastrous blaze of July, 1911, when Cochrane, at the junction of the T. & N. O. and the National Transcontinental, was wiped from the map, and at South Porcupine on the Timmins branch of the T. & N. O. many lost their lives.

Roughly speaking, the fire embraces an area over sixty miles long, from Cochrane on the north to Ramore on the south, and bounded on the east by the Quebec boundary and on the west by the Mattagami River. Reports of fires, however, from Tashota, about 200 miles west of Cochrane on the Transcontinental, and Kowkash, farther to the west, indicate that the danger is not confined to one area.

Timmins, a town of several hundred population and now the most important centre of the Porcupine mining district, escaped with less damage than Cochrane, but Porquis Junction, where the line from Timmins and that from Iroquois Falls join the main line of the Timiskaming Railway, was practically destroyed.

At Iroquois Falls, which is the site of the plant of the Abitibi Power & Paper Company, everything except the company's mills was destroyed.

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