OFF TO THE BATTLE

Pack on his back, a smokechaser leaves a two-man lookout station in Idaho. The photographs here, on the facing page and on the front cover are official photographs of the U. S. Forest Service.

can spot a tiny fleck of gray on a background of green or reddish brown. Smoke and the summer and autumn foliage of the forests are the three shades, of course.

The success of the government's forest fire protection in past years is best told by figures showing acres burned.

In 1935 there were about 10,000 forest fires started in the National Forests from one cause or another. That figure is high compared with the 8,000 a year average for years from 1931 to 1934. But note this fact: in 1935 only 178,133 acres of national forests were burned over, compared with 440,802 acres average for the four preceding years.

Even more significant is the fact that in 1935 there were only 156 "extra-period" fires compared with an average of 270 yearly from 1931 to 1934. An "extra-period" fire, it might be explained, is one which is still out of control after 10 a. m. of the day following its discovery.

Cause of Fires

How do forest fires start? Man, mainly, is responsible either through carelessness with campfires, matches and pipes and cigarettes or in some cases by deliberate arson. Lightning is the next largest cause.

The Forest Service is at the point today where it is only the so-called "freak" fire that outwits the fire-fighters. Out of the thousands of forest fires each year only about a score cause real trouble.

It now takes a combination of extra-dry weather over a sizable period of time, a rugged inaccessible terrain and conditions favorable for exceptionally rapid spreading to bring about a "freak."

Forest fire protection costs money, it is true, but the significant fact is that about 90 per cent of all the nation's forest fire losses now occur on lands without organized protection.

Science News Letter, August 29, 1936

MEDICINE

Truants From Medicine Found Fame Elsewhere

THE GIFTS of medicine to humanity —conquests of diseases, relief of suffering and prolongation of life— have never been minimized. Yet from early times there have been medical men who, turning aside from their profession, have made outstanding contributions in other than medical fields.

A roster of these medical "truants" was called by Lord Moynihan of Leeds in the latest Linacre Lecture at Cambridge University, given in memory of one of the earliest and most distinguished of the truants from medicine. In this lecture, now available in book form (Truants; Cambridge University Press), Lord Moynihan refers to some hundred men, trained as physicians, who won distinction as writers, artists, scientists, statesmen, explorers, actors and even athletes.

Among the latter Lord Moynihan lists the great cricketer, W. G. Grace; Lennard Stokes, outstanding Rugby player; and the lawn tennis player, Joshua Pim, who won four championships.

Most persons will recall that Clemenceau deserted medical practice for politics; that Keats and Goldsmith studied medicine; that Oliver Wendell Holmes carried on simultaneously in medicine and literature, winning fame not only as the author of the Breakfast Table series but also as the first person to point out that puerperal or childbed fever is contagious.

The name of Sir Francis Seymour Haden is well known in the art world but perhaps less well known is the fact that this eminent etcher carried on a large and important medical practice, often making professional rounds with an etching plate in his pocket.

"Sherlock Holmes" owed his methods of solving a mystery to the fact that his creator, Conan Doyle, studied medicine under Joseph Bell, a Scottish surgeon who impressed on all his pupils the "endless significance of trifles and of small distinctions."

John Bull

The name of John Arbuthnot, physician and wit of the early 18th century, may not be familiar to many 20th century readers, but who does not know John Bull? This famous character and name was probably created when Arbuthnot published *Law in a Bottomless Pit, or the History of John Bull,* Lord Moynihan states.

A physician of the 16th century, William Gilbert, gave the word electricity to the English language, while important additions to knowledge of electricity were made by an Italian physician, Galvani. Copernicus, the founder of modern astronomy, Linnaeus, father of modern scientific botany, Galileo, Robert Boyle—all held medical degrees and are ranked with the other "truants" by Lord Moynihan.

Honor of being the first truant goes to Imhotep, the Egyptian physician of nearly six thousand years ago, who combined with his duties of physician those of being the Pharaoh's chief Lector, Priest, Architect, and Grand Vizier.

Science News Letter, August 29, 1936