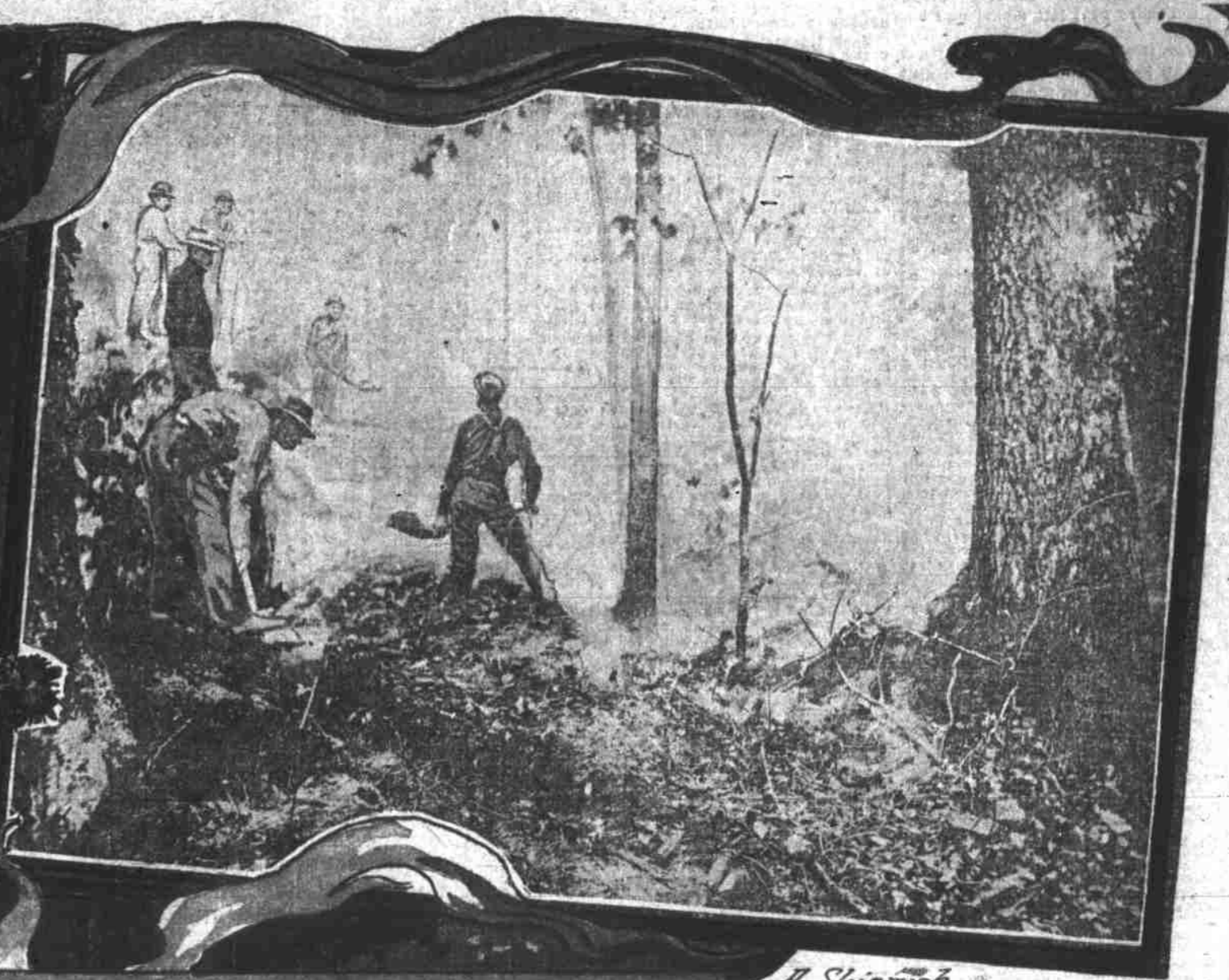
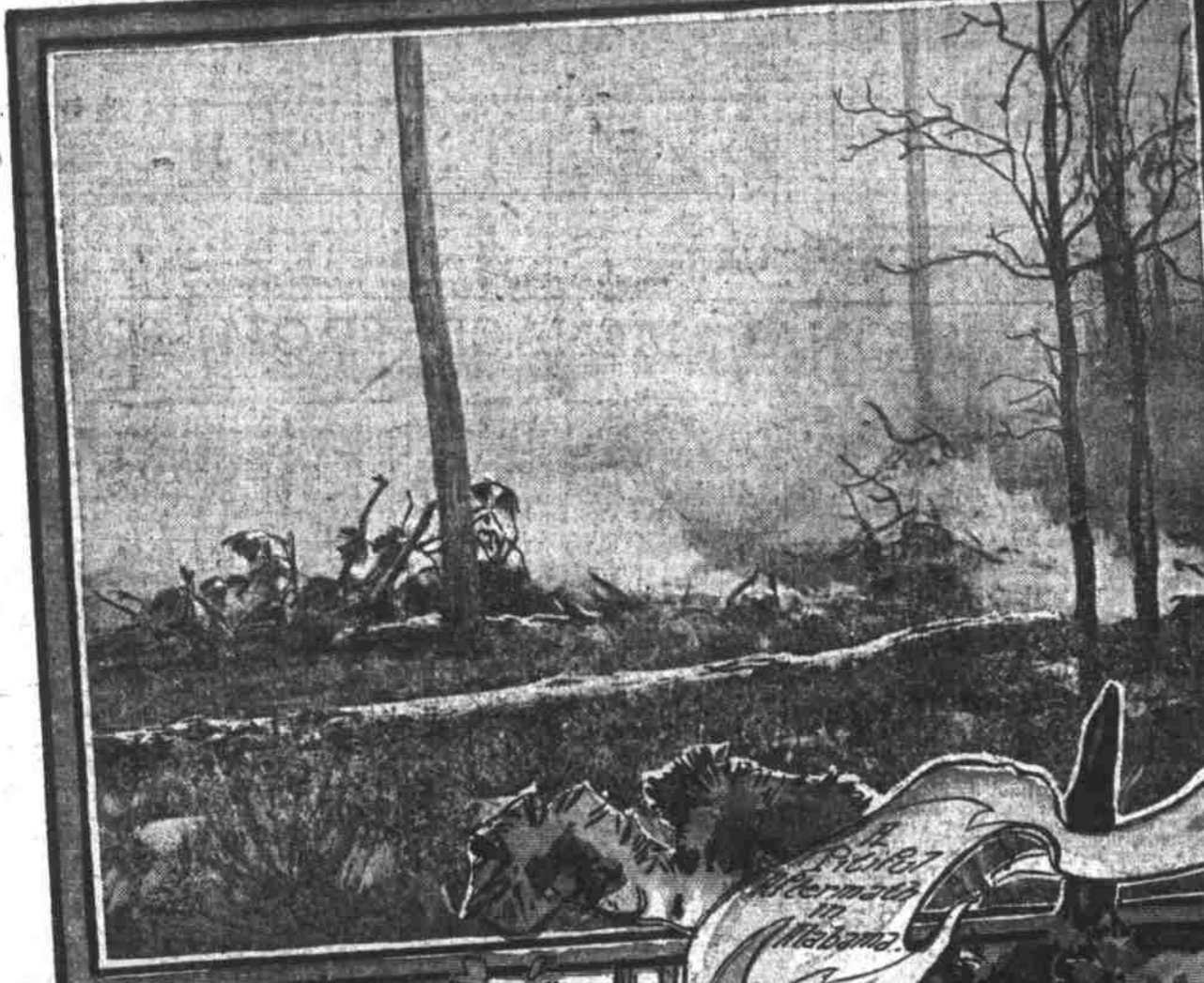


OUR NATIONAL MENACE FROM FOREST FIRES



A Skirmish Line of Forest Fire Fighters.



Flames Sweeping California Forest.



When the Mountain Side Is Ablaze.

THE COSTLY LESSON TAUGHT BY SWEEPING FLAMES THIS YEAR

THAT dense pall of smoke which overhung vast areas of the United States during the late summer and the early autumn, and spread far out to sea, has cost the country close to \$100,000,000, it is estimated.

It left wide miles of that friendly soil, the ally that is our ultimate dependence and must forever be our dependence after all others shall fail, barren of hope of resurrection for long years to come.

It robbed us of the waters that are our other indispensable aid, and prepared the torrents which are our overwhelming foes.

It opened the million paths by which those numberless torrents of the near future shall rob of their riches enormous areas destined by nature to support whole populations. It set back civilization, with all its multiplying wealths, indefinitely, over territories equal to foreign kingdoms.

What has the nation to learn from this latest, most terrible consequence attending its Belshazzar's feast, in which it so riotously wastes its resources?

IF THE greatly preponderant, greatly apathetic majority of those 80,000,000 of our population, who saw nothing of those terrific forest fires except the daylight dullness they mildly grumbled over, could be transported from their rich, cleared farms, from their elegant estates and their struggling frame dwellings, from their offices and their apartment suites and from their big factories and

their neat two-story homes in the cities—if all these cheerfully indifferent souls, in company with a few hundred penny-wise-pound-foolish congressmen and state legislators—could be summarily set down upon the fire-branded edge of only one among those many conflagrations, its appalling object lesson would burn the moral ineradicably upon their minds.

Trivial appropriations, for which the few far-seeing advocates of proper forest conservation are striving, would be forthcoming with scarcely a day's delay.

The careless camper, the heedless farmer burning brush, the director of the railroad refusing to provide due safeguards against engine sparks, the whole selfish legion of criminally negligent would be as instantly classed with the few willful incendiaries whose activities, in several districts, have started fires which generations of care must go to make amends for.

With the millions so wantonly allowed to vanish in the air, a magnificent fleet of first-class battleships could have been given to the nation; the year's wage loss, to which so large a proportion of the country's workers have been subjected, could have been converted into a year of comparative plenty; the inland waterways

project could have been launched into practical utility, with its watersheds infinitely better controlled than they can be after so many million acres have been denuded of their forest protection.

Those are estimates of the kind that leave their reader sitting as calm and unmoved as when he learned that the Argentine is producing more cattle this year than last.

But when it is noted that this loss of \$100,000,000 is the direct loss of every man, woman and child in the land—to be felt now, with but little interval of time due to go by before it comes out of all pockets—the forest fires of 1908, worst in a quarter of a century, assume a graver aspect.

For thousands of men are deprived of work in lumber industries; thousands of farms are foredoomed to be equipped with gullies instead of streams. All uses to which lumber can be

put suffer a setback beyond repair; all constructions into which lumber enters, from rocking chairs to dwellings, cost more for occupancy and ownership. Our very food supplies feel the costly effects of the long-protracted series of disasters.

Officers of the United States Forest Service, which has had its most able experts on the ground, are agreed that it is doubtful whether the actual losses of this fearfully expensive year will ever be known. But it is already apparent that no part of the country escaped the devastation of the flames.

Disasters which occurred in Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin proved to be the worst that befell the lake states during the whole year. All the way from the Pacific coast and the Rocky mountain districts to the New England states and Canada spring, summer and early fall brought on a growing series of forest fires that culminated in what was really close to the conflagration of a continent.

The estimate of Dr. W. J. McGee, the erosion expert of the United States Department of Agriculture—an estimate considered conservative by the Forestry Bureau—places the aggregate loss, in all parts of the country during the months of this year's conflagrations, at \$1,000,000 a day.

But the Forestry Service, as the fires of this fall were drawing to their destructive close, estimated that the loss to the new growth alone was very nearly as much more, if the total original losses were rated at \$100,000,000.

If it were not for the forest fires we could expect an additional growth of twenty cubic feet per acre every year, which, for a total forest area of approximately 500,000,000 acres, would amount to 10,000,000,000 cubic feet. That equals 45,000,000,000 feet, board measure—more than the total consumption of saw timber in the United States.

PERMANENT YEARLY LOSS

At \$2 per 1000 feet, the new growth of timber—not merely checked, but utterly destroyed for an indefinite period—represents a permanent yearly loss of national income amounting to \$80,000,000.

For this year it is as yet impossible to count up accurately the number of lives that have been sacrificed. The official count for the thirty years preceding this shows 1956 victims, or sixty-five lives annually. The year 1908 will bring the average up appreciably.

The whole history of the nation has been one of a series, never really interrupted, of annual conflagrations in its forests. The census figures for 1880 gave the area burned per year of 10,000,000 acres; but the Division of Forestry, in 1891, collected records of 13,000,000 acres burned over in a single year, with an estimate of timber actually destroyed as amounting to from \$25,000,000 to \$50,000,000.

Since then the value of "stumpage" has multiplied itself fivefold. However much the yearly waste of our woodlands may have been reduced in board measure, the loss in values has enormously increased, for, at the price of lumber today, 2,000,000 acres burned over how cost as much as 10,000,000 were worth in 1880.

"We have," says R. S. Kellogg, of the forest service, "a forest area in the United States that has been variously estimated at from 500,000,000 to 700,000,000 acres. We are not sure which is correct, but it is probably the smaller estimate. The board foot measure of the timber standing on this acreage may range from 1,400,000,000,000 to 2,000,000,000,000—and again the smaller estimate is probably the right one."

"We are using annually, in the form of lumber alone, at least 40,000,000,000 feet; in shingles and lath, 3,000,000,000 feet; in cross ties, 100,000,000 of them; in pulp and paper, 3,000,000 cords—and for fuel, perhaps as much as all the other items together."

"Accepting the largest estimate of the timber remaining in the entire United States, all of

(CONTINUED ON INSIDE PAGE)