

FIRE

And What Is Being Done to Prevent Its Destruction of the Forests

Written for The Journal by Fred W. Vincent.

FIRE! Reverberating through the timbered regions of the Pacific slope last autumn that single word foreshadowed the deaths of 90 human beings, the loss of approximately \$26,000,000 worth of merchantable timber; the devastation of more than 3,400,000 acres of timber land; the destruction of forage on 754,000 acres of open land and the ruination of hundreds of settlers and homesteaders who had staked their all on one roll of fate's dice—and lost!

Plain facts these! Simply a small part of the data collected by experts who came after the burning lines of exhausted, smoke choked, fire stained men had retired from the desolate stretches of what once been great sweeps of majestic forest.

Though the cost was great, and the northwest, especially, will feel the effect of the blow for a generation to come, in one way the great conflagrations did a vast amount of good. They awakened the people to the value of protection and brought home the fact that one half the standing timber of the United States, stands in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana, and it is in constant danger of destruction.

And once aroused, no time was lost in taking measures to protect the forests—the fountain head of one of the west's greatest resources—from future harm.

How well they succeeded is seen in the forest fire history of this season. A number of fires have occurred; the climatic conditions this summer made opportunity for destructive blazes, but this year found public and private interests prepared, and the result has been—very few fires of any magnitude and small losses.

This splendid showing was not accidental. It is a result of hard-headed work on the part of the state and federal governments, the railroads, lumbermen and of timber associations.

Prevention the Cure.

When the cry of "fire" had died away and smouldering stumps marked the graveyard of millions in wealth, the federal government was among the first to count the cost and act. Congress made an emergency appropriation of \$1,000,000 to fight forest fires in 1911; expert fire fighters were sent into the timber country to teach settlers and foresters the science of subduing conflagrations; laborers were put to work constructing trails into the virgin forest stands; fire breaks were made,

mountain telephone lines installed and systematic efforts were made to arrange a cooperative fire fighting and patrol system with logging companies, timber associations, and railroads for 1911 and succeeding years.

Meanwhile the timbermen banded together in strong organizations and aided by business interests and crystallized public sentiment united in Oregon, Washington and Idaho to promote legislation to better aid in the preservation of the forests. The so-called capitalistic class and so called masses, for once at least works in harmony. Each recognized one's loss meant money out of pocket for the other.

In Montana the legislature did nothing, despite the fact that her fire loss last year in timber alone was \$3,350,000. Most of the fires occurred in the government reserves and her timbermen, unorganized, asked nothing of the state, and nothing was given. This summer she faces a dry season, her wilderness primed for fire, with only uncertain funds for fighting them and crude statutes to enforce inoperative punitive laws.

Nor did California do any better. In 1910 the Golden state acted as advisor only and no responsibility was accepted by her forestry office beyond this contracted limit. And this season no more was done. Fifteen thousand dollars annually is appropriated to run the forestry office beyond this contracted limit. That is all. The prohibitory code is good but to enforce it fire wardens must depend on uncertain compensation from private or the county purse. But California's fire loss was small, less than half a million dollars' worth of timber burned last year and it is notorious that humankind is prone to look the stable after the horse is stolen.

California's losses this year will be heavier, however, largely because of the lack of proper preparation. A fitting illustration of what happens when there are no efficient patrol systems is seen in the forest fires which swept an area of 95 square miles of timber land and watersheds in the San Bernardino mountains during the last two weeks. More than 500 men fought the conflagrations until the flames died down of their own accord. The fire fighters failed, and the cost of their hire was more than sufficient to defray the expense of keeping a splendid patrol on the ground all summer. Had such a patrol been in operation the probability

RE-SEEDING FIRE-SWEPT AREA IN WINTER.

ties are strong that the big blazes would not have occurred because they would have been extinguished before they had attained uncontrollable magnitude, and California and the federal government would not be out of pocket and that desolate blot would not be seen in southern California's forest districts today. The fires were fitting lessons.

The Northwest's Experience.

In Oregon, Washington and Idaho, however, things were different. Millions on millions of feet of timber went up in smoke, 90 men were incinerated, 42,000 head of livestock perished, towns and settlers' homes burned, miles of railroad lines were destroyed and the resultant loss of approximately \$30,000,000 was felt alike by sheepman, merchant, timberman and laborer. One million two hundred and fifty thousand dollars was expended by the state and federal governments and timber owners in the losing battle with hundreds of conflagrations, before nature, turned suddenly kind, released the pent up storms and ended the long drought and disastrous fires.

But the echo of the cry "Fire!" was persistent—it reached every man in these three states, where lumbering is one of the chief industries. The result was that great strides were made toward fire prevention.

Progressive laws were enacted; timber owners, heretofore loosely organized or not at all, banded close together and spared no expense in making ready for this summer's struggle against the destructive element and in educating the public to the danger of forest conflagrations; with them other interests cooperated to the fullest extent.

The Oregon legislature raised its forestry appropriation from \$250 to \$60,000 and enacted a new forestry code which is considered the most advanced and flexible of any of the state's codes, save Minnesota's.

Under its provisions forestry matters are controlled by a non-political board, which appoints the state forester, who in turn selects his own deputies. The forester is permitted to dispose of \$30,000 each year as he deems best. This allows the state to cooperate financially with timber associations, private owners or corporations in the suppression of fires or in forest patrol and other preventive measures. The law, in addition, requires that locomotives and sawmill engines shall carry spark arresters during the dry season; that railroad right of ways must be cleared of inflammable materials and slashings in wooded districts can be burned only under supervision of forestry officials. To make obedience of the law more certain stringent penalties are provided for its violation.

The new Washington law is much the same as Oregon's, save that there is danger of political interference in its fullest operation. Washington raised her forestry appropriation from \$23,000 to \$38,000.

Idaho handles her forest situation as though the state were a private owner. The code is so arranged that the state cooperates with private interests in all matters pertaining to the care of the timbered regions, bearing its share of

SOLDIER FIRE FIGHTERS IN SERVICE.

expense on a pro rata basis, in ratio to the acreage involved.

WHERE DISASTROUS CROWN FIRE IS LIABLE TO HAPPEN

Under this statute the details of forestry administration are largely in the hands of timbermen whose object, naturally, would be to make it as effective as possible. The merits of the code are striking. The danger of influenced politics are done away with and the care of the forests are directed by men competent to handle such matters. The state gets the best possible return on its money, because the Idaho associations are highly organized and efficient.

On the other hand Idaho does not enforce the prohibitory laws where it owns no timber and practically recognizes no responsibility in protecting life and property in outside districts. This probably will be changed by the next legislature to include the entire state in a protective policy—to a certain degree at least.

The Fallon law was on the books before the disastrous fires of last summer which cost Idaho approximately \$21,000,000 in burned timber, and damaged ranches, towns and railroad lines, in addition to causing the deaths of 77 men. It was an awful toll to pay, but the price was necessary, largely through laxity in the enforcement of the laws then extant, and lack of preparedness for just such an emergency as the unusual drought of 1910 superinduced.

Cooperation and Vigilance.

But laws do not extinguish fires. That takes men, money, system. This was one of the great lessons taught by last year's experience and it did not go amiss.

As soon as the legislatures of the northwest had done their part the big lumber corporations, the federal government, timber associations and railroads began their arrangements.

The government naturally turned its attention to the forest reserves and during the winter large parties of men were kept in the field re-seeding thousands of acres of devastated lands to

and firebreaks and stringing telephone lines through the forests to make it possible to assemble firefighting forces at any point quickly. Approximately \$100,000 was spent in the work this spring and summer in Oregon and Washington alone, and the beginning of the fire season found 1800 miles of trails, and 700 miles of phone lines winding through the wilderness. At present 550 men are on constant duty patrolling the reserves, watching careless campers and hunters and never once relaxing their vigil against the woodland's arch enemy.

The railroads likewise added their contributions to the common fund of protection. The Southern Pacific, one of the biggest timber owners in the world, has scores of men patrolling 1,000,000 acres of land it owns in Oregon and the great tracts it possesses in northern California. Its patrols have instructions to cooperate in all efforts to fight fires, whether the conflagrations are on its land or on outsiders'. It protects others, because others protect it—for this is the new system that obtains in the northwest as a result of the lesson of 1910.

In Washington the Hill railroad systems go even further by cooperating with the government. They bear the cost of putting out all fires that originate within a mile of their right of way and the cost of any blaze outside this limit resultant from fires within it. Among the biggest mainstays in the gigantic scheme, however, are the timber associations of the Pacific slope, which are banded together under the name of the Western Forestry and

Conservation association. Practically every association from California to Montana are members of the organization. Timber owners, whose fortunes are tied up in the forests, compose it and thousands upon thousands of dollars are poured out with lavish hand to assure the safety of their aboreal treasure.

Each member is assessed in ratio to his holdings, and no assessment limit is recognized when funds are needed. As a usual thing two cents an acre is the cost of operating its comprehensive patrol system, in which hundreds of men are employed. Should an emergency arise, however, this can be elevated to any figure. Over \$500,000 annually is expended for protection and as a result the most magnificent stand of timber in the world is given the efficient care it so richly deserves.

For timbermen are vividly cognizant that the country is enriched \$125,000,000 each year through lumbering operations, most of which goes directly to western citizens in wages. They recognize that each fire means a direct loss, not only to themselves, but to the commonwealth, and with one accord they combine to fight against fire and preserve to the west her magnificent brightness—the forests.

The Question.

From the Catholic Standard and Times. Dremer—"Did you ever think what you would do if you had Rockefeller's income?" Mugley—"Yes; and I've often wondered what he'd do if he had mine."

BILL'S GENTLE HINT—By Berton Braley

Says I to Bill O'Hooligan, that is me bosom frind,
"The Dimmycratic party is a-comin' to an ind;
It may not be so clear to you, but I kin plainly see
Yer only hope of Hiven is to line the G. O. P.
Says I to Bill O'Hooligan, "Shut up!" says Bill to me.

Says I to Bill O'Hooligan as he was drinkin' booze,
"Yed better cut that habit out, each drink ye shud refuse,
It takes away the brain of ye—though little that may be—
It makes you waste yer hard earned cash in goin' on a spree!"
Says I to Bill O'Hooligan, "Shut up!" says Bill to me.

Says I to Bill O'Hooligan, "Yer way of eatin' soup
Is like the sound av washin' upon the kitchen stoop;
Yer manners is in need av change, as I've explained to ye,
Just listen to this frind av yours that knows society."
Says I to Bill O'Hooligan, "Shut up!" says Bill to me.

Says I to Bill O'Hooligan, "The kind av clothes you wear
Is somethin' simply scandalous, a scarecrow you would scare,
You ought to study styles an' things from Paris to New York,
An' get a line on how to dress so ye'll be fit to see."
Says I to Bill O'Hooligan, "Shut up!" says Bill to me.

Says I to Bill O'Hooligan—"Shut up!" says Bill to me.
But I was full av good advice to offer to him free;
Says I to Bill O'Hooligan, "Bad temper isn't nice."
An' Bill he never said a word, but up an' hit me twice;
An' suddenly it dawned on me—HE DIDN'T WANT ADVICE!

CURRENT EVENTS, ADMINISTRATIVE, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL AS PICTURED BY THE CARTOONISTS

