

Losses by Forest-fires.

With the growth of settlements, and the building of railroads through our timber lands, comes a fearful and growing risk. The smouldering embers in some thoughtless settlers clearing, fanned by rising wind and scattered among dry grass and brush, kindle into a sweeping blaze that spreads over acres and miles, destroying the timber, or leaving it so scorched and deadened that it must soon be cut or become worthless; or the sparks from a passing locomotive kindle the dry vegetation along its track, and the same fiery work goes on, until we can look over leagues of blackened and desolate forest, and exclaim: "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth"!

The autumn of 1871 was a season of protracted drought all over the Northwest, and the losses by forest-fires in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan would probably aggregate as large as those of the terrible Chicago conflagration in that year; while the resultant peril and distress, in homes destroyed and families impoverished, would be quite as great. No season since has shown such extraordinary destruction, but the yearly losses have been large and increasing. Minnesota has suffered, Wisconsin more, and Michigan most, having more settlers and more railroads reaching into the pineries, helping to carry away their lumber, but adding to the risk of its destruction. Maine lumbermen, and indeed those of every State, share these losses. Pennsylvania, with her forests more among the mountains, and away from railroads, suffers less than more level regions, but is not exempt. This increasing risk comes in as an element to be estimated in the results of lumbering. If fires occur early in the summer, as this year, the timber is injured by worms if not cut soon, and even if they break out late in the season, the cutting must take place the following winter. We learn of several cases in the