

TO PREVENT FIRES ALONG RAILWAYS.

The Forestry Committee of the Commission of Conservation at its meeting on May 2nd last considered the question of the prevention of fires set by railways, and the following recommendations were made:—

"That to the provisions of the railway act already on the statute books relating to fires, the following clauses be added:

"For each and every case in which a fire is started by sparks from a railway locomotive, and either begins outside of the right of way or spreads therefrom to the adjoining land, the company which is operating the railway at the time when the fire is started, as aforesaid, shall be liable to a fine of one thousand dollars, to be recovered by summary prosecution before a stipendiary Magistrate or two Justices of the Peace;

"Provided, that it shall be a sufficient defence against any such prosecution if it be shown by the railway company:

"(1) That the company has used upon the locomotive the best available modern appliances for the purpose of preventing sparks spreading therefrom;

"(2) That no negligence has been shown

by the engineer or fireman of the locomotive, or any other servant of the company, conducing to the starting or spreading of the fires; and

"(3) That the company has maintained an efficient staff of fire-rangers properly equipped with all suitable appliances for fighting fires and proper and efficient means of travelling from place to place along the line of railway, and that the said staff has been prompt and diligent in taking all possible means to prevent the fire from spreading.

"The committee further recommends that the act respecting Government railways be amended to provide (1) that the Government railways maintain an efficient staff of fire-rangers properly equipped with all suitable appliances for fighting fires and proper and efficient means of travelling from place to place along the line of railways; and (2) that the Government railways shall provide free transportation for all provincial fire guardians properly certified as such, while travelling in the discharge of their official duties."

EFFECT OF EXCESSIVE DEFORESTATION.

"What has been the effect of the tremendous consumption of timber upon our forests?" This question is often asked by people in various sections of the country, and often the information of the average man on the subject is not definite enough to enable him to make a clear and satisfactory answer. R. S. Kellogg, assistant forester, engaged upon statistics in the United States Forest Service, in giving a concise answer to the important question says:—

"Now our annual requirements exceed 40,000,000,000 feet of timber, 100,000,000 crossties, 4,000,000 cords of pulp wood, besides great quantities of other forms of forest products, such as firewood, posts, poles, mine timber, etc. The per capita consumption of lumber in the United States was 215 board feet in 1850; now it is 470 board feet.

"One forest region after another has been attacked. With the exception of Maine, the New England States are cutting mostly second or third growth timber. The box factories there take white pine saplings down to 6 inches in diameter. The so-called 'inexhaustible' white pine forests of Michigan are gone, and millions of acres of cut-over and burned-over land have gone upon the delinquent tax list. Michigan supplied 23 per cent. of the lumber production of the United States in 1880, and less than 5 per cent. of it in

1907.

"The value of the lumber production in Michigan since 1849 has been 50 per cent. greater than the output of gold in California, and it has all taken place without a thought for the future. The cream of our hardwood is gone, and it is becoming more and more difficult to get in sufficient quantity the high grades of oak, yellow poplar, ash and hickory that our great manufacturing industries require. The South's once great supply of yellow pine is rapidly giving way before axe and saw, fire and tornado. Half a generation more will, in most places, see little but remnants left of the Southern forests, and in that time the Pacific Coast supplies will be heavily drawn upon.

"Ours is primarily a wood-using civilization. Despite the introduction of substitutes for wood in the form of stone, cement, concrete and steel, our consumption of timber has constantly increased from the earliest days up to the present time. The prices of forest products have risen more rapidly than those of other commodities. According to the reports of the Bureau of Labor, the quoted prices of the leading kinds of lumber on the New York market have risen twice as much in the last ten years as the average increase in all commodities. This indicates that the supply of timber is not keeping pace with the demand."