

destroyed, square mile upon square mile of young growth coming on to supply the demands of the future has been wiped out of existence. In Northern Ontario, where but a thin layer of vegetable mould covers the rocks, the soft, oozy forest floor, the only hope of vegetation and equable stream flow has been completely destroyed, leaving a cheerless rocky waste for generations to come. Even if no thought be given to the number of lives lost, it must be admitted that the loss occasioned this year by forest fires has been nothing short of appalling.

Can nothing be done, then, to prevent this loss? The answer is that much can be done. The solution of the problem is indicated in two words—public sentiment. The two principal causes of forest fires are campers and railways, and public opinion must be brought to bear upon these. The tourist-camper does not at all realize the extent of the damage which his unextinguished camp fire may do. Laws against leaving camp fires burning are already on the statute books, but it is quite evident that their observance rests mainly with the tourist himself. He must be impressed with the very serious nature of his offence. If a man sets fire to a building, he is convicted of arson and sent to prison as a felon, but if his unextinguished camp fire burns down millions of dollars worth of timber and perhaps destroys human life as well, he is, at best, made to pay a small fine. When public opinion views this carelessness of the camper as a criminal act and frowns upon him accordingly, considerable progress will have been made in lessening the number of forest fires from this cause.

But it is the railways that spread the most destruction. Travelling, as they do, the great lone stretches of uninhabited timber areas, the sparks from their locomotives start numerous fires that gain great headway before being detected. Too often the right-of-way, piled thick with inflammable rubbish, furnishes a tinder-box for these conflagrations. The owner of destroyed property along the line has found it almost impossible under the present laws to get damages from the railway company, so difficult is it to fix the responsibility, and so expensive is the process of litigation. In order to lessen the number of fires due to this cause, the Committee on Forests of the Commission of Conservation has proposed to make the railways pecuniarily responsible. It has recommended that there be added to the Railway Act a clause making them liable to a fine of \$1,000, recoverable by summary prosecution before a stipendiary magistrate or two justices of the peace, for every fire started by sparks from their locomotives. It makes no difference whether the fire begins out-