

FIRE PROTECTION.

Our fire protection is about the same as it was last year, and all appliances are constantly tested and kept in good order, babcocks being frequently recharged. Unfortunately fires with us invariably start in extremely cold weather, and Calgary being the only place provided with water works, we have great difficulty to keep our hose from freezing, the pressure not being sufficiently strong, but watchfulness and prompt action at first saves us a good many dangerous fires, and the very general substitution of brick chimneys for tin ones is a great relief.

EQUIPMENT.

We are using fewer tents every year, and we have enough for our requirements. Horse blankets are on charge in every division for field service, as we use few in barracks, and we are well supplied with general hardware, etc., etc. We are now manufacturing all our tinware, boilers, pails, etc., and while we expect to secure a better grade of goods, we hope to save considerably. We have just completed new cartridge belts for the Lee-Metford, and all our holsters and waist belts, are made by our own men.

TELEGRAPHS AND TELEPHONES.

The telephone line between Duck Lake and Batoche works very badly, and frequent complaints have been made at Edmonton *re* the working of the government telegraph line.

ASSISTANCE TO RAILROADS.

We have not been called upon during the year for any assistance to railroads.

PRAIRIE FIRES.

This year these fires have not generally occasioned as much damage as formerly, although several very destructive ones occurred. One near Red Jacket, west of Moosomin, destroyed a large amount of property. Several settlers in the immediate vicinity of the spot where this fire started, were last year fined \$3.00 each by a local magistrate for letting fires run, and the police received a great deal of abuse in consequence of these prosecutions. There were also several other bad fires in the same neighbourhood, mostly caused by carelessness.

There were also very bad fires in the Oxbow country, said to be caused by the C. P. R., and I understand that the settlers injured are about to proceed against the railway company.

In October when drawing a very heavy cattle train out of Duck Lake, sparks and coals from the engine started eight fires in about 12 miles. The C. P. R. were convicted and fined, but on appeal I believe the case will be thrown out owing to improper procedure. While I think the C. P. R. endeavour to prevent fires to the best of their ability, I think the engineers frequently by disobeying orders, start prairie fires by running without spark arresters, and dumping their ash pans without proper precautions. A great extent of fire guards has been ploughed by the company, but, on a very windy day, fire jumps them unless attended to at once.

Some very disastrous fires occurred in the Edmonton district, and many settlers were burned out, and some lost everything. This will necessitate some government relief, particularly in seed grain.

The luxuriant vegetation in the north causes prairie fires to be much more dangerous than in the south, where the grass is much shorter, and the only way to save a place is to have fire guards ploughed, and on the immediate approach of a bad fire, start the grass all round the fire breaks, as, until a fire gets headway, it will not jump a break except in very heavy winds, in any case it is safer to start fire round a place if a fire is really bad and rolling down on it.