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FOREST FIRES.

Last year within two weeks over \$1,000,000 worth of timber and other property was destroyed by forest fires in Oregon and Washington, according to Maxwell's Talleman. This enormous loss occurred upon a restricted area and represents only a very small part of the annual loss from this source. Every timbered region of the United States suffers year after year from fire. The annual loss is estimated at from \$25,000,000 to \$50,000,000.

Forest fires have been regarded as almost inevitable, and few systematic attempts have been made to prevent them, except in the States of New York, Pennsylvania and Minnesota, which have sufficient systems of fire protection.

The Bureau of Forestry has this year undertaken a thorough study of the forest fire problem in several different regions. It has placed men in



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forest districts to study fires while in the process of burning. Instead of waiting until fires are over and relying for information on local reports, as has been done heretofore, the fires are now being observed by the bureau's agents and full data will be obtained as to how they were caused, how fast they burn, what conditions favor or hinder them, and just what damage they do to the soil and to tree growth. Each agent of the bureau has been assigned to a district and is investigating all fires that occur within his territory. For example, one man studies a lumber tract, another a farming district, a third a turpentine orchard, etc.

In connection with this detailed study, the agents will observe the methods of fire protection practiced by railroads and other owners of timber lands. The fire warden systems of the states which have forest fire laws, and the patrol system in use on the federal forest reserves will also be observed closely.

By such methods the Bureau of Forestry hopes to replace with carefully gathered facts the vague general notions that now exist about forest fires. When the problem is solved for any particular region, the bureau will be ready to recommend methods of fire prevention and control for the private land-owner, and to suggest forest-fire legislation for the various states.

The investigation is now in progress in Northern Florida and Southern Alabama and Georgia, under the direction of Mr. Ernest A. Sterling, H. J. Tompkins, with a small corps of assistants. It has begun in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. Later in the season a study of forest fires will be made on the Pacific coast.

A LABOR PROBLEM.

The keen competition of 200 farmers to engage 100 newly arrived immigrants reveals one of the most serious phases of the labor problem in Ontario and the west, says the Toronto Globe. At the present time it seems probable that the farmers of Ontario will not be able to engage a sufficient force to take in the crop when harvest time comes. It is not so much a question of wages, although that may underlie this as it does all other phases of the labor problem. The difficulty will be to secure labor at one time. The farmers seem likely to suffer through the prosperous condition of the Dominion, which has been made for the encouragement of immigration among agricultural laborers. The Bureau of Forestry has this year undertaken a thorough study of the labor problem in several different regions. It has placed men in

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difficulty for the farmers to contemplate.

This is a question that should receive more attention in the farmers' institutes. The immigrants who have just arrived, and are about to arrive, will be valuable to the farmers of Ontario and the west. But by next harvest they will be on farms of their own, or engaged in permanent occupations which they cannot desert for a few weeks of higher wages during the busy time. We need not expect the problem to be solved by the arrival of a new force of labor from abroad for every harvest. The difficulty grows out of the nature of the grain producing industry. A large force of men is required when the harvest is ready and the work is imperative. During the remainder of the year the need of labor is comparatively small. The specializing of many

industries connected with the farm has lessened the need for help during the winter. The wood-lot has disappeared. We cannot expect men to remain idle all the year waiting for a call to work in the harvest fields. Every change tending to distribute the work over the year must afford relief. The adoption of mixed farming is an advantage in that respect. Farmers must seek various means of making profitable use of the services of their workmen all the year round. The erection of suitable dwellings for workmen and their families and the setting apart of garden plots may prove advantageous. The problem is to afford continuous profitable employment for a larger proportion of the necessary harvest labor, and the farmers of Ontario and the west must take it up with a full appreciation of its importance.