

ANACONDA, MONT.

STANDARD

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THE FOREST FIRES.

We concur, of course, in the statement of our ~~contemporary~~, the Miner, in its statement that "conservation of the forests that prevent the utilization of timber by man in order that it may be preserved to feed the flames, which, in turn, become the funeral pyre of the families of honest settlers, will hardly commend itself to open-minded political economists." There can be no two opinions on the Miner's proposition.

We presume, also, that the Miner may be right in its estimate that "the destruction of timber in Western Montana by fires during the last few weeks exceeds in feet all the timber that has been cut by man in a decade or more." The Miner's calculation may or may not be right; at any rate the destruction recently wrought amounts to a deplorable total.

We do not, however, see how these fires lead logically to the Miner's conclusion that "if the forestry bureau cannot guard the standing trees against destruction by fire it would be far better to throw open all the reserves and urge citizens to help themselves free of charge to all the timber they can use."

We suppose that it is not a sensible presumption that the forestry service can absolutely protect this state's vast forest area from fire or from ~~any~~ ~~other~~ ~~cause~~ ~~to~~ ~~fire~~. It can, however, help

toward that kind of protection, and we understand that it is at this moment rendering splendid service in the arduous work of fighting fires. Great as it is, or as it is liable to be, the loss will be immensely less than it would be but for the zealous work in which the forestry service is just now engaged.

Our Butte neighbor believes that "it is criminal folly to preserve the forests" merely "to placate Gifford Pinchot." That policy would, indeed, be criminal folly—it would be that, to say the least of it. But we do not understand that the federal government is running its forestry service with that fancied purpose in view; that is not the public's understanding. If in this we are right, then the Miner's remark is pointless and without purpose.

But, be that as it may, we do not conclude that it is unwise to try to protect the country's forest domain simply because forests are exposed to risk of destruction by fire. But the Miner's remarks, if we get the right understanding of them, present that alternative.