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REPORT

OF THE

FOREST ADMINISTRATION

OF THE

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CENTRAL PROVINCES

FOR THE YEAR.

1917-18

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Central Provinces Administration

FOREST DEPARTMENT

Nagpur the 8th February 1919.

READ—

Report by the Chief Conservator of Forests on Forest Administration in the Central Provinces for the year 1917-18.

RESOLUTION.

Mr. Hill commences his report with an account of the fodder operations which were undertaken during the year 1917-18 for the Army, and in the report there are scattered references to the different ways in which the Forest Department has contributed towards the prosecution of the war, but now that hostilities have ceased, it is fitting to give a more connected account of what has been done and of how war needs have stimulated the activities of the Department. Out of a total of 20 Imperial officers below the rank of Conservator, no less than 9 were deputed to military duty. Of the Provincial Service one officer, out of three whose services were offered, joined the Indian Army Reserve of Officers, and two more were deputed to special sleeper duty in the Chhattisgarh Division at the call of the Munitions Board for an increased quantity of sleepers from the Central Provinces. The officers who remained on duty were taxed to the utmost not merely in carrying on their regular duties but in meeting the heavy calls made on them for supplies for the Army.

2. In 1916-17 about 18,000 tons of hay in the shape of steam-pressed bales was supplied for military purposes; in 1917-18 the amount rose to over 93,000 tons, and during the current year the Department has been asked to provide 100,000 tons, which will be used not only for the Army but for meeting the fodder scarcity in those parts of India where the monsoon has failed. Forty hay presses in the possession of the Department were despatched to Mesopotamia and some more to places in India where they were urgently required. Large numbers of sal trees suitable for conversion into sleepers are found in the privately owned forests of the Chhattisgarh Division, and close on 400,000 broad-gauge sleepers were supplied from this source through the agency of the two officers specially deputed, as above mentioned, for managing the operations, while in addition nearly 50,000 were obtained from Government forests. Numerous enquiries were received for the supply of timber, bamboos and other forest produce, many of which, however, did not materialise into actual indents; but, in addition to items of less importance, much material was supplied for the construction of temporary barracks in Jubbulpore, Betul and Chhindwara. Large quantities of tanstuffs were also provided from Government forests, and the Chief Conservator has served as a member of the Committee of Control of the Tannin Research Factory at Maihar. A start has been made with the systematic cultivation of *tarwad* (*Cassia auriculata*), which has hitherto only grown wild in certain places in the south of the Provinces. Under the influence of the war demand for shellac, the scientific production of lac has also been undertaken and arrangements have been made for propagating it departmentally on a more extensive scale. It is intended that, as soon as one is available, an officer should be placed on special duty to take charge of the operations, which will include the demonstration of improved methods to the lac-growers who lease areas in privately owned forests. Though the energies of the weakened Forest staff were much taken

up in carrying out these extra duties, it is satisfactory to note that the ordinary work of the Department has continued to progress. The gross income, the amount of the money spent on the development of the forests and the surplus have all increased in the year under report.

3. In paragraphs 4 and 5 of his report the Chief Conservator indicates some of the lines of advance which will call for the attention of his Department as soon as normal times return, but the first essential is the improvement of communications, and, though much pre-occupied with urgent Army work, the Department has not neglected this essential. The expenditure on roads increased, and a further extensive programme has been prepared for which provision has been made in the provincial budget for 1919-20. The total amount spent on communications is, however, of perhaps less importance than the manner in which it is spent. The easing of the ghat sections of roads and the improvement of river-crossings do much more to increase the accessibility of the forests for the same money than the improvement of roads in level tracts, and the Chief Commissioner knows that this consideration is constantly borne in mind by Forest officers. The scheme of increasing the roads in the South Raipur Division, which is referred to in paragraphs 14 and 19 of the report, is one on which the Chief Commissioner lays much stress. Until the people of Chhattisgarh have a plentiful supply of cheap firewood as a substitute for the cowdung fuel which they at present use, they cannot take full advantage of the irrigation schemes which have been constructed by Government at great expense. The commercial aspect of the fuel depôts which it is proposed to establish in this tract is a minor consideration to start with, and if the people can be induced to take to substituting wood for cowdung fuel, any initial loss may be regarded with complaisance.

4. There was a substantial increase in the amount spent on the proper housing of the subordinate establishment, but much yet remains to be done, and a suitable provision for this object has been made in the coming financial year. The Chief Commissioner would again emphasize the fact that, unless the subordinate staff is properly housed, good work cannot be expected from it, and money invested for this purpose will be amply recouped in the more efficient management of the forests, which can only be effected through a contented staff.

5. There was a fall from 14,046 to 12,415 in the number of forest offences, but it is difficult to say how much of the decline is due to pre-occupation with other more important duties interfering with the detection of petty offences. Offences connected with grazing decreased by 1,151; apart from the cause already indicated, it is believed that the rules are coming to be better understood and acted on. Cases in which rewards were paid for the detection of offences fell from 296 to 108.

6. There was a further reduction in the area in which regular fire protection was attempted during the year, much of which is accounted for by the extension of the practice of early burning, which continues to give good results; and though the area in which fires occurred increased from 92 to 159 miles, the percentage of 98, which was attained in successful protection, is very good considering the dry nature of the hot weather. The statistics show a small decline in the average cost per square mile protected, but they appear in the Southern Circle to include the cost of early burning and in other Circles to exclude it. In future they should be prepared on the uniform principle of excluding this item, as the early burnt area is not included in the area shown as protected.

7. The total number of animals grazed in the forests during the year fell from 3,581,780 to 3,434,484 and the income declined from Rs. 13,85,911 to Rs. 13,73,955, but much of the decrease occurred among sheep and goats, and it is therefore not entirely to be deprecated. In the Central Provinces the number of buffaloes, cows and bullocks very slightly increased, and the decline among such animals in Berar proper was chiefly in the Yeotmal district, where it was due to the introduction of the new grazing settlement. That settlement

has been modified where it has been shown to cause hardship, and the situation is being carefully watched, and any further action which may seem called for will be taken. Well under half the total number of animals grazed were charged at full rates.

8. The amount of fodder grass extracted by cultivators for their cattle is still much too small, and, indeed, fell slightly during the year under report, but no account is taken of the quantity taken in the shape of free head-loads in localities where, owing to crop failure, the forests were thrown open for the extraction of such. It is interesting to note, however, that in the Nimar Division, where a very large quantity of grass was supplied to the Army, the people took an increased quantity of fodder. The extraction of large quantities of grass for consumption outside the Provinces is in no way inconsistent with a very much increased use of cut fodder by cultivators, for at present, even with the heavy Army grass operations, only a small portion of the yearly grass crop is consumed; and, provided that arrangements for cutting grass for external use are made with due regard to the needs of local cultivators and they get timely notice that certain areas will be closed to them, as the report mentions they received in Nimar, the quantity they take can be indefinitely increased. The large demand for the current year has been carefully allotted to divisions and within them so as to avoid hardship to the persons who are accustomed to resort to the forests for fodder. Too much attention cannot be paid to giving every inducement to cultivators to supply themselves with cut grass by placing readily accessible areas at their disposal for this purpose.

9. Additions have been made from time to time to the list of attached ranges to grazing districts which is given in Appendix B to the Grazing Rules, and the Chief Commissioner would be glad if the Chief Conservator would consider, with reference to the remarks made regarding Saugor and Jubbulpore in paragraph 39 of the report, whether any further additions are called for.

10. The figures given in paragraph 45 of the report are concrete evidence that, despite the handicaps from which it suffered, the Forest Department has not stood still. The gross revenue has grown steadily. After a temporary reduction, expenditure is again above the average of the years 1911 to 1916, and the plans for the immediate future involve a further considerable increase. The surplus, however, continues to grow and would have been considerably higher this year, had not certain contractors been behindhand with their payments.

11. Mr. Hill held charge of the post of Chief Conservator throughout the year, and Sir Benjamin Robertson has to thank him for another year's successful work under difficulties. He records his regret at the tragic death of Mr. Hunt, Extra-Deputy Conservator of Forests, in whom the Provincial Service lost a useful officer. The Chief Commissioner has noted the names of the officers brought to notice for good work by the Chief Conservator, and he congratulates Mr. Dunbar Brander, Rao Bahadur Srinivasulu Naidu and Mr. M. Narsingh Rao on their being admitted to the Order of the British Empire in recognition of their strenuous exertions in supplying fodder for the Army.

ORDER.—Ordered that a copy of this Resolution be submitted to the Government of India, Revenue and Agriculture Department, and that a copy be forwarded to the Chief Conservator of Forests and to the Conservators of Forests, Northern, Southern and Berar Circles, for information and guidance; also, that it be published in the Supplement to the *Central Provinces Gazette*.

J. F. DYER,
*Third Secretary to the Chief Commissioner,
 Central Provinces.*

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