

THE FORESTS OF  
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THE PROGRESS OF CONSERVANCY AND THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH IN FORESTRY 1901-1925

INCLUDING BRIEF REVIEWS OF THE PROGRESS  
OF CONSERVANCY IN THE SEVERAL PRESIDENCIES  
AND PROVINCES BETWEEN 1871-1900

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## CHAPTER VIII

### PROGRESS OF FOREST ADMINISTRATION IN THE NORTH-WEST PROVINCES AND OUDH, 1871-1900 (*cont.*)

#### CONSERVANCY IN OUDH

**F**OREST Conservancy in Oudh, when compared to many other parts of India, or even the adjoining North-West Provinces, had made considerable progress by 1870, as has been described in Chapter X of Volume II. It will be remembered that the chapter was closed with a vividly drawn word picture of the position of these forests by Eardley Wilmot, who joined the service in Oudh in December, 1873. A good commencement had been made and the revenue was fairly satisfactory in some districts. Fire protection was still, however, in its infancy and forest settlements were giving trouble (*vide* II, pp. 358-60). Even in Oudh, where there existed few "rights" over large tracts of the forests, the settlement of some areas was incorrectly made and forests were burdened with rights which under the law did not exist.

The position of the Oudh Forests and administration was the subject of an interesting Report by Ribbentrop, Inspector-General of Forests, in 1886, based on an inspection of the Oudh Forest Circle as it then was, the Province having been amalgamated with the North-West Provinces, with two Conservators, one in the North-West Provinces Circle and the second in Oudh. Ribbentrop alludes to a visit of Brandis to Oudh in 1881, which will be detailed later on, and to some work undertaken by Schlich in the forests. So that Oudh had had the benefit of the advice of three experts who had followed each other as Inspectors-General of Forests. During his visit Brandis, in his forecast of November, 1881, had fixed the annual out-turn in sâl to be cut in the Kheri Forests at 2500 sâl trees, to be extracted under selection fellings. A large demand for timber and sleepers subsequently arose, however, in consequence of the construc-

ready to hand an invaluable labour supply. Orders were, however, issued to hand over the Tharus to the Revenue Officer, a proceeding as short-sighted as it was distressing to the two chief parties concerned. It is refreshing to know that some ten years later, when Eardley Wilmot was Inspector-General, the matter again came up for consideration and, on his clear exposition of the case, the decision was reversed.

The third problem taken up, which cost an infinity of trouble and labour, was the preparation of the Record of Rights, a business which had not been settled. All villages within three miles of the boundary and, says Eardley Wilmot, there were many more in the now more populous country, were enumerated, with numbers of houses, cattle, acreage of land, etc., as also their requirements in fuel, grazing, etc., from the forest. Schedules were then prepared recording the annual grants of each to which the people were eligible. In this way the proportion of produce from the forests required for the local community was known and consequently the amount remaining for sale in the open market. This work occupied several years as it required constant reference to the Revenue officials.

The Conservator refers to the early difficulties experienced during the first-half of his service in the attitude of the Revenue Officers *vis-à-vis* the new department and he correctly ascribes it, as has already been mentioned earlier in this history, to the ignorance existing in England at the time in all pertaining to forestry and the impossibility of the Indian civilian at home obtaining any knowledge of forestry, since it was then a *terra incognita* at the Universities. And the same applied with even greater force to the higher officials, who had the framing of the general forest policy to be applied to a Province. That the Department received the support it did in these early days was due, as has been often reiterated in this history, to the surprising (if it may be so termed) foresight and statesmanship of successive Secretaries of State, commencing with the first Sir Charles Wood (I, p. 530), and to one or two of the Governors-General of that period.

During Eardley Wilmot's Conservatorship in Oudh Mr. P. H. Clutterbuck (later Inspector-General of Forests) was in charge of the Gorakhpur Forests, which were separated from Bengal by the Gundak River. He there shot the last surviving buffalo and also the last rhinoceros, which had wandered down from Nepal, killed in this district. At this period Mr. B. A. Rebsch, one of the more senior untrained officers, was in

charge of Gonda. The Bhinga Forests have been already alluded to—Eardley Wilmot has the following interesting note concerning them: “The forests of Bhinga present a curious appearance to the forester. Thirty years ago the area was peopled with ancient trees that rose abruptly from a bare soil hardened by the hoofs of numberless cattle; there was no young growth, the parent trees were without progeny, and as they fell from natural decay their place was filled by a thorny growth, impenetrable to man or cattle. It was Nature’s last despairing effort to protect the fertility of the soil. For a generation the Forester fought against fires, cattle and man, and yet there was no response in the appearance or in the continuance of seedling growth, till later, under the protection of the thorns, a few little trees began to show, and, encouraged by the admission of light, sprang up to give in their turn protection to hundreds of their kind, to assure the tardy regeneration of the former forest. To one acquainted with the past history of this forest, two questions naturally presented themselves—whether a whole generation was required to rest a tired soil, and whether the planting of any other than the existing species might have met with success.” As the Conservator says, to these questions answers are indispensable if the forester is not to invite serious silvicultural failures. Research work to provide knowledge on the rotation of species is essential in all countries, and perhaps even more so in areas where it is desired for one reason or another to raise pure crops, which are even more subject to insect attack and fungus diseases. Research is a paramount necessity in India, and through research work there can be little doubt that, as Eardley Wilmot expresses it, “we may some day light upon the causes that are at work when studying, as we now do, to remedy their effects, and there will become open to us those silvicultural secrets with regard to teak, to sâl, to other valuable Indian timbers which at present so often stand in the way of the forester in his efforts to aid in the regeneration of those trees on areas where magnificent forests once flourished, or stand in splendid maturity even in the present day.”