

slower, kinder, but surer desolation than their bloody swords could make.

That the desiccation in itself was the cause of great movements which reached and radically affected Europe has been a favourite suggestion of several writers. To me it seems improbable. The destructions that were cataclysmic (a few such are in Khotan tradition) would not furnish emigrants,—only corpses. Those that were slow would not extrude large numbers at the same time but would cause some gradual displacement of population to neighbouring oases and some decimation by diminishment of food-supply. The fixed inhabitants of such regions, moreover, were not of the stuff of which great migrations are made.

On the other hand it may be urged that, in so far as this desiccation limited the regions within which war-driven shepherds of the north-east might find plunder and ultimately fixed seats, it may have contributed to the force which urged them farther westward. And further, in so far as the Tarim basin held nomad populations, these might, in the space of a few years, find themselves dispossessed of grazing lands by the encroaching sands,—and these nomads might thus join the westward-ho! movement; but there is no evidence that such people were at any time numerous enough in the doomed area to become in themselves conquering armies.

The wars which followed during the nineteenth century, quite up to our own time, were generally religious rebellions, often fomented across the mountains in Bokhara. At the end of one such