

sider briefly the oft-repeated and generally accepted statement that the decay of Persia and of other semi-arid lands is due to wars and massacres and the frightful misgovernment which has prevailed for century after century. If a strong, just government were established, the former conditions of prosperity and dense population could be restored, so it is said. The progress which has been made under British rule in India and under Russian rule in Transcaspia shows what can be done. No one doubts that war and misgovernment are frightful curses which have again and again caused depopulation, nor is it open to question that the just rule of a European power might do much to restore the ancient prosperity of favored localities, and would be a blessing everywhere. That is not the point. The question is, first, whether the parts of the country which have suffered most from war and misgovernment are the parts which have become most extensively depopulated; and, second, whether, under present physical conditions, it would be possible for Iran to support a much larger population than that of to-day.

As to the relation of war and kindred disasters to depopulation and the decay of civilization, an examination of various Persian provinces shows that the former do not necessarily cause the latter.

The province of Astrabad on the southeast coast of the Caspian Sea is one of the few parts of Persia which is blessed with an abundant rainfall and great natural advantages. For centuries its inhabitants have been exposed to the terrible raids of the fierce Turkomans, and have also had the disadvantage of a very unhealthful climate. Their con-