

extreme aridity renders recovery well-nigh impossible, except along the Helmund. Kirman lies so remote behind its barriers of deserts and mountains that it has suffered from war much less than any of the three other provinces. Yet its ruined cities and its appearance of hopeless depopulation are almost as impressive as those of Seyistan. If war and misgovernment are the cause of the decay of Persia, it is remarkable that the two provinces which have suffered most from war and not less from misgovernment should now be the most prosperous and least depopulated; while the two which have suffered less from war and no more from misgovernment have been fearfully, and, it would seem, irreparably depopulated. It is also significant that the regions which have suffered the greatest ruin are those where water is least abundant, and where a decrease in the supply would most quickly be felt. War and misgovernment do not seem invariably to cause depopulation, nor has the process gone on most rapidly where war has been most prevalent.

It is often asserted that with proper irrigation methods Iran might support a population much larger than that of to-day, and the people are taken to task for not utilizing their resources. They do utilize them, however, and it is true of the Persians, as Holdich says of the Afghans, that they "have, from time immemorial, been great practical irrigation engineers. Every acre of rich soil is made to yield its abundance by means of every drop of water that can be extracted from overground or underground sources. It would be rash to say that the cultivable area of Afghanistan could be *largely* increased." Goldsmith, who knew Persia