

at that time, but it does not prove at all that the country was covered with forests and lakes of fresh water."<sup>1</sup>

Still more plainly does W. Tomaschek express opinions at variance with the results arrived at by Huntington. To draw conclusions from the existence of ruins may be very misleading. Tomaschek has made use of the most reliable historical material that can be found, and therefore his conclusions are of extraordinary weight. By comparing the abundant notices of Arabian geographers with explorations of our own times in the same regions he has arrived at the following result:—

“The comparison shows with certainty that the conditions in this region have remained remarkably constant during the past thousand years. Statistics of human habitations are an important factor in this comparison, a measure of the rising or falling capability of the soil for cultivation. If, for instance, Istakri informs us that the village Kharânek had 200, and Sâghand 400, families, and we now, a thousand years later, find in the same places almost the same number of inhabitants, we obtain valuable evidence of the stability of natural conditions in certain parts of the dry region, and a proof that this soil is absolutely incapable of supporting more living beings than now and in former times.”

“It can be shown of some regions that the cultivation of the soil within their bounds has markedly improved owing to the restless activity of man, in spite of years of scarcity and the raids of plundering nomads. In other places, on the contrary, nature has of itself changed for the worse, the constantly increasing evaporation has caused the drainage to fail, and advancing masses of dust and sand have buried old cultivated oases for ever. While the changes of nature proceed so extremely slowly that a thousand years is a short period in the existence of the earth's surface, yet the almost imperceptible changes in all existing things is clearly apparent to the attentive observer, even in tracts which bear outwardly a character of stagnation.”<sup>2</sup>

By describing fourteen of the Arabs' desert routes and

<sup>1</sup> “Zur Theorie der Entstehung der Salzsteppen,” etc., *Jahrbuch d. K.K. Geologischen Reichsanstalt*, Bd. 27 (1877), p. 341.

<sup>2</sup> *Zur historischen Topographie von Persien*, vol. ii. p. 3.