

Baggage animals were killed and eaten to avoid death by starvation.

But palms grew then as now, and, according to Strabo, dates saved the survivors. The country was so bad that even a native guide could not find the way, all tracks in the sand having been blown away. Well-sinkers were always sent in advance, and long marches were made because of the scarcity of water. The distance to Pura is 560 miles in a straight line. With 60 marching days that makes 9 miles a day. But the road evidently wound about, and a day or two's rest was taken in more favourable spots. Probably the pace was 19 miles a day. Goldsmid travelled in 25 days from Karachi to Gwadar; Miles took 40 days between the same places, but by a different route in the west; Smith marched between Pura and Gwadar in 17 days. But these travellers had small parties, and Alexander a whole army of 40,000 men at starting. This is the essential difference. Small parties with camels can get through where an army with horses and mules is doomed to perish. And so it happened. All the animals died, and of the soldiers only the strongest survived.

It is quite credible that the season had something to do with the disaster, but I do not believe that it was the determining cause. Alexander travelled from the end of August to the end of October, Goldsmid in December and January, Miles from October to December, and Smith in February and March. According to J. Hahn, the coast lands of the Arabian Gulf are within the domain of the south-west monsoon.¹ Réclus says that Baluchistan is one of the driest countries of Asia, though visited by the south-west monsoon. It rains only in the hills. "Il tombe en effet des averses considérables pendant la saison d'été," and temporary lakes are formed in the valleys. Réclus alludes to traces of a much more abundant precipitation in a past age.² Such an age there was, of that there is no doubt. But when? Not within the last 2200 years, but perhaps 20,000 years ago. According to Pottinger, it rains in the country between Eastern Persia and Western Sind in

¹ *Handbuch der Klimatologie*, Bd. ii. p. 162 (2nd Ed.).

² *Nouvelle Géographie universelle*, vol. ix. p. 116.