

through southern Baluchistan to India without hindrance, obtaining water and provisions all the way. And he is not alone in this opinion, for St. John confirms his assertion. "In the early part of his march through Balúchistán Alexander must, I think, have been deceived by his guides, who seem to have kept him exactly at that distance from the coast where there is least water. Had he followed the Kej valley, the natural road from the Indus to western Balúchistán, he would have found abundant water."¹

Why did he choose this, the worst of all the roads to and from India, instead of effecting his retreat through the northern pass, afterwards tried so successfully by Timur in the year 1398, Sultan Baber in 1505 and 1525, and Nadir Shah in 1738, when those monarchs conquered India? He was not in ignorance of better routes, and he had himself tried a safe way on this march to India. His campaign was no boyish Macedonian exploit, a marriage feast with a drinking-match to the sound of drums and cymbals. He went wildly and recklessly to work more than once, but he had a great object in view. He wished to do all in his power to knit together the vast areas of his new empire. Therefore he had to open a sea route between the Euphrates and the Indus. Therefore Nearchus must be sent with the fleet along the coast. And the latter accomplished his mission with such exactness that, though the coast-line has changed in some places since then, mariners of the present day can identify from his logbook most of the places where he anchored.² With the vessels of those days it was impossible to sail at a long distance from the coast, for provisions and water for several months could not be carried. Nearchus was, therefore, dependent on the coast. His fleet consisted, according to Droysen, of 100 vessels. His voyage had to be supported by the army on land, which supplied him with victuals and water.

Therefore Alexander was obliged to skirt the coast at any cost. Droysen says: "He did not abandon his great

¹ *Eastern Persia*, vol. i. p. 75.

² Markham's *History of Persia*, p. 412.