

that time? And are there not other causes which may force a population to desert its town or village? It only needs an ebb in a Brückner period to prevent a canal from reaching any longer a village it has hitherto watered. The village is abandoned, and a new one founded higher up. How often we meet with the names Kale-no, Deh-no, etc., or the "new fort," "new village," etc.! The old remain in ruins, and the ruins become more numerous in the course of ages. Round Delhi lies a whole cemetery of former quarters of the town. It seems an immense field of ruins, and as if in our times the population must have diminished to insignificance. And yet it is only that the town itself has moved.

In Seistan, which, according to Curzon, is richer in ruins than any other equal area in the world, there is no reason whatever to assume a desiccation of climate during historic times. Curzon himself gives the only true explanation: "To the jeremiads of those critics who represent Seistan as consisting of two parts, a desert under water and a desert above water, must be opposed the evidence both of history and of existing facts. If their verdict be true, how comes it that this province was once so famous for its magnificent fertility, its dense population, and its splendid cities? What must be said of the square miles of ruins still encumbering the ground? Fertility in Persia is almost solely dependent upon water-supply; and here, alone among Persian provinces, is enough water not merely to fill great canals as large as rivers, and a network of smaller ditches and dykes, but also very frequently to run to waste in superfluous swamps and lagoons." Curzon quotes several opinions of English travellers in Seistan, and comes to the conclusion that the country's "capacities of production under a more scientific system of irrigation are enormous."¹

Bellew expresses the same opinion. He says of Bust that this place was destroyed by Nadir Shah on his march to Kandahar and India. "In all these sieges, the fort alone, it appears, was occupied as a strategical position; the city and suburbs had remained a mass of ruins, in much the same state as they are now, since the desolating invasion

¹ *Persia*, vol. i. p. 242.