

of Changhiz in A.D. 1222." Of the time of Craterus' march he remarks: "At this period the country must have been in a much more flourishing and populous condition than it is now." Of the Garmzel, or the country on the lower Hilmend, Bellew writes: "The valley everywhere bears the marks of former prosperity and population. Its soil is extremely fertile and the command of water is unlimited. It only requires a strong and just government to quickly recover its lost prosperity and to render it a fruitful garden, crowded with towns and villages in unbroken succession all the way from Sistan to Kandahar. The present desolation and waste of this naturally fertile tract intensify the aridity and heat of its climate. But with the increase of cultivation and the growth of trees these defects of the climate would be reduced to a minimum, and the Garmzel would then become habitable, which in its present state it can hardly be considered to be. Under a civilized government there is not a doubt the Garmzel would soon recover its pristine prosperity, and then this part of the Helmand valley would rival in the salubrity of its climate that of the Tigris at Baghdad."<sup>1</sup>

There are, besides, great disasters, which in the form of famine or plague devastate one or another of the Persian provinces again and again, just as in India when the monsoon fails to appear, or in Russia when there is no rain or cholera rages. I myself witnessed the progress of the plague in Seistan in April 1906, when whole villages were actually exterminated, and the deserted houses would then fall into ruins. Probably this is not the first time that plague has harried the unfortunate country. Dr. Kelly also expressed a suspicion that possibly the infection lay concealed in a latent form, and at certain times broke forth again from some unknown cause. When a whole population is decimated by such an epidemic and crowds fly out of the country in panic fear, it is natural that ruins should arise. When the land gradually recovers new dwellings will be built.

Another important factor, especially in Seistan, is the shifting of the river branches. The delta of the Hilmend,

<sup>1</sup> *From the Indus to the Tigris*, pp. 176, 205, and 260.