

the life and soul of Seistan, has changed its position innumerable times. Under such circumstances, whole towns and villages must be abandoned and new ones erected beside the new water channels. Where empty walls remain in the dry deserts of Seistan one is often deceived as to their age. They are scraped and worn away by the exceedingly strong north-north-west wind, and therefore look older than they are. In a comparatively short time they are razed altogether.

As there are such evident and sufficient reasons for the existence of ruins in Seistan, it is superfluous to try to account for their presence by a deterioration of climate within historic times. The soil is not less fruitful than before, and, whether the volume of water in the Hilmend increases or diminishes, it is always so enormous that it could provide for the maintenance of millions of human beings. M'Mahon estimates the population of Seistan at 205,000; it has a more abundant supply of water than any other part of Persia of the same extent. According to M'Mahon the Hilmend carries down at the season of low water 2000 cubic feet a second, and at high water 50,000 to 70,000 feet a second. He believes that Seistan might, under a good and wise government, become a second Egypt.¹

That historical data cannot always be accepted without criticism is shown by the following statement of the famous Chardin, who dwelt for several years in Ispahan in the seventeenth century. Of the Sende-rud he says: "Ce fleuve se jette sous la terre entre Ispahan et la ville de Kirman, où il reparoît et d'où il va se rendre dans la Mer des Indes."² And yet this fanciful tale shows that the climate of Ispahan 250 years ago was similar to the present. If the Gavkhaneh had then been a large lake, no Persian would have thought of imposing on Chardin with the story that the river disappeared underground. It was lost, as now, in a temporary salt lake.

When the Arab geographers mention that in the tenth century a road ran straight through the Desht-i-Lut from Deh-i-salm to Bam, which now, as far as I could ascertain,

¹ *Geogr. Journal*, vol. xxviii. (1906), p. 209.

² *Voyages en Perse*, vol. iii. p. 4.