

ditions for hemming in and localizing an epidemic could be conceived: the river to the east, to the north and west the Hamun, and a desert on the south. Here the evil would be as in a rat-trap if all entrances and exits were blocked. In the worst case the whole population might perish, but what were a hundred thousand persons compared to all Persia? And if the plague came so far the whole world would be opened to it, and no one could tell where it would end.

One question Captain Kelly, with all his zealous efforts, investigations, and inquiries had not been able to answer, and that was, How did the plague come to Seistan? How did the infection first reach Deh-Seiyat-gur? Seistan was surrounded on all sides by unaffected country, and Karachi more than 600 miles distant was the nearest plague-stricken place. Three routes only were imaginable: by land, water, or air. By water it could not come, for the Hilmend descends from invigorating highlands, and its water remains in the Hamun. It seems that it could not have come by caravan, for the people of Deh-Seiyat-gur were poor, and bought no goods from Hindustan, and, besides, a caravan takes nearly two months to travel from Nushki to Nasretabad, and if it carried the disease, places on the road would be infected, which was not the case. Infection is not carried through the air, for in India it is found to spread quite independently of wind.

There remain, then, birds of passage, and it was on these that Captain Kelly's suspicions rested. He thought of the ducks and geese which fly from India to Seistan, perhaps after coming into contact with a corpse thrown into a river. But here another difficulty arose: wild geese and ducks fly north-westwards from India in the spring, and the first case of plague occurred in November. It is possible that the infection was really introduced in spring, but was not propagated till autumn.

Selfish and thoughtless men worked in the interests of the devouring bacilli. The famine which prevailed everywhere enfeebled the people, and rendered them more liable to disease. Under ordinary circumstances large quantities of the grain harvest are bought up by a few rich persons,