

ages of exposure intervene between the different floods; there we have two basins, here only one. The previous year the Hamun basin had been practically dry. Water, however, always remained in its deepest hollows, becoming brackish. In the winter 1905-6 three oscillations had been noticed in the Hilmend, in the middle of December, at the end of January, and in the middle of March. The last was still in progress, and would attain its maximum in two months, and the river would be at its lowest in August. Then from October another rise begins. It depends on the melting of snow and on rain in the mountains, while the former two are due only to rain.

The delta of the Hilmend is converted at the time of high water into a single lake, huge sheets of water covering the beds and hollows. Large quantities of silt are carried down yearly, and level the surface. When the water has vanished, the wind begins its work of excavation. The lower Hilmend has moved to the west during the last thirty years, as may be seen from Goldsmid's maps. From Bend-i-Seistan the water spreads out in delta arms, one of which runs north-westwards, and they were its ramifications that we crossed on April 9.

Seistan has long been a bone of contention between Persia and Afghanistan, chiefly on account of the valuable irrigation water and its apportionment between the two States, a dispute not easy to decide during seasons when the river is small. The work of the English Commission under General Sir Frederic Goldsmid, which in 1872 had the task of arranging matters, was of little use when the river changed its bed twenty-four years later. A war had almost broken out when England, by virtue of the Treaty of Paris of 1837, was chosen as arbitrator between the two States. The leader and head of the large and thoroughly well-organized Commission was Colonel Sir Henry M'Mahon. Its thorough and exhaustive work occupied two and a half years, being concluded in 1905. The Commission divided the water-supply between the two contracting parties in a manner which ought to have satisfied both. Nevertheless the Persians grumbled, and expressed their dissatisfaction.