

Nasratabad, the one village, could hardly give supplies for a hundred men, and everything for an army would have to be brought from Sistan. Yet the route was once so important that strong fortifications, caravanserais, and other ancient ruins occur at frequent intervals, as do also kanats or canals. Of the last 90 miles Smith (p. 248) says that at both of the two possible stopping-places "water was obtainable by digging wells 5 feet deep, but it was brackish and bad; and at the latter place there is a stream so salt and bitter that none of our animals would even touch it." Sykes (*a*, p. 417) describes the same route in equally uncomplimentary terms:

Gurg (the first stage) is generally considered to be the worst stage in this part of the desert, the pools of water being quite undrinkable. . . . In summer, owing to the heat, Gurg is little better than a death-trap, and here, more than elsewhere, the abomination of desolation is realized. . . . At Shurgaz (the next stage) the water was just a little better, but so scanty that there was none for the camels.

At the end of the third day, after marching over a hundred miles through the worst part of the desert, a better region was reached. "A day's halt was imperative, as our camels could hardly move." That a large army could cross such a desert is hardly credible; that such an army should have no hardships worthy of mention by the historian is less credible; and that they could bring elephants with them is least credible.

The elephants of Krateros are not the only ones mentioned in history. Malcolm (I, p. 35) speaks of them as abundant in antiquity in the kingdom of Persia, as is shown by both the ancient history and the sculpture of the country. Mazanderan is the only part of the country that could now support them, but they are spoken of in other places.

Another interesting commentary on the climate of antiquity is afforded by a comparison of a description of the province of Kirman as it is to-day, by Sykes (p. 44), and as it was in the past by Strabo (quoted by Sykes, p. 48). The modern description runs: "The whole province can best be described as partly desert, pure and simple, and partly desert tempered by oasis. . . . As may be supposed, the rivers are unimportant." The ancient description is scarcely longer, but conveys a wholly different impression: "Kirman . . . lies more to the north than Gedrosia. This is indicated by its fertility, for it not only produces everything, but the trees are of large size. . . . It is also watered by rivers. . . . It includes also a desert tract which is contiguous to Parthia." Even since the twelfth century there has been deterioration, for in numerous cases ancient Mohammedan towns are abandoned and can not be restored because no water can be procured.

THE DESICCATION OF ANCIENT RUINS.

The ruins of Eastern Persia and the neighboring countries are incredibly abundant. The mighty cities of the dead crowding the shores of the lake of Sistan in the center, and the abundant vestiges of a former population much denser than the present in Kirman to the west, Baluchistan to the south, and the Helmund Valley to the east, have already been mentioned. Examples might be multiplied indefinitely, for the tale of every traveler is full of them. North of Sistan the same is true. Half-way from Herat to Kandahar the plain of Dasht-i-Bakwa, where, according to