

an Afghan prophecy, a great battle will some day take place between the English and the Russians, is now inhabited only by nomads, although this has by no means always been the case. Yate (p. 11) "found the plain covered with the marks of old karezes, or underground water-channels, and it had evidently been thickly populated by a cultivating class at some time, while water was said to be obtained all over it. When I passed it was all a waste." Ferrier, in the same region, describes the ruins of city after city. To a certain extent these might be restored to prosperity under good government, but there are certain places which no amount of government, good or bad, could affect.

NEH.

The ruins of Neh, called Kala Shah Duzd, or the Castle of King Thief, illustrate this point admirably. They are located 60 miles west of the northern end of the lake of Sistan. They have been described by Sykes (p. 413), who says:

"Neh . . . is undoubtedly a site of great antiquity, and must have been a place of importance. . . . At the present time nine routes radiate from the town. Ancient Neh . . . three miles to the east of the more modern fort, is built on a hill only accessible on the west side, and is carefully guarded by . . . a line of bastioned wall. . . . Lying up the steep hill-side are thousands of houses, built of unhewn stone fitted together with mortar the summit being some six hundred feet above the plain. The other faces are perpendicular, but the water supply seemed insufficient, there being only tanks, so far as could be seen. The area covered was quite four acres, and these are certainly the most important ruins which I have examined in Eastern Persia."

It seems to me that Sykes, who is usually very accurate, has overestimated the size and importance of the ruins. I estimated that there were at least 300 houses still standing, possibly 500, and there may have been as many more which have fallen. As to the paucity of the water-supply, these questions seem to be not whether there are cisterns enough, but how the cisterns were filled. I counted five large cisterns, all of them located near the top of the hill. One was located in the mouth of a small valley, where it might possibly be filled several times in the year if the drainage from among the surrounding houses were allowed to pour into it. The others were placed at the very crest of the hill, where they were not only surrounded by houses, but had only the most limited drainage areas, so that the rainfall of a whole year under present conditions would hardly fill them, even if the drainage from the streets were allowed to come in. If the place were simply a fortress we might suppose that water was laboriously carried up the steep hill from the plain 600 or 700 feet below and stored for time of need, although there is now no source of water within 2 or 3 miles. The number and permanence of the houses and the fact that many of them lie outside the fortifications, even though there are open spaces inside, indicate that the place was a permanent town. If the inhabitants were agriculturists their fields must have been far away; if they were artisans and tradesmen their number is surprisingly large in proportion to the present possibilities of the surrounding country. If the rainfall were greater there would be no difficulty in understanding the location of Kala Shah Duzd, for the cisterns could be filled, fields could be cultivated nearby, and the surrounding plains could support villages which would warrant the building of a large fortress and town. It is not absolutely impossible that such a place should grow up under