

must have been agricultural, but agriculture is to-day impossible in the neighborhood of their village. In the first place, more than half the region round about is covered with sand-dunes. In the second place, irrigation is impossible, and without irrigation agriculture is utterly impossible, as the Turkomans know to their cost. Bal Kuwi lies in the course which the Anau stream would pursue if it should be prolonged. At present, however, even in the greatest floods, when no water is taken off upstream for irrigation, the floods are lost in the desert before coming half-way from Anau to Bal Kuwi. Between their point of disappearance and Bal Kuwi lie some miles of sand-dunes, through which it is evident that water never passes. In brief, Bal Kuwi appears to have been an agricultural village, but under present conditions that would be impossible. If in some way the Anau stream could be caused to increase its volume so as to flow farther out into the desert, the old condition might be restored. Bal Kuwi seems to be a parallel case to Shah Duzd and Merv, and to many other ruins in this part of the world.

THE NORTHERN BORDER OF THE DASHT-I-LUT.

One more illustration will suffice to show the uniformity with which depopulation has gone on over the whole of Eastern Persia and its neighbors. Lord Curzon (p. 255) made a rapid journey along the high-road from Meshed to Teheran, which skirts the northern border of the great Persian desert.

For the entire distance of 560 miles there is frequent and abundant evidence that the country traversed was once more densely or less sparsely populated, and for that reason more carefully tended, than it is at present. The traveler passes towns which have been entirely abandoned, and display only a melancholy confusion of tottering walls and fallen towers. He observes citadels and fortified posts which have crumbled into irretrievable decay and are now little more than shapeless heaps of mud. He sees long lines of choked and disused kanats, the shafts of the underground wells by which water was once brought to the lands from the mountains. The walls of the cities are in ruins and exhibit yawning gaps; the few public buildings of any note are falling to pieces; rows of former dwellings have been abandoned to dust-heaps and dogs.

From other more detailed accounts of this same region it appears that the ruins are of all ages, from two thousand to twenty years, and that the country has been subjected to a gradual process of ruin and depopulation. Practically all writers on Persia agree that in the time of Darius and as late as early Mohammedan times the country was decidedly more prosperous and more populous than now; and the area of cultivation and the visible supply of water in canals and kanats, or underground channels, were much greater.

THE CAUSE OF THE DEPOPULATION OF IRAN.

Several theories have been advanced in explanation of the gradual ruin of Persia and its neighbors, but all of them can be summed up under two. According to one school, in which Curzon is the most prominent writer, the climate of Persia has remained practically unaltered throughout historical time. The decay of the country is due to wars and massacres and the frightful misgovernment which has prevailed century after century. If a strong, just government were established the former conditions of prosperity would be restored. The progress which has been made under British rule in the arid portions of India and under Russian rule in