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THE BASIN REGION OF IRAN: MORPHOLOGY AND CLIMATE

OSKAR VON NIEDERMAYER. **Die Binnenbecken des Iranischen Hochlandes.** 59 pp.; map, diags., ills., bibliogr. Munich, 1920. 9 x 6½ inches.

The paper is based on a journey of scientific exploration (wissenschaftliche Forschungsreise) in 1912-1914 and on a twofold crossing of Persia and Afghanistan (the object and route of which are not stated) during the "war years" 1915-1916. The text begins with a brief description of the general tectonic characteristics and geological formation of what the author calls the "highland" of Iran, but which others call the "basin region." Difference in altitude between the edges and depressions is discussed, and then comes a long and excellent section on the present climate. A page or two is devoted to the rivers, and then follows the main body of the work, a series of sections devoted to a generalized description of the basins, with examples to illustrate details.

Good descriptions are given of the gravelly wastes on the edges of the basins, the deposits of sand, clay, and salt in their lower portions, the terraces which surround the old lake beds, and the peculiar breaking of the saline lake deposits into polygons. An excellent feature is a classification of the basins according to their stage of development, first genuine salt lakes, then temporary lakes, next swamps, and finally mere flat-floored depressions which are never covered with water.

The last quarter of the text is devoted to the question of climatic changes. Niedermayer agrees with practically all previous students of the problem as to the great change that has taken place since the glacial period but is sceptical as to a progressive change of climate during historical times. The reviewer's work on "The Basin of Eastern Persia and Sistan" (pp. 219-317 of "Explorations in Turkestan, with an Account of the Basin of Eastern Persia and Sistan, Expedition of 1903, under the Direction of Raphael Pumpelly," *Carnegie Instn. Publ. No. 26*, Washington, D. C., 1905) is taken as typical of the hypothesis of progressive climatic change and comes in for a good deal of criticism, all of which is reasonable and friendly. The chief arguments against the hypothesis are the old familiar statements that rivers change their courses, irrigated fields become saline and must be abandoned, wars produce devastation, and bad government works havoc. All of this is true but has no bearing on the question of whether the present total water supply is sufficient to support as large and prosperous a population as we know to have existed in Persia and its neighboring countries in past times. As a final argument Niedermayer states that the reviewer must be wrong because he does not take due account of periodic changes such as Brückner has found in the Caspian Sea, nor of a dry period in post-glacial times. Hence his final conclusion is that "in Turan as well as in Iran great changes have taken place in the conditions of precipitation; whether they are nonperiodic or periodic we do not yet know, and if the latter we shall not soon learn the length of the period, since in any event they are clearly longer than the 35-year Brückner period." This is interesting, for it is exactly the conclusion reached by the reviewer in "The Pulse of Asia" and amplified in "Palestine and Its Transformation," "The Climatic Factor," and "The Solar Hypothesis of Climatic Changes." If Niedermayer had kept track of the literature in English on his main subject (it should be remarked that the bibliography of 93 titles includes only three non-German works published since 1907), his paper would presumably have been quite different. It may be, however, that his independent conclusions as to the instability of post-glacial climates are more valuable than if they had been influenced by the work of others.

ELLSWORTH HUNTINGTON

CORRESPONDENCE

Boston, Massachusetts, December 18, 1920

To the Editor of the "Geographical Review":

My attention has been called in a letter from G. H. Knibbs, Esq., Commonwealth Statistician, to an error in my review of Sir Timothy A. Coghlan's "Labour and Industry in Australia from the First Settlement in 1788 to the Establishment of the Commonwealth in 1901" in the *Geographical Review* of last April-June. Mr. Coghlan, while at the head of the Statistical Department of New South Wales for many years, did not bear the title of