

“frontiers between the Persians and the Turks, three days’ distance from Baghdad, where
 “it was due to join the army: while I with the guide went to the caravan. I took the letters
 “and at once we mounted and rode all the night long and the next day in order to catch
 “up the captain. We did 20 leagues and found him towards evening of the following day,
 “one mile from the frontier boundary. He sent for me and bade me sit down near him.
 “Hardly had I dismounted than it was necessary to march on again, without my having had
 “a rest or eaten during the 20 leagues¹ we had done. It was all uninhabited country, being
 “on the frontier and mountainous. The captain told me that one mile further on he would
 “halt, in order to assault a neighbouring town by night, and thence he would raid the
 “country as far as Baghdad: he told me to stop there with some soldiers who would be
 “left to guard their things until his return which would be in two or three days’ time.
 “From having marched the whole day and the previous night without feed or rest my horse
 “was unable to go any farther, so I could not follow the ‘sultan’. That night I remained
 “with 3 or 4 soldiers, I did not know whether friends or enemies, in the open, fearing every
 “hour to be captured by Turks, within whose territory and frontiers we already were.
 “In the morning together with ten other soldiers, who had kept us company for the night,
 “we went to look for the captain: we reached the place where the baggage was and found
 “he had left. I had brought nothing to eat with me: we were in the desert: and the soldiers
 “were without anything for themselves, because each one was carrying only a little flour,
 “as we were marching with such speed. I did not dare to let myself be seen by anyone
 “as we were on the Turkish frontier, and a large town called Mandali² was only a mile
 “away, and we were expecting attack any hour. The Turks did not do so, because they
 “took this to be the army of the king of Persia, and he himself with it. We waited for the
 “captain there four days, in which we ate wild thistles and the little flour or grain which
 “one of them gave me out of charity. Finally every man’s provisions were exhausted
 “and there were no more thistles to be found. I had left the quilt in the caravan, and
 “they had robbed me of the felt³ I had, so that at night I suffered much from the cold, and
 “at times I was soaked by the rain. . . . Some ‘Turks’ in the town near by . . . had
 “compassion on me, and gave me some wild thistles which they were collecting. On the
 “fourth day the ‘captain’ returned with great booty—10,000 sheep, 1,000 horses, many
 “oxen, cows, buffaloes, some boys and women prisoners, and other spoils.

“I went to see him: he told me that it was impossible to get through, because I could
 “see for myself how he had plundered them, so that the whole countryside was up, and
 “they would not allow anyone coming from Persia” (to pass). “I commended myself
 “to the Lord, and had a talk with his confidential man, whose palms I had first greased,
 “begging him to persuade the captain to give me a guide, determined to go through to
 “Baghdad. He did so and came to tell me that the captain had sent for me, and that
 “it would be necessary to make him a gift of something. I went there, and presented to
 “him one of those gold medals, weighing 17 sequins, which Pope Clement VII had given
 “us, and another 10 sequins. He made me sup with him: then we went into his tent.
 “He warned me of the great danger there was in going to Baghdad: if however I were
 “determined to go, he would give me a Darwish to accompany me, but it would be necessary
 “to leave behind the horse and everything else, and go clothed as a poor man.

“I answered that I would do anything. He had brought to me a pair of drawers of
 “black drill torn in rags, and a shirt in a thousand pieces, a small cap, no shoes or stockings
 “but only a piece of leather to be tied to the soles of my feet with string: in a knapsack were
 “the books which the Shah of Persia was sending for Cardinal Cinthius, the Bible in which
 “I had the letters from the king, a breviary, the diary of my journey, two vocabularies,
 “one of Russian, the other of Turkish words, the letters and a little bread and cheese

¹ At least 75 miles.

² This would appear to be Mandali, the usual habitat of the Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh, a great tribal magnate, in recent times.

³ The Persian *namad*, sleeveless cloaks of wool macerated into stiff felt, as worn by shepherds and tribesmen keep one warm.