

“barley-bread. I commended myself to the Lord and resolved to go that same day to Baghdad, 8 leagues away. I joined company with some men on their way there: they were on horseback, and trotting in order to arrive in daylight, so it was necessary for me too to ‘trot’, as I had no guide with me and did not know the road.

“I reached Baghdad, 20th April (1608), with fever, more dead than alive. The guards at the gate ran to see who I was. Unable to go a step more, I sat down and told them that I was a Frank. When they saw me so poor and weak, they had compassion on me, and sent a man to show me a hospice or caravansarai where, they said, there were a number of Franks. They had all gone. There was a gentile there who knew how to speak Portuguese, and who kept me there that night and sent one of his people to buy me something to eat. In the morning with my money he purchased for me a shirt, a pair of drawers, a tunic and shoes, etc., and directed me to the shop of a Hebrew, who could talk Spanish and was friendly with Franks. This Hebrew received me courteously, engaged a room for me and from his house sent food for me. During the ten days I was in Baghdad every day we were together and ate together . . . he told me of a renegade Maltese, who was on close terms with the Pasha and professed to show favour to Franks. I went to seek him. . . . I was continually in a fright and, although I still had fever, sickness and diarrhoea, I determined to leave. We found a trusty courier, who has a wife and house in Baghdad, an Arab, acquainted with the desert, who contracted to guide me across the desert to Aleppo in 40 days. He wanted 30 gold ducats. So that he should not play some trick, the renegade Maltese (who called himself Ja’far Bashi) . . . disbursed part of the money, binding himself to pay the balance whenever he (the guide) returned with a letter from me. He purchased for me a mule for 30 piastres, a little biscuit and provender for the journey, but with my money, and obtained permission from the Pasha for this courier to leave—all this with much charitableness. He compelled me to stay for two days before my departure in his house, where he entertained me with fowls, although I could not eat. . . . On the 1st May (1608) I had myself bled, and although I could not stand . . . I slept the night in the house of the courier on the other side of the river.

“Baghdad is as large as Naples, but with a small population. There are many ruined buildings. The country is very fertile, there is an abundance of supplies and a good market: there is no wine, but many dates. Through the middle of it flows the river Tigris, which contains many good fish. . . . The inhabitants of Baghdad are ‘Turks’ by creed: they appear a good folk and know three languages—Persian, Turkish and Arabic, which is their natural tongue. Formerly it was a city with great trade on account of the caravans arriving from India and passing by to go to Aleppo; but now it is ruined, because the Pasha, who is in rebellion against the Sultan of Turkey, in order to pay his soldiery has robbed and killed the richest merchants, the others have fled, and out of fear caravans no longer go to Baghdad. “The Pasha is a young man—he was a private soldier, who by violence became Pasha. He has 12,000 soldiers (rebels against the Turk) and he leans on the Shah of Persia, and a few months ago slew another (Pasha), whom the Sultan was sending to govern the city, massacring all the fifty men whom that man had brought as escort, and appropriating what they had.

“On the 2nd May I quitted Baghdad: we travelled 13 days to Aleppo, always by the desert, only touching the road half-way at Ana, an Arab town situated on the banks of the Euphrates, where I slept in the house of a Hebrew. All the rest of the way was desert, where we saw no one, nor was there any road. . . . The countryside is but little inhabited, and the few people there are Arab shepherds living in tents near the Euphrates. Every day in May the heat was exceedingly great: they had reaped the corn a month previously in Baghdad. We slept in the open, our food biscuit and water. We marched day and night, and did not rest for more than 4 hours in the day. Caravans do this journey in one month and mostly along the bank of the river Euphrates. . . . The Lord God was gracious to me, in that, although I had set out with fever and was very weak,