

“interpreter that we did not eat meat, one of them sent us two very fine fish and a great quantity of apples which come from Persia and at that season were much prized in the city.

“This people here” (i.e. the Baghdadis) “are altogether and without exception the most civil of all we have till now met in Muslim lands, and most disposed to show politeness to foreigners, in particular to Religious, so that when we passed through the streets the better class among them were the most prompt to greet us and pay us courtesies, some of them giving us roses and flowers, others inviting us to enter their gardens, of which there are many inside the city and outside, most of them full of orange trees, palms and other fruit trees . . .”

The two Carmelites had attacks of fever.

“. . . This happened in Holy Week, when, God giving us courage to continue to fast in the Roman style, notwithstanding that they told us that according to the custom in India it was permissible to eat eggs and milk foods, as did the Portuguese merchant. He also gave us strength to sing the Office solemnly on those three last days of the Passion in the presence of all Christians living in that house, to their consolation and ours: with some poor candles we had arranged a still poorer altar, had the door closed and begged them to put aside all their business affairs: during those three days we got them to keep us company and in the same way would have said Mass on Easter day and given Communion to those good people, who had one after the other already made their confessions, if we had been able to find in Baghdat grape wine, the little wine there is to be found there being made of dried raisins boiled in water and a mixture of dates and like things, which was not suitable for consecration.

“We stayed 29 days in that city, deceived by a Persian head muleteer, who had promised us four days after Easter to leave and get us to Isfahan in 20 days and who finally, when almost compelled by force, decided to set off on the night of the 10th May. The caravan was rather large: besides a train of 50 or more” (beasts) “there were more than 100 travellers, the majority of them with their bows and among them some 15 arquebusiers: all the same, this road being very dangerous, more so than any other highway whatsoever in the land of the Turks, and as we had news that here a few days previously a large caravan had been plundered, we proceeded apprehensively and with a caution beyond measure noteworthy. The two headmen of the caravan divided all those fit for fighting into several separate groups: so marching in good order from place to place they made the arquebuse-men go on ahead and hold the more perilous passes on the road. Having marched for the three first nights in that order—for we were obliged to halt during the day on account of the great heat—on the fourth, on which we were due to pass a big river across from Turkish territory into that of the king of Persia, there came news from some peasants that 50 mounted Arabs were waiting to rob us at a certain pass. The fear and confusion, which thereupon arose in the caravan, was exceeding great. . . . Having set off, therefore, according to our advice the same evening, and marched all the night away from the road, sending on two men far in advance to reconnoitre the country, we finally found our way at sunrise to that river which divides the Turkish from the Persian dominions. The water had risen to such a height that it reached the horses’ cruppers, so that it took us no little to do to cross, and much more labour they had to get the loaded animals across, and much time was lost in preventing them being submerged. At last all were safely across, and those Muslims made many signs of delight at finding themselves on Persian soil, where robbers in particular are rigorously pursued, and out of danger. . . . All the people dwelling in those parts up to near Isfahan, i.e. for more than 20 days’ journey, are of the Kurdish race for the most part: they live in great poverty and nakedness, after the manner of the Arabs dwelling in tents, and maintain themselves from what they can get out of the few cattle they pasture. . . .”