

cannot speak Arabic. Our host was very hospitable, and gave us a good dinner, and on the 8th we left for Mendili. Such torrents of rain and such mud as we had to go through to-day I never witnessed before, from 8 A.M. to 6 P.M. The poor beasts of burden toiled on. The whole country pouring with rivers of water. I was quite surprised that none broke down, and in the evening we found ourselves most comfortably entertained by a rich Jew named Sassoon, to whom Mr. Waitman, when he left with the Wally, had given me a letter of introduction. Here again we were delayed, and puzzled to know what to do. The straight road by Beledruz to Bagdad was reported to be impassable on account of heavy rains. A muleteer arrived who had lost four mules in the water near Beledruz. The Turkish side of the frontier is as sparsely populated as the Persian. Everywhere in the great plains of the Tigris there are the remains of ancient irrigation canals and ruins of old towns, telling of prosperity and plenty where now all is desolation. We waited for two days, greatly enjoying the kindness of the Jews, and by our host's advice started on the 10th for an encampment of the Nida Arabs, four hours distant, where, as he said, we could inquire the state of the road to Beledruz, and, if it was still impassable, go by the longer route to Shahraban.

"11th.—The Arabs assured us that the water on the Beledruz road had gone down, that it had been up to a man's neck and was now not much above the knees, and that it was quite near us, not further than we had come yesterday, viz : four hours. Took guides from them in addition to our guards, and started long before sunrise. Found it took us eight hours instead of four. After wading for about three hours through the most adhesive mud I ever passed through, came out on a nice piece of dry ground within a farsang of Beledruz, where we found a few Arab tents. Oh, the comfort of feeling *terra firma* under the poor horses' feet, and of cups of coffee dealt freely to us all with Arab hospitality round a fire in the tent! And still more the assurance which the Arabs gave us, that the road was good, the water of the river (as I ignorantly supposed) gone down, and the sight of the date groves of Beledruz, within three miles of us!

"A FEARFUL MARSH.—But alas! our comforts were soon dissipated. It is no exaggeration to say I shall never forget the horrors of those three miles. I thought nothing of a river up to the saddle girths; but it was no river—it was more than two miles of the most fearful marsh I ever saw. No mule on earth could carry his burden through it. We were in it before we knew where we were. Everywhere the water was up to the horses' knees, and every two or three minutes the poor animals would plunge down into a hole up to their girths. Each mule was prostrate in a different hole, quite unable to regain its feet. Dogs were feeding around us on the carcases of other mules which had yielded up the ghost to the Demon of the Marajeh, as it is called, and I thought ours would share their fate. I got off my horse, and walked about in the water, and had the loads heaped up, selfishly taking care to put some merchants' wares which the muleteer had on other mules under our bedding and clothes; and then having sent one of our guards in one direction, George Mackertich and I went to the town for help; and all was brought safely out, but most of our things well drenched again. *Thank God my Persian translation escaped as by a miracle!*

"Three marches more brought us to Bagdad, on the 14th, having been sixty-two days en route from Ispahan. You must not fancy that travelling in Persia is generally like this, and I hope I have not tired you with detail. The heavy rains which gave us so much trouble are the greatest blessing to this land, and already the robbers have been put down."

At Bagdad a house has been obtained for a depot, George Mackertich has been installed, and a well-qualified colporteur from Tiflis sent to join him. Mr. Bruce, who had been applying himself with his companion to the study of