

## **Friday 1 April 1921**

Today was one of those days on which nothing happens: except that under the orders of the G.O.C. Baghdad Area, Topees are to be worn by the military personnel from today onwards. So I ventured forth in my big white topee (which is not nearly so comfortable as an ordinary hat to wear) and was quite surprised to find most Europeans wearing them. It is the thing for civilians to obey the orders of the G.O.C., as well as the military. As a matter of fact, the sun is gaining power every day, and is almost overhead at 12 o'clock. The grass in parts of the golf course is beginning to shrivel up but in most of the gardens, which are irrigated, flowers and trees are now in full bloom, and everything looks so flourishing and generous under the gorgeous sun that it seems hard to believe that in 2 or 3 months time everyone will be walking about with their tongues hanging out - horses, dogs and chickens too, just the same. During the summer months everyone (Military) is entitled to a free ration of ice - we are entitled, "J" Mess, I mean, to 30lbs daily. If it weren't for the ice, everything would get too hot to drink!

## **Saturday 2 April 1921**

Today has been brilliantly fine during the morning - although thin clouds began to form in the afternoon and gradually got thicker until the whole sky was over-clouded by night time.

Padre Webb and I went up to the Baghdad Sporting Club in the afternoon for golf. I played pretty well but was disappointed with myself. I have the feeling that I can do every hole in about 4 or 5 strokes, but often take even 8. However, two holes I did in "bogey" and one in "one under bogey". I am beginning to drive much better and often manage 200 yards or over. I went round in 109 - but I had some appalling bad luck, being in the bunkers several times.

When we came back for tea, we found that our car had gone home (or rather the driver had taken it) so I had to order a fresh car to come up for us. This turned up - only after a great deal of trouble and temper had been expended - at 7.00pm. In the meantime we

did the first 9 holes again and I played much better. After dinner, Townsend and I went down to the R.A.P.B. Concert at South Gate. It was really extremely good and Townsend gave a first rate show.

### **Sunday 3rd April 1921**

Up at 5.30 this morning and dressed and found outside our street door the motorcar and lorry I had ordered yesterday for the purpose of fetching Mr Pickard on his arrival at Baghdad West Station. He had started by the 10pm train from Basrah on Friday and the train arrived here at 7.15am Sunday morning only 3/4 hour late. On these journeys you take all your bedding, nightclothes and toilet articles, and manage fairly comfortably. Your servant gets your shaving and washing water from the engine when it stops somewhere. The Railway Company provide meals at reasonable rates at certain stations and stops the train for the purpose. All the passengers get out and feed. I bought Pickard home and installed him in our mess, next room to mine. During the morning we had a walk round the Bazaars and bought various articles and bargained for carpets and camel bells without intending to buy.

I wrote in the afternoon and went to Church at 6, had a good dinner, played ping-pong and went to bed very tired. However, I am happier now that Pickard has come up - he will take a lot off my shoulders and make things much easier.

### **Monday 4 April 1921**

Yesterday evening a fairly severe rainstorm broke over Baghdad, and persisted during intervals until morning. Nothing so severe as we get in England although we had some thunder and lightning. The roads were rather muddy in the morning but were dry again by midday. It was a godsend to some of the Arab gardeners, I understand, notwithstanding the water obtained by irrigation works. Everything is growing fast here now and the flowers one gets in England about the end of May are in full bloom here. The marigold is a favourite plant and grows about 18 inches high, wallflowers, hollyhocks, poppies, delphiniums, sweetpeas, stocks, sunflowers and so on - and in a day

or so, thousands of roses will be in bloom. The trees are nearly all in full leaf and the orange trees are getting ready to blossom.

Padre Webb and I went up to the Sporting Club and had a round of golf. I did no better than on Saturday on the whole, but I think I am improving as I did two successive holes in bogey.

This morning I went to Holy Communion as I had missed on Sunday and stayed for morning Prayer.

### **Tuesday 5 April 1921**

It is beginning to warm up now, so that the walk to the office in the morning is not the rather welcome exercise it used to be, and today I had the car call for us at 8am for the first time. If I am getting all this golf, I can go short of a little morning exercise! Horton rang me up in the morning and arranged to call for me at 2pm. So in the afternoon up again to golf, again I went and again did only fairly. The last 4 or 5 times I have managed to go round the 18 holes in 108 or 109, and I did the same today. Yesterday I drove splendidly - today I couldn't drive at all, but my mid field work was better, so I think I am improving on the whole. We had tea on the Club lawn - really quite delightful. Nice thick grass, well mown and flat, all surrounded by gardens full of green and flowers. The air, too, is delightful out there, so different from stuffy Baghdad and it reminds me of Hampton in that way. I always used to fancy I noticed a change in the air as soon as I got to Hampton. It is the same here, the Sporting Club being 2 miles out with little traffic there, the air is breezy and cool and clean compared with Baghdad.

### **Wednesday 6 April 1921**

Today I had an afternoon at home - or rather I did not go golfing. Instead I intended to do an afternoons writing, but Pickard wanted to go out for a walk - so I went with him and as a result we didn't get back until 4.30, late for tea and no writing got done. Pickard is a keen photographer and wants to get some pictures showing local colour. We walked round and watched the wood turners at work, the

native women squatting down selling "Khubz", or Arab bread, the Kurd coolies or porters carrying their tremendous loads, the money-changers squatting in Exchange Square with their heaps of notes or money on pieces of sack in front of them, the native auctioneers holding auctions amid indescribable din, the Arab saddlers and trunkmakers, Arab shoemakers making the red shoes (like those I sent home for Joan and Sylvia) and dozens of other craftsmen all working in their little shops. When one takes out one's camera, looking about for likely photos to take, one notices much more of the sights of the place. One of the interests of Baghdad is its native craftsmen all making the things they sell - which is a thing one seldom sees in England, where everything is made in factories and sold wholesale.

With all this it must be remembered that each shop is not 6 feet square and yet sometimes there are half-a-dozen working in it. Or if there is not room inside they sit outside and work on the path. Even outside our own door, which has iron-workers on either side, they bring their work out onto the path if they have a big job on. In the coppersmiths bazaar, most of the work is done outside, but the men who do the thinning of the copper work inside because they have a fire and bellows to work. The tailor works inside his shop and so does the dyer, but the latter often hangs his dyed material outside to dry! The embroiderer is an interesting man to watch, working as he does in gold and silver and red metallic thread. All these workers are men. One never sees a woman working outside the house except the women selling khubz and eggs. There is no question of female labour competing with the men. Men even make the tea and coffee in the native Cafes. Small children (boys) are often employed, but never women. All of this is of the most intense interest, and if it were not for the necessity of exercise, I expect I should spend half my time in the Bazaars.

### **Thursday 7 April 1921**

Horton arranged during the morning to pick up Capt. Mackenzie, of G.H.Q., and call for Padre Webb and me to take us all down to the Sporting Club for an afternoons golf. He called just as I was

arranging with our cook for tonights dinner and so I delayed them, as usual. (There is a good deal to arrange in our domestic affairs even with 8 servants.) However we got down to the Club and I partnered MacKenzie, who has the reputation of being a good player. Just because I wished to play well I played badly and Mackenzie beat me 5 up on the 18 holes. MacKenzie played badly, too, perhaps it was the wind, which was very gusty. However tea on the Sporting Club lawn restored our tempers. Some very swagger girls (wives of English men in Baghdad) were there for "The Dansant" - not on the lawn but in the Club house, to the strains of an Arab Jazz Band.

In the evening we had Padre Hutchings and Capt. Horton to dinner and our cook put up a very good meal. On these nights we indulge in liqueurs and things and our ping-pong afterwards was very merry. Our guests always enjoy themselves and there is more than one Officer in Baghdad who would like to join our Mess. Anyway we had a jolly evening and our guests went home happy and contented.

### **Friday 8 April 1921**

Today I went down to Hinaidi Station to see the latest method which has been suggested by the Mesopotamian Railways for preventing theft of goods en route. Hitherto it has been no extra-ordinary thing for a gang of robbers to board a train between the stations and completely loot the contents of several trucks; which have arrived at their destination empty. So much so that it became safe only to travel by day and stand still, under an armed guard, at night. A system of putting locks on trunks was tried but the robbers got keys that fitted and succeeded almost as well then. Armed guards were no good, often acting in collusion with the Arab robbers, who are the most expert thieves in the world. Now it is proposed to fasten up the doors with iron rivets at the dispatching station and not to knock them out except in the presence of the consignee. The noise of knocking these rivets out is so great that anyone trying it en route would immediately attract the attention of the guards or other people on the train. It sounds all right, but we have losses by theft etc. elsewhere than on the railways e.g. on board ships, tugs, barges, motor- lorries, carts or pack animals. As a matter of fact we lose

£1000 a day out here, or £365000 a year. We are hoping to be able to bring this down this year, but that has been the figure in the past.

### **Saturday 9th April 1921**

It has been a beautiful day today. A long and arduous morning's work to start with, but that has been compensated by a splendid afternoon's golf. Although Pickard is up here now and has taken over "surplus" work, I still find that I have more than I can comfortably manage with my "stores" work. Proper accounting, except in a minority of instances, has been practically non-existent and there is a lot to do before it is got on to proper lines.

Anyway as regards golf. Horton, with Padre Jaques called for Webb and me and we got down to the Club soon after 2.00 and started round at 2.30. Webb and I played together and I did some quite good holes (and also some quite bad ones) and beat him by 4 holes. We then had tea and as Horton had to be back by 5, Jaques, Webb and I decided to stay on and go round again. I didn't do so well this time - but it got a bit dark by the end. However, we finished all merry and bright and started to walk home. A kind motorist gave Jaques a lift, but Webb and I walked to the North Gate along the dark country road before we got an Arabana (native carriage) to take us the last mile. The night noises were very curious, the different bird and animals all busy with their strange cries. But the strangest of all were the Bull-frogs. It is their breeding season, and their noise was deafening. Thousands of them on each side of the road in the streams and ponds croaking like mad. It is impossible to describe it but it is true to say one could hardly hear the other talk.

### **Sunday 10th April 1921**

This morning to early service (Holy Communion) and back with Mackenzie through the Bazaar. After breakfast I worked at our mess accounts and when Pickard came home from Church I went with him for a walk around the Bazaars and at one place bargained for a fine red silk scarf. The merchant started at 15 Rupees, but Pickard spoiled it by mentioning 10 Rupees, at which price the rogue was

ready to sell. I could have got it for 7 or 8, I think, so I refused to buy and will try another day. We got a good picture of a water-seller, or rather, I hope it will prove to be a good picture. The Tigris is very high today, 7 feet higher than normal, the snows have started to melt in N.W. Persia and Kurdistan, and we hear that it will rise several feet higher yet. It is now flowing at a terrific rate and ordinary traffic up river is stopped.

### **Monday 11th April 1921**

Last night just before dinner, just after I had got home from Church, a terrific dust-storm arose, followed by an absolutely tropical deluge of rain. Generally when it rains it is a gentle rain, but now and again it comes down solid. One is soaked in a couple of minutes. When accompanied by a dust-storm one can only stand still. To go for shelter is impossible. It is impossible to see your hand before you. Of course the dust is soon laid by the rain, but there is nothing more horrible while it lasts. The morning was beautiful after the rain, cool and refreshing: I heard the rains we have had have done a lot of good. I heard this morning, however, that a big Mahela in the storm had crashed through Karradah Bridge (of Boats), just below Baghdad, and that the floods, the river being so high, are doing a lot of damage. Also a herd of water buffaloes had been swept away. They wouldn't drown, I was told, but one by one succeeded in making the banks lower down. We went up to golf in the afternoon, Webb, Jaques and I, and I did very indifferently. I had a little time with the professional who was telling me my faults, which it appears are "too numerous to mention". So I have arranged to have a lesson from him next week, probably Thursday.

In the evening Padres Hutchings and Jaques came to dinner. Cook managed a good dinner and we had a very jolly and enjoyable evening. We played ping-pong and much to our satisfaction administered several defeats to Jaques, our erstwhile conqueror. They stayed very late, however, and I didn't get to bed until 12 - very late indeed for me.

### **Tuesday 12th April 1921**

This afternoon, instead of going out, Pickard and I put in 2 good hours work taking stock of the mess property and furniture, and found a good few breakages had occurred in our glass and crockery. One or two other items of cutlery and so on were missing but I don't know that we can very well make our bearers pay. No- one thinks of charging the servants at home. In some of the messes out here the practice of charging the servants exists and it is claimed that nothing is ever lost or broken in them: the way servants are punished is to deduct so much from their pay, and burn the notes before their eyes. Nothing upsets them so much as that. Mr. Toplis arrived back from Basrah this afternoon, looking much better. He was certainly much more cheerful.

### **Wednesday 13 April 1921**

My birthday - 40 years old today. Nobody believes me when I give my age and I'm sure I don't feel it: I don't think that this country is ageing me, although I have to work hard. Up to quite recently, before Pickard came, it was a real struggle and even with his advent I seem to have as much as I can manage. One's work is what one makes it I suppose - the less one has the more thoroughly one does it; the more one has, one can merely scratch the surface. Well, here I am, 1000 miles from home, living in a Mess with 15 other men - 5 officers and 10 servants! 5 officers and 10 Indians - some of them quite black - and outside the howling mob of Arabs, Jews, Americans, Persians, Kurds, more Indians and God knows who. One more birthday here, I suppose, and then the next at home. I was to have gone out to dinner tonight, but I cried off and had my dinner at home. We had whiskey and liqueurs and everybody drank my health. My mess mates are nice fellows - and I felt that it was something of a birthday party. We were very merry and afterwards at ping-pong played some uproarious games. But my heart was in Hampton village.

### **Thursday 14 April 1921**

The river has been in flood during this week but I hear that it has now gone down a few feet. Had it risen much higher the results might have been serious, not only for Baghdad but the surrounding country which would have been flooded. The Railway Line between Kut and Baghdad has been cut in 5 places by the flood, two great breaches in the bund having been made, and the 99th Infantry, who were proceeding to Kut, are cut off between the two breaches. It is only with great difficulty that rations are being got to them.

In the afternoon Webb, Jaques and I went down to the Sporting Club and the professional being unoccupied I had him to give me a lesson. Most of the time was spent in driving and it took me some time to get out of my wrong methods into his. He also gave a lot of time to teaching me how to use a mashie, and how to putt. I didn't do so badly - so he said - for I was driving half as far again before the finish, and doing some mashie shots that he said were very good, while if I can improve my putting at the same rate I shall save dozens of strokes which I usually throw away on the green. The secret seems to lie in "following the stroke through", putting all the strength one can into the drive, and judging the strength required for mashie shots and putts. We shall see how I do next time I play.

### **Friday 15th April 1921**

It is getting warmer every day and today is a sort of official date for recognising that fact. Today we start to use our fans (electric) for the purpose of cooling our rooms, and today the official issue of ice commences. I get about 6lbs per day. The ice is not for consumption but for the purpose of keeping food good and drinks cool. Practically in the way of medicine. For the same reason mineral waters are very cheap. We supply our own bottles, which are 8 annas each (8d) and the Government fill them for 3 annas a dozen sodawaters, and 12 annas a dozen Lemonades and Ginger Beers. While minerals are so cheap people keep off water - and Beer - and consequently there is less typhoid and dysentery, and the Government saves on hospital expenses.

Last night the temperature in my room was 80 degrees. In England we would find this oppressive, but here it is not so bad, the air being so much drier, and I slept all right. I am even wearing flannel pyjamas still. The night temperature is generally 80 - 95 degrees in the summer months in the early night, but a welcome breeze generally springs up about 3 or 4 am and makes the air much cooler.

### **Saturday 16 April 1921**

Today is the second day of Baghdad Races - a very popular meeting - and consequently cars are very hard to get. However, by a little wrangling, I managed to obtain one and after tiffin went up, with Capt Mackenzie of "Q" Branch G.H.Q., to the Golf Club. I was very anxious to test the results of my lesson by the pro. On the whole I was better, but I had too many bad holes. I went round in 107 strokes, but 48 of these were taken over 6 holes only. This leaves 59 strokes for 12 holes, an average of 1 under 5. Mackenzie is a much better player than I am and beat me by 3 holes. I think that it is clear that practice is what I want and I might be able to get it presently when our office hours alter. Next week we work from 8.15 to 1 and then 2-4 on 3 afternoons, the other 3 afternoons being free.

It was hot playing in the brilliant sun and we were ever so glad of tea, taken on the shady club verandah, under a big electric fan, with the club gardens in front, a mass of flowers. With a cool wind blowing, this is the most welcome feature of the golf, almost!

### **Sunday 17 April 1921**

This morning the Holy Communion Service was taken by the Bishop of Persia, who is paying a visit to Mesopotamia, which is also in his Diocese. He took the service reverently and beautifully and I do not think I have ever been present at a service more beautifully taken. In the morning Pickard and I had a stroll through the Bazaars, and watched for a time the Barbers shaving the heads of natives who already find their hair an inconvenience during the hot weather. The willing victims sit in the open, in the boiling sun, and have their heads just lathered and shaved like an Englishman does his chin.

They are as bald as eggs when done. Or some have a circle of hair shaved off just around the crown say about 4 inches wide, then a ring of bristly hair left about 2 inches wide, and the rest shaved off. They look very funny when done. These men always wear turbans which cover up the whole of the skull. From the Bazaars we went out through the North Gate and walked to the orange gardens. Here we sat in the shade for some time amid the beautiful perfume of the orange blossom, which covers every tree. Fig-trees near by were crowded with green figs, and the date palms had just thrown out their golden clusters of bloom, which become the date later on. We sat in the shade and watched the men and women and children working in the gardens. It was a most pleasant hour and we left it so late that we had to have an Arabana, which fortunately drove by as we came out of the gardens, to take us home. Pickard was immensely interested in the native Arab village I took him through and is coming out another Sunday to take a series of photos.

In the afternoon I wrote as usual, but just after tea, two of our clerks came in to talk over the question of our allowances in Mesopotamia. This delayed my writing so I had to finish it when I came back from Church. The Bishop of Persia preached and made a most eloquent address on the subject of the man who said "Lord I will follow Thee but first I must say good-bye to my parents". After dinner Marsh and I went over our mess accounts and found that we have made a big cut in our expenses which are now for the past month only 1 Rupee 12 annas per day (or with rations, for me, 4 Rupees per day.)

### **Monday 18 April 1921**

Today we started our new hours viz: 8.15 am to 1 pm every morning and 2 to 4 pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoons are to be free. Later on we shall probably work from 7.30am till 1 pm and then finish. Every afternoon off. At present afternoon work is possible, but later on it will be out of the question.

In the morning I prepared what I think is a case strong enough to get a prominent I.W.T. Officer (a major) court marshalled. The Chief

seemed very pleased with it and he has agreed to demand an enquiry on the ground of falsification of accounts. We are giving these I.W.T. people a thorough shaking at last: goodness knows it's almost too late. Swindling and slackness has gone on hand in hand for years and stern steps ought to have been taken before.

During the day our electric light fused and we had to use lanterns and candles when it got dark. Wash, bath and dress, and also have dinner by candle. The engineer people promised to send and see to it at once but no-one turned up. After dinner we had our postponed mess meeting and elected our officers. After a long discussion we decided on Padre Marsh as President of the mess, Padre Webb as President in his absence, Pickard as Treasurer and Accounts Officer and me as officer in charge of stores. As a matter of fact this leaves nearly everything in Marsh's hands but he has most time and is best fitted for the job. But they will never manage to keep the messing down to the figures I have for the past month - 2 Rupees a day (or Rupees 4 annas 4 for me, who has to pay for Rations which Army Officers get free.)

## **Tuesday 19th April 1921**

It has been dark most of the time today and close, and I have been bitten unmercifully by mosquitoes. I shall soon get used to them, I am told, and I fervently hope I shall. At present I want to scratch the spots like h\*\*\*! The afternoon being free I actually went to bed and slept, waking greatly refreshed and ready for tea. Afterwards I wrote 2 letters and while in my bath the light suddenly came on - our cheers deafened the district! After dinner I played Padre Marsh ping-pong and beat him 4 games to 1, much to his surprise. And so with much content, to bed, but I woke up 3 times, hearing a mosquito buzzing around my head. I am getting so funky of the beastly things that their buzzing is sufficient to wake me up. So I jumped out of bed each time and switched on the light but no sign of the wretched insect could I see. I suppose I shall have to put up my mosquito net soon.

## **Wednesday 20 April 1921**

Today completes my 4th month away from home - one-sixth or one-seventh of my tour. The time has passed slowly enough but I suppose it doesn't seem more than 4 months since I said good-bye. Everyone said after the first 3 or 4 months, time will pass ever so quickly. Well now it can start passing as quickly as it likes.

On Monday the Camp Quarter-master Sergeant came to the mess and checked our furniture. As becomes an Auditor I have a complete account of all the Govt. things in the mess and drew from the Q.M.S. the remark that he wished other messes were like mine.

I worked in the office this afternoon and did a good afternoons work, too. When we came back we had tea in my room - ever so nice - and after that a carpet merchant came in and brought a lot of carpets, which we carefully had exhibited and examined - but did not buy any. The merchant left 3 for Pickard to look at and when he comes again we shall have a fierce bargaining over them, I expect. I shan't buy any. I have three - quite enough.

In the evening Neil, now of the Farms Directorate came in and played us at ping-pong. Webb and I had some practice because we are to play the S. and T. Directorate tomorrow. I felt a bit below par, however.

### **Thursday 21st April 1921**

A thoroughly good, but tiring morning's work, getting out the final observations on the I.W.T. Baghdad Accounts, and a pretty hefty lot of observations they are too.

I had arranged with Padre Webb to go golfing with him in the afternoon, and the car duly came and we went off together, although I didn't feel like it much. A pain in the back had developed during the morning and golf made it worse, so that when we had finished I felt it pretty badly. As a consequence I played very badly indeed and could do nothing right. I could not drive or putt, and in fact I got properly downhearted. But there is no doubt that I wasn't well and

like other games, one has to be fit to play golf. As soon as we were back to the billet we bathed and dressed to go to the S. and T. Directorate for dinner although I didn't feel like it much.

However, a Vauxhall car called for us at 7.30 and we ran luxuriously down New Street arriving about quarter to 8 at the S. and T. billet near the South Gate. It is a really gorgeous billet with heaps of room and only 8 officers living in it. A beautiful courtyard with orange trees growing in it and a fine balcony looking out on the river. We had a good dinner and soon afterwards went down to the Surdab for ping-pong. They have a gorgeous table, 10ft by 6ft, a bit too big as a matter of fact, but a noble table all the same, about twice the size of ours. I rather think they thought they were going to "put it over us", but as it so happened, they were mistaken, for we won every game, much to their surprise, both singles and doubles. We excelled ourselves notwithstanding the strange table and beat the four men who are their champions. It was a great night and we worthily upheld "J" mess. We came home again by the Vauxhall about 11 and finding the others still up told them of our famous victory. Great cheers and many congratulations, after which we retired to bed. My back was pretty bad so I rubbed it as well as I could with Esmolin, but without much hope.

### **Friday 22 April 1921**

As I said yesterday the little rubbing which I gave to my back was without much hope - and, sure enough, when I awoke this morning I could hardly get out of bed, I had such an excruciating pain in the back, between the two shoulder-blades. I could just about get up and that was all, and Padre Marsh advised me to stay in bed and have the doctor to see me. When anything happens to one in this country it is the rule to have a doctor - what one thinks may only be a slight illness may actually be something serious. In any case that was the policy I had decided on long ago, so I meekly stayed home and Pickard arranged for the doctor, who came about 12.30 and after having tested my chest and lungs and found them all right, diagnosed my trouble as "muscular rheumatism". I told him that I had had it before, but lower down, and he tells me that if I am liable

to such things I must be very careful when I get hot, not to sit in a draught or under a fan. I expect how I got this was sitting in my bedroom reading after getting very hot at ping-pong the other night. However these little things happening to me now will make me much more careful for the future and be a blessing in disguise.

It is a great boon this free medical attendance out here by an efficient military doctor. We get free dental treatment, too, and I must pay a visit to the military dentist soon and have my teeth inspected in case there is a speck of decay on any of them.

I felt much cheerier after hearing that my malady was only rheumatism and after tea I got up, had a bath, and dressed for dinner. One gets very sticky lying in bed all day in this climate and the change for dinner did me good. Only I was afraid to have my fan on during the night. My friend Pickard gave me a good rubbing when I went to bed.

Padres Webb and Marsh have taken their beds up on the roof tonight and intend to sleep there from today during the hot weather. Everybody does that in the summer, but I must wait a few days I think before I do until my back is better. Then up I go with my camp bedstead and my mosquito net nicely tied and enjoy the cool morning breezes, instead of stewing down-stairs. It is getting too hot at night now, being over 80 degrees in one's bedroom. My back is not so bad tonight so perhaps by the grace of God it will be well enough for me to go to the office tomorrow.

### **Saturday 23 April 1921**

A bit better this morning so dressed and went to the office, and although fairly fatigued at the finish, did a good mornings work.

Nearly everybody is now coming out in light cotton suits, and many in shorts (thin knickers coming to about 1 inch above the knee). Everybody wears topees; it is dangerous to even go out in the sun for a few seconds without head covering at all. At 12 o'clock it is

nearly overhead and one feels the heat very plainly scorching through one's ordinary hat.

After tiffin I thought I had better not go with Webb and Horton to the Sporting Club, as I could not play and the heat might be oppressive simply sitting out there. So I went with Padre Marsh, our mess President, to look at a new billet near by which is being vacated by the accounts officers. It is a fine large roomy billet - but nothing like so compact as ours, nor so clean or nicely painted or filled up. We shall want a good bit spent on it before we accept it.

I strolled in the Bazaar and bargained for a camel bell I have been after for some weeks past, and at last got it for my price, 5 Rupees. It is an old Persian bell, well worth the money, and we are going to use it pro tem for our Mess gong. I am much better tonight and played some ping-pong.

### **Sunday 24 April 1921**

Today my back has been better, and I think it is now on the mend. Whether it is the medicine or Pickard's rubbing, I don't know, probably some of both.

To Sacrament in the morning and afterwards sat at home and read "Miss Haroum At Raschid", a tale of Mesopotamia by Miss J.D.Kerrish, very good indeed, and well worth reading. It is a tale of 30 years ago, but still holds good in most of its local colour. Mesopotamia is very slow to alter and it won't be until the present children are men that it will make much progress.

Pickard had a long and wordy bargain over his carpets and eventually got two for 190 Rupees - not so bad, but not really outstanding bargains. However he's pleased. I wrote all the afternoon as usual and went to Church in the evening with Mackenzie where we listened to an extraordinary sermon on "Second hand Religion".

It was fairly warm today so I put on one of my cotton suits and felt very comfortable in it. Many people at Church were similarly dressed

and there is no doubt that it is "warming up". Pickard took a photo of me in my new suit standing outside my room and proudly exhibiting my carpets, exposure 30 seconds! (I will send along copies in about a fortnight if they are good.)

### **Monday 25 April 1921**

Today was Pickards' birthday and he had proposed to celebrate it by a visit to Babylon in company with Padre Marsh, Padre Alexander and another officer. They had made great preparations for the trip overnight as they were to start early in the morning. I heard their noisy morning preparations, too, and presently Marsh burst into my room to tell me that the other officer had been unable to come, and would I like to go in his place? I said yes, but having made no arrangements with the Chief, told Marsh I must see him first. I dressed in my lightest things and made a hurried breakfast and then motored around to the Chief's billet, where I found him still in bed! He sat up and, half awake, gave me permission, so off we all went, very merry, at 7.30. My back was much better, though not quite right, so I thought this trip might do me some good. We had two cars - one with Marsh and a British driver, with all the provisions and petrol in the back, and the other with Pickard, Alexander and me. Over Khota Bridge, with the Tigris, brown and muddy, still running strongly, we went, hooting loudly through the early morning throngs; past Baghdad West Station and out into the country, over Khirr Bridge, and so past the outer ring of Baghdad Defences, a ring of barbed wire, guarded by Indian troops. The road up to Khirr had been fairly good but now it began to get very bad. In parts the ruts and holes were very treacherous, giving the cars many heavy jolts, and this started our petrol cans leaking. Petrol in this country is canned in 4-gallon tins of very thin tin and the seams start opening and the touch of a sharp point of another tin will make a puncture. We plugged up the holes and transferred the petrol to our car, to look after it the better and avoid it getting into our food. We were now running on the fairly busy road to Kerbela, the sacred Mohammedan City where their saint, Imam Hosein, who was murdered by a rival Caliph, is buried. We passed and were passed by many motor cars and carts carrying devout Mussalmans on their

annual pilgrimage to his shrine. For some way out from Baghdad the country is cultivated in parts and the beautiful "bee-eater", a bird the size of a thrush, brilliant green upper surface and red under, darts about, flashing in the sun. He catches hornets and after beating off their heads against a stone, consumes the animal. I have seen no wasps here, but plenty of hornets, like wasps, but 4 times as big. Soon, however, we were out in the desert and the "road" became a road merely in name. Often the only signs of its existence were the marks of the wheels of other cars and carts and the thick dust traffic had made. We passed through the village of Mahmudiya and soon after, unable to discern where the "road" to Hillah and Babylon turned off (to the left) from the Kerbela Road we went past the point and presently found ourselves in Khan Iskanderiya, the first Khan past Mahmudiya on the way to Kerbela. It consists of a few mud-houses, built of mud bricks, clustered around the Khan, or Inn. The latter consists of a number of rooms and stables, protected by a high wall, roughly square in shape, built round a spacious open square courtyard. The entrance is by a large wooden door which is shut at night to keep marauders out. These are situated at intervals along the desert routes and afford refreshment and rest to the traveller. To those travelling by foot or on horse they are a virtual necessity for no-one dares risk a night out in the desert, without food or water, and in danger of dust or rain storms, or wild animals. I looked inside one, Khan Haswa, but its courtyard was rather untidy, littered with straw and manure, fowls running about and didn't look very inviting.

Well, we had to retrace our road from Khan Iskanderiya for 4 or 5 miles before we hit on the Hillah-Babylon Road. No wonder we had missed it, for it was often merely a track across flat desert, the chief aid to keeping it being that it now ran approximately in the same direction as the Hillah Railway. We enquired now and again if we were on the right road, from itinerant Arabs, but if one strayed far from the "Road" it might be hard to find it again. However we eventually came to the section of the road leading to Babylon ("good" for desert road) and as we did so, came out of the desert into the greener land bordering the Euphrates. Date-palms appeared again and soon we ran into the charming date-grove in which the Rest House is pleasantly situated, on the banks of the river. Here we had

our lunch, and enjoyed it, too, and afterwards started out about 1.30 to explore the ruins and excavations. Marsh made a very good guide and made my second visit as interesting as the first. He pointed out the supposed position of the Lions' Den (where Daniel was thrust) and traced for us and described the Sacred Way, the wonderful stone - paved road which led straight from one side of the old city to the other, along which the statue of the great Babylonian God Marduk passed in procession; and the other gods on their proper festivals. We visited again the Temple of Nin - Makh, the Goddess of Motherhood, to whom the Babylonian wives prayed for children: the Temple of Inger - Bel whose devotees practised the obscene rites still performed by prostitutes and libertines; the Hanging Gardens, the Temple of Nebuchadnezzar, of which only the floor now remains, the broken alabaster capitals of its pillars lying on the ground. There Belshazzar sat with his wives and concubines and in drunken fear saw the writing on the wall. All these excavations are in the Kasr Mound, at the foot of which our cars met us and took us over the intervening country to the Mound of Etem- en-Anki, one of the legendary sites of the Tower of Babel. The name means "Here Heaven and Earth join", and is supposed to refer to the Tower whose great height appeared to reach Heaven. A little further on was the Mound of Marduk where was the Temple of the Great God Marduk. From here we could plainly see through the glasses the other supposed site of the Tower of Babel, the big mound of Birs Nimrod, with the remains still standing of the great tower built by Nebuchadnezzar that inclines many people to the belief that Birs Nimrod was the true site of Babel. We came down and had our tea at the foot of the mound by our cars, and duly refreshed, started back home at 4.30pm. It had been very hot during the afternoon but travelling in our comfortable motor cars there is a refreshing breeze, which keeps me pleasantly cool. We raced along over the desert, making good time and stopped halfway at Mahmudhiya, where at a native Arab Cafe we had Arab coffee and tea. Here we met two Captains of Police going out to Hillah. Dare-devils, I should think, ready for anything, but with a bad opinion of the native. We left again about 6.30 and Marsh in his lighter car forged ahead. We ran in the twilight for some time and then as it darkened our driver switched on his headlights but they only functioned properly for a

little while: one went out quite, the other gave a very poor light. It was now quite dark and this made travelling very difficult, as the way was full of pitfalls especially as we neared Baghdad and if we strayed off the track (as we did once) we might find the greatest difficulty in picking it up again. We were risking a night in the desert, or worse, and this certainly did add some excitement to the ride and gave a spice of adventure which our homeward journey would have lacked otherwise. "Out in the blue" was "out in the black" now but going warily we at last reached the Baghdad Defences and surviving the sentry's challenge passed over the last of the irrigation canals where we found Marsh awaiting us. A little further on was Kherr Bridge and here the Indian sentry we found had refused to let some late Arab travellers through. However, after some rigorous alteration we took them with us, much to their delight. We had seen the lights of Baghdad Railway Station some miles away, and now as we passed them we knew we were absolutely safe. Over Maude Bridge and to the left up New Street, we reached home about 8.15 pm just as the back tyre of our car gave out, punctured.

So ended a very pleasant and successful day, full of experience and teaching. I took a few more photographs though very likely not successful ones. Anyway I slept in my bed soundly, not in a block-house, thank God for that.

I had forgotten to mention the exquisite blue jays of Babylon and the desert. These birds rival the bee-eaters for brilliance: but are larger. Their beauty as they fly cannot be described adequately, but neither of them have any song. Bits of sky flashing by.

## **Tuesday 26 April 1921**

I had a little headache yesterday evening after my long day in the sun, but I slept well as might be expected and awoke refreshed. After yesterdays bustle and action today has seemed quite peaceful - but, oh, the work that piles up in ones absence! Still, I'm ever so glad I went and I think that to make a journey 60 miles out in the desert and 60 miles back through what was to us unknown country wasn't a bad achievement. It was a good day, thank goodness, a

little cloudy at times to temper the scorch of the sun and just a little breeze now and again. The native police and native army are being organised on a better basis, too, and that makes travelling safer and trouble like last years less likely. The administration of the country being now under the colonial office, there is not so much likelihood of friction between the Civil Government and the army as there was before when Civil and Military were gradually separating. Now both are subjects to the Colonial Office, and whether the native likes it or not there is evidence that a stronger hand is to be applied. The Chief Arab in the Civil Government, for instance, was arrested last week and is being taken out of the country. This is a much needed warning to other Arabs who are getting independent. They understand the strong hand; and fail to appreciate the extended hand of generosity. At least, not yet.

### **Wednesday 27 April 1921**

Although yesterday afternoon was a holiday I went to the office to try and pull up some of my arrears, and tonight I am getting nearly clear. But if I do what I intend this year I have a very full programme to compass. I shall have a staff of six, besides myself, but I could do with double to do things properly. I shall have to cut my coat according to my cloth.

The Chief is pleased with my efforts so far, which is very cheering. He has specially commended me and mentioned me by name in his monthly report to the W.O. for this month, as deserving "Great credit"!

Every day is warmer now and one wears only a suit and an aertex shirt. Just a sheet is all that is wanted, over one at night, but in the early morning hours sometimes it becomes cold enough to pull a blanket over. One's fan is a blessing, but the best way to keep one's room cool is to shut up all the windows in the morning and keep them shut, to keep the days heat out. Cucumbers, marrows and apples are now on sale and the date palms are in bloom and one often sees the date gardener climbing the tall trees jerking himself up

or down by means of a rope round him and the tree which he leans back on at an angle while he walks up with bare feet.

### **Thursday 28 April 1921**

Today I attended the preliminary investigation of the witnesses concerned in the trial of Lieut. Campbell, the I.W.T. Officer who is under arrest for illegally disposing of Government Stores. This consists of taking down # in writing the evidence of all the witnesses, in front of the accused, who then has the right of objecting to any part of the evidence (e.g. second-hand evidence) or of questioning the witnesses. I gave evidence for about an hour and thought that Campbell got very restive towards the end. There are about 12 witnesses in all and the summary will take about two days - I expect Campbell will get more fidgety yet.

In and around Baghdad are many gardens now ablaze with flowers. In this fertile land, and under this wonderful sun, things thrive apace, if watered. Watering is not done by hose or can. Instead, Irrigation channels, or ditches built up of mud, run all throughout the surrounding country, and underground through Baghdad, through which water from the river is pumped by engine pumps. Thus sufficient water night and day is distributed throughout the country and all the gardener does is to allow the water from the nearest ditch to flow into and swamp his garden! Easy!

Of course, this can only be done near a river, and as the rainfall is so small and totally insufficient, that explains why cultivation is only possible in the narrow band alongside the two great rivers. All else, although good soil and capable, if irrigated, of growing almost anything, without water is useless and dry, and desert. During the spring, if rains are heavy the desert becomes covered with grass which lasts a few weeks and feeds the flocks - only to be burnt up by the sun a little later. This year the rain fall has been very light, much less than usual and the Arab shepherds are hard put to keep their animals fed. It will be seen how important rain and water are in this country - practically its life blood, and if it failed, the whole thing would go "phut".

## **Friday April 29 1921**

I gave further evidence at Campbell's trial today, but beyond this nothing has happened except work, and plenty of it. I haven't got my section properly organised yet being still short of staff coming up from Basrah. When all are here, however, I hope to arrange things so that not quite so much falls onto my shoulders, and so that I can get out a bit more.

## **Saturday 30 April 1921**

Today my back being so much better I went with Padre Webb down to golf. I had a busy morning still being wanted for more evidence at Campbell's trial, and as a consequence not able to get on with my own work.

Still I have taken home work every night last week and I thought I would have my weekend free. So I came home with nothing but that determination. My golf, as may be imagined, was execrable - but for the first few holes I was afraid to swing much or put any strain on my back. However I got more courage in the second half and did much better.

But the chief charm of the afternoon lay in the trip itself. It was pleasant to come out of stuffy Baghdad into this pleasant place, bordered on three sides by palm trees, and to sit by the really gorgeous gardens and lawns and have one's tea in conditions which reminded one so much of dear old England. The garden here is a blaze of colour. I have described before the multitudinous flowers they grow, but no-one could adequately picture the wonderful show made by the Hollyhocks which, in another part of the garden, run in long rows by which runs an irrigation ditch, while a raised path runs in between each two rows, along the pleasant shade of which one strolls after tea and smokes a cigarette. I had had no proper exercise for 10 days and the afternoon, I felt, did me good.