

Monday 1st August 1921

My room in "C" Mess juts out over the road and although this makes it rather noisy it also makes it interesting, for the road was at one time the principal road for through city traffic in Baghdad before New Street was made, and still takes a lot of pack animal traffic which avoids New Street because of the heavy motor traffic. Convoys of fruit, melons and vegetables come up from the river to the fruit and vegetable bazaar, mostly on donkeys and horses. Just nearby is a refugee camp, with the families living under canvas, Armenians, Syrians and other people from North of Mesopotamia who fled from the Turks when they began to massacre and haven't yet been able to get back. Between me and the Armenians is a camp of Indians living under tents. So I have plenty to watch if I wish to look out of my window, or I can go up on the balcony just outside. Many of the members of the Mess dress early for dinner and sit up on the roof for 15 minutes or so, having a drink or a cigarette. Here the evening breeze, soft and cool, is very welcome after the heat of the afternoon.

Tuesday 2nd August 1921

Yesterday afternoon Capt. Watson called for me and we went to The Sporting Club for our return match of golf. He had beaten me the first occasion but I beat him this time by two holes up. It was a good game. I went off by winning the first two holes and we then halved and won alternately - but we were all square at the 11th hole. Afterwards I pulled up again and got ahead. The sun now sets about 7 p.m. behind the palms in a blaze of gold and red and the picture from the Sporting Club is very fine sometimes with the dome and minarets of Muad'dhaim Mosque standing up against the light. But as soon as the sun is down it becomes dark and one can no longer see to play. There is no twilight here to speak of in the summer. Perhaps the intense light of day makes the half light of twilight seem almost darkness in comparison. But the mornings and evenings are lovely - outside Baghdad. The beautiful cool morning air, which one awakes to on the roof, is a tonic - but after 7 a.m. it is all gone and one risks sunstroke if one dallies too many seconds in the sun.

Wednesday 3rd August 1921

At 10 minutes to 2 last night I was rudely awakened by hearing a man running along the road below yelling. I jumped out of bed and immediately saw that "Babylon" the billet next but one to ours was fiercely ablaze. Flames were issuing in great long tongues from both back and front of the billet and as we watched from the vantage point of our roof we realised that nothing could save it and that it was doomed. By the mercy of Providence the wind was blowing practically straight through the billet so that the houses each side had not caught alight and would stand a chance of escape if only the Fire brigade could get up on time. Great streams of sparks and red-hot debris were flying over the Indian and Refugee Camps and some of the date palms caught alight. It was not long before all the tents in the camps were struck and rolled up for safety. I saw the Firemen run up with the hose this was at 2.15 a.m., but it was not until 2.30 that the first stream of water was thrown on the building which was now like a furnace, and thousands of rounds of ammunition were detonating fiercely that we knew the fire had reached the magazine.

The billet was occupied by about 50 clerks of GHQ, most of whom slept on the verandahs which ran round the level of the 1st and 2nd floors. Some slept on the roof and these were trapped and had to jump for their lives. Some slid down by using knotted sheets but the others were nearly all injured. One man perished in the flames, one died of shock and another died of injuries sustained in jumping. About 20 were injured and all lost their belongings. There was only time to save their lives. The late arrival of the water was due to the Fire Float being unable to get through Maude Bridge, which is closed during the night to river traffic. The water has to be pumped by the Fire Float all the way from the River, using about a mile of hose running through the streets, but it was a fine stream when it did arrive and saved the next billet and so saved us.

If the wind, which was NW, had been blowing from the N nothing could have saved us. My billet would have been burnt down and many others and it would have been a very serious affair indeed.

At one time we were very "windy" and filled all our water pails and took them up on the roof; but if the wind had been our way no-

one could have lived in the stream of sparks to have poured water on if the billet caught. The Baghdad houses are so much built of wood that there is little hope if one catches on fire, and my room has big chatai sun-screens over the windows and these would have been the first to catch alight.

In the afternoon Horton called for me and we went to see Herbert and some other friends who are in Hospital. It is astonishing what a lot of friends get into hospital sooner or later and one has to take greatest care of oneself out here. We went up to the Sporting Club but only for a drink.

It was guest night tonight and I had Capt. Pullan of the Tanks to dinner. A ripping dinner it was, too, but I am afraid I mixed the drinks too much, for my tummy is rotten now (Thursday). I must try and remember that I couldn't drink at home and sure thing I can't do it here. We were 14 to dinner.

Thursday 4th August 1921

I have got tired of waiting for my driver to be mended and having had the offer of a new driver from Cairns for 10 Rupees I went over to his billet and bought it, or rather took it on trial for this afternoon.

At 5 o'clock Horton called for me and although I felt pretty mouldy I went up with him for golf. My new driver, I think, is a very good one. We only played 11 holes - of which I won 8, halved 1, and Horton won 2. We were both feeling seedy and both feeling sick and I only had a soda to drink afterwards, envying those lusty young fellows at other tables drinking great jugfuls of shandy-gaff. But tummy trouble out here is much more troublesome than at home and causes much greater discomfort owing to the great heat. Nearly every Englishman has it in greater or less degree. I suppose it's the cooking - oh, for a dinner like I used to have on Sunday at home! Anyway, immediately I had had my bath on getting back home I was violently sick and couldn't go down to dinner. I had some brought up to my room, but I could eat but very little, and I soon went up to bed, feeling very sorry for myself and thanking God for the nice cool night.

Friday 5th August 1921

Woke this morning feeling much better but rather shaky, so rested after breakfast and didn't go to the office until nearly 11. The Chief was yesterday morning found to be going strong for a breakdown and has been ordered into Hospital, where he is to rest for about a fortnight. Williams went to see him tonight and told him I was unwell at which he was much concerned until W. explained that I had been mixing the drinks. I must go up soon and correct the misapprehension. My tummy had been sickening for over a week and Wednesday night put the finishing touch, that's all. I've been asking my friends to show me their tongues and I never saw such a rotten lot of tongues. It makes me feel quite well to see how bad theirs are!

Pickard and I went for a walk tonight and had a look at the old South Gate, the most important entrance into the city from the South before New Street was cut. As I said before the old Main Street led from the old South Gate past our present billet. Near by is Von der Goltz's tomb, the German General commanding the Turkish forces who died in Baghdad during the war.

Saturday 6th August 1921

The last two nights the wind has changed and a warm easterly wind has taken the place of the N Westerly breeze. The warm wind has blown during the day and it is extraordinary the ripening influence it has had on the dates which are now beginning to turn yellow, as they hang in their enormous bunches from the trees. The real warm sticky "date winds" have yet to come, though, the "date ripeners".

Went to the Office as usual this morning feeling much better and did a good morning's work. But it is a long, long morning, 7.30 - 1.00, too long for this country in the summer, I think.

In the afternoon Horton called for me and we went up to the Sporting Club for a game of golf. I played badly to start with and he won the first 6 holes, I won back 2 of the next 5 and halved 3, but he thus properly turned the tables on me for Thursday's beating.

There were only 3 of us to dinner tonight Pickard, Bray and I, and afterwards we put on the gramophone and played that until 10.30. We have a good set of records, including "Have you seen the ducks go by?"

Sunday 7th August 1921

Up early and to Holy Communion and Matins and walked both ways - half an hour each way. By breakfast time one gets jolly hungry. An extraordinary thing it is, how hungry one gets during the hot weather. One would have imagined one would have hardly eaten - but it is just the opposite and the man who goes off his food during the hot weather goes off to Hospital. I suppose one's bodily wastage is so excessive, owing to the greater exertion needed.

In the afternoon Pickard and I chartered an arabana and went up to the 23rd British Stationary Hospital to see our chief - Mr Toplis. We found him not quite so cheerful as we had heard he was: his tummy was troubling him - something is wrong with his intestine. I gave him a packet of my photos to send home and then went and saw some other friends who are in. Horton was there and drove me in his car to Church and home afterwards.

Jolly good dinner tonight and now feeling much better, after a rotten day. (touch wood!)

Monday 8th August 1921

Today began cloudy and there have been some clouds all day. I mention this because clouds are such an unusual sight here during summer (and apparently somewhat more unusual in England this year). Tonight there was the most gorgeous sunset with the sky the most brilliant red and gold and purple cloudy patches, and the sun sitting behind the Mosque of Marzam as I saw it from the Sporting Club. Horton called for me at 5 with Captain Giffen, the new Camp Commandant at GHQ and we played another match over 12 holes. This time we both played well and it was a ding-dong game with me eventually winning one hole up. First Horton would be one up, then all square, then I went one up and so on. About the most interesting game I have played.

Today we heard the extraordinary news that Mr Toplis is to be invalided home. Something wrong with his intestine, they say, and the doctors say that if it developed his health might not be good enough to pull him through. He will be a great loss to the Audit staff in Mesopotamia, and I shall lose a chief who has been very good to me.

Tuesday 9th August 1921

After our comparatively cool spell it has turned a bit warmer - 112° in the shade and 85° at night. The 85° is of course the night minimum. It is always 100° at least when we go to bed and I generally have to change my pillow over 2 or 3 times when it gets wet through.

Tonight I went out with Giffen and Horton to celebrate the latter's Staff Captaincy, which was only Gazetted last Sunday announcing it as dating from 1.4.21. They called for me at 8 o'clock and we motored to the Casino where we had a cocktail and then walked round to the Maude Hotel where a table on the balcony by the River had been reserved for us. We had a really topping dinner, but I was very abstemious, after last Wednesday's lesson! Moored just off the Maude was the Government steamer with 55 Russian "ladies" on board, ladies of easy morals who had found Baghdad a happy hunting ground for the past few months, but whom the Government or GHQ, or both had suddenly decided were superfluous so they had had a round up and 55 had been escorted on board the steamer. We could see them from our balcony, many of them pacing the two decks and having a last look at the haunts which would see them no more. I understand they are going straight down to Basrah and then on a ship which will take them to Vladivostok. It seems rather cruel sending them to a horrible hole like that where they either have to continue their loose ways or perish, but I suppose it wasn't done without some strong reason and they will probably do less harm to us there than in Baghdad.

So, on this my first night out in a Baghdad Hotel, there was only one woman there instead of the numerous beauties usually adorning it.

After dinner we went for a drive in the car round the Bund, the high mud road which runs all round Baghdad, like a wall - and which serves the same purpose. We got back to "G" Mess, Horton's billet at 11.30 and after a last drink, arrived at "C" Mess at 12 o'clock. Both the others were by this time pretty merry, but I was fit as a fiddle, and having had a real good evening, slept the sleep of the just.

Wednesday 10th August 1921

It seems very strange with the Chief away from the Office. He has a strong personality and somehow we don't seem to be doing so much with him out of action. But Williams the Assistant Local Auditor is a strong man too, and with Rice up here, the combination will be quite strong enough. I am afraid, however, that the W.O. are wanting to cut us down too severely for next year and that the directing staff will have a thick time.

Pickard and I went up to the 23rd British Stationary Hospital tonight to see the Chief. We found him much more cheerful than we had expected and quite resigned to going home. I had expected that he would have been violently antagonistic and read a conspiracy into the happenings of the last few days - a conspiracy on the part of GHQ to get him out of the country. But he is quite pleased, I think and so he ought to be, to think that he will be with his wife and children within the next 6 weeks. For he had his medical "Board" today and he is to leave on Saturday next. There is nothing seriously wrong, only that he is run down to the last inch and is safer out of the country.

Thursday 11 August 1921

Last night Horton was my guest at dinner and a topping dinner we had. Horton was most abstemious, having still something of a thick head from the night before. I was as fit as a tick yesterday (touch wood) but then I was a good deal more careful and so I was last night. So I am feeling fit also today. Not fit like one feels in England, of course, but fit for Mesopotamia.

Williams and I went up to the Sporting Club this afternoon for golf. We started at 4.30, picked up North and went to the Hospital to see the Chief, where we left North, and got down to the Club about 5.30. Williams went off in great style and was soon 3 up, but eventually I pegged him back and after a tussle ended 1 up over 12 holes. He fell off after about 6 holes, I think, because I played badly now and again, actually missing my drive twice.

We were only 4 to dinner tonight, the other 5 dining out, and after dinner I went and sat on the roof and watched some very clever night flying by two Handley Pages. One could follow the planes easily by their lights and by the red, green and white "very" lights they dropped.

Friday 12 August 1921

It strikes me as a bit warmer the last 2 or 3 days, something in the region of 120° again. We are having moonlight nights now but not much breeze. These are the sticky days which are supposed to ripen the dates. They are commencing to pick a few of the early dates already but they are not yet properly ripe by a long way, only yellow yet. I have lately had some very nice green grapes, as big as large dates and the same long shape, and these with ripe figs (the latter quite small) are the nicest fruit at present in season. The nectarines are not properly ripe yet.

This afternoon Pickard and I went out at 17.00 hrs. (5 p.m.) and had a most interesting 2 hours walk. Our objective was Sheikh Omer's Tomb on the outskirts of East Baghdad. We passed by the Mosque of Sheikh Abdul Kadir and looking in wondered whether we would take a photo of the courtyard. Crossing the road for a better view we were invited by a friendly Arab into the house just by and taken up onto the roof to admire the view. He explained that the house belonged to the Naqib (or "Prince") of Baghdad. We couldn't take a photo as the sun was in our eyes, so came down. We were met on the next floor by an Arab servant with three cups and a coffee pot. We each ceremoniously had three sips of very delicious coffee - but the man only put about a spoonful in each cup. Having apologised at having no parnee (water) to offer us he shook hands heartily and we all three placed our hands on our foreheads, and then went on our way.

Having arrived at Baghdad East Station (all the Baghdad stations are in the desert, outside Baghdad) we decided to explore some low buildings just by, beyond the refugee camp, and found they were a pottery works. Everything was ever so quaint and primitive, probably they were employing much the same methods as they used 3000 years ago. There were the cubby holes in which the potters stood and revolved the potters table with one foot while they fashioned the article with their hands. Others made the glazing mixture and applied it to the made utensils, and two men were carefully stacking them all in a kiln to burn. We inspected one kiln which was going strong, and could see the bluey-green glaze appearing on the earthenware within. Quite a busy show. We made our salaams and departed.

We next made our way over towards the Tomb of Sheikh Omer which we could see in the distance standing lone in the desert just below the Bund along which the outer road runs. A short distance ahead also is the Bab al Wastani, one of the chief gates of the city at one time, but now a ruin. The Tomb of the famous old Sheikh, who died AD1234 is enclosed within a high square wall, and is of a conical shape. Inside the wall is a fine minaret, no doubt belonging to the inevitable Mosque, which rises over every ancient Mohammedan mystics tomb. Walking towards it we came across a thick crust of solid salt, which had formed over a dried up marsh. After a few steps we began to tread through into the black mud underneath and had to retrace our steps.

It was now time to be getting back, so we made our way towards the city again and were soon threading the narrow dirty streets of Old Baghdad. These narrow crooked ways although immensely interesting are extremely baffling to the stranger, and although we turned out of a narrow lane into a busy bazaar, and then again into another narrow street, and on and on, we came across no landmark which we recognised. Gracious! We were lost in Baghdad! I was by now mighty thirsty, so we halted at an Arab cafe and taking places on a bench (altho' we did not tuck our feet up under us) we called for cha'ee (tea). This was brought in small glass cups, with an enormous quantity of sugar, such as the Arab loves. One Arab offered us his fan, another advised us to stir it up

well so as to dissolve the sugar. All seemed quite pleased at the honour of having us. Great salaams as we moved on again!

Another 15 minutes and we spotted the tall E&M chimney, and soon were on familiar ground again arriving back at the Mess at 7.00p.m. very tired, very dusty and very, very thirsty.

It was a most interesting walk and showed how anxious, even, the Baghdadi now is to be friendly. We received kindness everywhere. You can't see Baghdad unless you go into the Old City. New Street is an eyesore - crowded and unfinished and tawdry modern. The bazaars are better, but old Baghdad is the best.

Saturday 13 August 1921

Today more refugees have found their way to Baghdad and have squatted themselves in what was until recently a garden just behind "D" Mess. They will be a problem here presently - but I have little sympathy for them. The men are a hopeless lazy lot - what little work is done, the women do. The women are astonishingly clean, as a whole, much cleaner than the poorer class of Mahomedan woman - but how the whole tribe manages about its sanitary arrangements beats me.

Mr Toplis came into the office this morning to say goodbye - but he suggested that I should come up to the Hospital to say goodbye tomorrow. He seemed glad to be saying "Farewell" to it all, but he looked very broken down and I should say he was worse than most of us thought when he gave up and went into Hospital.

With Horton and Giffen to Golf at 5.p.m. Played below form and yet managed to beat the other two. I was slicing my driver badly and I think I must have another lesson from the professional. Only 3 to dinner tonight, Pickard, Bray and I. Afterwards watched the wonderful night flying aeroplanes from the roof until 10 p.m.

Sunday 14 August 1921

Up at 5.30 a.m. and with Mackenzie to Holy Communion. M. left after Communion but I stayed on for Matins, and enjoyed the service. Walking home through the Bazaar, I noticed for the first time the fortune tellers, each with a little knot of intent men squatting round. They are women of a gypsy type, all in black, and they shuffle up several shells and some broken pieces of pottery of various colours in a small shawl and then open the shawl on the ground and study the positions of the shells etc. Apparently these are quite as illuminative of the future as cards are with us!

After my afternoon sleep I had tea and then went down to the Hospital to see my Chief. I thought he was leaving tonight, but owing to the re-crudescence of the heat-wave the downward passage had been postponed. He was looking a bit better and had actually bought a carpet! That's a good sign. He probably won't go till Thursday now.

From there to Church at 6.30 and then walked home to a good dinner and a bumper plate of ice-cream, which I love. We have ice-cream twice a week, and good men's portions each time, too.

Monday 15 August 1921

The word Baghdad means "the Gift of God". As a gift to a lot of poisonous rascals it might have been appropriate. As a matter of fact I am wrong in designating Baghdadis as a whole as poisonous. I have, at times, received a great deal of kindness and courtesy at their hands, and I feel sure that they are better inclined towards the English than they used to be. Why not? Emir Feisul, speaking at a big function the other night, counselled his audience to stand by the English and to welcome them. They had spent a lot of money on Iraq, "and we are hoping to get much more yet". We are the people to fill their pockets! Poor old British taxpayer!

Tonight Pickard and I went for a walk and came across the Chief (Mr Toplis) buying Amara work to take home. He looked very weak, but is looking forward to Wednesday when he goes home.

I passed by an Arab tailor's, Khedouri Toeg, and asked him how much he would make me a white dinner suit for. As he offered to do this for Rupees 30, I decided to have one and was measured. It is to be ready by Friday.

Tuesday 16 August 1921

Today it was decidedly cooler and very welcome. Yesterday it was 115° degrees however and Saturday 118°. Three months is a long time to have heat like this and I shall be glad to see the end of August and the prospect of a cooler September. And yet many people say that Mesopotamia is better than many stations in India, especially the Punjab, and the hot plains. That is as regards climate: but of course, there is society in India, and home life, and wives and children. And gorgeous hill stations to live in in the summer. Our hill station was Kerind in Persia, by railway to Quraitu and motor from there, but we have evacuated Persia now and Kerind summer camp is no more. I should have loved to have seen Persia.

I went down to the Hospital to see the Chief and found him much more cheerful and much more settled now that the date of his departure is fixed. He goes tomorrow. He has made his few last purchases of carpets and Amara work and will travel home by Ambulance train and Hospital ships, in comfort. And when he gets home, 6 months leave to recuperate. Lucky dog.

Wednesday 17 August 1921

There is a great annoyance among the military lately at the re-imposition of the export duty of 1%. It is the work of the much disliked Civil Administration and as practically the only people exporting from Mespot, bar the date growers, is the military officer taking carpets and so forth home, he naturally sees in this another pinprick from the Civil. As a matter of fact, the Civil Administration is very hard up and I hear almost bankrupt. Well, there are plenty of absurdly rich Jews and Mohammedans in Baghdad, and I should think it wouldn't be a bad idea to try Income Tax on these people. They don't pay a penny at present of Income Tax.

Tonight was our Guest night: there were 15 of us to dinner and my old friend Major Burtenshaw, who came out with me on the 'Huntsgreen' and 'Vasna', was a guest. We had a very jolly evening. Some played bridge, of course; Pryor played the piano, Williams and a guest and Waite sang; Waite also told stories. He's an Irishman with an Irishman's faculty for entertaining. It certainly was the best guest night since I joined the mess.

Thursday 18 August 1921

Extraordinary bit of bad luck today. Williams and I had arranged to go up to the Sporting Club for golf today, and our motor-car came at 5 p.m. and off we set. Soon after we had got out into New Street, just after we had passed Maude Bridge, a little Arab girl darted out from the path and before our driver could pull his car up we had knocked her down. I yelled and hardly dared look out of the car, fully expecting to see her poor little mangled body under the car. But no - thank Heaven, the car had struck her on the bounce I suppose and hurled her forward and she had hurt her nose badly and one knee. An Arab lifted her on to the path and there she sat, poor little mite, her nose streaming blood - but no-one offering to do anything to help her. I signed to the Arab to lift her into our car, but he was afraid of soiling his clothes and told a coolie boy to lift her. This enraged me so that I lifted the poor mite myself and cuddled her up as we drove to the police station to report the accident. Such a nice chubby little girl she was, about 4 years old, and about the weight of my Sylvie a year ago. She was a dear little kiddy, free from the sores that so many of the Baghdadi children have. When we got to the Police Station we had to wait some minutes, and her sister, about 6 or 7 years old with a baby sister in her arms, came up weeping bitterly. So I took her up and tried to assure her that her little sister wasn't badly hurt. Presently we put the injured one in our motor-car and sent her to the Civil Hospital where she will have her wounds dressed and in a day or two, I hope, will be none the worse for her accident. It was only by the mercy of God that she was so little hurt and nothing worse happened. But it is a most surprising thing that so few fatal accidents happen. The grown people are hopeless when they walk across the street, let alone children, and certainly children ought not to be allowed in New Street. So Williams and I came home and after a drink to soothe our nerves,

went out to the Alwiyal? Club on foot for a walk. Not a bad walk, and home by the river, which is now very low, although not yet at its lowest, and showing many islands.

Friday 19 August 1921

I found out today that our little victim of yesterday is a little Christian girl, the daughter of Christian parents, and named Marie Felim. I thought she was a nice clean little girl: the Christians are much cleaner than the Arabs. As good fortune had it, it also turned out that the seamstress at the Hospital was her aunt, so she was assured of good treatment. She was not badly hurt, no bones broken; and she will soon be all right again. The hospital will keep her until she is well and there will thus be no danger of her wounds turning septic. I must try to run out to see her and take her some sweets.

I went up to the Sporting Club with Pickard today and while he walked back along the river I went round the course with the Pro., Hornsby. I played well some holes and badly at others. I did the fourth hole in 2 and drove onto the green at the 9th hole (285 yards). Hornsby was only about 2 holes up on me at the finish. He is anxious to give me some more lessons and if I can only become more consistent with my drive I think I could give some of the good ones a good game.

Saturday 20 August 1921

Today completes my eighth month away from home. I am two thirds of the way up the hill. After 21/12/21 I shall be going down the hill, at the bottom of which is home. The hot weather will soon be over now - and another comforting thing is - the Rupee is rising in value. On 1/8/21 it was only worth 1 shilling and thruppence three farthings - today it is 1 shilling and four pence halfpenny. It is expected to go to 1/6d at least.

We were disappointed today when the news came that the mail would not be in until tomorrow. I haven't had a letter since the 8th and only the exile who knows what the home letter stands for knows what that means.

I went up to the Sporting Club and played Horton and Giffen. Giffen was overcome and had to give up at the 4th hole. I beat Horton by several holes although I played badly. But I shall improve one day.

The best part of the day is the hour at the end of the game, sitting on the Club lawn enjoying the rest, the shandy and a cigarette. And then the comfortable swift Vauxhall home to bath and dinner. But if these things couldn't be had, life wouldn't be worth living.

Sunday 21 August 1921

The days are getting shorter. I was up this morning at 5.30 (as usual Sundays), just before sunrise. Half Baghdad gets up early, but all the birds in the date palms were engaged in making the bustle and noise they always make just before dawn.

After Holy Communion, which is over 7 a.m. Mackenzie and I went into the Citadel Bazaar and found the shop of an old Arab shoemaker who makes fancy bags, about the only one I have come across in Baghdad. He had 6 small bags of which Mackenzie bought 4 and I two. I also gave him an order to make a satchel for Joan but I'm not at all certain he understood what I wanted.

Although New Street is full of motors and gharries it is nearly all passenger traffic or Army transport and almost all the goods traffic is carried on pack animals and the backs of coolies or porters. The bazaars and side streets at this hour are full of groups of pack horses, mules or donkeys, which trot along at a rare pace, each group, from 2 - 6 in the charge of a man or boy. They avoid you and you them and accidents rarely happen.

Monday 22 August 1921

Today the sad news came that the "Vasna", which was carrying the mails from Bombay (posted in London 21st July) had had an accident and had transferred all her mails at Karachi to the SS "Bandra" which was arriving at Basrah today. That means that our letters won't arrive until Wednesday at the earliest, and perhaps Thursday. This is all the more unfortunate as the mails posted in London on 28 July are due to arrive at Basrah on Tuesday and so

the two mails may come up together. The mails posted on the 14th July arrived in Baghdad on 9th August - so I have waited 16 days since my last letter. All this may seem trivial to the reader at home, but it is a most engrossing subject to the exile, and I am sure it has been the chief subject of conversation for the past week, and has surpassed the heat as the chief topic. It is a very sad deprivation to be without a word from home. Those letters are the link with home and one reads them and reads them again. One letter lasts a week nicely, that is the average letter - but a specially nice one will last a fortnight. So here's an important tip - there should always be enough kisses in it to last 14 days!

Tuesday 23 August 1921

Yesterday afternoon at 4.30 Tuckett of the big Engineer Field Park at Right Bank called for me and Pickard and I went with him and took our racquets. I spent an hour lecturing the staff on how to get their ledgers right - the accounts having fallen into such a state that a complete new account is to be started and a stocktaking made. This is now to be done for all the Engineers stores in Mesopotamia and is a colossal job, and I wanted Tuckett, who is to be in charge, to understand thoroughly how to get his books right at once without waiting until the stocktaking is completed before doing it. That way takes months. After 6.00 p.m. we made up a four and played two sets of tennis. It was only my fourth game and I'm afraid I was the weakest. Anyway, I was on the losing side both times - but it is the game that matters and the exercise most of all.

Today Emir Feisul was crowned King of Iraq. The ceremony took place in the big square inside the Serai and all the notables attended. Only one ticket was allotted to the Local Auditor, and that Williams used. The proclamation states that Feisul had been elected King by 96% of the inhabitants - but how they arrived at the figure is a matter of conjecture. Certainly no referendum has taken place and it is well known that many of the tribes were very lukewarm in their acceptance of him. However, he is now His Majesty King Feisul of Iraq and the ceremony ended with a Salute of 21 Guns - a Royal Salute. Today was proclaimed a holiday, but most of the shops were open and there has been very little

rejoicing. Perhaps the populace expended all their stock of enthusiasm when they welcomed him on his arrival.

This afternoon Pickard and I went to the Sporting Club and I went round with Hornsby the pro. We played 12 holes and I won four and halved two. I still am very dissatisfied with my play and am improving very slowly. Golf needs a lot of concentration and it is not easy to concentrate in this country at the end of the day in hot weather. There's no doubt that golf is a better winter game in Mesopotamia and the best part of the game in summer is the drinks at the end!

Wednesday 24 August 1921

I went this morning to the tailors where my white dinner suit has been made - Khedouri Toeg's - and tried it on. It required altering, being a little too tight under the arms. So I cannot wear it tonight.

I couldn't sleep this afternoon, either. My fan wouldn't work at a slow speed (wants oiling, I expect) and it made me too chilly at a high speed. So I turned it off - and sweated myself awake. I just mention this to show something of what a fan means out here. Life would be impossible without them - and the ice-chest.

I went with Horton and Giffen to the Sporting Club for an afternoon (or rather, evening's) golf and played worse than any beginner. I must say Golf is an amazing game. Some days I play like a budding champion (loud cheers!), others like the veriest fozzler. We had a very successful guest night again tonight (I had two big plates of ice-cream) Several sang and this emboldened me to bring down some of my songs, and I made a successful "first appearance". I'm afraid we kept it up rather late and I didn't get to bed until after 12.30 - but soon asleep when I did get there.

Thursday 25 August 1921

Today the looked for mail came in and I got my letter; 16 days since the last. And now we expect another in tomorrow. Mails are important matters and the delay must cause a great deal of inconvenience to business people in Mesopotamia. I wonder they submit to the way it is bungled. But we are very fatalistic in the East and that is the reason, I suppose - " what is to be - will be"

Lieut. Brown of "I" Branch GHQ called to see me this afternoon and made me an offer for the rest of 'J' Mess private property. I have realised over 200 Rupees on it, which divides up between 4 of us.

Pickard and I went up to the Bazaars this afternoon for a walk and spent our time in inspecting the work of the saddlers. They turn out the most gorgeous saddles and saddlery trappings, all embroidered and worked in silk, much of it remarkably cheap. The Arab loves to decorate his horse, even the poorest, but it must be a trade which is feeling the competition of the motorcar - which is easily the cheapest method of travel with Petrol only a Rupee a gallon, and all the fashionable town Arabs and Jews drive Overlands.

Friday 26 August 1921

When the "Babylon" billet was burned down the occupants (B.O.R.s - British Other Ranks) moved into No. 33 Billet, a house in the same road next to "A" Mess. Today at 10.30 a.m. a fire broke out in 33 Billet, which was burned out as completely as "Babylon" was. When the alarm was given, I went out immediately to see (I was in my office at GHQ) and the house was a mass of flames - just one sheet of fire. When a house gets on fire in this heat there is no hope. The wood in it is as dry as tinder - and in a sun temperature of probably 140 or 150° it burns like straw. There are no water mains from which water can be pumped and the water is pumped from the River by a Fire Float about 5 or 6 hundred yards away, and it is almost impossible to have water playing on the fire under 15 minutes from the call. By that time, the fire is well away and beyond control.

Pickard and I got our cameras and from the Tennis Courts got a good view. I took one photo at 10.35 and a minute after the front of the house fell into the street. I took another photo at 10.40 and a third at 11 a.m. By this time "A" Mess, the building next door was alight, and all the occupants were busy getting their belongings into the street. The Fire Brigade was now pouring a big jet of water on the buildings and only one corner of "A" Mess was destroyed. However all the Officers were ordered to find temporary rooms elsewhere and four of them are now with us. "A" Mess is very wet, being soaked with water, and will take 2 or 3 days to dry. Also, as a precaution against further fire, the billet is being thoroughly examined and watched in case a stray spark may have lodged in some nook and caused a smoulder, which will develop into a fresh fire. No lives were lost as all the occupants were at GHQ at work. This is another mysterious fire and incendiarism is now suspected.

The breeze was blowing over towards our Mess but a good distance separated us from the fire, twice as far as "Babylon". The fire was now under control, and Pickard and I walked back to "C" Mess to put our cameras back into our rooms. As we stepped through the door, on the courtyard floor was our roof awning! Some sparks had dropped on it and set it alight! Fortunately one of our members, Capt. Waite was in the billet and he soon had the awning cut down and the flames put out. But what an escape! But for Waite, who was home sick, "C" Mess might have been destroyed. Even if our servants had noticed the awning alight they would probably have gone panicky and then - phut!

My man Imam Ali has been sick the last two days and pretty bad today. So I sent him to the Dispensary tonight: since when I haven't seen him. He's got some sort of fever and the poor fellow could hardly stand.

Horton and Giffen called for me at 5.00p.m. and we intended to go to the Muad'dhaim and then to the Sporting Club. However, we had a puncture in New Street and another at North Gate and by the time a new tube had been fetched and the car was ready again it was well after 6.00. So we just went to the Club and sat on the lawn and had drinks. Quite half-a-dozen women were

there with their kiddies, in Baghdad you take your kiddies out for their airing and exercise in the evening!

Saturday 27 August 1921

This morning up early and with Williams by car to Hinaidi Station arriving there at 7 a.m. The train from Kut had been in for 20 minutes and we found Rice and his bearer and luggage awaiting us. He has had a bad spell at Basrah (just heat) but is now fit again, though looking thinner. We fixed him up at the Maude Hotel until a place can be found for him in "C" Mess.

My man has been ordered to Hospital notwithstanding his continued assertion that he would not go. He has a bad touch of fever with very bad pains in his bones and had tried to fight it too long. He has been a good faithful servant to me and I miss him.

In the afternoon Mackenzie called for me and we went to tea at the Beau Monde and afterwards for a walk out into the desert beyond Baghdad West Station. The desert comes right up to the walls of Baghdad, of course it is not sand, but beautiful alluvial soil and if there were only a decent rainfall it would make the richest soil in the world. But without water, nothing can live in the scorching heat.

Sunday 28 August 1921

Up early again and with Mackenzie to Holy Communion. Back to breakfast and at 9 o'clock went over to GHQ and found Rice and Williams hard at work. So walked up to the Law Courts and found my friend Cooke, the Chief of the Awqaf Department. He had got a bundle of Abbas in for me to look at, some at Rs.95 each some at Rs.90 some at Rs.35. But there was no doubt as to value - those at Rs.95 were best value. They were of every colour except green - and I had a good deal of trouble selecting one; for the lady in England for whom I was buying is dark and all these colours aren't meant for dark girls. Curiously enough many of the Baghdadi girls are fair. However I eventually lit on two - one at Rs. 95 and one at Rs. 35.

Cooke had a number of callers mostly natives and every time a fresh one came in an old Arab appeared with a coffee. I had three cups and most delicious coffee it was.

I eventually got back to GHQ and then went with Rice and Williams over to our Mess drinking and chatting until tiffin-time.

Monday 29th August 1921

This afternoon I had to apply myself, after teatime, to putting up a case on behalf of the married 1st Class Assistant Accountant for the retention of the Mesopotamia local allowance, which the Home Treasury are criticising. In every direction, the Treasury are endeavouring to cut down, no matter how trivial the amount saved may be; and the man who wants to keep his allowances has got to justify them. Thus the man who scores is he who has the ability to set out a good -looking case, irrespective of whether it has merit or not. However our case has merit and I hope that the axe won't fall on our allowances out here. It is bad enough to have to suffer the separation, and to endure the discomforts and risks of the climate; if one had to lose money on top of it that would be the last straw.

I had Rice as my guest to dinner tonight; we had a special dinner including ice-cream, and he enjoyed it immensely. After dinner we discussed the allowance question thoroughly - and he seems hopeful of an increase for the lower grades and of the retention of the allowances of the directing staff.

Tuesday 30th August 1921

The work in my section of the Office has been decreasing somewhat lately. I have had no need to bring any to my billet to do for some time - now I am getting time to look around me at the Office. This is not likely to last long, however, for the Mosul Office is to be closed and the work brought down to Baghdad. A large number of our staff are going home this autumn and I shall have hardly enough personnel to enable me to do more than scratch around. I had intended to do such a lot this winter, too, in the way of visiting Units and Depots all over the Division. However, it is no use grumbling or worrying. If they will only give

me half the necessary staff, they must be content with half the job.

This afternoon Rice and I went for a walk to the Sporting Club, and after a rest on the pleasant lawn and a couple of drinks, came back with Horton and Giffen in their car. Just time to bath and dress and then to dinner with Mackenzie at the Casino Club. This was Mackenzie's farewell dinner as he goes to Basrah tomorrow for Bombay and home, where he is to go through a year's course at the Signal School, Uckfield.

Wednesday 31st August 1921

Last night was a stuffy night - and the weather has turned hot again - the old hands tell me that we are now in the throes of a 'date ripener', which may last any time up to 14 days.

Mackenzie came in today to say goodbye, he leaves by the 9 o'clock train for Basrah tonight. I shall miss him. He has been my companion every Sunday to church - all 3 services, the only GHQ Officer besides myself who ever did it, even for one Sunday. I was thrown very much into contact with him in my official capacity, and I consider he was one of the most earnest and able Officers in GHQ.

Poor old Rice had a bad night - something he had at the Casino Club apparently disagreed with him and he got hardly any sleep. I was quite all right, however. In the afternoon (5 o'clock) to the Sporting Club and played a round with Horton and Giffen. Drove all right, but very feeble on the greens. Met Major de Grey Murray, a very jovial Officer who kept us greatly amused with his anecdotes.

Good guest night tonight. About 14 at table and a very good dinner. These are a great help in relieving the monotony and I quite look forward to them.