

Thursday 1st September 1921

Work has begun to get busy again at the Office after a spell when it eased off a bit - only for a day or two! I don't fancy the winter work prospect. I shall only have one European clerk for four months as compared with my present staff of 8 Europeans. I shall have to try and make up with Indians and local clerks, very poor quality compared with white men.

No sleep this afternoon; it makes one a bit nervy, I think, to miss the afternoon nap. I awoke myself in the middle of the night shouting, "Have a drink". Pickard sat straight up in bed with a start and half asleep replied "No thanks; I'm not thirsty". It's this beastly date-ripenener. It makes every one puzzled so the old hands say.

In the evening 5 p.m. with Rice through the Bazaars and obtained my two bags from the old Arab shoemaker. He hasn't made such a bad job of the satchel and it is almost more suitable for an ordinary hand-bag. Afterwards to the Government Book Shop in the Serai and had a half hour or so looking over the books, of which they have a really wonderful collection.

Friday 2nd September 1921

Here we are, well in September! Oh, if only it was 1922. I am hoping that with the cold weather time will pass quicker and then - one more hot weather and Home ahoy!

The women (The lower class native Arab women) know how to arrange their household matters during the hot weather. They never go out except in the evening and early morning. Very seldom in the evening, as a matter of fact except to get water from the River balancing their big copper water jars on their shoulders or heads. In the morning one sees them most, going marketing. They pass my window in dozens each with her black shaleef or marketing cloth folded neatly and balanced on her head, just a square hanging down the back. When they return, the goods are all done up neatly in the shaleef, which is carried in the usual manner viz: balanced on the head. None wear shoes of any sort - most have silver anklets around their ankles. Quite a

number have a small child - if very young, sleeping inside the shelter of the abba; if old enough, sitting astride one shoulder. One never sees them with their men, or only on some special journey very, very seldom.

Saturday 3rd September 1921

I forgot to record that I played proper Bridge for the first time in Mespot on Thursday - not that I wanted to, but because there were 3 keen Bridge players wanting a game, all the others being out. However, I'm determined that I'll be no slave to it and stipulated that I should stop at 10, which I did. I played "cut-throat" bridge again tonight, and in the end lost the extravagant sum of 4 annas!

Yesterday I went down to the Sporting Club intending to have a round with the professional, but just as I was about to go out with him the GOC came and bagged him. So I went round by myself, and did badly and well, in patches.

I went up again this afternoon with Horton, Giffen and Goodrich. I played Giffen, and beat him easily enough, but I played very patchily again. The exercise is good though, and so are the drinks at the end.

My dear old friend Pickard left "C" Mess today and Rice came in in his place. Pickard is a loss to me but Rice is a great gain and I am very glad indeed to have him here. We have many sympathies and it is very nice to have someone to talk to about the dear home topics.

Sunday 4th September 1921

Today has been a really sticky one. Very sultry, no wind, very thirsty and one perspires from head to foot. Only a few more days and one can depend on the "date - ripener" being over and then for the cooler days and "the most wonderful winter climate in the world".

We had our monthly Mess meeting two days ago and I was asked to take over the function of Secretary. I am not anxious for these

compliments, for they mean very often a lot of work out of one's spare time. That, strangely, isn't a great deal. For instance: Office from 7.30 to 1.00. Tiffin 1.00 to 2.00. Sleep (a necessity) 2.00 - 4.00. Tea 4.00 - 4.30. Dress and go to golf or tennis (a necessity) 5.00 - 7.30. Home, bath and dress for dinner 8.15. Dinner over 9.15. Then comes one's spare time, when one doesn't want to work.

Usual Sunday. Holy Communion 6.30a.m. Evensong 6.30 p.m. Sewed up a parcel for home - took me nearly 2 hours. Had a great find tonight. At evening service at Church I noticed a red book on the priest's stall. After service I had the curiosity to look at it - it was my Prayer Book which I lost in March or April last!

Monday 5th September 1921

Today has been hotter than ever. The official temperature is 116°F, which is a record for Baghdad since the British occupation - but my handbook on Mesopotamia records a temperature of 117° F in one September (year not stated). Anyway, the average mean max. for September is only 103° so cooler days are coming - though a long time about it. I can't say that I have felt the heat a great deal - I didn't think I should. It's the discomfort that goes with it - the slackness and the wetness. One thing is noticeable and that is that the native sweats just as much as the Englishman, if not more because he takes less trouble to keep out of the sun. He must perspire, of course, or die; it is only that which keeps the body temperature down and his natural temperature is the same as ours.

Went with Williams and Rice at 5 p.m. to the Sporting Club and played 12 holes with Williams, beating him 2 up. I played some fairly good holes and had a sort of feeling that I was improving slightly. But I have a long way to travel before I shall be like the fellow in "Punch" who was so cut up because he took 2 for a hole which he had done in 1 the day before!

Tuesday 6th September 1921

The mails posted in London on 11 August were delivered yesterday - 25 days from home, which is rather good. I got my

letter posted from Shanklin on 10 August, but not that posted on 3rd August. However that turned up today.

Still hot today but a lovely cool night last night and I had to put a blanket on.

Sunday the Mohammedan month of Muharram started the Moslem New Year 1340. This month is regarded as a feast time by the Sunni sect and as a time of lamentation by the Shiah sect, who bewail the deaths of Husain and Ali, the grandson and son-in-law of the Prophet. Already the Arabs have started processions. We could see one from the billet tonight, a long line of shouting, gesticulating natives, numbers carrying flaming torches on poles and accompanied by weird drum bands, slowly moving along the road. These processions will increase in excitement until 13th September (10th of Muharram) the date of death of Husain, when many used to slash themselves with knives and beat themselves until they fell insensible. This is not likely to be allowed in Baghdad this year - so there's another show I'm to be done out of. Bad luck!

Wednesday 7th September 1921

This evening I had a car call for me at 4.30 and went to the 61st I.S.H. (Indian Stationary Hospital) to see how Imam Ali, my servant, was. It was a beautiful ride (I had the big "Vauxhall") along a well kept motor road, a military road, and then by a part which is full of market gardens; large tracts often sheltered by date palms and other trees where such vegetables are grown as brinjals, ladies fingers, pumpkins, gourds, haricot beans, tomatoes, cucumbers and so on, in fact, all the vegetables, known and unknown, we have on our daily table, except potatoes. Then by date gardens, with men up the trees picking the dates which are already ripening, and into a real date grove of smaller trees, each one with its bunches of golden yellow fruit, in the midst of which stood the Hospital. It has 1000 beds and it took some time to locate Imam Ali. When I rang up on the phone some clerk told me Imam would be out in a week and I was astonished when I was told he couldn't walk! So I went into the clean cool ward and there I found him lying on a bed thin and wan, and in a state of great distress to have to tell me he was still very ill. That he certainly was. His case is diagnosed as Muscular Malaria and he is

running a temperature up to 104° although he has the best treatment. The nurse (a half-caste Indian girl) told me that it might be a month before he was out. As a matter of fact they might invalid him then as he will be time expired, although he had promised to stay on for me. I gave him a letter which had arrived for him and spoke to him for a little. Tears filled his eyes and ran down the side of his face and he looked at me just like a faithful dog who had been grievously hurt might look up at his master. Poor Imam Ali - I doubt whether you will ever serve me again. He managed to ask me whether his box was safe (it holds his savings) and then I went. The run to the Sporting Club from here was a long one and I only had time for a very little golf so I had the pro. out for a short lesson. I found Horton and Giffen on the lawn and after a drink we all came home in my car.

The weather has been very hot still in the day-time, but tonight it is cooler and there's a chance of a good nights sleep.

Thursday 8 September 1921

I was to have had a guest last night, Squadron Leader Rees of the R.A.F. but he had gone sick and sent an officer to excuse him and to invite Rici Williams and me to the Aircraft Park for Saturday week.

Tonight Horton called for me about 4.30 and we picked up Griffen and Thacker the C. of E. Chaplain at "G" Mess and went down to "Devonshire" for a bathe. The way was along the same road as yesterday until we came to the date grove and then we turned to the left and along some really charming (though dusty) lanes bordered on both sides by date and other trees and often with an irrigation ditch running by the side. Then by more gardens and so into a copse or thicket of some sweet-smelling shrub until we came to the River. Where the car stopped we were some distance from the main stream but there was a large long pool which made a most excellent swimming bath. The depth was in most places less than a man's height and so it was safe. We spread our blankets by the sloping side of the pool and were soon clad in our bathing costumes and in the Pool, which in reality was an arm of the Tigris running alongside the main stream. Although the bottom was muddy it was a clean sandy mud and swimming was

delightful in the cool evening, the sun just setting behind the bushes at the high top of the bank. The water too was surprisingly buoyant and the mud, being heavy, soon settled, leaving the pool clear again. After our bathe we came out and as we dried consumed a lovely cool whiskey and soda and a cigarette. It was a lovely evening and I enjoyed it immensely. Next time I go up I must take some photos.

Back up into our car, which Wrays drove back like a demon. It was most exhilarating to spin through the cool air at 40 miles per hour, especially after our exercise and this ride just put the finishing touch to an enjoyable trip.

After dinner played Bridge (there not being a regular four) Ended a few points up, and at 10p.m. came up and wrote for a bit. Bed at 11.30. One doesn't get properly tired until then - I suppose it's the afternoon sleep that does it.

Friday 9th September 1921

Today has brought no diminution of the heat which still remains at 112° - 115°. I think it is this that takes it out of people here as much as anything - the daily hope for a definite fall which doesn't come. "Watch kettle never boils"

Moharram processions are in full swing, dozens of torches held high on poles, weird tom-tom bands playing and yelling Arabs beating themselves and dancing. They get more fervid as the days go on and on the 13th - the great day - slash themselves with knives.

The three Officers who have been living with us since the fire at "A" Mess are going back to "A" Mess tomorrow. Very nice fellows they are and we shall miss them. One of them would insist on standing all the drinks for the evening, and it was a very merry dinner table - one of the jolliest since I have been at "C" Mess.

I played Horton golf this afternoon and got beaten 2 holes up. He certainly played surprisingly well and got down an exasperating number of long putts, while I was rather weak on the greens. It was a ripping evening - so much cooler out here than in stuffy Baghdad.

Saturday 10th September 1921

Much cooler tonight - with a nice wind blowing which will make our night's sleep much more pleasant. Perhaps this is the herald of the cooler weather which most prophets say is now near at hand; judging by the flocks of geese which are beginning to appear rather earlier than usual. The shooting season is now in full swing and I had an invitation for tomorrow - but alas I am no shootist nor have I a gun. Ducks and grouse are the most plentiful birds; fine and fat they are too after their summer sojourn in the hills. We saw several flocks of them on Thursday flying in V-formation, rather high, but they fly lower later on - and then we shall have roast duck.

Up again to the Sporting Club where there was an unusual crowd - some playing golf, some tennis, some cricket, others riding their horses on the race-course. I beat Horton 3 holes up - revenge for yesterday - and except at two holes played good enough golf. I must say I do enjoy my evenings out there, although they are expensive. Still, exercise is as necessary to good health here as food is.

Sunday 11th September 1921

Horton called for me at 6.15 and we motored to Church, which is an improvement on walking at that early hour for Baghdad has not been properly watered by then and is dusty. No-one at home can understand what dust is like out here. I have seen New Street so dusty in parts that one couldn't see across the road, narrow as it is. The dust hangs low in the air, like fog. Home by motor early and read and wrote and had visitors all the morning.

In the afternoon down to the British Hospital by Arabana, having heard that my old friend Padre Marsh is in - also Pullar of the Lambs. Pullar has had a nervous breakdown and will probably be invalided home, poor fellow. Marsh strained his heart starting his motor-bike the other day and is in to have a complete rest. He was fairly cheerful. Paid him 60 Rupees - his share of sale of "J" Mess property. Paid Pickard his share - 36 Rupees this morning.

Today has been much cooler and I have worn my grey flannel suit to celebrate it. By cooler I mean under 110°, and tonight a lovely cool breeze is blowing, promising a good night's rest.

Monday 12th September 1921

The Moharrum bands and processions have been very vociferous tonight, "making night hideous". Pandemonium it is already, I don't know what tomorrow will be like. Tomorrow is the day on which the Shiah's commemorate the death of Hussein, the second son of the Prophet's son-in-law, Ali, and is their most important day - when the most fervent beat and cut themselves in their "grief". Such is the religious enthusiasm of the Mohammedan in this country. Of course it is all very foolish and barbaric, but there are not many Christians who beat or hurt themselves on Good Friday. Most go to Football or the Races!

Went out with Rice tonight and had four sets of tennis (singles) with him. This was in the nature of a lesson; I keep out of the tennis because of my indifferent play and so lose most excellent exercise, which is what I want. I didn't do so badly, although I lost each set, for Rice is by no means a bad player. I got up to 4 games all in one set, and I think it will pay to take a little more practice. I don't intend to give up golf, however; there is so much greater fascination in golf.

Tuesday 13th September 1921

I have cheated myself. The pandemonium I mentioned last night was the great and final Moharrem procession in Baghdad. Today is the day of Hussein's death, but the Mahomedan day ends at 6 p.m. - so no procession tonight! It seems so still and quiet after all the noise of the past week. There was a morning procession at Kazimain, however, the chief holy city of the Shiah's, and some officers I know went over to see it. The whole business of beating with chains and slashing with knives was gone through - and one or two good photos got. I must try and get one.

I have been so stiff and wobbly on my legs with yesterday's tennis that I was unable to play golf today. Instead I went for a ride with Horton and afterwards went on the tennis court at GHQ and

watched our people playing tennis. All the courts are made of hard mud, with a little sand sprinkled over, and the play is much faster than on the grass courts at home, and the exercise much more strenuous.

The maximum temperature on Monday was 101° and the minimum 70° only. It's getting quite cold!

Wednesday 14th September 1921

I slept last night better than I have done for months - owing to the coolness of it, and in the breeze I needed two blankets. The flies are a bit of a nuisance - they are coming out again now the hot weather is over. It is a fact that they almost disappear during the summer - the heat is too much even for them!

Went up to the Sporting Club with Horton and Giffen, and played their best ball; that is I had to beat both to win a hole. I didn't do very well, slicing most of my drives badly and ended 3 holes down. Now the evenings turn so cool, the drinks after the game are no longer the welcome prize they used to be. Oh, that long cool drink in the hot weather, like the nectar of Paradise! I have another 9 months to wait before I taste you again.

Great guest night tonight. I had Squadron Leader Rees, of the R.A.F., to dinner and I believe we sat down 13 to table. But it was the most jolly affair and afterwards we sat and talked and others played Bridge. 11 o'clock was on us in no time and Rees went but many of the others kept it up a good deal later and I was fast asleep before the last came up to bed.

Thursday 15th September 1921

Today the Aerial Mail left for Cairo and I got off two letters by it - one to Joan and Sylvie and one to my dear girl. Major Tucker went by it - on leave for 61 days - and reckons to land in England on 22nd September, 7 days after leaving Baghdad. It took me 44 days to go from London to Baghdad, and even letters generally take about 28 days. The letters posted in London on 18th August reach Baghdad tomorrow, 16th September - 29 days!

In the afternoon went up to the Sporting Club for another match with Horton, but he was completely off his game, and I beat him 5 or 6 holes up. I played a nice consistent game, doing most of the holes in 3,4,5 or 6 strokes. Quite a crowd of stylish ladies on the lawn afterwards, nearby a dozen, which is a crowd in Baghdad. The Club has been sold to the Racing Club of Baghdad and the Races are to be held here in future - but the usual sports are to be kept on as well. The subscription will probably be higher if we have racing thrown in - which is a bad show these expensive times - and drinks dearer. Well if it's too dear, I shall take up tennis - so there!

Friday 16th September 1921

This afternoon Horton called for me at 4.15 and went to "G" Mess to pick up Griffen and Thacker. Went in and had a look at Horton's dog's pups. Fine little chaps they are, 5 in all, and just beginning to crawl. I hardly think I will have one, however, in Mespot. One gets attached to a dog and then can only turn it adrift when one leaves.

When Thacker arrived we went off in the car to 61st I.S.H., in order that I might see how Imam Ali was. I found him thinner and weaker, but his temperature had gone down the last 2 or 3 days and was now nearly normal. But the poor fellow had been "boarded" for India, he told me piteously. I think he is very cut up at having to leave me and I am very sorry indeed to lose my good servant.

From here we went on to Devonshire for a swim. I enjoyed it again immensely, though not quite so much as last time as we got there a little too late and the sun soon went down. So soon out and after dressing off again and called at the 17th Division headquarters to see Burtenshaw and Frogley - two RASC Majors. They have a most charming riverside house right out in the country - one of the nicest billets I have seen so far. I came out with Burtenshaw on the "Huntsgreen".

Saturday 17th September 1921

This afternoon went down to G.H.Q. Courts and watched the tennis, there not being time to go up to golf. Back at 6.30 p.m. and bathed and dresses and at 7 p.m. punctually the R.A.F. car came and fetched us over to Aircraft Park. The tables were laid as usual outside the Mess in the open and we had a top-hole supper and at 8.30 proceeded over to the Theatre, which as a matter of fact is a large hangar (aeroplane shed) specially fitted up. The piece played was the same as before "Charley's Uncle" revised and brought up to date with new quips and jokes. One was that the Auditors at GHQ wear spurs! "What for?" "Why, to keep their feet from slipping off the table!" A girl asks the policeman "Do you know Hiawatha?" "Hiawatha who?" "Hiawatha good little girl till I met you!" The policeman asks "Do you know Jerry?" "Who's Jerry?" "The biggest mug in the China Shop!" And so on. We all laughed heartily right through, Rice as well; he oughtn't to object to a theatre in the future. The play wasn't over until 11.20 and we weren't home until 12.20 - after a final drink and a merry spin home in Rees's beautiful car.

Sunday 18th September 1921

Up early this morning and to Church by 6.30. Baghdad is well awake by then and working. I walked the whole way - 2 miles - it is a walk of never failing interest. Past the milk cows with their calves, being milked specially for each customer, past porters carrying the most terrific loads, packs of donkeys and horses going to work with their pack saddles on their backs, urged on at a constant trot by imps who ride on the last animal. The donkeys are wonderful animals. One often sees quite tiny ones, no bigger than a big dog carrying a fat Arab. Last night we passed a troop of camels in the dark on the way home, ambling along at a jog to their night's camp. It is so weird to hear these silent animals, so unwieldy, shuffling by with their packsaddles on their backs. The leaders had a large sort of bright coloured plume fixed at the back of the saddle - I suppose as a guide to the others.

Went to see Marsh and Pullar in the 23rd B.S.H. and found M. much better, but P. not so well. From there to Church and afterwards home in Horton's car, just in time for dinner after all, which is at 8 o'clock now that it gets dark so early.

Monday 19th September 1921

Today opened nice and cool and kept nice, the maximum temperature being only 101.5° - fancy calling that cool!

In the afternoon I had a car and leaving my billet at 3 p.m. called for Pickard and went to the Engineer Field Park at Advanced Base to see how they were getting on with the accounts, which they have only just now got onto right lines. They have taken stock and got their accounts right as regards stocks and were going on with the preparation of "Loss statements". I propose, however, to accept the a/c as it stands and waive all adjustments to cover past misdeeds.

This concluded, we proceeded to have a "spot" of tennis on their pretty court. It is a mud court, of course, but so are all courts here. But it is surrounded by picturesque palm trees of various heights and at the ends rush matting is stretched to stop the balls from flying too far. I did fairly well this time and was in two winning sets, thanks a great deal to my sets with Rice last Monday. Pickard and I played two of the Engineer officers and won. We stayed on to dinner and had a real jolly time and returned home at 10.

Tuesday 20th September 1921

I went yesterday, on my way to the E.F.Park, into Pickard's new billet in Chelsea Terrace, which has been taken on as an Audit Staff Mess. It is a very nice spacious house with a courtyard full of trees and rooms for 6 officers. Some of them are fine big rooms and look out over the Tigris and there is a nice wide verandah on the River, most pleasant to sit out on. With a little enterprise it could be made a most delightful place.

The River is very low at present and lower down big islands have formed or rather appeared, which almost block the River. Also it makes irrigation very expensive the water having to be pumped up such a height to the ground level.

Went up with Horton to Golf and got beaten two holes up. He played better than I did, but he also had more of the luck. Out

with Rice to dinner with the P.C. (Principal Chaplain) who as usual put up a ripping dinner. The other guest was Captain Reid of the General Staff, the Secret Service Officer, and he being inclined to talk we had a most interesting evening and heard some inner history of the War in Armenia and the Caucasus.

Wednesday 21st September 1921

Today has been a Red letter day. To start with I have completed 9 months away from home and it seems incredible that I have already been 8 weeks in "C" Mess. Time is beginning to move.

But today I have been up in the Air! I have had two flights, one in a Bristol Fighter and another in D.H.G.A (De Havilland) Major Rees sent his car to fetch Rice and me at 6.a.m. and we soon arrived on the Aerodrome at Aircraft Park. First we had breakfast with the RAF Officers and a good breakfast, too, after our early morning ride.

The Bristol Fighter was already out on the Aerodrome and mechanics were tuning her up ready for the flight.

I put on my overcoat and flying cap and goggles and the pilot sat in his seat and they started her up. The propeller ran for some time with the plane stationary, "warming the engine up". At last I climbed up and was strapped in my seat and the engine was let all out. It was a Rolls Royce engine and the roar was deafening, while the back draught of air almost lifted one out of one's seat. In a few moments the Pilot, Flight Lieut. Greene, whom I had met on the "Huntsgreen" gave the order and the mechanics wheeled the plane around and let go. We leapt forward taxi-ing along the ground, ever increasing our speed and presently the jar of our skid ceased, and we had lifted off the ground. Up, up we went as easily and gently as a bird until we were about 1000 feet up and then we turned, and my pilot shook his head to me. The engine was not running true and down we came again landing as gently almost as we had risen and taxi-ed back to the Hangar. There was some tiny defect in the way the engine was running and no risks, however slight, are taken.

This short flight had given me a taste for more and I was very pleased when Rees announced that he would have the big D.H.G.A got ready for us. This took a little time but at last she was ready and we took our seats. She was fitted with a big Liberty 400H.P. Engine and the roar and wind from this was more than from the Rolls Royce. It was a roomier machine, longer in the span, and in the body and has a speed of 100 - 120 miles per hour in the air. I sat in a deeper seat, and it felt safer than the little Bristol machine I first went up in.

It was a bigger and heavier machine and we had to turn round "into the wind" before we could lift off the ground. This wasn't necessary with the agile little Bristol Fighter. The DHGA was built for long distance bombing and that is what it is used for here. One could tell at once when the slight jar when running on the ground (taxi-ing) stopped and we rose. We "flew" up into the air higher and higher and the whole of the country could be seen for 25 miles each way - to the Euphrates on the west, a long dark blue line, and the brown desert out beyond Baghdad to the east. From north to south wound the wonderful Tigris, just as erratic, to the north flanked by deep green plantations of date palms and cultivation and to the south disappearing into the distant desert again. One could pick out in the desert some of the Wadis, which, rivers in Spring, are dry as the desert now. How easy it was to detect in the Tigris the shallower parts, just as planes could detect the German submarines lying under the water. These shallows are quite invisible from the banks of the River, as well as from boats sailing in it.

Baghdad lay spread out brown and sun-baked, every house square and flat-roofed with beds on top and New Street plainly running through parallel almost with the River. One could pick out the blue-domed mosques (like turquoises in the sand) and the chief places like the Serai, the Citadel and the North Gate Barracks, and right away beyond the Sporting Club the enormous expanse of the filter beds, looking so square and neat, which supply Baghdad's water.

My pilot is the star test pilot for Mesopotamia and tests all the planes as they are built up in the Workshops. They come out from England in parts. It is as safe as walking - flying with a man like that, but

also the plane in the hands of a capable pilot is every bit as sure as a motor-car. To show how safe and stable it was he held both his hands up in the air and yet on we sailed, serene and straight, into the sky. The wonderful thing was the extra-ordinary sense of security. I felt none of the sensations I have felt when looking down from a high building and yet I was looking over the side of a wooden and canvas thing 4000 feet from the ground, floating on nothing more solid than air, and tearing along at the rate of a mile every 30 seconds! It was a gorgeous thing, sublime, god-like, and I felt I could go on for hours like this - and then my pilot made his first turn!

This is called banking. Gradually the plane tilted up on the end of one wing and we seemed to be falling right over and I unconsciously leaned over to the right, to endeavour to right the machine. When were we going to stop? Great God, had he lost control of the machine? I took a hurried glance at him - he sat all unperturbed by this awful catastrophe and then the aeroplane gradually righted itself again and the ground, which we had appeared to be rushing headlong for, slipped under the plane again. We had made our first turn!

On we flew again and made other turns, but I was ready for them, and presently, after we had been flying for about 15 minutes my pilot pointed downwards. I had been enjoying my flight up till then. Now, however, after each sharp turn we shot downwards (we had 4000 feet to go) and then before I could recover myself, flattened out again to get speed up for the next bank over and down. The sensation is more than I can describe, my heart was literally in my mouth and I had all my work cut out to stand it. I am a bad sailor and I was not likely to be unaffected by these topsy-turvy evolutions. The earth came nearer and nearer and presently we made our landing, light as a feather, and taxied in. I climbed out, thanked Greene, turned my back on him and was promptly sick! I absolutely could not help it, but who cares? I had had a most marvellous 20 minutes, had attained a speed of nearly 150 miles an hour at the moment when the plane was dropping, been nearly a mile up in the air and got back safe.

Rice now went up for a similar flight but the pilot (same fellow) brought him down in a lovely spiral descent so it seemed, perhaps

more considerate after my sickness. Anyway, Rice wasn't sick, but he is a good sailor and would probably have stuck my descent quite all right. He enjoyed it all though.

Back to Maude Bridge after a drink at the Mess and the Bridge being cut we crossed by bellum and so home and washed and changed, and back to the office.

In the afternoon I played Horton golf and beat him 3 holes up in 15, thus taking my revenge for yesterday. I played fairly consistently, but not well. I wonder when I shall be satisfied with my golf?

Met two Officers who have just as bad an opinion of the Assyrians as Captain Reid had a good one. It is very strange how some people describe them as lazy and cowardly, while others call them brave and industrious. They don't seem very industrious to me, what I have seen of them, but their women are splendid - hardworking, strong, tidy.

Back fairly early and after a bath, down to a jolly good dinner, it being guest night, with sand-grouse (shot by Colonel Davidson) and ice cream (two). And afterwards up early at 10 o'clock with many apologies to everybody and to bed. Soon asleep after my wonderful day, and had a splendid night's rest. And I deserved it.

Thursday 22 September 1921

After my strenuous day yesterday I thought I would go easy today. Colonel Morris, the Director of Medical Services here says that some sort of exercise should be taken every day in order to keep fit. The fit men keep well. So one tends to live at a much greater pace here. Exercise is expensive; one drinks a great deal owing to the heat, and drinks are expensive; one lives in a military mess and that is expensive. Mesopotamia is not a cheap place to live in, unless one becomes a hermit.

Anyway I feel a bit like a little rest today, so I just sat in and wrote up my journal, which I hadn't touched this week. And that took some time. Then some carpet merchants came with some carpets to sell and we bargained for a while and bought nothing (having no money) They started at a foolish price and after Rice had gone

I got them down to Rs.120 for two and then told them that Rice would buy them tomorrow! He hasn't any carpets yet and he can probably get them for less than Rs.120 even.

After dinner played bridge – though I'd sooner have gone up to bed. The weather has turned hot again and this coupled with lack of exercise, makes one very tired.

Friday 23 September 1921

Quite hot again today – there being very little wind. Temperature probably up near 110° F.

A short time ago I began to think that the work was dropping, but it has proved a vain hope. It only happened for a day and still I find I have more than I would prefer. One doesn't want this strenuous mental work in Mesopotamia. Anyway I was obliged to put in an afternoon at the office on urgent work but I had an hours sleep first, though I doubt if it did me any good.

Rushed back just after 5, changed and went round to the GHQ Courts and had some tennis with Rice and Co. but I played very disappointingly, considering how well I did on Monday. My eyes ached – I expect the afternoon work did it, and I couldn't judge the balls.

The Persian carpet merchants came round while I was out and Rice took up the tussle for the carpets, actually getting them eventually for Rs.100 They really weren't worth much more. But North came round after tennis and bought them for Rs120, Rice having decided, half an hour after he had bought them, that he didn't like them!

Saturday 24 September 1921

Today Rice decided that he and I and Davies would go on a week's inspection to Kut-il-Amara, the place where General Townshend was besieged, about 120 miles from Baghdad. We start tomorrow night, which is very sad, for I still haven't a bearer.

Thank goodness the weather has changed again today and it is much cooler. There is a nice breeze blowing and I shouldn't be surprised if it were under 100°F. This is, of course, very fortunate for our trip, if it keeps cool. One feels the benefit of the drop most delightfully. I have felt better today than for some time past. Not that there was the least thing wrong – I mean that I have felt fitter, more energetic and more contented, instead of slack, and grumbling at the heat.

Certainly I was fitter at golf. I played Giffen, the camp Commandant, this afternoon. We played 13 holes, of which I won 12 and halved the other. Still driving badly but picking up every time in mid field and doing most holes in 1 over bogey. So, feeling more content with my golf than for a long time. Unfortunately there's no golf at Kut, only tennis, and I'm such a poor show at that.

Sunday 25 September 1921

Today has been a fairly busy day. Owing to Rice springing the Kut trip on me so suddenly I had no chance of pulling up my arrears and I had to go to the Office this afternoon and put in a full afternoons work. The office was swarming with mosquitoes that bit me badly and I had to move into another room to get away from them.

I still have no regular bearer and consequently I had to pick out the kit I wanted to take with me instead of leaving everything to my poor Imam Ali. Williams's bearer, Kanjee, whom I share, is fairly good but he forgets things and besides it worries these Indians, serving two masters. However, eventually everything was packed, bed, bedding, bath, wash-stand and so on and at 8.00 our cars came and at 8.30 we set off for Hinaidi. Having arrived we proceeded to seize a first class sleeping compartment (3 berths) and our bearers put our beds out. My hurricane lamp supplied our light; we undressed, put on our pyjamas and got into our beds. Soon after we were settled in the train moved out at 10.35, ten minutes late.

Monday 26 September 1921

I suppose one would call it a comfortable journey as railway journeys go in Mesopotamia. It was a nice cool night, and I slept well and had just had time for a shave when the train pulled into Kut about 7 a.m. We were met by the O.C. (Officer Commanding) the Combined Depot with a car and taken straight to breakfast while our bearers loaded our luggage on to A. T. carts and took it to our bungalow.

Kut looks a desert of a place now – it is being practically evacuated and most of the troops have gone, and in a couple of months time it will be empty (that is military Kut; the famous town of Kut-el-Amara at the bend of the river three miles upstream) except for a battalion of infantry, a Supply Depot and a few small auxiliary units. But the desert air is invigorating, especially in the early morning and certainly an improvement on stuffy Baghdad. It's 'out in the blue' now, except that the wonderful river is by our side almost and the time is coming when it will return to the original desert which it was before we began to build the great military camp here.

I put in a good morning's work and 'did' the accounts of the Combined Depot. Very simple really, compared with the home a/c's before the war, but all the accounts here won't be so simple. Our visit is partly to see what the condition of affairs is in Kut prior to its evacuation. Generally when a place is closed down its accounts turn out to be in such a muck that neither head or tail can be made of them. It is partly to see that things are going on the right lines and to avoid general muddle that we are here now. In the afternoon we went to the Gymkhana on the Sports Ground. This is 'Kut Week' we were late but there was a very good and interesting programme on and it was an enjoyable afternoon. There were Pillow fighting, Wrestling, Musical chairs, V.C. Race, Cigarette race (Officers and Ladies), mounted; Tug-of-war, Obstacle race and other races.

I met Capt. Stephenson of the I.W.T., at the Sports and went to dinner at his Mess at night. A splendid dinner it was, too, and I had the exceptional experience in Mesopotamia of sitting between two ladies and one of them, the lady of the train, Miss Isherwood.

Tuesday 27 September 1921

Last night most of the guests at Capt. Stephenson's dinner went on to the Dance at the Military Hospital – but I stayed at his bungalow and played Bridge and got home pretty late.

We all slept downstairs and it being cool enough turned off the fan. We were suitably punished for our stupidity, all of us being bitten by mosquitoes, which are very plentiful here, and have been scratching all day.

I examined the accounts of the E & M (Electrical & Mechanical) section R. E. (Royal Engineers); the people who produced the electric light and water for the station and the ICE (most important item) Those I did in the morning and found them bad enough. In the afternoon I went to the R.E. Works Dump, as it is called, where the carpenters and building stores and such are kept. After tea I went down to the I.W.T. tennis court and found Rice playing in double. When he had finished Major Luck and Miss Isherwood played Miss Thompson and me. I surprised myself by playing a fairly good game and didn't let my fair partner down badly, although we lost!

Tonight Dawes and I decided to sleep on the roof and avoid the mosquitoes. We avoided them all night, but it was so cold that we were almost frozen stiff. We had enough blankets over us, but not enough under us and on a camp bed one wants even more under than over.

The feeding at the Combined Depot is very poor indeed. We feed for better at "C" Mess for only a little more than half the money.

Wednesday 28 September 1921

Today I did the accounts of the Ordnance Dump, or Depot, and found them well kept. They are getting nearly all their stock ready to sell by auction in a fortnight's time and here's another gift to the bally Arab. It's mostly too expensive to send home and the wily Arab knows whatever price he offers we must take it or leave

it. The only way to make him offer a fair price is to burn the stuff if he bids 'silly' prices.

In the afternoon we all went to the Gymkhana again and had a jolly afternoon's sport. Today's events included a Cook's Race (Cooks to bring Atta*, bundle of wood, bricks for a fireplace and a chapatti plate) * = Indian flour. They ran a distance, made a chapatti (a sort of flat bread pancake) and ate it and then ran back. There were also another V.C. Race, Motor Cycle Race, Boat Race – 4 Indians sit on a pole and run backwards, steered by a cox – and a splendid exhibition of Tent-pegging. The latter was won by an Indian Corporal who beat all the other officers. The second was a British Sergeant Major. There was a tiny freak mule there of which I took a photo – a little dog that pulled a tiny cart with a lantern on it.

After dinner we all went round to Stephenson's again. Lewis, the other IWT Officer, was giving a dinner party and they were having a musical evening afterwards. No less than 6 ladies there including, Miss Thompson, my tennis partner of yesterday. She is the Matron of the Hospital and very nice. I found "The Floral Dance" and sang it, but the level of the singing was very poor. However it was an evening out and Kut must be pretty deadly if you've nothing to do and nowhere to go! That's the reason, I expect, for the heavy drinking that goes on here.

Thursday 29 September 1921

Kut-el-Amara is a town that owes its importance to its position at the turn of one of the biggest loops of the Tigris. The loop is almost shaped like a hairpin and, strongly held, it could hold up all traffic on the River. When we were fighting our way up to Baghdad in 1915 there was no Railway and while we held Kut the Turks could not bring their army far south of it because they could not get their stores and equipment round the bend which we held. Also if we hung on we should not have the trouble of retaking the place on our way up to Baghdad again. So General Townshend held Kut with his handful of men and held the Turks up long enough to stop them going further south until the hot weather set in 1916 when fighting was dropped.

I wanted to see famous Kut while I was here and as Capt. Stephenson gave me the use of his motor launch I set out from the IWT foreshore at 4.15 this afternoon. I've made rather slow progress against the stream, which is, nearing the bend, very choppy owing to the shallow bed and swiftness of the current. At one point we were nearly 15 minutes finding our way through two buoys that mark the deepest part of the stream; we would stick on a mud bank and then have to back off and try again. It took 3 or 4 tries before we hit on a point deep enough to let us over. However eventually we got to Kut, but the River bank was too high to enable the town to be seen as it lies back a little way from the bank. Against the bank to show there must be some sort of place behind it, there were three or four steamers, some barges and a few maheilas. I climbed up the bank and there was Kut, a sort of attempt by mud hut villagers to build a town. Three or four rather pretentious buildings existed on the riverfront, including the Police Station, but all else was small and poor. The bazaar was nearly all shut, partly owing to the lateness of the hour for Kut Town has no lights and partly owing to the disappearance of trade from the closing Camp. I walked to the house which was occupied by General Townshend during the siege, quite a small place, though probably one of the best in town, and then to the Mosque and climbed up the minaret, from the top of which one gets a good view of the little town. The top of the minaret had disappeared, and I am told that our gunners knocked it off with their 3rd shot, as the Turks were using it as an observation post. It was now getting dark so I thought it best not to go out to the Cemetery, where so many of our men lie, and went back to the launch and home. This was really the best part of the trip, during the cool of the evening, in the twilight, the western sky aglow with copper and red and gold gradually disappearing as night fell, and then the lights of military Kut in the distance. We got back about a quarter to 7 and I went into Stephenson's bungalow and had a very welcome drink.

So back to my own bungalow and to dinner at the Combined Depot. This is the worst place I have ever struck in Mesopotamia for meals and we had a bad and unappetising dinner.

I have done both the IWT accounts today and practically finished my part of the programme.

Friday 30 September 1921

Much warmer today – the lovely fresh breeze has dropped and things are sultry again. Went to breakfast with Stephenson of the I.W.T. again and enjoyed it. The feeding at the Combined Depot has not been at all good. Afterwards round the various units I had inspected and settled a number of points. We have had a successful visit on the whole, but nothing much was wrong. It was necessary to see how things stood, however, as Kut is being evacuated practically and closing down, and we don't want a repetition of the scandalous Persian a/cs as when Persia was evacuated last May. We are now clear how things are and no-one can hoodwink us, or hide their misdeeds by losing their a/cs as they did in Persia.

In the afternoon went to tennis at the Club, but played badly and could have wept. I played so well the other night.

In the evening to dinner with Stephenson and at 9.15 by motor with him to the Railway Station. It was a very full train, and we had to have a closed iron truck. Our bearers had previously got our beds set up in it and all ready and after a cheery good-bye we got into bed and the train moved off.