

Saturday 1 October 1921

Sleeping in an iron truck with the wide door open and every moment fearing that some Buddoos might creep in at a stop or when the train slowed down is not conducive to rest, and I slept badly and kept waking up.

We got to Hinaidi punctually having made a really good journey and often the train breaks down – but I felt very tired and kept like it the whole day. Baghdad is stuffy after the open desert of Kut and one felt sleepy and unable to think in our underground office. Found plenty of work on hand, it is extraordinary how it keeps up in volume.

In the afternoon intended to start at 4 o'clock for golf with Horton but my car didn't turn up and I had to turf it out of the garage so didn't get down to the Golf Club until 5 p.m. and only had time for 10 holes. Horton beat me 2 up. It gets dark now soon after 6. There is a very short twilight. The sun goes down in a blaze of wonderful colours and 30 minutes afterwards it is dark.

Sunday 2 October 1921

I have had a busy day today writing and getting out our Mess Accounts. The household a/cs of a Mess of 10 members for a month are not so simple and one has to be very careful indeed or one may be let in. However I had worked them out completely and correctly by 11.30 p.m. and I reckon I have earned my sleep this day. I had to take stock also of our wines and goods, of which we hold over £40 worth.

I got up early and went to 6.30 Holy Communion, and on my way back I bought a silver thimble and a silver cigarette case, both engraved by the Amarah craftsman.

I also passed by the ruins of the great fire that occurred last Tuesday in Baghdad Bazaar, and destroyed property worth over £1,000,000. The ruins are still smouldering and firemen are playing water on them. We have had some disastrous fires here and I must insure my goods, which I expect, are worth 3000 Rupees or thereabouts, including my carpets and curios. This

bazaar fire might have been a very serious affair – but the Fire Brigade did wonders.

Monday 3 October 1921

To the Office this morning and found a pile of work, partly owing to my absence at Kut, partly to the fact that Rice and Williams went to the Office yesterday and went through their arrears, part of which are sorted out to me.

Plenty of work also to do at the Billet in getting out the Mess bills and completing the Mess a/cs. This has all come together so that left no time for Golf or tennis and I stayed home for a time and then went round to the Office during the afternoon. From there on to the GHQ football ground and watched the Audit Staff eleven play the Pay Corps. It was a really good game and our side won 1 goal to 0. There is no grass on our grounds, of course, and very dusty at that and consequently the players look very grimy by the end of the game with perspiration and dust. While the game was in progress several droves of camels came slowly by the ground, one drove containing over 100 I should think. It made a strange picture the tall palms, the camels, the wonderful sunset and in the midst a strenuous football battle!

Tuesday 4 October 1921

We are now getting into better weather. Yesterday was rather warm – 101.5 ° - but usually we are under 100°. Last week the highest temperature was 97.5° and the lowest 60°, at night. A big drop like this in one day makes the night feel quite cold and one can now have 3 blankets on at night. I am still sleeping on the roof and I hope to do so until the rains set in, but it is rather windy tonight. However, there's little rain until November and I expect it will be too cold for the roof by then.

The moderation in the heat makes it possible to take one's exercise earlier in the afternoon and indeed it is necessary now the evenings are drawing in, for it is nearly dark by 6. Williams and I went out to Golf this afternoon and started away at 3.30 and were out on the course by 4. I played quite well for the first 8 or 9 holes and got 5 up, but I fell off badly in the second half and

ended only 1 up. I am still suffering a spell of driving badly, which I can't understand considering how well I had been driving. But I'm improving with the mashie.

I brought home some office work to do, but they were short of a man for bridge so I had to play cards. Still all work and no play – etc!

Wednesday 5 October 1921

There's no doubt that plenty of exercise is the best medicine in this country. So long as one keeps fit one has the reserve to meet illness if it comes, and certainly the athlete, or rather I should say, the man who goes in for sport, suffers less from stomach trouble, and that is the thing which pulls one down quickest here. I have lost all my fat, which I had commenced to put on early in the summer, and am now about average weight, but fit.

This afternoon Horton and I went out to the Sporting Club for golf and played 15 holes, starting from "C" Mess at 3.30 p.m. I played fairly consistently and ended about 6 or 7 up, I forget which. Driving still bad, except for 3 or 4 good efforts. However, it's the exercise one gets that counts and one certainly feels the benefit of it.

Horton is leaving Baghdad on Monday next for home, much to my sorrow, and I had him to dinner tonight. We put up a good dinner and had five guests – quite a merry party. Played bridge afterwards and Horton when he left said ours was a really topping Mess and that he had had a most enjoyable evening. It really is a decent Mess and I'm quite happy, if I ever can be happy in Mesopotamia, away from my dear ones.

Thursday 6 October 1921

This afternoon Horton and Dredge called for me for, as Horton described it, a drive out "into the country" They had their big Vauxhall and brought their guns, in the hope of getting some birds. Crowds of birds manage to find sustenance in this land, which are good eating – grouse, partridge, teal, snipe, duck and

so on. Having crossed the railway we struck out into the desert, picking our way along the desert roads, which are really little more than tracks, only told because they are dusty instead of the hard-baked desert surface. Along back on the Hinaidi road we had passed near two 'sand devils', whirlwinds of sand twisting round and round swiftly and reaching perhaps a thousand feet or more high. They appear rather terrifying things and I should think one would easily be swept off one's feet if one struck you. They must be caused by actual holes in the air, which the ground air rushes in to fill and carries the ground dust up with it in a wonderful twirling spiral column.

On the horizon one side was a shimmering mirage and on the other a clearly marked dark line. As we approached we saw numbers of big hawks (as big as eagles) and presently hovering over the dark lines thousands more hawks.

We were in face of a heartbreaking tragedy. The Army in Mesopotamia had thousands on thousands of horses, of course, all purchased in England, USA, India and so on at high rates during the war. Now the troops have mostly gone home and the old war horses remain behind. The Arab won't buy him, he prefers his own stamp of horse, and as it does not pay to carry them back, poor old Dobbin is led out into the desert and shot. There were probably a thousand of them, or more, their body bones picked clean by the jackals and hawks but their heads and legs still remaining covered by the brown skin. While juicy body meat was to be had these animals and birds of prey don't trouble about the bony head and legs! They really looked a ghastly sight out here in the desert, miles from anywhere, and we were glad to have them behind us. Some miles further on, and we came to the cultivated ground that borders the River Diala and soon after stopped our car and walked to the Riverside. Both banks (now very deep and steep owing to the lowness of the water) are covered with verdure and on the other side what appeared to be groves of trees and the whole scene with its clean green rejoiced our eyes. We breathed deep the clean desert air and voted that it was a topping day.

Up to now we had shot no birds at all and an old Arab told us that there were plenty birds the other side. How to get across? Dredge, who knows some Arabic, informed one of the boys who had waded across the River to meet us with clothes tucked up

around their necks and one re-crossed and disappeared the other side. He could get us across he said. Soon he appeared leading a horse, waded across the River with the horse, which he brought to us. That's how we were to ferry across, on horseback! Pullen went over first, then Dredge, but both got their legs and shoes wet, dangling in the water. My turn was next, so I took my shoes and stockings off. If only I had had my camera with me! I should have liked a snap of my crossing. I jumped up on the horse (we went over bare-backed, of course) and off he went in front of the boy, who, not being able to keep up with him, pulled him by still holding on the rope half round and the horse walked up stream away from the ford, getting into deeper water every step. Then in desperation, the silly young Arab jerked him round and in so doing nearly jerked me off! However, over we got safely – Horton last. Telling the boy to keep the horse handy we started to tramp over the ground the other side – at least the men with the guns did – but Horton and I, not so enthusiastic, sat down just by the river bank. They came back in about half an hour – no birds – and we forded back and paid the boy a rupee for the use of the horse, a gross over-payment probably, judging by his joy. Soon we found the car and after some cool drinks off the ice started for home, past the dead horses and into Baghdad just as the sun was setting, silhouetting the domes and minarets against the evening sky.

It was a really topping journey – and I am going again, perhaps for a weekend.

After dinner Rice, Williams and I went by car to Baghdad South Station to see our boys off who are going home. There were seven of them, five of mine unfortunately, - Hudson, Slark, Hanks, Carney and Whelan. They were all in great spirits and we had a very jolly half hour before the train started – they were very bucked with their send off. Hudson and Whelan are coming back in the spring. They reach Basrah on the 8th (morning) and embark on the 12th so they should be in England by about the 15th or 16th of November. They are lucky to get away so early – as most of them only came out in March 1920 – less than 20 months ago.

Friday 7th October 1921

The Office has seemed very empty today with so many of my boys gone. It has, however, been cooler. We didn't have the electric fans on in the Office, even – the first time since April.

Horton called for me soon after 3 p.m. and we went up to the Sporting Club for our final match. It was an enjoyable game too, we neither of us played very well and at the 11th hole were all square, I then won the 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th and ended 4 up! I made a few good drives and at the 12th put my approach shot down for 4 – 1 under bogey. Horton goes home on Monday and I shall miss him badly – and his car. When Webb went I went on with Horton for a friend – now I have no golf friend I am keen on. Perhaps I can get Williams out more often altho' he is a tennis man – and perhaps even Rice altho' he is a tennis player and doesn't play golf at all. Or perhaps I shall take up tennis – which is nearly as expensive as golf out here.

Tonight just as I was getting ready for bed it rained a bit, and I have brought my bedding down and am going to sleep in my room.

Saturday 8th October 1921

Today has been cloudy again all day – but no rain and I am still up on the roof. Strangely enough the temperature went up to 102° again today, but one is so used to heat by now that it seemed reasonably cool.

Went up to golf again this afternoon and played Long, a civilian and a very nice fellow. Started at the 5th and played 14 holes finishing up on the 18th. 6 holes up. Long is pretty good but very much out of practice. He found the atmosphere rather sticky but I felt fine and enjoyed it. Considering the terrific summer I've been through I must be pretty fit, I think.

After dinner read a book for a while (The Road to En-dor) the first I have taken up for about 6 months. We get all the weekly Illustrated papers and one wants little else I find – Sketch, Tatler, Truth, Sporting and Dramatic, Punch, La Vie Parisienne, Times Weekly and so on. One can sit down in the Mess ante-room and

read and smoke, while the others play cards or chess. So one has no time to read books – at least I haven't.

Sunday 9 October 1921

Up early and to Holy Communion, Padre Hutchings held a very nice service. On the way back stopped and bargained with several Amarah workers for 3 more silver serviette rings and had a very interesting time with them. Finally found three, which took my fancy (unfinished) and bid up to 14 Rupees for them. After breakfast went back and agreed to take them for 15 Rupees the three. Like other trades in Baghdad all the Amarah workers are in one street. Like most other shops they are simply holes 6 feet square and 6 feet deep and strangely enough nearly all the workers have similar features, mostly of the type of our Lord's "disciples", some quite patriarchal in appearance. They are mostly fair skinned and wear red head-kerchiefs held on by a light brown coil of wool. Nearly all speak English enough to understand and bargain with you. They're a queer crowd.

Went to Horton's "G" Mess GHQ, to dinner tonight, it being his last dinner to count. A very enjoyable evening I spent, too, and came home by car soon after 10.30.

Monday 10 October 1921

This afternoon Captain Horton and Padre Hutchings came round and brought the Church accounts and Horton handed them over to me on my assumption of Church Warden and Treasurer of the Garrison Church. There is quite a big bank balance (over 3000 Rupees) the larger part of which I must put on Deposit at the bank and so earn interest. I am sure this is the last job I had thought I should undertake in Mesopotamia, but I am very glad to do something for the Church – which does a great deal for me.

At 8.30 p.m. Horton called for me and having picked up the other fellows from "G" Mess we all went to Baghdad West station to see him off. This is the beginning of the "trooping season" exodus and a great number of Officers and troops are going home. The train for Basrah is packed every night – all anxious to get home for Xmas. Several others of Horton's friends turned up and we had

another merry "seeing-off" party. Lt. Col Marshall, another friend, was the other occupant of Horton's compartment and as he also had friends seeing him off the party grew and became uproarious.

Tuesday 11 October 1921

It never rains but it pours. I had been without a bearer since 27th August and had written to Waldren, our audit representative at Basrah to get me one – as none were to be got at Baghdad. However, no reply came and then last Tuesday, Major Munro, an officer in this Mess, offered me his bearer, who wants to stay in Mesopotamia although Munro is going home. So I accepted. The day after, Major Pryer, who is being invalided, asked me if I would like his bearer. Today a letter came to say that a new bearer was being sent up to me! But I am satisfied with my new man, who I believe I can make as good a servant as Imam Ali was. He is a Mohammedan, and at present he is most attentive. He doesn't quite know what is wanted in dealing with civilian kit but is willing and quick to learn and nothing is amiss to him. He'll be obeying me like a dog soon. And it's all done by kindness.

I stayed in all the afternoon and read and then got off three letters I had wanted to write.

After dinner the usual Bridge party was absent and I played patience (some new kinds) with Williams – and I'm sleeping in my room tonight, in case of rain.

Wednesday 12 October 1921

Today has been a great day indeed. We had the greatest guest night I have ever been at in honour of Major Munro who leaves for India tomorrow.

But first I must record the arrival of the remainder of the Mosul staff. The 18th Division is coming down from Mosul and our office there shuts up accordingly. McNeill, Barkham and Wardrop came down and brought all the accounts with them. McNeill is staying in "C" Mess for a time until he leaves for home. He looks very fit, and has enjoyed his experience at Mosul.

In the afternoon I went out with Rice and McNeill to tennis. I am rather slow at putting up much improvement, but I enjoy the game which is splendid exercise on these hard courts. But tonight was the night. We had 16 men sitting at table and our cook excelled himself and put up a tophole dinner, including ice-cream (Can you fancy 16 men sitting around a table, each eating a big plate of ice-cream?) But the best of the dinner was the champagne, which Munro had supplied – one dozen bottles of the best. We had two servants going round the table the whole of dinner filling up each man's glass as soon as there was any more to go in. What with the other drinks – a 'short drink' before dinner, most of us were feeling quite merry by the time we rose. One table started Bridge, but the remainder preferred the jolly old piano. One of our guests was a topping pianist and Williams and I brought out our songs, and Bridge was thereafter voted an impossibility. We sang my songs with the choruses again and again. "Italiano" was a great favourite and so was "The green grass grew all round". We must have been really merry, for I gave a dance which encouraged others to dance – some preferring the table, some the floor – one man did a wild sword dance, some jazzed; and the noise! Afterwards someone started 'monkey' tricks, at which we all competed – but when it came to cockfighting on the floor, I cried off. Half a dozen of the others took part, but McNeill was caught unawares and came over a purler on his head and sprained his neck. However, we put him to bed, said "goo-ni" to Munro and went to bed ourselves.

Thursday 13 October 1921

McNeill brought down with him three fine turkeys from Mosul and they are now in G.H.Q. horse-lines where they will remain until the end of November when we shall have them up at the Mess garden to fatten for Xmas. The three only cost 40 Rupees and we shall very likely be able to sell the 3rd bird for that. We are going to have a great time this Xmas.

I massaged McNeill's neck in the afternoon and we went out for a stroll, but he cannot move his head at all at the moment and is suffering a great deal of discomfort and some pain. I'm glad I didn't "cockfight".

After dinner we all went down with Munro to the station to see him off. He had a berth reserved for him in one carriage and we all trooped in – seven of us – and whiled away the hour's wait singing and laughing. We had all the old songs over again and entertained the rest of GHQ almost to drinks for of course whisky and sodas had been brought down. Munro enjoyed his send-off and he won't forget his last two days in Baghdad. Good Luck Munro! You are a fine fellow.

Friday 14 October 1921

No more sleeping on the roof this year, I'm afraid. The nights have turned suddenly very cold, down as low as 50° and this to a man used to temperatures up to 120° is cold. He feels it very much – his blood is so thin, his skin pores so open. In the mid-day sun flannels are too hot, much too hot; in the evening the same things are too cold. This is the season one has to be careful.

During the last few days two carpet merchants have been round to the billet trying to sell carpets, but I haven't seen one I like – though I really can't afford to buy any more. But it is great fun bargaining with them. The other day one man, who swore that he gave 54 Rupees for a carpet and only wanted 6 Rupees profit (Rs. 60 in all – but he first asked Rs. 65) eventually accepted Rupees 35 for it!

In the evening went up with Williams to the Government Book Shop and had a good hours book –dipping. I bought one book – Rs.3, Williams bought 7 or 8 – for Rs. 24. On the way home looked in at the American Bar at the Maude Hotel, full of Officers; the fashion is to go there and have drinks and chip potatoes – latter very fine!

Saturday 15 October 1921

During the morning booked a car to take McNeill and me to Baghdad Sporting Club, Williams's foot being too sore for golf. After tiffin Rice said he would come and Williams lent him his clubs. I played very moderately, only 3 bogeys in 16 holes and Rice found it much more difficult than he thought. Of course, my attention was too much occupied in showing Rice what to do, for

me to play careful and studied golf. But I could now go round on a good day in about 90, I think, for the 18 holes (bogey = 73) and when I have eliminated the slice from my drive I shall do still better. I'm beginning to get the idea, I think sometimes: other times, I feel that I shall never play a good game.

Home by car, and after a comfy drink and smoke, a jolly hot bath. Hot baths now at night, but I am still keeping up the morning cold bath, as it wakes one up so effectively.

Played Bridge in the evening until I was almost too tired to see the cards. Went up at 11 o'clock and in bed and asleep by 11.40, after a long and happy 'think' .

Sunday 16 October 1921

To Holy Communion this morning with Barkham and a very good service indeed by Padre Hutchings. Took the collection. "Some Churchwarden!" On our way back I bought a round beaten copper tray in the coppersmith's bazaar for 3 Rs. (about 4/4d) which I intend to get my man to polish.

Now the lovely cool days have come one doesn't use the fans at all. I have sat in my room all day and never once needed the fan. That is a blessing – not to have to use it, just as it is a blessing to have one when the heat is on.

Went to Church tonight with McNeill and Major West. Enjoyed the service very much including the sermon, which the others criticised. The point was that God had more use for a sinner with a programme of life, than a non-sinner without one. We go in for good virile soldiers' sermons out here and are not afraid to call a spade a spade.

Tonight all the dogs in Baghdad are having a barking match, and about 100 or more are at it. Their owners must be heavy sleepers not to mind it, or perhaps they haven't any owners!

Monday 17 October 1921

The shutting of the Mosul office has meant that the work formerly done there has now come to Baghdad and a good part of it comes to me. I am full up to the brim with work again and had to put in the afternoon today at the office. It's getting more reasonable weather, of course, but it is not good this afternoon work. The afternoon is sacred to rest or exercise. I expect I should have played tennis, but poor old McNeill's neck is still very stiff and he can't play. Major Middleton West has been massaging him but it does no good and McNeill will have to go to Hospital to be thoroughly examined. Very hard luck on him – and on me, too, for he was to have helped me for three weeks before going down to Basrah for home, and he hasn't been able to do anything yet. King Feisul has been up at Mosul and had a good reception and things seem quiet enough up there. We have very few troops at Mosul now – and we have given up Kirkuk altogether, where we had maintained a garrison to keep the Kurds in order. We are gradually reducing our Garrison in Mesopotamia. Why not home for Xmas 1922?

Tuesday 18 October 1921

Poor old McNeill has received his orders – he's for Hospital tomorrow. They want to X-ray him to find out what has happened.

So I put off golf, I was going with him to the Sporting Club and went instead with Capt. Waite to the Citadel, where we had three sets of tennis on the Ordnance Courts. Didn't win a set, I'm still too weak at the game, but I enjoyed it immensely, and I think I'm improving. Home afterwards on foot through the bazaar and eventually looked in at the Maude Hotel, where we found the American Bar full of Baghdadis, Arab Army Officers, and English Officers and civilians, all having drinks and fried potatoes. This is a rather recent enterprise in Baghdad this American Bar and it is astonishing how the Baghdadi has taken to it. The thing in Baghdad is of course to do what Feisul's pal, the Englishman does and the well-to-do Baghdadi does it. He also wears European clothes and his women dress in the latest European fashion. He still wears his fez, but my impression is that the women aren't so particular about veiling themselves as they used to be.

Wednesday 19 October 1921

Yesterday afternoon I went with Capt. Waite to the Citadel where the Ordnance have a quite good tennis court. We went up by arabana, and entered by the Gate where the famous old gun is where the Arab women rub their 'tummies' in order to get a man-child. It's apparently an efficacious old gun, too, judging by the bits of material, torn off the baby's clothing, which happy mothers tie on the chain which encloses the gun, as a thank offering. I had three sets, pretty good tennis, and am rather pleased with myself.

This afternoon I had a sleep and then went to the office and fetched some work home to the billet to do. The amount of work coming in is astonishing – and no joke by any means. And then, out go all our lights- there's a fuse somewhere! Ring up Central 37. Yes, they'll send a man at once. In 10 minutes the man is here and in 20 minutes the lights are on again. I wonder if London could beat that?

Had a jolly good guest night again tonight. Afterwards played Bridge – and had as unfortunate evening – the first since I've been out here.

Thursday 20 Oct 1921

Left the office early today at noon and had tiffin. Started away from the mess at 12.30 and motored to the Baghdad races, which this year are being held on the new Race course by the Golf Course, in nice clean open country, not so desert as the old Hinaidi Course. It cost 10 Rupees for entrance, which is pretty thick, but there was a very good crowd there, including a number of well to do Baghdadis and "Buddoos" (or Bedouins), the lower class Arab. Military Baghdad was there in force, of course, and a good sprinkling of Civil, so it can be imagined what the crowd looked like. There is quite a handsome Grand Stand, in the centre of which King Feisal sat, with His Excellency the High Commissioner and Lady Cox, and other ladies. Betting was done by Totalisator, which takes 10% of the money wagered and pays out the balance to the backers of the winning horses. Sometimes big odds are

paid. One horse won at 570 to 10. On another horse, which came third, 177 to 10 was paid for a place.

Most of the horses that ran were of the thin weedy Arab type, ridden by Arab jockeys. All wore the proper owners colours, but the get-up of some was extraordinary. But their enthusiasm on winning was wonderful, and their horses entered fully into the spirit of the thing. I backed one Arab horse and won 47 for my 10. The same horse ran again in the next race and I didn't back it. It won easily – 65 to 10. (Serves me right!) It was interesting to watch the horses parading in the paddock before the race. Here one picked one's horse, or canvassed friends for the winner, just as at home. Four of us went. Two won 50 Rupees each. I lost 2, the fourth lost 13. We had a most interesting day, but I had a cold coming on and wasn't as fit as I usually am.

Friday 21 October 1921

There were good fields for every race yesterday and I can still see the horses coming tearing round the bend into the straight, for home. It is only a brown earth course, not grass, and the last few horses swept along in clouds of dust, which quite wiped out any chance they may have had. They were started by flag, too; we have no such stupid devices as starting gates out here. The judge made a mistake, too, in one race and the spectators had to put him right. Once the "Tote" began paying out 72 to 10 on a horse, and subsequently discovered it should have been 22 to 10. But who cares? Certainly not those who drew 72's for their 10's! It is remarkable what a gambler the Arab is. Dozens of most disreputable scallywags had plenty of notes to venture and picked the winner too. Anyone with a little horse sense could have won stacks of money.

I have felt rotten all day today with a bad cold, a sore lip, broken tooth, pimple on my tongue, hot head etc. etc. etc. I brought home an afternoon's work, too, and that hasn't improved matters. And this day 10 months ago I left England. Speed up, Father Time, get a move on.

I forgot to record that I was vaccinated last Wednesday morning. There is a smallpox epidemic in Baghdad among the natives. No

danger to Europeans, but it is just as well to take precautions. My arm hasn't "taken" very well, so I suppose I'm still immune.

Received news today that our War Gratuity is to be paid. Splendid! Better late than never.

Saturday 22 October 1921

The past few days I have unfortunately had a bad cold which has dragged me down pretty low, as colds always do in this country. During this past week it has kept very cold in the mornings and the temperature has dropped quickly from the wonderful 120° – 130°, which one had almost got accustomed to. Lots of people have got colds – 3 others in our mess – and I am no exception. Notwithstanding my cold I went again to the Races – had a bet on every race and ended 8 annas down. Again I ought to have ended well up, but I have no horse "sense" as I said before. I backed one horse, No 13 in a race - which romped home only to be disqualified. Then my old friend Leila ran in the last race again and in spite of a heavy penalty came third at a good price, for a place. I didn't back her. But it was a jolly day, full of interest and life and fun – and I should have enjoyed it immensely had I felt better. After dinner I was done and came up and went early to bed. If I am not better tomorrow, it's me for the Doctor, Sahib.

Sunday 23 October 1921

This morning woke up feeling rotten but went to Church and nearly felt like fainting. Came home with the P.C. in his car but had to refuse his invitation to dinner for tonight.

After breakfast went to the GHQ Dispensary, which is just by and was carefully examined by the medical officer – temperature, pulse, lungs, throat etc. He said I'm all right, or will be in a day or two. In fact I'm getting better!

In the afternoon went with Rice to the Hospital to see McNeill – who seems quite all right again. His neck is quickly getting better, but he won't be out for a fortnight and then he'll go straight home. From the Hospital went down to the Serai by boat – a very pretty little journey. It was twilight and it's just at this time that Baghdad viewed from the River looks more like the East. The Minarets and

domes of the mosques, the square roofed houses, the date palms silhouetted against the beautiful evening sky. On the other shore a few lights move noiselessly about as we row along the silent Tigris. Yes, this is the East.

Monday 24 October 1921

I don't seem to have the best of luck with my servants. My new man had obviously been unwell for some days and on questioning him I found that he had had severe stomach pains and couldn't eat anything. So I sent him to the GHQ Dispensary and had a chit from the Indian doctor there asking that he should be sent to Hospital, as he had a fever and diarrhoea. When I told my man, however, he flatly refused to go to Hospital and asserts that he will soon be well. That's all very well, but I'm not keen on a servant attending me who has a fever.

In the afternoon went up with Rice to see McNeill in Hospital. Found him quite cheerful and he says that he is enjoying the rest! Of course, he's quite fit except for the torn muscles of his neck and is just in the proper condition to enjoy Hospital. But he won't be out for a fortnight and then he'll want to go straight home so I shan't get the help I thought I was going to.

In the evening sent my man out to buy some green lemons. They are rather small but he got 12 for 6 annas. He boiled me some water and Rice and I had a big glass of hot lemon before going to bed. Just like home (?)

Tuesday 25 October 1921

I got fed up with myself, not having had any proper exercise for a week that I had a car out and Williams and I went up to the Sporting Club for golf. We played 15 holes and he beat me 1 up. I had absolutely no luck, however, for I played fairly well on the whole. I did one hole in 1 under bogey. Although I lost, I was ever so pleased with the exercise and also with the thought that I was playing better than usual, and had nearly got out of my bad habit of slicing.

I sent the car back for two other officers of "C" Mess and they brought another officer and came round part of the course with us. After one drink at the Club we all went to the now famous American Bar at the Maude and had drinks and chip potatoes. Shades of Caliph Haroun Al Raschid! (One time Caliph of Baghdad – Two Thousand and One Nights)

The afternoons are now getting much nicer and soon I shall start nosing around the city again and my Journal may get a little more interesting and not merely a record of tennis, golf, and guest nights. I shall take some more photographs, too, for I have noticed many interesting things and Baghdad is full of interest to the man who can see.

Wednesday 26 October 1921

Today I have spent the afternoon in the bazaars, and inspected precious stones and amber beads just as thought I were really a connoisseur. It is astonishing what lovely jewels even a potty little jeweller in a musty hole in the wall can produce if he thinks you are a buyer. I have seen some most gorgeous amber beads today, some valued at as much as Rs. 175 a string – but it would be a good spec. to buy them, for I'm sure they would fetch up to £30 or £40 in London. The merchant brought out his cheapest first and it was some time before he would produce his best for inspection. Just a small square room about 7 or 8 feet square hidden away in a khan, no carpet on the floor, 2 seats and 2 small chests. Nothing at all on show! and yet those 2 chests were stuffed full of amber beads. Home and spent some time re-stringing the beads I bought as they were only on a cheap piece of twine. They look much better on silk with knots between each bead.

Guest night tonight. I had Irvine, who goes home on Saturday, as my guest. We had a top-hole dinner and I think Irvine enjoyed himself. Anyway he was in no hurry to go, even at midnight.

Thursday 27 October 1921

The date harvest is now in full swing and it is quite a sight watching the date pickers walking up the trees. They are up in no

time, lying back in their rope supports and using the indentations where the old fronds grew as steps, and shifting the rope with jerks upwards as up they walk. They take up flat baskets which they lay across the ropes when they are up at the top and catch the loose dates which fall off as they hack at the bunches. These they place on the baskets and lower them as the baskets get full. Those on the ground separate the dates and it is astonishing how quickly the yellow heaps grow. They are then packed up in shaleefs, or thin sacking sheets, and taken away on donkeys. The old palm fronds are also hacked off or broken off and make beds, brooms, fans, roofs for houses and countless other things.

When picked yellow these dates are quite dry and have a fairly hard outside skin which comes off pretty easily. There is also a fibrous material near the stone which is not nice, but the date improves with keeping, like many other fruits and after a time gets quite sticky and soft all through and goes dark brown.

Friday 28 October 1921

It has been a lovely day today. Brilliantly sunny, midsummer heat, brisk and dry, nice breeze and cool morning and evening. It's a grand winter climate, there's no gainsaying, but you have to be careful morning and night.

In the afternoon Hutchings and Jaques called for me and we all 3 went down to the Sporting Club just after 2.00p.m. I played by myself and found that I could go round in an average of 90 or so, or 1 over bogey. I did 3 bogeys and one under bogey. I am improving my driving, but putting badly still.

The padres had two nurses up to tea. We had a merry party of 5 and didn't leave until nearly 6.30. In the evening we all went ("C" Mess) to the R.A.F. show which is being given this week at the Royal Cinema in Baghdad. They have renamed it "Oh, Charlie". It was very well received and well done, though not so well as at their own theatre in Aircraft Park, probably owing to the different and smaller stage. However, we all enjoyed it and all voted it easily the best show anywhere outside London!

Saturday 29 October 1921

Very sad tonight – I have just seen off by the 21.50 train my second-in-command, Irvine. He and North went together and we have endeavoured to arrange for their passage by the fast boat which leaves Basrah on 2nd December. He has worked splendidly this last month and I shall miss him very much. He is due to return next March. Speed on, March! All the Audit Staff were at the station to see them off. Never mind, I only have one more year to do.

I had intended to go up to the Hospital to see McNeill but while I was having my tea two Arabs came with carpets, Mezmarian and his co-swindler. I upset them very much by telling them that the English Army was going home next year. They held up their hands in despair, rolled their eyes and said the desert Arabs and the Turks would come in and shoot everybody and take all their money away. They were relieved when I told them Coccus (Sir Percy Cox) and the R.A.F. would remain, they don't think much of King Feisul apparently – "he got no money" – nor of the Arab Army, and I believe their attitude is typical of the town Arab. "Coccus" is the King of Iraq to them, not Feisul.

Sunday 30 October 1921

Up early and went to Holy Communion at the Garrison Church. I was the congregation again. Not frightfully energetic is the Army, I'm afraid.

I bought a carpet yesterday from Mezmarian. A Kashgar – all wool – which he started at Rs. 200. Of course, I laughed in his face, and offered to give him my pair of Baluchi saddle bags in exchange (value Rs.35) He actually stayed and bargained for two hours and in the end I took the carpet for Rs.85; viz. my saddlebags which are worth Rs.30 to him and Rs.55 in cash. I wasn't keen on the saddlebags and quite satisfied to get rid of them. The carpet is 6 ft by 5 ft about, not counting the fringe at each end which is about 5 inches long. Lieut. Eagle, who came in at 6 o'clock bought another carpet for Rs.55! I wouldn't have it, but it was a good enough carpet. Fancy a Persian carpet 30ft. square for £4. Carpets are cheap just now and the merchants are even sending them back to Persia, where better prices can be got.

Went to see poor old McNeill tonight in Hospital. His neck is still stiff and it may be weeks before it is right. To Church by bellum - all the way for 8 annas.

Monday 31 October 1921

There was a letter for Williams this morning from the War Office asking him whether he was willing to stay in Mesopotamia another year "under Rice". This looks as if Rice is to be confirmed in the post of Financial Advisor, and that they haven't been able to find a Chief Accountant fit to come out. The news is also confirmed that the R.A.F. take over control from the Army on 1st October 1922, and it is added that the whole of the Army Audit Staff should be able to get away by December 1922. This should mean that some of the staff could leave about 1st November and most of the remainder about 1st December and disposes of the possibility of having to stay until March or April 1923.

In view of the early ending of Army control out here, they (W.O.) apparently don't want to send another Assistant Local Auditor out and therefore ask Williams to stay; but this knocks my hope of becoming A.L.A. on the head. The details of W.O. reorganisation are not yet notified to us, but I rather infer that the scheme, whatever it is, has damaged my prospect of promotion (at any rate in the near future) or my name might have been mentioned. However, Williams is not yet decided whether he will agree to stay.