

Tuesday 1st November 1921

My cold not having disappeared, and the cough having stuck to me, I went to the G.H.Q. Medical Officer yesterday and he told me I had got a touch of bronchitis and that I ought to go to Hospital. This was very far from my ideas on the matter and in the afternoon I got Major Middleton West to examine me and say whether he thought there was any real necessity. Unfortunately he agreed with the M.O. basing his advice on this – that a few days in Hospital would put me right, but if I didn't tackle it at once it might get worse and mean a month in. When I went to the M.O. again this morning he told me that it had been decided to send me to Hospital, so I went back to the Office, cleared up what I could, then to the Mess, packed up sufficient things and came up to the Hospital by car.

I am particularly annoyed over this, as I have kept so well all the hot weather, and as a matter of fact, I don't feel at all ill now. My section of work at the Office is running beautifully, in spite of the loss of staff, and my loss (while I am in Hospital) will be severely felt. However if two medical men advise you to go in, there is practically no alternative. Anyway it will be a nice few days rest, so long as nothing is wrong.

Wednesday 2nd November 1921

Well, I arrived here - 23rd British Stationary Hospital – at about 12 o'clock yesterday, reported myself and just lazed about all the rest of the day. Nobody troubled me at all. McNeill is in here and quite well, except that he is to undergo a small operation tomorrow. Quite a nice lot of officers in here, no-one seriously ill. The ward to which I have been allotted, "F" Ward, is a large square room with 8 beds in it - about 36' x 24' and 15 feet high. It is beautifully light and clean and as might be expected, exceedingly well ventilated.

I stayed in bed this morning for my medical examination. The M.O. came round about 9.30 and gave me a most thorough overhaul, tapping and listening again and again for nearly half an hour. In the end he told me that I had got a little congestion in my right lung and that I needed a rest – that was all. He could

find nothing else wrong, but if I could manage to bring up a little phlegm he would examine it. I have felt better since I have been in here and haven't coughed much. I don't feel a bit ill now and there can't be much wrong as I am on full diet, and have a bottle of beer for lunch and two whiskies for dinner. I am to stay in bed for four or five days and then be examined again.

Thursday 3 November 1921

One's day here starts at 5 a.m. when an orderly and the night sister come round and take one's temperature and pulse. Then a dose of salts and a few minutes after – your early morning tea. Now to sleep again and about 7 a.m. one gets up, shaves and has a hot bath – 3 pails full of hot water in a real bath. Breakfast is at 8 a.m. – porridge, eggs and bacon, bread and butter and tea. After breakfast orderlies appear and make all the beds, the sister on duty tidies up and at 9.30 a.m. the M.O. comes round with the sister, inspects you, examines you and hears all about you both from yourself and the sister. At 10 o'clock, medicine. At 11 o'clock hot milk. At 12.30 tiffin – soup, chicken, milk pudding or jelly with cream. 1.30 to 3.30 you sleep. 3.30 Nurse takes temperature and pulse again and then you have tea, bread and butter and biscuits. 4 p.m. medicine and wash. Orderlies make beds again and at 5 or 5.30 M/O. comes round again sometimes with the Matron or O.C. Hospital and looks over everybody. Dinner is at 6.30, same as tiffin plus fish, and a whisky and soda instead of beer. Medicine at 7.30. Milk at 8.00. Soda water at 9.00 and at 10 p.m. lights are put out. During the day one sleeps or reads or writes as one pleases – so long as one rests.

Friday 4 November 1921

This morning the M.O. gave me another full examination and although the little bit of congestion hasn't quite disappeared, he says it is certain that there is nothing else there and that I may get up tomorrow. I shan't get up until about 11 o'clock as I am rather enjoying the rest, which is really what I wanted more than anything else. 3 of the other officers in my ward are suffering from stomach trouble, two from boils and one from continual headaches. The latter is an R.A.F. Major and a very jolly fellow in spite of his unfortunate complaint.

It is not quite so cold this morning and it has turned much warmer tonight and rained, tho' very little. The gardens will look nicer when there has been a good rain or two and washed the summer's inclusion of dust off the leaves. There is a fine wide verandah both sides of the long building in which the Officers wards are with quite pretty gardens back and front. I had a wander around at the back this afternoon and quite enjoyed the sun which is now quite moderate, like in summer at home, and I should have been sorry to have missed any of this lovely weather. Thank goodness I am all right and shan't have to stay longer.

Saturday 5 November 1921

As I thought the gardens have benefited by last night's rain and the trees look much cleaner – the orange trees especially, the oranges which had been looking very brown and dusty are a deep green again and with the real autumn weather will begin soon to turn yellow. Pomegranates are a brilliant red brown – those still remaining on the bushes, and the dates are nearly all picked. Limes, grape-fruits and lemons are turning slightly. In the gardens this hot-house climate enables turnips, lettuces, marrows, cucumbers and tomatoes still to be grown, while even gourds, pumpkins, brinjals and ladies fingers are not yet finished.

I was permitted to get up today and I accepted the gracious boon with gratified joy just as if I had recovered from a serious illness – whereas I know that actually I am a pious fraud and have been perfectly well all the time! But I must say that I am enjoying this rest in Hospital very much. At 6 o'clock I was ordered back to bed and I can't help laughing at it all. I read all day and am being fed up just like a turkey for Xmas! I'm actually getting fat already and I've only been in 5 days!

Tonight is Bonfire Night – and the troops in Baghdad have been celebrating it with rockets and "very" lights, we can see them plainly from our ward.

Sunday 6 November 1921

Obtained permission to get up this morning for early service – but the bally bhisti made me wait nearly 20 minutes for my bath and I was late. The bhisti handles nothing but water, prepares one's hot bath water, fills chatters (drinking water coolers) and hubs (large filters) No one else will do his job, just as no-one else will handle the patients bed pans and bottles or clean the w.c.'s except the sweeper. As I say I was late as the bhisti was delivering hot water to the wards and no-one else will touch his job.

During the morning I found an invalid chair and fixed it up under a sort of bushy privet tree, and commenced my letter. After lunch I finished it and was grateful for the solitude, although it was warmer in the garden, damp after the rain, than it was in the shady ward.

I've had fewer visitors than usual today (some days I've had 6 or so) Rice and Barkham. I asked B. whether he would take on the job of organist at the Garrison Church. He's a splendid organist but the choir is touchy and wants handling and I wonder if he is the man to do it. There's splendid material in the choir, if properly trained, and actually 17 turned up at last Friday's choir practice, so there's numbers as well. It might be 'some' choir one day.

Monday 7 November 1921

A lovely lazy day. The cold weather has disappeared and lazy midsummer weather come again and I have sat in my chair in the garden, reading in the shade, even doing that lazily. Big fat-bodied insects busy themselves among the flowers or sun their wings on the broad hollyhock leaves just by (there are no bees in this country) and presently a stately proud old hen with about 8 or 10 whistling chicks emerges from the low foliage and steers her children across the grass into the next leafy square, clucking to the laggards of they get behind. Then suddenly a flock of doves, frightened for some reason, flush into the air from the trees in a most startling manner, and whirl away. Then back to my book and imagine I'm in the Riviera, and whether you are having such weather as this in England now. These lazy days are a welcome change and I am quite content. I'm getting fitter and fatter and don't seem to worry a bit about the exercise I thought so essential a fortnight ago. Still, thinking of it makes me feel it will be nice to

have a round of golf and some tennis again. In the afternoon I lie down on my bed and read and after a bit, drop off to sleep. In the lazy hours between 4 and 6 we look at carpets or chat lazily and watch the smoke of our cigarettes curling upwards. The birds in the trees are chattering about the day's happenings, but soon they're asleep, and we go in, a lazy day ended.

Tuesday 8 November 1921

Quite a number of patients are leaving and I can't help that there is not much reason for my continued stay here, now my chest is right. Still, I don't feel like hurrying things, for this will set me up for the winter, and, I hope for next summer, too, until the day when, next autumn, I pack up for Home. Dear Home! Gray skies, maybe chilly winds, wet days – but what is the use of this gorgeous sun and blue, blue skies if they deny you those you love?

I have had quite a number of visitors today – Fennell and Haynes of the C.M.A., Thomas (the padre), Hutchings (another padre), Pickard and Major Middleton West – six of them all in the afternoon, so it's been quite a kind of reception. It's ever so nice to see them – but when you think that this is all out of their leisure time, given up to you, because you're in Hospital, you feel an awful fraud.

We had a great entertainment tonight in the Hospital Theatre, the best, I believe in Mesopotamia. It was given by the Baghdad Amateur Dramatic Society and consisted of three sketches – 'That brute Simmons', 'The Ghost of Terry Bundles' and 'A Sister to assist 'er'' with some very excellent violin solos, songs and recitations in between. We enjoyed it immensely – all of us – and got back to our wards by 10.45 p.m. This was the Society's first effort in public, but they'll soon make a most excellent show of it.

Wednesday 9 November 1921

Slept soundly last night and woke up feeling very bucked. Major Potter came round about 9 o'clock and I stripped for him to examine me. He listened over every inch of my chest and back and says that my lungs are in perfect condition. So that's that.

I dressed and strolled down to the riverside just outside the Hospital Gate. Just here the Tigris narrows and a low flat plane spreads out into the stream. Keleks and gufahs and barges from upstream anchor here and discharge bamboos and brushwood, skins and a sort of cement. A dozen dhobis have their stand here and bang their washing to bits on boards or rocks, afterwards laying it out to dry on the bare ground. I suppose the dirt brushes off all right. Here also the Dairy farm herds come down to water and the big black water buffaloes lie down in the water, many with just their nostrils showing, like the hippopotamus at the Zoo. They're sort of halfway between a cow and a hippo. There are hundreds of them and as they come out the dung which they drop is collected by half a dozen children into tins. Higher up the bank it is spread out into round flat pancakes to dry, and sold as fuel. One whole family lives in a rugged sort of tent there and makes its living out of it, but what a business and what a smell! They look as filthy as their manufacturer, too.

Thursday 10 November 1921

Another complete examination this morning with the same result. The instrument they use is a sort of microphone about the size of a bun with a wire to each ear. My lungs are perfect and I am to go home tomorrow (home with a small 'h', i.e. the billet) I'm half sorry to be leaving so soon, for they are a jolly set of fellows here and I have quite enjoyed my short stay.

So I have written letters today – one hasn't so much opportunity at the billet – out in the garden, but it's pretty hot and honestly it's much better to be slacking. I went down to see the Colonel in charge at 11 o'clock and he half gave me the chance to stay a day or two longer, but it wouldn't be cricket, would it? At 11.30 I went to the Dentists and he re-stopped one tooth. The other I am to have done at 10.30 on the 15th.

In the afternoon strolled round the grounds and took a few photos. The oranges in the orange garden are just beginning to yellow and some of the trees are loaded. The orange season is near at hand, I should say, and we shall soon be eating these delicious fruits again. Never any lack of fruit or vegetables in this wonderful country, and yet it is all done in a strip a mile wide or so

each side of the two rivers – Tigris and Euphrates – all the rest is desert.

Friday 11 November 1921

This morning I awoke with a quite sharp feeling of regret that I was leaving Hospital and almost hoped something might happen which would delay my discharge for a few days. McNeill, whose operation (for piles) has been very successful, will be up in a few days, several other fellows are for Medical Board (to go home) while others are to go out in a few days discharged. There'll only be a half a dozen left next week.

I ordered the Ambulance Car for 6 p.m. and went round and said good-bye to everybody – but as the car didn't arrive until nearly 7p.m. I had dinner with them and said good-bye all over again. I thanked the sisters and told them I was certainly coming in again at the slightest chance.

I arrived at the Billet at 7.15 and having had my dinner went with Rice and Major Middleton-West to Dr Cantine's lecture at the Y.M.C.A. on "Travels among the Arabs of South East Arabia" He was a missionary for many years at Muscat and knows that wonderful piece of country well.

Today was Armistice Day and we observed the 2 minute silence in Baghdad.

Saturday 12 November 1921

Back into the collar again and found the Office full of work as usual. Dear old Pickard has been doing my job and handed over to me, and the rest of the morning was one long procession of Officers calling about their accounts, all of them wanting to get away at once and wanting everything cleared up forthwith. Consequently O didn't get much done and went in in the afternoon to make up, but I didn't feel much like it after my 'holiday'. One never does the first day back.

The billet of very comfy after all, but the nights are colder now and it won't be long before we shall be wanting fires or oil-stoves

going. We have drawn our oil-stoves from Ordnance and I have a nice new one waiting in my bathroom. The night temperatures are round about 50°, while the day maximum goes up to 80° and even over – and one feels a drop of 30°.

But the more bearable weather has made the afternoon sleep no longer a necessity and one can now stroll about in the afternoon sun with the greatest comfort, of course, where two months ago one would have risked one's life by doing so.

Sunday 13 November 1921

A beautiful warm autumn day. Up in the morning early and walked to Church. Back with the P.C. in his car. He took the service. (N.B. Principal Chaplain for Mesopotamia – Colonel J.T. Hales)

Wrote all the morning – my Xmas letters. I find that our new member Capt. Luxon, C.M.A., has a riverside bungalow at Walton where his wife lives from April to November. The winter she spends at home. He has quite a good lot of photos of the neighbourhood, which brought back memories of home.

In the afternoon walked down to the Hospital (to show how fit I was) and saw McNeill who gets up tomorrow and Forbes and the others. All cheery but say they miss me.

Afterwards to Church – home with Hutchings in his car and dressed quickly and went round to the High Priests for dinner. Every time he puts up a good dinner and I enjoyed it. Jaques and Capt Tooler were also at dinner, with the P.C. and me making four, so we made quite a cheerful diner of it. After the P.C. went (at 9.45) I stayed on discussing the old chaps carpets – he has quite 20 – until 10.45 when I and Hutchings left. So here I am finishing my diary for the week and now off to byes.

Monday 14 November 1921

The closing down of the Mosul Audit Office (where McNeill was) has meant more work comes here now, and the Mosul force being only one Brigade instead of a Division, the Officers of the

abolished units have been bringing in their accounts and pressing for their clearance certificates. I've sometimes had a string of them waiting for interviews and this and the increased work have kept me very busy and meant a little 'overtime'.

Went in the afternoon and watched some good tennis and then to the Office and after that walked again to the Hospital – for exercise – and to get my topee which I had left there. On the way back I bought a box of Turkish Delight from my old Arab friend, Hussan, who sells the best sweets in Baghdad. It is very surprising what a lot of sweetmeat shops and stalls there are in Baghdad. The Arab has a sweet tooth, and his pastry cooks make him all manner of sweet cakes, macaroons, and sweets of every description. Many very highly coloured. Sugar chickens are great favourites with the Arab children, and a sort of whitish round shaped sweet called 'manna' – something like very tough marshmallow.

Tuesday 15 November 1921

This morning I again motored to the Hospital but this time to have my teeth seen to by the Dentist. I can't help comparing the cleanness and quiet of the Hospital in its pretty grounds with the dirt and noise of Baghdad. I always had a gorgeous night's sleep at the Hospital but the barking dogs and other noises around my billet disturb my sleep now I am back. So long as there is nothing much wrong with one, a sojourn in Hospital is a very pleasant way of earning one's living!

In the afternoon, at 2.15 p.m. went up with Cairns, Hirons and Rhodes, 3 of our staff, to the Sporting Club for golf. It has been taken over by the Baghdad race Club and the first proposal was to make all members pay an entrance fee of Rs. 50 and Rs. 10 per month. There has been such a howl of protest that the entrance fee of Rs. 50 is to be dropped. I played fairly but my absence of three weeks has left me out of form.

Then back to the Office for a little work and after dinner a little Bridge.

How I wish I had a gun to shoot that beast of a dog barking nearby.

Wednesday 16 November 1921

The last few nights have been much colder especially last night when the minimum was only 47° – 15° above freezing, and it seems only a few weeks ago when the daily temperature was 117° or more. As a matter of fact it was only about 2 months ago – yet yesterday's maximum was only 77.8°. That's 40 degrees drop in the day temperature and actually 70 degrees between that September maximum and last night's minimum. It is these rapid drops that make the climate difficult. Yet they say this November has been warmer than last November. But the wonderful blue skies continue, no rain or clouds even – and this winter climate is gorgeous; and with the dry atmosphere continuing is not surpassed by the Riviera or Italian climate.

Tonight we had quite a jolly guest night. One of the guests was Cook, from the Ordnance, who is a good pianist. I have lost most of my best songs – stolen or taken from the Mess Room – but we went over all the songs in the Day & Hunter's Song Album and the other few songs I had left. We ended up the evening by a few roundelays in joyous mood. One of the best evenings I have had since the evening Munro left.

Thursday 17 November 1921

Nowadays one doesn't feel quite so eager to get up in the morning. A month ago it was the best time of the day and I used to love to sit at my window and watch the people and traffic go by – for my window overlooks what was one of the chief streets in Baghdad – the street leading from the South Gate – before New Street was made. It is still the favourite street for much of the early morning traffic. It starts as soon as it is light. Not wheeled traffic; that doesn't start until later. But donkeys carrying vegetables from the gardens at Karradah and Hinaidi; or wood from the mahelus at the riverside; or bricks from the same place, all accompanied by men or boys yelling unknown words. Many workmen going into the city to work, and Assyrians and Armenians coming to draw water. But the most unusual thing to the

Englishman is the number of women from the villages nearby who come in with fowls, eggs etc. and bundles of fuel. This is of all sorts – broken up palm fronds, sticks gleaned from the riverside, tree roots and dung pancakes. I have mentioned this extraordinary industry before and it is remarkable what a big trade is done in it. Only natives use it.

Friday 18 November 1921

The individuals I mentioned yesterday only constitute a small proportion of the traffic, of course. There are horses with at bulging saddlebags, small squads of Police, some going some returning from the Depot near by; the contrary stream of donkeys and horses going down to Karradah or the River for more merchandise. The water men arrive and jerk their water over the dusty road. The E & M Camp opposite wakes up and goes to work, Officers going or returning from their morning ride, and so on, an unending stream of interest.

In the afternoon Pickard came up and we played singles at the G.H.Q. tennis courts from 2.45 until 4.40. I improved a little I think – but very potty compared with the fine tennis being played on the other courts. I'm beginning to be able to keep up some good rallies now and then.

In the evening went to the Audit Staff Mess in Chelsea Terrace, where they have made the billet very comfortable and put up a good dinner. Afterwards played ping-pong on a proper sized table and glad to see I hadn't forgotten my old proficiency. Had many good games and enjoyed them. Sat up on the riverside verandah afterwards and yarned and left for home at 11 p.m.

Saturday 19 November 1921

Felt very stiff after yesterday's long game and this I think affected my golf today. My right arm ached and golf is like most other games one must be absolutely fit to do well. I did fairly well for the first 12 holes but then I went potty and played badly. I'm slicing again. Barkham came with me and I had a lot of explaining to do and I'm sure one can't play so well when one's attention constantly taken off one's game. I can always play best

with a good player. Barkham is left-handed but will make a good enough golfer.

It was very nice out on the Course and many Arabs were exercising or trying their horses on the Race Course just by for the Race Meeting next week. There was an exceptional number golfing today and quite a crowd having tea on the sunny verandah afterwards.

It has been keeping cold at night (45° again Thursday night 76° maximum during the day) and we started fires in the Mess room tonight. Quite homely and comfortable it seemed and we yarned and got sleepy – so I'm going to bed earlier than usual tonight 10.15 p.m., which is about 7 or 7.30 at home. Daddy goes to bed the same time as his kiddies, now!

Sunday 20 November 1921

Yesterday was cloudy all day and it looked like rain. I left the billet at 7 a.m. and walked to the Garrison Church for Sacrament and on my return at 8.30 it had started to rain. It is still raining, 10.00 p.m. It has poured steadily all day and the result in a land where the earth is all clayey loam is almost disastrous. There is no subsoil to allow the water to drain away and soon all the roads which are a little below the level of the others become rivers, even as much as a foot deep in water. The road just outside this billet is a foot deep in water and the donkeys and carts splash through, motor cars go cautiously, while pedestrians simply gather up their skirts (the men – that is) and wade through, being shoeless. Women keep at home these days as they are not allowed to hold their skirts up. River Street, I am told, justifies its name, being a stream for most of its length. The other roads are almost impassable for mud – except New Street, which is the only street in Baghdad with stones on it, brought from Table Mountain, over 100 miles away. What a change from the dust and drought of a few days ago! I can see it is impossible to get about here in ordinary boots and I must buy some rubber "gum – boots" tomorrow.

Monday 21 November 1921

Talk about mud! You in England have not the least conception of what Mesopotamia (or Iraq as it is now called) is like when it is muddy. In the road outside the billet the mud is at least 6 inches thick and impassable to Europeans. The Arab pedestrian, both male and female, wears no shoes, so finds no inconvenience. Motor cars, however, find it almost impossible to move today and transport has practically broken down. The gangs of donkeys who do most of the native carrying work and which generally look so spick and span, are today in a very sorry condition especially the white ones (the majority are white). But they have to do a full day's work whether the roads are bad or not. The water buffaloes as they go down to the River to water don't mind, of course; the shepherd of one herd fords the deep mud outside here by riding on one of his cows! I was wrong about the women. They hold their skirts up all right, but their legs are ugly and what is the use of watching ugly legs coated with Mesopot mud? Having no gum boots I haven't gone far today – only just between the billet and Office. Rice came back today from Basrah. Just caught the right train. Sunday night's train arrived at Ur to find the line washed out – so there'll be no mail until Thursday.

Tuesday 22 November 1921

Yesterday completed my eleventh month away from home and tomorrow will be the tenth 'monthiversary' of my arrival in Iraq. Speed on 1922!

Each Officer has now been issued with a large size Ripplingille's "Perfection" heating stove for paraffin oil or as we call it out here, Kerosene. This Persian oil is exceptionally pure, good enough in fact for motor-cars, so that we get a splendid heat, non-smelling and non-smoking. Mine is a new one and heats my room nicely. I tried to get some gum boots today without success but I bought a ripping Burberry Overcoat at the Officers Shop for Rs.40 – less than £3. Many things are cheaper in Iraq than England. Summer suits, boots and shoes, white Dinner Suits. I got my servant a beautiful full size thick knitted wool cardigan jacket for Rs.4 and a pair of serge khaki trousers for Rs.6 I spent a lot of money on getting kit in England which I might have got more cheaply here. Tonight we all gathered round the jolly Mess Room fire (real coal) and talked. When the kettle boiled the others had hot whisky

toddy – Rice and I had hot lemon. Someone said it was just like home. What a fatuous remark.

Wednesday 23 November 1921

It was a good staying rain on Sunday and the streets are a long time getting dry. Of course that may be due to the heavy humidity in the air, as the stone floor of my room at the Office is still quite wet, and there may be some more rain in the air. The Municipality has been employing men and youths to push the superfluous mud off the roads, but unless they are continually whipped and bullied they do precious little work. If he is allowed to, the Arab will just squat down on his haunches and never do a stroke all day – and then complain bitterly that his pay isn't enough and that he has worn himself to a shadow! He only gets Rs.1 and the youths 12 Annas and he doubtless thinks the job of going for the money is hard enough at that price.

This weather has stopped all sport and it is too muddy to make walking pleasant. I have taken up a deck chair on the small roof and sit there in the afternoon if there is sun and read, and then at 5 o'clock go to the Office for two hours.

We had an enjoyable guest night tonight, very happy in a way. There was a splendid fire in the Mess room and I enjoyed it. Anyway it made me very sleepy and I slept soundly.

Thursday 24 November 1921

Yesterday's relative humidity was actually 83% - i.e. the atmosphere was almost saturated with moisture. Tonight the expected rain came – with a vengeance. We had as much in 10 hours as we had all Sunday, and I hear that many of the lower quarters are flooded. The main roads (New Street especially) is built on a high level, and most of the smaller side streets run steeply down from them. Then the ground floors of houses in the smaller streets even are lower than the streets so that when a big rain like this happens they soon get flooded out. This week's rain has been exceptionally heavy for Mesopotamia. Rains don't usually get really serious until January and they are very early this year. I hear that the Railway has been washed away between Ur

and Samawa and that 17 miles of track is under flood. These Iraq railways are only laid on mud embankments (there are no 'metalled' tracks in the country) consequently the tracks get very soft in wet weather and if a heavy train tried to steam over a flooded track it would probably sink 6 feet into mud! This has delayed the English mail badly and the letters which should have arrived here on Monday have not yet been delivered.

Friday 25 November 1921

An inch and a half of rain fell last night. The Baghdad Races, which were to have taken place on 24th and 26th of this month, have been postponed; it's impossible to get on to the Race Course and racing will be impossible until it has dried a bit.

This afternoon I borrowed a pair of gumboots and Rice and I went for a walk into Baghdad City to see what the damage was. I started picking my way carefully in New Street but when I reached River Street I found I was wading through mud more than ankle deep and I soon ceased to worry about mud. From the Serai Bazaar we crossed to Exchange Square and went down the Shorza bazaar – and here the mud became a revelation! It was never less than ankle deep and sometimes so sticky it nearly pulled ones gumboots off. Here and there one found a dandy (Arab) who kept his boots on and was ferried over the bad parts on the back of a coolie, but most everybody paddled along in bare feet. In one street the water (rich brown muddy water) came half up to our knees. One woman was raising the level of her doorstep with mud to keep the water out! But this mud – MUD – MUD! It is impossible to describe Baghdad today and I give it up.

Saturday 26 November 1921

Today the trial of the Indian clerks I captured at Zeur on 28th June last began – after the poor wretches had been 5 months in jail awaiting trial. Nobody hurries in Iraq. I arrived at the Arab law Courts by the Serai at 9.00a.m. where I met Major Neilson just arriving, also Mr Vatcher, an Indian Christian who is an Assistant Commissioner of Police. The courtyard was full of natives, engaged in various lawsuits I expect, with their native lawyers and

also some murderers heavily chained in the charge of armed guards.

At 9.30 our prisoners arrived and soon after we were ushered into a waiting room and regaled with tea. Poor Hamilton looks a wreck. It was not until after 10 that the trial started. At 11 o'clock I went for a stroll round the Courtyard. It had by now got very lively and groups of Arabs and Jews squatting down everywhere seemed to be arguing the merits of their cases beforehand screaming at one another and gesticulating like mad hatters. The din was terrific. How different from an English Court, where in the waiting room stony silence is the rule. After waiting all day I was told at 3.30 that I shan't be wanted until Monday afternoon – and it looks as if this is going to be a tedious unsatisfactory case.

Sunday 27th November 1921

This morning went to Holy Communion as usual in spite of the mud – no virtue in that however as the P.C. called for me at 7.10 and brought me back. Doctor Wigram again acted as server, same as last Sunday. There was no change in the mud in New Street, but there are hopes as I think the weather has changed. After a misty morning the sun came out in a cloudless sky and although it turned a bit cloudy later in the day it has been a warm sunny day. The relative humidity went up to 97% - nearly saturation – very different to the 18% during the summer!

All the morning I wrote. In the afternoon sat out on the roof in the sun and read (too hot for Rice, who had to go down) and in the evening to Church by Arabana and home by car with Jaques. In the evening went to diner with the P.C. Doctor Wigram was there and a most interesting old man he is. He has been in Iraq for many years and knows it almost by heart, and Kurdistan as well. P.C. went to sleep after dinner, but old Wigram was most entertaining and I quite enjoyed the evening.

Monday 28 November 1921

A heavy morning at the Office – after Saturday's day at the Law Courts and Sunday's holiday and got rid of a real big pile of work.

It is extraordinary that our work is increasing in spite of the numbers of troops evacuated – September incoming correspondence was 1500 letters – October's 1900 and November's will be over 2100 letters.

So I felt anything but eager for the afternoon at the Law Courts. I reached there soon after 2 p.m. and there I sat until 4 p.m. when I was told I should not be wanted! Good old East! Anything put off till another day is a great achievement. If I ever bargain with an Arab for something I don't intend to buy and I suggest a low price which he accepts (and expects you to hold to your offer) I can always effect a retreat by uttering the one word 'peechi' (afterwards). The Arab is quite content – puts his goods away and awaits your pleasure, (if any).

Had a look around the Government Book Shop (thronged with buyers) and then to the Hospital and saw McNeill and the others. A case of smallpox has occurred there and they are all 'isolated' . Poor old Mac who had expected to be out on Wednesday last is in until next Friday.

Tuesday 29 November 1921

The weather has been delightful these last few days and the roads are now drying up – though not very fast. However, as a precaution against the next rain I have bought a fine pair of "Gum Boots" from the Ordnance (Rubber Knee Boots) for Rs.7 (about 11/3d). It keeps rather cool. The maximum day temperature was 63° and the minimum night temperature 46°, which is about the usual temperature for December except that the nights run a bit colder.

In the afternoon I had a walk round the G.H.Q. garden and picked a large bunch of Chrysanthemums for the Mess. These are in full bloom now, all grown on the bush and spray principle smaller than our carefully disbudded sorts, but they are a mass of bloom and supported by Hollyhocks, French Marigolds, Zinnias and roses still in flower. I love roaming around the garden and I'm struck by the remarkable scarcity of weeds. Grass grows plentifully here and there, but that is not accounted a weed here! I have never seen a caterpillar yet, nor a worm and the only butterflies the small

cabbage white. There are some big insects and beetles, however, and any number of lizards, but I have noticed neither aphids nor any blight.

Wednesday 30 November 1921

The place is now beginning to dry nicely and tennis started again today. The flooded railway line is also right again and the up-train with the mails starts tomorrow.

Went out this afternoon with Major Middleton West round the Bazaars. We priced up several things including a complete Arab costume which would cost about Rs.35. Apropos of what I was saying on Monday, I bargained with one dealer for a brass scribe's pen and ink holder. The Arab wanted Rupees 20 for it and said it was "old", "good work", "very good" and so on – but I suggested 8 Rupees only. He gradually came down to Rs.10. I then turned to go when he said "All right Sahib, 8 Rupees". I didn't want the thing so I said "peechi". "All right" he said, quite content, and put it away. We also had a walk around the Goldsmith's Bazaar and watched the craftsmen making nose-rings, and nose-jewels, and ankle bracelets, such as the Arabs wear. The little silver ones with bells on for babies, are rather novel and I will buy a pair for my Sylvie if Mummy will tell me the size of her ankles. Had Pickard to dinner and had an enjoyable guest night.