

## **Thursday 1 December 1921**

This morning at 11 a.m. I received the request to attend at the Law Courts. My turn had come. The Arab Prosecutor had promised to call and see me, as I felt he wanted shaking, he was handling the case so badly, and it wasn't going at all well. But he never came. However, from the beginning of my evidence I practically took charge of the case and I think I have put it on right lines again. I was there from 11 o'clock to 4 o'clock except  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour for lunch. As I was leaving, Hamilton, one of the prisoners, whispered asking if he could speak to me. He wanted to make a clean breast of it and I have arranged for him to be brought to G.H.Q. Tomorrow.

On the way home I met Dr Cantine, the American missionary and he would take me home to tea with him. Mrs Cantine was in and I stayed until 6 o'clock and had a most enjoyable time telling them all about Teddington and Hampton and my wife and children!

After dinner worked on the mess accounts until 11 p.m. I don't seem to get much leisure to read these days, but it may get easier with the New Year.

## **Friday 2 December 1921**

A hard morning's work at the Office and after tiffin finished the Mess accounts and made out the bills. Then to the Hospital but this morning we have had more rain and the roads which had begun to dry a bit are as bad as ever again. After wading through a river of mud for a mile I took a gharry (arabana) to the Hospital. I passed by the Arab Theatre which collapsed the other day. It is now quite flat on the ground, the only things sticking up being the long heavy poles which served as rafters for the roof. It was one of the buildings put up when New Street was cut through Baghdad in 1915 and was a very flimsy affair. I wonder it has stood as long as it did. Like many other of these Arab buildings its walls were two thin shells of brick filled with earth and rubble. The rain soaked into it, made it rotten and unable to stand the weight of the roof. So they just collapsed. Four Arabs were killed. All the fellows are very fed up in the Hospital with having been delayed so long owing to the smallpox outbreak, and are looking forward to coming out or going home next week. After dinner went to Dr

Wygrams lecture at the YMCA on Kurdistan. It was a most entertaining lecture and only lasted an hour – all too short everyone said.

### **Saturday 3 December 1921**

Today has been a miserable day – wet and cold and the place is fast becoming one sea of mud. But it was saved by the arrival of my long looked for letter from home, a fortnight late owing to the breach in the railway line both sides of Ur. Trains started running again on the 1<sup>st</sup>.

Yesterday Hamilton (one of the Zeur prisoners) was brought to GHQ by Vatcher the Police Lieutenant and I spoke to him in the Conference Room. As I thought, he wanted to make a clean breast of everything and wrote out and signed a full statement admitting that all the charges were correct. This ought to make the case a good deal easier, though it will now be necessary to conduct it on slightly different lines. He could see the case was going against him, especially after my evidence, so he is now trying to diminish his punishment by turning informant. He should have done it before.

It is very monstrous these wet days. It is no fun mud-wading and there are no sports to be followed – so one has to sit in one's room and either read or work. As my work is so heavy I have to give most time to work. Work and sleep interspersed with eating – that's one day in Iraq but thank God there are one's letters to save one – jewels in the desert.

### **Sunday 4 December 1921**

Three weeks to Xmas Day and four weeks to New Year (1922)  
Hooray!

Trudged in the mud as far as Exchange Square and then Jaques and Hutchings picked me up and I made the rest of the journey in their car to Church. Only two at Communion this morning – and Hutch mentioned this in his sermon tonight on "Thou shalt have no other Gods but me". He said that it was evident many people

made a God of their beds and their comfort and early breakfast, and put Church second. Still, two miles through liquid mud is decidedly a handicap to enjoyment. To see the Arabs trudging by our billet, where the mud is thickest, is a scream. Neither they nor their women wear shoes and they sink half up to their knees each step in some places. The men tuck their clothes up to their waist and their legs are a sight. So are the donkeys and horses, hundreds of which pass hourly in the morning – thick mud all over their legs and bellies. They must be wretchedly cold and the boys who drive them lash them unmercifully with canes if they lag. These donkey-boys are very cruel and the race as a whole has very little pity. They are filthy little wretches generally, they live in squalor and it makes them brutal, I suppose.

### **Monday 5 December 1921**

It is still very muddy and likely to remain so while the air continues so humid. Every morning there is a thick mist, which hangs about until 10 o'clock when the sun disperses it. In our own semi-basement serdab at the Office it is not very warm and being dark also, it is not an ideal place to work in during the winter although nice during the summer.

Some of the roads which bear heavy traffic have been sadly damaged by the continual wet and there are many big holes, filled at the present moment with creamy mud. As many of these roads have no paths one has to walk in the mid and sometimes finds these holes, a foot deep. Rubber knee boots are thus a necessity, and we all look like so many members of an amateur Fire Brigade. Still I suppose this weather, so long as one keeps properly clad is better than the summer.

Three members of the Exchequer and Audit Dept. (Treasury) have arrived today. These go over the accounts we have audited and report the results to the Public Accounts Committee. Considering the extremely bad accounts we have had they ought to find plenty to say. They are staying here for a month.

### **Tuesday 6 December 1921**

At home where cruelty is practically non-existent we have hundreds of Inspectors of the R.S.P.C.A. on the watch. Here cruelty to animals is almost part of the daily routine and there are none. Even the method prescribed by the Mahommedan religion for slaughtering their sheep is to slit the throat up from the chest to chin and leave the animal to die. Unless the meat is killed this way no true Mahommedan will touch it. But they treat their donkeys just as cruelly, and these are the chief beasts of burden. I should say that 60% or more of the carrying is done by horses and donkeys, which have their loads slung over their backs, half each side, and there are about 3 donkeys to one horse. They overload them shamefully and work them until they drop. Today a donkey sat down in the mud, nearly under my window and refused to budge. They twisted his ears and tail, and then one bright fellow lifted up his tail and prodded him with a sharp stick. Eventually poor old moke got up (beautifully muddy) had his load on again and trotted off. Blows meant nothing to him I expect, being too used to them. But he had a few minutes rest, and was able to struggle on again.

### **Wednesday 7 December 1921**

We have purchased a badminton set, with 6 rackets. We have put up the net in our courtyard, five feet high and had some splendid games the last few afternoons. Our courtyard is paved with brick (and just the size for a badminton court) so now we are able to get all the exercise we want notwithstanding it is too wet still for golf or tennis. We are getting more proficient now and the game at times becomes extremely fast, so much so that an hour or hour and a half is quite enough and one gets almost wet through. But one must keep fit in this country and exercise is more necessary than medicine.

There have been two or three more smallpox cases in GHQ (other offices) and so we have all been vaccinated again. I was done yesterday; I don't fancy I shall take although this is new vaccine this time. Four spots I was done, on the left arm. All our clerks are being done, and any who refuse are to be discharged on the spot. The Arabs and Indians are very slow to realise the wonderful safeguard of vaccination and that is one reason why the Health Authorities find the disease so hard to combat.

## **Thursday 8 December 1921**

All our servants went for vaccination the other day – not without some objections. The vaccine is of course obtained from cows or calves – sacred animals to many Indians and that is the reason why many refuse vaccination who are in a position to do so. These religious difficulties confront one at every turn in the shape of the Indian caste system. My boy for instance won't touch my enamelled chamber pot (that is the job of the mehtar, or sweeper, who is out-caste) and I have to bring it in every night myself from my bathroom where I keep it during the day, and the sweeper is brought upstairs every morning to take it out. During the summer (when I didn't need it) it remained in my bathroom and my man never even dusted it although he dusted everything else!

Had nearly two hours badminton after tiffin today and immensely enjoyed it. McNeill now staying here after leaving Hospital, would play all day if he could get opponents!

Last night had a good guest night. I had Perkins, one of the E and A fellows from Egypt and Rice had Armstrong. Perkins is a jolly boy and much enjoyed himself.

## **Friday 9 December 1921**

It was clear that we were in for more rain, for the air has been saturated with moisture – the relative humidity being 100%. In the summer it was often 18% or less. And sure enough the rain came this afternoon and continued all the evening. This winter has produced an absolute record in rain so far – nothing so heavy has been ever recorded, and the mud doesn't get a chance to dry. It is gum boots always.

Rice and I (and Mc + Major West) went to the YMCA to hear Dr Wigram's second lecture on his experiences as "A Prisoner in the hands of the Turks". He was very good, better I think than last week. There was a poor audience owing to the wet. In fine weather we should have the hall crowded.

When I came home, Williams astonished me by asking what I had done with his dinner suit. When he went to dress his suit was missing and he could only think that I had played him a practical joke. As a matter of fact, a thief must have come in, popped in his room and seized the suit and shirt and vest and out again like a flash! Williams sometimes leaves his door open, but it is pretty daring for a thief to come into a house which holds 16 servants and 10 officers and get clean away with a suit of clothes. The Arab is the cleverest thief in the world.

### **Saturday 10 December 1921**

Last night was a real stormy night. I didn't know such a wind occurred in Iraq but at 10.30 a wind storm arose and continued until past 11.30 when I fell asleep. There are hundreds of date palms in the gardens facing my room and the wind makes a tremendous noise as it rushes through the long palm fronds. That makes it seem noisier. The tall palm tree bends to the wind, but seldom breaks, being composed of a tough fibre-y sort of interior not true wood at all. It won't burn or saw into planks, so that although the country holds millions of date trees, it has to import fire-wood and building wood. Fuel oil, which is abundant is now being more used, but the Arab is very conservative and very slow to change. IRAQ produces wonderful wool and is now growing cotton and I see no reason why she shouldn't put up factories, using fuel oil and make her own woollen and cotton goods.

I forgot to say that last night Major Middleton West invited Rice and I to dinner at the Maude Hotel. We had to plough through the rain and mud but it was a topping dinner and quite good music – a piano and violin, played by Englishmen.

### **Sunday 11 December 1921**

To Church as usual 7.30 service and Holy Communion. After breakfast to Office at 9 o'clock to superintend the move of our Office furniture and accounts to new rooms on the top floor. We have now got a suite of 9 rooms on the side facing the River. They will be an immense improvement on our semi-underground rooms for the winter – up to May, but from June to October they will be very hot. However that's next year and a long way off yet.

We have taken the rooms formerly occupied by "A" Branch and although they were to have moved out by 9.00a.m. so as to enable us to move in, I had actually got my move ( for which I had to get 12 more coolies and carry out at the same time as theirs) completed before they had finished theirs. I have got a nice room to myself. I didn't get back to my billet until 12.15 and couldn't write my letter until the afternoon.

Mrs Williams has cabled to her husband from South Africa that she does not wish to come out here so Williams has now cabled the War Office that he does not desire to stay beyond March next. If the W.O. does not send out another man to take his place, I may get the job (Assistant Local Auditor) a great stroke of luck if it comes off.

### **Monday 12 December 1921**

The quantity of official work so occupies one's time nowadays that beyond the hour or so spent at Badminton one has very little leisure to devote to exploration or sightseeing and so one's daily diary tends to become rather tame and uninteresting being merely a repetition of the daily routine. The mud, the record rainfall and so on are daily topics, the rupees continue at about 1 to 33/4, and provides us with a daily grouse when we see the 'rate of exchange' seconded by the daily grouse about the non arrival of the mail from home.

Today there was an official 'grouse', or rather complaint that Officers are talking too freely in derogatory terms of King Feisul and pointing out that as his accession to the throne of Iraq is an act of considered policy on the part of Britain, officers are expected to support him and to discountenance talk to his detriment. I don't know whether Feisul is not 'making good' but it will be a thousand pities if he doesn't, because the sooner Britain can rid herself of the expense of Mesopotamia or IRAQ The better. If we keep the port of Basrah, that's quite enough. The advantage of holding the rest isn't worth the cost, even if it's an advantage at all.

## **Tuesday 13 December 1921**

When I took over my new rooms on Sunday there was a beautiful green island about ½ mile down the river. Today it is non-existent. A few weeks ago, cars found difficulty in climbing the incline from the boat bridges to the bank. Today there is no incline. The river, owing to the heavy rains has risen 15 feet and actually rose 5 feet last night. It was rising all day today and is running at a rare pace, rich brown in colour with the mud. There is no sub-soil in Iraq which can drain away the water – it all has to go into the Rivers – either the Tigris or Euphrates, and now the desert wadis which 6 weeks ago were just dry channels are running streams. As if by magic, rivers have now appeared where formerly the dust of the desert reigned and grass is beginning to show green. The same dusty desert, on which before convoys and caravans roamed and cars traversed is now impassable with mud and marsh in many places. We have had plenty of wind which is blowing off the looser leaves, still green, and today it has veered to the North and is much colder, at night especially, and the garden flowers are beginning to go off, like zinnias, French marigolds etc.

## **Wednesday 14 December 1921**

The river commenced to drop a little today and it is a good thing for a little more would have made the flood difficult to deal with lower down.

I went yesterday to have my vaccination looked at and it being pronounced a failure I was done again – 4 places. This is the third time in a month and if this takes or if it doesn't I shall be immune from smallpox, so the Medical Officer told me. Just as well to be safe as smallpox is still prevalent in Baghdad. The only deaths among the troops so far have been of men who had never been vaccinated (two or three) But the mortality among the Arabs is much higher – about 40 deaths last week.

I brought out my ping-pong last night and we played for about 2 hours but our table isn't suitable. I had intended to bring it out again tonight (guest night) but the fire was too comfortable and we all sat round it and yarned. I had Case, one of the E & A

fellows for my guest and Rice had Morton Marshall the Chief of the General Staff, and he was in great form as a raconteur and kept us in roars of laughter. Quite a good night.

### **Thursday 15 December 1921**

About this time in England it begins to keep dark until nearly 8 o'clock, but here it is quite light even at 6.30a.m. It gets dark soon after 5.30 in the evening and there is practically no twilight. However, it's a job to get up in the morning still and I don't get to the Office until 8 a.m. I do a good bit in the evening, however, overtime.

This afternoon after badminton, an Arab carpet dealer came to the billet. Rice bought a Baluchistan carpet 8 ft. by 4 ft. dark red for Rupees 70. Mine is a cheap carpet, I think, (£4.10.0) and I can sell it for more; or I may sell one of my others. These Arab carpet-dealers are feeling the pinch of the bad market and many have to sell their goods cheaply to raise money falling due. This was the case with this one.

McNeill left Baghdad for Basrah tonight en route to England, where he should arrive about the end of January. He arrived here about the 12 October and has spent all but a fortnight of the time in Hospital! There were 5 of us to see him off and he was in a very merry mood. He has promised to call at Meadview. (The house in Hampton)

### **Friday 16 December 1921**

The days have been very nice lately and this afternoon the GHQ tennis courts had dried enough to permit play. I spent over an hour watching the play which is very interesting at times, there being some fine players in GHQ.

After tea I walked up to the Government Book Shop and the paths having by now become reasonably dry the New Street parade of the native population on Friday and Saturday nights has re-started. It is quite nice to see some colour about again. The Jewesses as usual wear abbas of all colours and it is strange how

picturesquely the black costume of the Mahomedan women works in with the picture.

In the evening I went to dinner at the Hotel Abdul Lahad (run by an Arab) as guest of Padre Brown. Rice, West and Dr & Mrs Cantine were also there and we had a very enjoyable dinner of about 10 courses! The table was strewn with flowers about 2 or 3 inches deep – one could hardly see the white cloth.

Afterwards to the Y.M.C.A. to hear Dr Cantines' lecture on the customs and character of the Arab of southern Arabia. He makes him and his women to be a much more loveable lot than the Arab of Mesopotamia.

### **Saturday 17 December 1921**

Going to the Hotel yesterday I saw an incident which I suppose could happen nowhere else in the world but Baghdad. A burly Arab on a very small donkey, leading by one hand a very large camel. My donkey is too large and the camel too small!

The city Authorities have dug a series of holes down each side of New Street and lined them with brick. They will have top gratings and the idea is to push the water down them when it rains. As New Street is generally quite as low (if not lower) in the middle than at the sides I wonder how they expect the water to flow down the holes?

In the afternoon with Barkham to the Race Club for golf. Owing to the state of the roads it was a very rocky journey; flop down a hole, bump up again, flop down and so on! I played very badly and only beat Barkham by one hole. However, it was very nice to get out there, so fresh and clean the air. Here and there it was still very muddy. Tea after in the Club House and another bumpity-bump ride home feeling much better for having got out of Baghdad for a bit.

## **Sunday 18 December 1921**

My man woke me up at 7 a.m. this morning, which made it rather a rush to get to Church by 7.30 but I managed it. Even that early the beggars were out and crying "Alms for the love of Allah". Most are blind and ragged, with long staves and holding bowls for alms – but this morning near Exchange Square was a small boy about 11 I suppose, naked except for a loin cloth, crying bitterly and sitting down by the wall. It was jolly chilly, too, but no-one took any notice of him. He was just a professional beggar. The crying boy beggar is often to be seen.

In the morning did the Kut I.W.T. a/c in which we have 'spotted' another fraud. But I do wish these frauds wouldn't keep happening when I have so much work to do.

Wrote all the afternoon and at 4.00 had Rice and Major Middleton–West to tea and after indulged in a long theological discussion and nearly got late for Church again. It was a splendid evensong tonight. The Church was full and one man (a civilian) had actually brought his two little kiddies; a rare sight in Baghdad are British kiddies. Barkham is getting the choir into good shape and it is a topping service considering we are in the very centre of Mohammedanism and where at one time it was considered a virtuous act to slit a Christians throat.

## **Monday 19 December 1921**

The whole of today I have been engaged in writing my report on the results of the audit of the a/cs rendered by the troops which were employed on the Persian Lines of communication. It is not generally known that up to April 1921 our troops held a line 500 miles long extending through Persia to the Caspian Sea. It ran through the most mountainous country over high passes which for months in the winter was snowbound and no movement possible. Thousands of coolies were employed doing nothing but keeping the road clear of snow and thousands more guarding our huts and stores from the depredations of a people whose chief occupation was thieving. The whole operation was undertaken to keep the Bolshevik out of Persia and it achieved its object, but it was a

costly one to us in money. The report when typed covered ten foolscap pages.

We are all still very busy and working long hours but I am hoping that we have now broken the back of the work and that an easier time may be coming. And then, given good weather and good health, there ought to be a good prospect of keeping happy and fit until the gorgeous day when I turn my back on Baghdad.

### **Tuesday 20 December 1921**

Today I completed my first year abroad – a year during which I have traveled nearly 8000 miles and seen India, Egypt, Persia and Mesopotamia, or as it is now called Iraq. While I have been away I have been through extremes of temperature, 130° in the shade at Baghdad and 5° of frost (27° Fahr.) at Basrah and walked about in the sun when the temp registered in the sun was 170°. I have been choked by dust and waded through streets where the mud was 12 inches and more in depth. I, a bad sailor, have gone through a 4 days storm in the Bay of Biscay, and flown in an aeroplane at 120 miles an hour and nearly a mile up in the air. It has been a wonderful year and full of interest and I have had splendid health (my ten days in Hospital doesn't count) – and a tremendous amount of work to do. It has been a year of education. I have learnt a lot of things and realized what Empire means which one can never learn or realize in England. I have lived in the wonderful sunshine of the East and its colour and glamour – and, the other side of the picture, its dirt and stink. I have lived for my year in a society comprised of men, and away from my dear ones. For a year I have not touched a woman's lips.

### **Wednesday 21 December 1921**

Today commenced my second year from home. The past year hasn't been a long year, looking back and I hope this one will be even shorter. In a few days I shall be in 1922, the year when I hope to return home. I am full of thankfulness for my good health in the past year and pray God I may have the same good fortune in this.

When roads are bad and work is heavy one goes little distance from one's billet and life tends rather to be monotonous, but interesting questions are always cropping up and it is great good fortune to be among such good fellows as I have had the privilege of meeting. Golf, tennis, badminton, motoring and racing have all helped to make life bearable; but all sports are indulged in out here, bar skating!

Yesterday night we had some more rain – not much – but enough to make things very dirty again. I really think that the rain brings more discomfort than the heat but after the greatest discomfort is that which is with us not that we have gone through and which is past.

We had quite a jolly guest night tonight and Cook, the pianist from Ordnance was a guest, so we had some songs and the evening passed pleasantly. But my thoughts were in England all today and tonight, the anniversary of my departure from home.

### **Thursday 22 December 1921**

One result of the heavy work at the Office and of the small staff I now have (owing to forced reductions by W.O.) is that I am quite unable to get out on inspection duty. By rights I should be going all round this cold weather inspecting a/cs on the spot – but during wet weather this is no joke and I'm quite glad of the excuse to stay at home. I'm hoping to get up to Mosul, however, before we evacuate in April next, on a short visit. These are the days one is grateful for a comfy billet. This morning the lawns at GHQ were covered with a white frost. I have a nice room at GHQ but it has no fireplace and I get my warmth from an oil-stove. I have a larger stove for my room at the billet which warms the room very quickly, but the great boon of the mess room is the big coal and log fire which is lit every night from 7 p.m. We each have a specified allowance of oil and coal and wood, so it doesn't do to be wasteful or you'd be without warmth for the end days of a week. Standing on the low hob at the side of the fire is a kettle of water with which, when so inclined, one makes a hot toddy just before turning in.

### **Friday 23 December 1921**

Today unfortunately it rained again, just as we had hoped it was going to dry up for Xmas. This had put the Ky-bosh on the Races – so that's one of the Xmas arrangements gone. It will also make the Xmas football matches rather a mud-lark and transport and communication very difficult for those who make the week a merry-go-round. In the afternoon our cook killed our Xmas turkey – one of the hen birds – it weighed 10 lbs trussed. After tea I went out and had my Xmas haircut and bought in a supply of tobacco as I wasn't sure whether N.A.F.F.I. would be open Xmas week.

(All GHQ are having a week's holiday except the Audit staff, who are only having Boxing Day and January 2<sup>nd</sup>.)

Rice and I had an early dinner and went to hear Padre Alexander (one of my old 'mess-mates from "J" Mess) deliver his lecture on "The Incarnation". Though rather long – it lasted 2 hours – it was a very well thought out and well rendered lecture and dealt with the subject from a common-sense point of view. It helps a man to understand these things when there is reason to back up faith and it makes one's religion an actual thing which carries conviction.

### **Saturday 24 December 1921**

Things slacked off a bit at the office today it being the first day of the Xmas holiday. I am greatly hoping that I may manage to get clear this Xmas with a bit of luck. In addition to the two days holiday we are only working from 9 till 1 (officially) during the week.

Yesterday some of the other members of the mess – the "Xmas Decorations Committee" they called themselves – went out into the bazaar and bought a lot of coloured paper. We started last night making them into chains and completed it this afternoon. We got in a lot of palm-tree fronds which are about 12 feet long and cut down some orange trees and while some put up the paper chains in the mess-room, others made a double archway of palm fronds and orange branches to the mess-room entrance and fixed up palm fronds all round the room inside. We bought new electric bulbs for our lamps and new bunting and stretched yellow bunting

around the room. Spiller and Rice made a large "Merry Xmas" motto over the Mess-room fireplace and I repaired two or three of the mess-room chairs which had become damaged.

Having given the room a thorough clean out, we brought down additional articles of our own furniture and repositioned the mess furniture. Luxon and I brought down several of our carpets and saddlebags and placed some on the mess-room floor (the mess carpet being a little shabby) and others on tables, chairs and settees. By the time we had finished we had absolutely changed our mess-room into a most charming place and resting from our labours at 6 p.m. with a whisky and soda by our side, surveyed our handiwork with satisfaction. I had also gone to GHQ garden and picked another big handful of chrysanthemums with which we filled every vase and bowl we had, and also some lent ones. Just fancy us (7 or 8 men) sitting down and making paper chains and mottoes! But we have our reward and it was a real treat sitting down to dinner and afterwards around the fire tonight.

After dinner I played cards until ten minutes to 12 and won four rupees which will go to swell my mite in tomorrow's collection at Church for the Waifs and Strays. At quarter to eleven I was 11 Rupees down and won 15 Rupees (= £1) during the last hour.

### **Sunday 25 December 1921**

Christmas day! A year ago I was in my bunk on board the Huntsgreen experiencing the fourth day of storm we went through from Southampton to Gibraltar. This year Xmas in IRAQ, in Baghdad, the famous city of the Caliphs and a very muddy one, too.

Up early and to Holy Communion at the GHQ Chapel in the N.A.A.F.I. building in River Street.

It was the first time I had been there; it is a tiny low-ceilinged room looking out onto the Tigris with the Altar one end and the rest filled with 19 seats each one occupied – so that we were crowded almost with 21 souls within that little room including the priest and the server. It is just the sort of room one might have expected the early Christians to have met in during their days of

persecution, but it was a very Eastern little room. Doctor Wigram was the priest and he rendered the service beautifully. Home and breakfasted of a large tinned ham, which cost us £3. In addition to the bed, which I bought for him I gave my man Rupees 5, though I very much doubt if he deserved anything. After breakfast Rice and I went for a walk in the mud and called in on the Audit Staff mess, but found them all out. I had hardly done 2 pages of my letters when the whole of the C.M.A's mess 8 officers and three of the Audit staff mess No2 came in and I was hauled down to join the merry crowd. I sang three or four songs with choruses and we made the old place resound I know.

In the afternoon I finished my letter and at 5.30 Williams, Luxon and I went by arabana to the Garrison Church to Evensong (It was a great achievement to get those two to Church by-the-way) It was a very good service and ended with carols.

Our turkey at dinner was a great success and it was a top-hole dinner with Xmas pudding and nuts and crackers all complete. I drank every toast with musical honours. The first toast of all was "Our dear ones at home" Everyone could drink to that toast and though we didn't have greet that with musical honours our hearts were full as we pictured our darlings in our homes in old England and hoped they were having a happy time, and not forgetting us. Our crackers were a great success; besides the usual caps we had some which had light cotton balls at each end which we threw at one another from the time the Port had gone round and made jolly fun. Our dinner was a great success.

After dinner we had games, of course. Our games took the form of tricks of skill and agility. Picking the pin off the chair leg; swinging the leg over a chair back without stopping – the highest number being the champion; standing up with a champagne bottle on one's head and carefully getting down to touch the floor with the chin and back up again; sitting balanced on a champagne bottle and one heel and writing 'love' on a card; placing a cork through one's legs as far forward as possible; picking up a chair placed against the wall – one's toes against the chair's legs and head against the wall; and so on; but no-one would attempt my trick of falling down on my chest with my body rigid.

Afterwards we had some songs and a hot drink and toddled off to bed, very contented with our Christmas Day. If only our dear ones were as merry then everything was all right and it was really a "Happy Xmas"

### **Monday 26 December 1921**

Today, being a holiday I lay in bed until half past 8 o'clock and didn't have breakfast until 9 o'clock and as a consequence of this unusual luxury felt lazy all day. Owing to the wet and muddy roads this has been a stay-at-home Christmas. I wrote and read all the morning. In the afternoon we played Badminton. We have organized a Badminton Tournament and Rice and I measured up our courtyard and marked it out according to the Rules. It being a brick floor the marking had to be done with bayonets and kukris (short swords) and it took some time cutting the lines into the bricks, which are a foot square and hard. Major West went out and bought some new shuttlecocks and in the afternoon we commenced the tournament. Col. Hamilton and Major West against Williams and Bray. The medical man won and I expect they will win the Tournament.

In the evening we had a merry time after dinner, arranging for our big Guest Night on Wednesday. We thought we'd treat our gentle guests to a Jazz Band and having collected the necessary musical(?) instruments commenced to rehearse it.

### **Tuesday 27 December 1921**

After Christmas Day and Boxing Day I felt a little liverish (as usual) and holidayish. Only the Audit Staff turned up in full force at GHQ and not a great deal was done at the Office.

In the afternoon Rice and I played two heats in the Badminton Tournament and lost both – one against Colonel Hamilton and Major West and the other against Williams and Bray. We played badly I must say – a good deal below our usual form – or we shouldn't have lost so easily to Williams and Bray. The latter also won against Spiller and Luxon. The marking of the court has greatly improved the game.

In the afternoon, after tea, Captain Teague, an officer in GHQ came in and played over a lot of Jazz Band tunes. We have decided on "Indranola" and "By Jingo". I have three instruments (?) a copper bowl, a copper tray and a cigar box. Waite has four cartridge cases (big ones), Middleton West 8 finger bowls and so on. Williams conducted and after a little practice it was surprising how well we did and what a musical row we made. Altogether we played (?) for 2 hours, and (what is after all, the great thing) enjoyed ourselves immensely. We had a jolly dinner, it being Waite's birthday (Champagne all round)

### **Wednesday 28 December 1921**

The day for which we had made so much preparation went off without a hitch, and was a real success. We had an 8 course dinner and 18 sat down to table – two guests not turning up. The dinner started somewhat lifelessly, but we soon warmed up (I suppose the wine helped matters) and by the time the King's Health had been drunk things were much livelier. The cotton balls from the crackers were a great success and the fun soon got uproarious (Just fancy 18 grown men - half over 40 anyway – shying cotton balls at one another for 20 minutes!

After dinner, which wasn't over until quarter to 10, we started our musical programme. Williams, Waite and I sang, Colonel Hamilton recited, and the event of the evening was our Jazz Band. Capt. Teague was great at the piano, and our Jazz Rag went splendidly, the company continually asking for encores. I sang 'Habano' and 'Signora' and had to give both a second time. (I wore my needlework box as a hat – great success!) We had several 'monkey-trick items, Waite did some 'thought-reading'; we played 'Little Old Man', acted charades and sang jazz carols. We didn't break up until quarter to 1, but all present agreed that it was without exception the jolliest night they had spent in Mesopotamia.

### **Thursday 29 December 1921**

I don't seem to have the best of luck as regards servants. My man went sick last night, just when he was most wanted, being guest night and this morning said he couldn't get up from his bed. So I

sent him to the GHQ Dispensary and the Indian Doctor there said that he was too ill for local treatment and that he must go to 61<sup>st</sup> Indian General Hospital. I have given him orders to report to the Dispensary tomorrow morning and go to Hospital as I can't have a man about me who is always going sick. I think I shall get a fresh servant, if possible.

In the afternoon Rice and I played our heat against Luxon and Spiller and won 2 games to their one. We played much better exception the last game, which they won. It's topping exercise, but one gets so wet and it's bad weather to get so hot unless one could have a hot bath and then change.

Major West came in and had tea with me and retailed many yarns of his hunting exploits in India, shooting big game like panthers, bear, champa and big deer. To listen to a traveled man, especially when he has the gift of description is better than reading a book.

### **Friday 30 December 1921**

Things haven't been quite so strenuous this week owing to the general holiday, so that up to today I had managed to keep my table clear by the morning's work from 9 to 1. But this evening I had to put in two hours evening work and I'm now ready for a long job which I have to tackle tomorrow morning.

During the last few days the roads have dried up rapidly and walking is once more a reasonable exercise. The day-time, though cool in the shade, has been lovely and warm in the sun and it's a real break to be out. Crisp, bright sun and no fog or clouds.

In the evening we all had early dinner and six of us went to hear Rice's lecture at the YMCA on "The Prophetic Stream of Life" It dealt with the prophecies of the Bible and showed what had already been fulfilled, what were in the process of being fulfilled, and argued that was a very sound basis to go upon in considering the prophecies dealing with the future. He stated what the latter were, as depicted in Revelations. It was a very good lecture, and Rice rather surprised me by the fluency of his speech and confidence on the platform.

### **Saturday 31 December 1921**

After a good morning's work at the office, during which I completed my list of units which had rendered accounts or had lost those they had kept, or which had kept none at all, home to a jolly tiffin, the last of Xmas week.

The final of the Overland Competition (Football) was to be played this afternoon at the Citadel ground, the finalists being the Norfolk Regt. A team and Aircraft Park RAF and we all had arranged to go so at 2.15 p.m. we set out, Luxon and I by gharry, and arrived at the ground by 2.30 p.m. Her Excellency Lady Cox was there and a big staff and Civil Government crowd. We witnessed a real good fast game in which fortunes fluctuated, first on one side then on the other, and time arrived with the score one goal all. It was decided to play 20 minutes extra, but no more goals being scored the match will have to be replayed. I suppose a draw was a fair result but with a little more luck the Norfolks might have won. The match, of course, was played on a hard parade ground sort of pitch – not on grass.

Afterwards to the Hospital to see Pickard who is in for an operation to his stiff toe, and then home.