

Wednesday 1 February 1922

As I was going to the RAF yesterday in my car I was met by a string of about 12 women carrying from 3 to 5 black pans on their heads each. They were evidently of the poorest type, ragged in their dress, clothed in the black abba but with the face bare, walking barefoot in the mud and slowly hand in hand, two together, making their way into Baghdad. I had seen these dirty looking females before and often wondered what they were. My driver told me they were the Arab milkmaids! coming in from the surrounding villages with their milk. I expect the natives have bought milk in like this for the past 3 or 4 thousand years and would never think of putting it in clean churns and bringing it in by cart. No – women have brought it in in pans on their heads thus – how else would you have it done?

I had a day at home today writing up my reports on the visits of Monday and Tuesday, but seemed to get very little done.

In the afternoon took a stock of our wines and stores and then played Badminton for a time – very glad of the exercise.

In the evening busy with my Mess accounts and got all ready for balancing out tomorrow.

Thursday 2 January 1922

This morning I went again to Aircraft Park this time to inspect the a/cs of No 6 Squadron RAF. This squadron's a/cs were already known to be bad and Crichton of HQ RAF was there superintending the re-organisation of them. So I didn't stay over the morning and came back to "C" Mess to tiffin. In the afternoon finished my mess accounts and got out the bills.

Yesterday evening Teague came round and we tried over some songs, including "The Landlord of the Old Ship Inn" and that goes very well indeed and just suits my voice. We then had a good hours practice at the Jazz band, rehearsing for our big dinner party tonight. We had 20 sit down to dinner – including 11 guests and after dinner had a proper party evening. I sang 4 songs, all of which went well. I had them in roars of laughter over "Signora"

and "Italiano". We had a guessing competition – 9 advertisements and 11 articles of food. I tied for second prize lost in cutting Luxon for it. We had a mock spiritualistic séance, did the bottle trick, played out Jazz band and kept it up until after 1. Rees of Aircraft Park, my guest, said on leaving that it was the best evening he had had in Mesopotamia!

Friday 3 February 1922

Today is Air- Mail Day. The aeroplane for Cairo leaves tomorrow morning at 8, but letters can be posted in Baghdad until 12 noon today. That is what makes the AirMail so popular. You know exactly when the 'plane is due to leave; in fact, if you watch out for it, you can see it sail away for Egypt sharp to time – a big twin-engined Vickers Vimy. It's a great favourite for letters going home, but doesn't pay on the outward journey. I got my long 7 page report off to the Air Ministry on my inspection of the RAF Squadrons.

After our hectic night last night I had been feeling pretty tired so I had an hour's sleep in the afternoon – the first this year. I was off in a minute.

Up to the Hospital to see Pickard who is coming out on Monday and gave him Rupees 25 to spend in India on a present for my wife.

After early dinner, to the YMCA to hear Colonel Stevenson lecture on "The Sumerians" the earliest people in this country whose history is known. It was a poor lecture, made worse by the lecturer wandering about the platform continually like a bear at the Zoo.

Saturday 4 February 1922

Last night was a stormy night – wind only, not rain. This morning as I had just dressed, I heard some corrugated iron being moved in the native compound opposite, which has just been vacated and looking out of my window saw an Arab putting the corrugated iron over a wall. I called my bearer and we hurried over to where the iron had just disappeared and looking over surprised two Arabs who had got it ready to take away – when they saw us they ran

like stink. Just afterwards an Arab in a cart drove up to take the iron away so we captured him and handed the case over to the Police to investigate. These Arabs will steal anything. One came in some time ago and stole Williams Mess suit out of his room as it lay on his bed ready for him to put on.

This afternoon Capt. Waite took over the duties of Joint Mess Secretary from Bray, and we went over all the wines and stores together. I shall work better with Waite.

After tea had a real good strenuous game of badminton with Luxon and getting wet through had a rub down and a complete change. This ends what has been for me a very strenuous week, but quite interesting and enjoyable. It has been glorious weather since Sunday during the day-time.

Sunday 5 February 1922

In the morning to early service at the New Chapel at South Gate. On my way passed supplies coming into Baghdad for the early morning market. It is almost like walking through a menagerie. Hundreds of donkeys of all sizes, horses, country carts, women laden with various commodities, bundles of chickens sometimes thrown over their shoulders (6 tied up in a bunch by the feet), baskets of eggs on their heads, black cows for milking, in the distance camels, all picking their way in and out along the South gate road, flanked on either side by the tall palms and mud houses. It is quite a business threading one's way through them. In the afternoon a little Badminton. Capt. Waite has had a busy day turning everything inside out, cleaning the Mess and re-arranging his stock. Good old "New Broom" – let's hope he keeps on like he's started.

In the evening to Church with Williams and Luxon and after dinner finished my writing of which I have got through a great deal today. The weather is delightful.

Monday 6 February 1922

I have been so busy today clearing up the work of my section (the Stores Section) which I hand over today to Heaton that I have

very little to record. At the Office from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. again from 2.30 to 4 p.m., home to tea and back again from 5.15 until 7 p.m. I had a half and hour's Badminton from 2 to 2.30 but lately I haven't been getting out enough and I must try and get a little golf. Exercise isn't so necessary in the winter as in the summer and the reason is rather strange. I think it might go in a diary. It is this – In the winter, one makes water in the normal manner and so the poisons of the body usually got rid of by that means are properly dealt with, In the height of summer, no matter how much one drinks, this function practically ceases and so the poisons get left behind. This can only be remedied by constant exercise which helps the body to clear itself through the pores by perspiration. Today I have also made arrangements for the inoculation of the Audit Staff and its clerks against typhoid fever – as the hot weather may start in March and one ought to be done twice before that sets in.

Tuesday 7 February 1922

Today, as I had arranged an orderly came over at 9 a.m. to say that the Medical Officer was ready to commence our T.A.B. inoculation (T.A.B. means Typhoid, Typhoid A, and Typhoid B, all varieties of Typhoid which are dealt with by the same dose.) I was in the first batch, the second batch goes Wednesday and the third Thursday. It was very quickly done – just a small place on the arm painted with iodine, the sharp needle of a hypodermic syringe pushed in about an inch, and half a dose pumped in for the first inoculation. I hardly felt it and afterwards went with Williams, who introduced me all round the Pay Office, as my new work will largely lie there.

In the afternoon as I didn't feel up to much I went to bed after having an hours Badminton. It was the exercise that stirred up the inoculation business, I suppose. Hutchings came to tea at 4.30 and I paid him 2100 Rupees out of Church funds – in seven cheques.

After my dinner, I felt much better, so sat in the mess until 10 p.m. reading. My arm is rather stiff and sore, however, and the serum is clearly doing its work. It's a very wise precaution against fever and I wouldn't miss it for anything.

Wednesday 8 February 1922

Today my arm has been pretty tender and inflamed. In fact I have, I suppose, got a local attack of typhoid fever in the arm. I haven't felt quite up to the mark, but that is only to be expected. I hear today that there have been extremely heavy rains in the North of the country and that the roads to Mosul are almost impassable owing to the mud. I hope, however, that this won't knock out our projected trip to Mosul as it is probably the only chance I shall have of seeing the place. The river is rising fast as the rainwater comes down from the North.

The second batch of our staff were inoculated today for T.A.B. The Indian clerks who were done yesterday have stayed away to a man. As a rule the Indian clerk is a big coward (unlike the true Indian soldier) though a frothy speaker, brave enough with the tongue. There is no question here in Mesopotamia of treating them on an equal with the whites, and consequently one gets generally good work out of them. They are of a servile disposition and work best under the strong hand. We're making a huge mistake I feel sure, in India, in adopting the "my Indian brother" policy. They only mistake it for weakness and that's all the trouble in India at the present time.

Thursday 9 February 1922

Yesterday evening Major Middleton-West gave a birthday party. He wanted to have a party like the others have had, and not having a birthday handy he selected the anniversary of his entry into the Army as a pretext. So we had a special dinner and champagne – we all made speeches, Major West replied and so on. I gave him a very hairy coconut, on which I had drawn a face. It had a huge tuft of fibre on the top of it almost as big as the nut itself, and as Major West is bald, I begged him not to be downhearted over it, but to accept this hairy nut as an example for the present and an inspiration for the future.

Had a good hour and a half Badminton after tiffin today and afterwards did about 2 hours hard work (official).

In the evening I had Heaton as my guest it being our guest night. Heaton got to the piano soon after dinner and without much pressing played songs and dances until half past 11. We have arranged for him to join the Mess as soon as there is a vacancy, which may be very soon now, as those officers going home this season have to be down at the Base (Basrah) by 1st March.

Friday 10 February 1922

Today the River has reached almost a record height. It has risen practically 10 feet since the beginning of the year owing to the unprecedented amount of flood water coming down from the North. Another 3 feet and there may be disaster, for the River may overflow its banks in many places. The speed of the River has practically stopped all boat traffic and nothing can contend with this mighty mud-brown torrent. On this same River, everything depends – life and fertility owing to its beneficent waters used in irrigation and water supply; death and destruction if those waters burst their regulated walls. With this wonderful volume of water the whole country could be irrigated if only the old canal system of the Babylonians remained, and huge desert reservoirs or lakes could be made to store up the surplus water to use in the summer.

As I sat in the YMCA tonight I could hear the River roaring (this is a fact) under the Maude Bridge like a huge Niagara.

Colonel Stevenson's lecture on "The Babylonians" was not very good, I thought, though a little better than last weeks, as he kept fairly still.

Saturday 11 February 1922

Today has been a busy day in the Mess. We had the mess-room, kitchen and scullery whitewashed and painted, a new drain in our garden (called "the compound") is being made, the roofs of the house are being repaired and many other necessary things done. The whole of the furniture etc. has been scrubbed over – a real spring clean. So most of us had tiffin and dinner out. Rice and I went to the Audit Mess in Chelsea Terrace, and had quite a good

tiffin and dinner, but I prefer our own mess, it's so much more comfortable.

Last night we entertained Pickard to dinner at the Maude Hotel and had a topping dinner, afterwards going to the YMCA lecture. Tonight Pickard was the guest at his own Mess – his farewell meal in Baghdad. Heaton, Rice and I praised him and his health was drunk with musical honours. Pickard made a very good speech in reply and then we all went to Baghdad West Station to see him off. Later on all the boys from the other audit mess turned up – so Pickard had the whole of the Staff to bid him goodbye. It was a cold night and Rice and I walked home – and arrived at "C" Mess tired – but warm.

Sunday 12 February 1922

Yesterday was a little wet and so was today but nothing to upset matters, as the roads now dry very quickly. It has been quite cold today, however, and I have had to wear my wool waistcoat again. The mess Room is in occupation again and so the fire was in great demand. But I have been writing in my room all day.

Yesterday we received a telegram from the War Office to say that Mr Toplis is re-joining and sailing from England next Friday. We don't know any details or under what conditions he is coming out a second time, but it presumably puts a lid on my hopes of being second in command out here.

Went to Holy Communion as usual in the morning, and to Evensong. Both very enjoyable services.

The River is dropping gradually I'm pleased to observe and if the drying wind keeps up the road to Mosul may be fit to travel on by the end of the month. I hope so anyway.

I took £100 out of this month's pay balance and bought Rupees 1525 with it and put them on deposit at 3.5% for 6 months in the Eastern Bank.

Monday 13 February 1922

This morning I received an urgent message from the Law Courts to attend with my bearer as witness in the trial of one Ibrahim, who was charged with the attempted theft of the corrugated iron from the E&M Compound (see sat 4 Feb) So up to the Law Courts by car and after waiting half an hour was called into a small Court presided over by a native Magistrate. The prisoner was a short stocky villainous looking Arab whom my bearer, Joseph, was emphatic in saying was the thief. It was Joseph who looked over the wall just where they were, while I thought I was doing a clever thing by going up to the Gate to interrupt them as they came out. Instead they ran in the opposite direction, so I only saw their backs. My evidence was translated to the Arab Magistrate as also was Joseph's, who spoke in Hindustani. The arabanchi who we captured was also a prisoner, but I don't think he knew he was assisting a thief. My evidence finished, the magistrate stood up and salaamed and I bowed very ceremoniously and took my leave, both of us smiling as cordially as we could. We are very polite in this country. The best people, after a meal at a friend's house, not only eat till they nearly burst, but then proceed to belch prodigiously to show how much they have enjoyed the meal. (This is quite true.)

Tuesday 14 February 1922

This morning Williams and I went on our postponed trip to the big Right Bank Supply Depot where we had found on audit that the a/cs had got into a mess. The reason was not far to seek. It was perfectly clear that there had been practically no supervision on the part of Officers and that the a/c had been left to the mercies of a handful of half-educated Indian babus ('babu' is an Indian clerk) But the waste and losses in the RASC Supply Depots is the most striking thing. Here we found huge stocks of food etc all rotting or already bad. There were, for instance over 600,000 tins of condensed milk, over half of which was warranty expired in 1919 and probably bad. Milk only stands one summer out here. 800 lbs. of Bovril – none wanted and tins all rusting. Tinned fruit – rusty and probably all bad (100,000 tins) Glaxo, meat tablets – bad. Enormous stocks of champagne, port, burgundy, whisky, rum – the relics of the war days, and probably in poor condition

especially the champagne and port. The waste and inefficiency out here is appalling and the sad thing is that nothing to change it seems possible, for personnel of the required ability are not forthcoming. That is the disease throughout Mesopotamia – inefficiency and slackness.

Wednesday 15 February 1922

Yesterday evening Rice, Williams and I walked over to Baghdad West Station to see Burnett, one of our juniors, off to Basrah on his way home. The next lot go in March and then no more until we all go home in the autumn. It was a beautiful evening, the moon extraordinarily bright and many aeroplanes were up (10 o'clock at night) letting off many coloured lights – quite a pretty show.

This morning I went over to the GHQ Dispensary for my second dose of T.A.B. inoculation. I have felt very little ill effect during the day and I should think I'm proof against typhoid now. All the staff are to be done over again.

In the afternoon, Rice, Williams and Cairns came to tea in my room and afterwards we spent two hours or more going over a group of cash a/cs kept in our own Office which had got into a muddle owing to the fluctuating values of the Rupee and the Persian Kran. These cash a/cs are to be part of my new work and I hope they'll be clear before Williams goes.

The last few days have been exceptionally cold – nearly freezing during the night. It is all the more noticeable coming after such warm days but it is about the end of the cold, I should say.

Thursday 16 February 1922

It is astonishing what a lot of building is going on in Baghdad lately – quite a number of handsome places are being built in New Street, solid and stately and worthy of the city. The bricks used are very soft and easy to work, and most of the buildings are very finely decorated with carved bricks, mostly worked in geometrical or floral patterns, cleverly done. In the old native quarters, however, nothing new is being put up and the crowded and

insanitary dwellings breed disease and the stink! The epidemic of smallpox is only just being got under. The typhoid season is about to start – but I'm apparently all right as my full dose of yesterday has had very little effect on me.

The Jews and the Christians are a much cleaner class than the Mohammedans, and although they don't breed like the Arabs, there is much less mortality among their children, and face sores and blind eyes are practically confined to the Arab lower classes. The latter look on water as for drinking, not washing, and when one sees their filthy houses, often only consisting of one room, where all sleep and eat – father, mother, children, grandparents, and generally half a dozen chickens, a dog, and a goat or sheep as well – one is surprised that there is not more disease. They have no sanitary arrangements and I'm bothered if I know how they manage about that.

Friday 17 February 1922

We have engaged a new cook, and the change of food, or I should say methods, is very welcome. He put up a very good dinner for our guest night last night.

I haven't been getting out enough lately, so today Williams and I went out to golf, calling for Cairns and Herons on our way. We had a Vauxhall and when we were halfway to the Sporting Club on the Muadhaim Road, a boy of about 7 ran from behind an arabana (a cart) straight in front of our car. There was no hope of pulling up and he was knocked down. We stopped at once, and his mother, an Arab woman commenced to beat herself and wail, for she, like we, thought he must be killed. He was bleeding from the neck, but Cairns examined him and said he wasn't badly hurt and presently he opened his eyes and began to cry. So we put him and his mother and another Arab woman into the car and sent them to the Civil Hospital, where they saw to him and only kept him for 3 or 4 hours. It was the most marvelous escape I have ever seen. I think he must have fallen down just as the car touched him and the car passed right over him without a wheel touching him. What hit his neck I don't know – perhaps the handle?

Anyway he wasn't even hurt enough to keep in Hospital. The Vauxhall is a big heavy five-seater car and it is a miracle he wasn't killed – nothing less.

We walked the rest of the way to the Club and the golf course looked a treat, being now carpeted with short green grass with here and there patches of a weed with pretty white flowers. I played very well for the first 9 holes, my score being 43 only 7 strokes over bogey. I've never done anything like it before – and I fell away badly during the second 9 holes – taking 56. However the full round for 99 is the best I have done so far, and I put in my card, the first I have ever handed in. I must try and get down to golf once a week, for I enjoyed the afternoon and it did me good. Office to billet, billet to Office has been my daily round too much lately and I must endeavour to get out a bit more.

After dinner Rice and I went to the YMCA to hear Dr Cantine lecture on his "Tramp through Palestine". He described how disappointed he was with Jerusalem, and I can't quite believe it, for I don't suppose there's a building worth tuppence in the place. It's like Baghdad and Basrah and Cairo – they're best in looks; looks don't smell.

Saturday 18 February 1922

I woke up this morning feeling rather sick – and I have not been up to the mark all day. A touch of biliousness, I think, as our new cook is rather fond of fat in his meals. He is a much more experienced man than our late cook, but the latter's food was plain and good and suited me better. A little biliousness at home one wouldn't notice but here as soon as anything unusual happens too one, one wathes it at once, and if it doesn't get well in a day or so, goes to the Doctor.

I have bought another pair of saddle-bags for Rupees 15. They will make 2 nice cushions, being square, and 24 inches by 21 inches. The carpet merchant wanted 25 Rupees and didn't want to sell at 15 Rupees - but I took them from him at last and put 15 Rupees in his hand after about 20 minutes haggling. What a way to do business!

After a little badminton I went to bed in the afternoon and after tea did a good spot of work. After dinner I felt much better and I sat the evening out in front of the cheery Mess room fire, happy and contented because I had had a topping mail letter. No-one can know what that means to the exile – a happy letter from home.

Sunday 19 February 1922

Today has been cold; nice and sunny in the morning, but with a cold wind. It was very windy yesterday – and the opposite bank of the River was almost obscured by dust. I suppose I oughtn't to call it cold, as I haven't had to wear an overcoat but one had got so used to the nice summer warmth that the drop in temperature is very noticeable.

I went to early service as usual – a nice little walk to South Gate – quite a pleasure. The early morning walk to the Serai was often quite fatiguing. It is a great boon to have the Church so near and we can hear its bell every day.

At four o'clock Rice and I went round to Doctor Cantine's to tea, and were surprised to meet there the American Consul and the Vice Consul and a little later Major Yates of the Railways came in. These people had traveled all over the East and it was an interesting little tea party. I had to leave early in order to go to Church, but I must manage to meet some of those fellows again.

I notice that many of the trees are in full bud and the young leaves already appeared owing to the warm weather and that apricots are in full bloom. The wallflowers have been blooming in the greatest profusion all the winter. They grow quite bushy here and provide perhaps 20 spikes of bloom.

Monday 20 February 1922

The Air Mail which should have gone on Saturday is held up in Baghdad through bad weather and bad visibility. There has been considerable wind the past few days and the air along the desert route is full of dust. The Air Mail the other end in Egypt also cannot start owing to bad weather and the air-storms in the

desert. About 500 miles of the route is across desert and there is no place on that part of the route which could afford help to an aeroplane which was forced to land while the desert tribes are none too friendly. It is not like an European route where there is help and food near by if a pilot was forced to land. So they wait for better weather.

In the afternoon Rice and Luxon and I went for a stroll in the Bazaar to look at skins, beads or anything else we had a fancy for. Skins seem to be scarce and we shan't get much until the roads from Persia open and we get the Persian skins down. I bought some silver salt spoons (6 for 2 Rupees) and also one white sapphire and one ruby (7 Rupees the two). These local rubies seem good, but I can't understand them quite as they are so cheap. I bargained for some amber beads but the merchants wouldn't come down to my price. Another day – perhaps.

Tuesday 21 February 1922

Last night went with Heaton to dinner with Major Nielson at IWT Headquarters Advanced Base. We boarded a launch at GHQ at 7 o'clock and arrived there at 7.30. Had an enjoyable evening – good dinner and Bridge: 600 points up. Came back at 12.15 but it took us over an hour coming back against the stream – about 8 miles. There was no moon and it is very dark here when there is no moon and it was rather eerie racing along in the darkness; it would have been more enjoyable if it hadn't been so cold. We did 16 miles on this cold swift muddy river and didn't meet a boat either way.

Today we had a very enjoyable 1 ½ hours Badminton in the afternoon and afterwards I changed and Rice came and had tea with me. I am finding plenty of work in my new job (on Pay) and generally do a couple of hours work at the billet in the evening after tea. I want to learn as much as I can before Williams goes. But things ought to quieten down a bit after 1st April and I'm hoping that the summer won't be quite so strenuous as last year's, and that I may get out a bit more.

Wednesday 22 February 1922

The scarcity of money is being felt by the trading community of Baghdad today just the same as elsewhere and the prices of carpets are coming down – and will probably go even lower. One gets a lot of information as to carpet values by watching how the carpet merchants sell – and many come to our Mess almost daily. Rice, Luxon and Williams have all been buying and swapping carpets – it is one of the chief amusements of Baghdad. This afternoon I took my bearer with me into the Bazaar to get him a new suit of white clothes – one even haggles with the tailor, for even he came down from Rupees 20 to Rupees 16 for the suit. Then into the saddlemakers bazaar where all the wonderful Arab saddles are made, gaily caparisoned with fringes and motifs on the crupper cloth and saddle flaps. I wanted to find a man who could make me another bag and ornament it with die-stamping work. My boy speaks Arabic and explained what I wanted to the leather worker and we eventually agreed on the price, Rupees 6. My boy explained that the bag must be very well done as it was for my 'bibi' – and I promised the man a Rupee bucksheesh (gift) if it was exceptionally well done. I also gave the man another bag to ornament and ordered a new strap for my haversack. From there we went to the Hatmaker's bazaar and priced some very fine Persian lambskins – eventually ordering 12 to be got by tomorrow (Williams wants them). We then went to the Silk bazaar and I looked over a lot of silks – Simple Simon in the den of thieves – and after a violent quarrel bought 4 yards of crepe –de-chine for 5 Rupees a yard. I thought it was about time I came home. But in the evening the man at whose shop I bought the silk came with silks for Rice and I made him take my silk back and sell me another piece of 4 yards – a beautiful cream taffeta for which I gave Rupees 5 Annas 4 (= 7/-) per yard. This piece Williams liked and I sold it to him as he is going home - but I shall buy some more tomorrow. What a game this is; I suppose one ought to be prepared to pay a little for it for the amusement it gives. The silk I gave Rupees 5 a yard for the merchant started at Rupees 6/8/- and that which I bought for Rupees 5/4/- he started at Rupees 7. I started at Rupees 4/8/- and worked up. This is the way you do your buying in Baghdad and the game is to find the proper price.

Thursday 23 February 1922

What a game it is, during the night and this morning Rice discovered that some of the silk he had bought overnight was not all pure silk and as I wanted some more silk I went with him to have a first-class row with the silk merchant. This we did in great style, and Rice made him take the dud stuff back, but one of the difficulties was that the good silk he had sold cheaper because he was getting high prices for the dud stuff! So I had to pay Rupees 5 Annas 8 a yard for the piece of silk to replace that I let Williams have. Middleton-West wanted some amber beads and we eventually got the old amber merchant down from 80 to 50 Rupees for one necklace and from 65 to 35 for another. But West has got them extraordinarily cheap, I think. I then went to the skin merchants and looked over about 40 skins and chose 12. Then we settled down to bargaining and I eventually got for 35 Rupees what the merchant swore he would not sell for less than 48 Rupees. What a game!

In the evening had a very jolly guest night, I had Heaton for my guest – 4 played cards but the remainder of us – 11 – sang and played and did “monkey tricks” – throwing cards into a hat, balancing bottles on our heads and so on. Keep smiling!

Friday 24 February 1922

Walden came up from Basrah yesterday; the Audit Office there is to shut up except for two men who will carry out local audit. So that removes the undesirable Basrah from our stations and Baghdad is our only station whereas a year ago we had Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, and Poona in India.

Just as I was going from the Office to the Mess for tiffin, I came across Padre Marsh, or rather Mr Marsh, now that he has given up the Church and taken up commercial life. So I took him to the Mess to tiffin and we played Badminton during the afternoon till 3, after which he went. He is hoping to get a position in the Anglo-Persian Oil Co. and stay out in Mesopotamia. Another man who likes the country.

In the afternoon I went into the Bazaar and got my grey suit which I had had altered – coat, waistcoat and trousers – at the charge of 3 Rupees! Work is cheap here!

In the evening to Mrs Cantine's lecture on "The Arab Woman – Behind the Veil". It was a most interesting lecture and I am trying to get a copy of her manuscript, so that I can send it home for our relatively lucky womankind to read. Pity the poor Arab wife – the Mohammedan woman – she leads a truly God-forsaken existence.

Saturday 25 February 1922

This afternoon was so delightfully warm and sunny that after Badminton I went up and sat out on the roof over my bathroom and enjoyed the sun. We have had such a spell of fine weather that the roads have become quite dusty again and the road waterer with his pig-skin of water has appeared again. His dexterity and speed are such that if he only could carry more water at a time he would be quite as effective as the modern watering cart.

Last night Mrs Cantine had a Christian-Arab girl dressed in the Oman women's dress with her on the platform. When the girl took her mask off I was astonished at her beauty; she was as fair as any European girl, of a European type and spoke English perfectly. Rice and I were only noticing this afternoon that the Town Arab of Baghdad is on the whole, whether Mohammedan, Jew or Christian, as fair as the English, certainly fairer than the Italians. I suppose less than 10% are darker and they are very likely descendents of desert Arabs who have settled in the city. The desert Arab in most cases is a much darker man and generally of an uglier, coarser type. He looks down on the town Arab with contempt.

Sunday 26 February 1922

In my letter this morning I was writing of the delightful weather we had been having. During then it was clouding over; a gale of wind arose, the air became full of dust, this afternoon it started to drizzle a bit and this evening it is pouring down in bucketsful. This will muck the roads up and stop tennis and golf for a bit – but it is probably the last heavy rain we shall have until next November. I suppose it is just as well that our Mosul trip is off. However, it is quite warm tonight and I feel very comfy here writing in my nice

room. I have just left our cosy Mess room fire where some of the others are playing the good old Sunday game of Poker.

To Holy Communion this morning as usual, but only 4 there. I felt almost certain that the Principal Chaplain would have something to say about it and sure enough he did tonight in his sermon and made a great appeal for more to come to early morning communion. I'm just wondering how our new Church will stand this rain. It came through the roof on the occasion of the last heavy rain and this is still heavier – and sounds still worse because all the water from our billet roof runs off by means of water spouts on to the verandah and courtyard and the splashing on the paved court sounds like a cascade.

Monday 27 February 1922

We have received today authority from the W.O. to conduct a detailed examination of the Command Pay Office and it is proposed to do it in the afternoon so as not to interfere with our work or the Pay Office work. But I'm afraid it will interfere greatly with our leisure.

This afternoon I started our Mess accounts in order that I might have them completed by the 28th as Luxon and Bray leave on the 1st March. Waite and I took stock this afternoon and after that I worked out the values. Then tea, and changed and had an hour's badminton – very nearly, I should say the best hour's continuous exercise I have ever had. I got absolutely wet through so I had my bath when I had finished and changed again.

It was very muddy in the streets again today after yesterday's rain and we had to wear gum-boots, but it was a beautiful day and by the evening it had dried up to some extent. The rain has driven away the cold wind (or I suppose the change in the wind brought the rain) and it is nice and warm, and almost too warm for winter things during mid-day and afternoon – though one needs them in the mornings and evenings still. As for overcoats they can now be packed away until next November.

Tuesday 28 February 1922

It is during the winter time that we grow most of the European vegetables here – and we have every day such vegetables as beetroot, carrot, spinach, turnips, cauliflower, lettuce, onions and so on. They are very plentiful and fairly cheap – but the great winter product is the orange, which is just prime at the moment, and being picked ripe from the trees as wanted. So one always gets them juicy and sweet, and never a bad one. I have one with my early tea (chota hazri) every morning before I get up. Pomegranates, figs, dates and small raisins (made from the native grapes) are also on sale in great quantities, together with nuts of all kinds. The Arabs are very fond of pistachios, a green nut, very cheap.

In the afternoon we paid our first inspection visit to the Pay Office and examined the Office of the Command Cashier. This will be a very useful experience for me, as I am quite new on cash work and have never seen the working of a Paymaster's Office before.

After dinner played vingt-et-un and won again. I have won several pounds at this game out here, but I don't suppose we shall play it much when Luxon and Bray have gone.