

## **Monday 1<sup>st</sup> May 1922**

Warmer today – May thought she ought to be warmer than April and that it was about time things began to warm up. We have had an exceptionally cool April – most beautiful weather.

In the afternoon went with Rice into the Bazaar. He wanted to get his suits – they have turned out very well. Better made and much cheaper than those we got in England.

We went to the Silk Bazaar and I bought a 4 yard length of crepe de chine, white and good quality for 20 Rupees – 6/9d. A yard. On our way back, I looked at the wares of the Amarah workers and at last came across a cigarette case worth buying. I have been looking out for a nice case for two or three months – but this is the first good one I have found which was worth buying (it is for my sister Gert)

Home and changed, then to tea with the Bilkerts. This time the baby boy was on his best behaviour and a lovely boy he is, merry, strong and fat. Had a quite enjoyable time.

Rice goes to Mosul tonight and having packed left for the Railway Station at 7 pm. I shall miss him, I know. This big room which I have been sharing with him looks very empty with only one occupant. I didn't go to see him off as I was dining with Padre Hutchings.

## **Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1922**

Last night dined at the Maude Hotel with Padre Hutchings – the other guests were Barkham, Goodrich Long and Padre Thomas. We had a table in the garden overlooking the River and had a very pleasant little function. All of us are very sorry to be losing Hutch. He is a splendid fellow – all like him, but he has done two summers and altho' he feels fit, a third hot weather is a gamble.

Had tiffin today with the Principal Chaplain and discussed the a/cs. Left him at 3 pm. after nearly an hour's argument. He's a nice old boy, but he cannot brook the slightest opposition and wants his own way always. It's not good for him, and I stood out for my own views. We compromised, adopting partly his views and partly mine.

Went into the Bazaar again with Major Middleton West, who ordered two khaki uniforms. I tried for some more silk, but couldn't get what I wanted.

Trade is still bad in Baghdad and there is not a great deal of new stuff coming in.

Today has been much warmer and the sleep after tiffin is becoming a necessity. I played bridge after dinner but I felt very tired owing to not having had my afternoon siesta. Feeling a bit better today on the whole – having felt very slack this last week. Change of weather I suppose.

### **Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1922**

Heard today that instructions have come out from the W.O. that the Command Paymaster's Office is to be reduced to 2 Officers and 28 men from 1.10.22 That's a good sign – if he is to practically shut down so shall we too, and we ought to get instructions soon. Home for Christmas, eh?

In the afternoon turned out and had an hours tennis (singles) with Heaton. We're both poor players, for Heaton only beat me two sets to one. The scores were 3-6, 6-4, 5-6. But the exercise is the thing and for that singles is better than doubles. Up on the roof after our return and had a very welcome drink or two. It is very nice on the roof in the cool of the evening. One sees some gorgeous sunsets, and it is interesting to watch the storks flying home. They have their nests in the city, but seem to go out into the country for their food.

In the evening had padre Hutchings to dinner, it being our guest night. We had a very jolly evening as usual and I sang several songs but not in very good voice) However the others don't notice it. Hutchings goes home tomorrow night and should reach England by the end of June. I'm hoping he will be able to manage a call at Hampton.

### **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

Very pleased to hear today that Income Tax has been reduced to 1/- in the £1 in the new Budget. It is not much but every little helps in these hard times when one's Bonus drops quicker than the cost of living.

Colonel Radcliffe wanted me to sing at the Hospital on Sunday, But I like Sunday quietly to myself and I am declining.

Now that Rice is away Mr Toplis is sending most of the big papers to me. He isn't going to work hard this time, or to worry – it's much easier to push the work on to the other fellow. One feels flattered, perhaps, having the big questions but one wishes they didn't come along in such wholesale fashion.

Slept hard this afternoon until 4.30, but out at 5.p.m. and with Heaton into the Bazaar after silk and other things (without success) Walked up to the Government Bookshop and found it shut.

Quite a lot of building is still going on in Baghdad but it is a ragtime show. I have heard it described as a place one half of which is building and the other half falling down. There is more brick and iron in the new buildings however, and not quite so much rush matting and mud.

### **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

The River has dropped down very fast lately and it looks as if the usual May floods were in April this year – owing to the mild winter the snows in the North melted earlier. The temperature is going up, 96deg. in the shade yesterday and 99 deg. a few days ago. That's the shade official maximum, but I rather fancy it was hotter really, for my towels when I dried myself tonight after my bath felt hot as if they were off the hot tank at home.

We are getting a good supply of ice now and all our drinks are placed on the ice and shut up in the ice chests before being opened. My room in the billet is, however, delightfully cool, and as I have all the windows shut at 8 o'clock in the morning and not opened again until 8 o'clock at night, I keep the hot air out and the cool air in.

Heaton and I went to the Bazaar again and up to the Bookshop after tea and bought several books. After dinner Mr Toplis and I went to Colonel Lindsay's lecture at the YMCA, on "The value of ideas", at 8.30. It was a most extraordinarily good lecture, quite the best I have heard for years, certainly the best out here, and we enjoyed it immensely.

### **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1922**

Busy morning and fortunately got a good deal of work off, so not much left over the weekend. I haven't had to do much afternoon or evening work lately, to my relief. The proper rule is morning work till 1 p.m.. Tiffin 1 to 2. Sleep 2 to 4. Tea 4 to 4:30 Exercise 4.30 to 6 or 6.30. Rest and bath until 8. Dinner 8 till 9. After dinner reading, Bridge, singing etc.

In the afternoon I sacrificed an hour's sleep and went out at 3 with Mr Toplis to the race club for golf. We started at 3:30 and finished the 18 at 6 p.m. I gave him one stroke a hole and won 10 holes. He won 6, so I was 4 up at the finish. I lost four of the last five holes as I broke my Mashie at the

14th hole, and the Mashie is my best Club. I do nearly all my midfield play with the Mashie here, and as the ground is very hard, no Mashie lasts very long out here. After the match, a most gorgeous ginger beer off the ice, followed by a wash and then tea on the lawn. Very cool and restful it is out here in this lovely green garden. The grass is said to be the best piece in Southern Mesopotamia.

### **Sunday 7th May 1922**

With Tucker to early Communion where 12 communicants, which is a good number. Are we experiencing a wave of religious revival in Baghdad? Two Sunday's ago there were 40 men confirmed and this evening while I was talking at the church door with the Principal Chaplain, two Indians came to him and said there was a number of their friends wanted to be baptised. The new civil Chaplain is doing very well, and people are rolling up who never came before.

There is an epidemic of thefts. Last night two Arabs got into the Audit mess in Chelsea Terrace and while one stood over the servants with a revolver the other ransacked the place for money. All our fellows had their doors locked, fortunately, and the Arabs got nothing. Tonight Arabs got into the W.O's and Sergeant's mess GHQ and stole a large box. This Mess is only a little way away. We have one of our servants sleep at the door every night and keep both doors, the Street door and a Garden door locked. We are almost burglar proof.

Went down to the Bazaar in the afternoon and bought 2 yards of black silk. Paid 6 Rupees per yard, the Jew swore he was losing over it, but I know this old rogue and I suspect that he meant he was losing part of his expected profit, not selling for less than he paid for it!

### **Monday 8th May 1922**

Today we all went by car to Ctesiphon. Punctually at 2 p.m., three Vauxhalls and a Ford van were lined up outside our door. Three members went in each Vauxhall and the butler with the tea things, drinks and the ice cream freezer in the Ford van. The road until the Hinaidi Bund is reached is a very good one, laid out by the engineers and kept in good condition. The driver of the car (C464) had a bet with the driver of C20 that he could beat him on the run to Ctesiphon, and when the opportunity offered he passed C20 on the Hinaidi Motor Road and kept his lead all the way. Our road never lay far from the River and there was always something to break the monotony. It was not like a cross-desert ride. There were corn fields nearly all the way, mostly

wheat and barley and in many places it was being reaped. Men were cutting it by hand with a kind of small sickle and women were collecting it into small sheaves. In one place it was being threshed. It is mostly very short in the straw, but where well irrigated it looked tall and "well formed". Flocks of sheep, goats, cows and camels were grazing on the scanty herbage, now brown and dried up with the heat. (The max. temperature yesterday was 102 deg. in the shade)

The road is good right up to the Dialah River which we crossed at Lancashire Bridge, still guarded by a company of Indian Infantry who turned out and stood at the 'present' as we passed. After we had passed the Arab Village which lies at the point where the Dialah empties into the Tigris the road runs along the railway line mostly and becomes very bad, being full of big dust holes, and in places nearly a foot deep in dust. We got well shaken up and I've no doubt the drive was actually good exercise.

Crowds of the beautiful bright green bee-eaters were perched on the telegraph lines. We found afterwards that there was a small local plague of locusts and the bee eaters were busy eating them.

Ctesiphon was now clearly visible. It stands on ground a little higher than the surrounding land and in this flat country a few feet make a lot of difference. At 3:30 we ran through the little village of Salman Pak and there we were at the ruined Palace of Ctesiphon. Salman Pak has a famous mosque built over supposed grave of the Prophet's barber, and is consequently a very holy place. People from great distances are brought here to be buried in the Holy Ground in the company of so holy a man as the Barber of the Prophet.

The ruin I described in my journal on the occasion of my first visit last May is now being underpinned and supported by a base of solid cement bricks, as it leans slightly forward and it was feared it might fall. It still looked as majestic as ever, a relic of the wonderful past, but now in the ruins of the palace where King Khosru held his feasts, pigeons, blue Jays and green bee-eaters nest undisturbed.

The wonderful Arch which defies all known laws of Architecture is built in three sections:

1. a very thick lower wall, each side of 20-ft solid brickwork, above that
2. another wall each side of about half the thickness and
3. on top of that, the circular roof completing the great arch.

This brickwork is still, 1,500 years later, as hard as granite including the mortar. Where the cement came from to make it, is a mystery. In the roof are

rows of small holes from which were let down the chains which bore the lamps which lit the great Hall. The walls of the great facade and the back of the banqueting hall are from 10 to 15 feet thick and as the palace had no Windows which opened on the outside it must have been a marvel of coolness.

After a look round we had ice cream and cold drinks from the ice chest - very refreshing after the hot and dusty journey. When "C" Mess goes on tour we do it in the proper manner.

About 4:30 we had tea in the shadow of the ruin and the Arabs gathered around must have wondered at the British Sahib; the tea-table with it's white tablecloth and crockery, sandwiches and cakes etc.

An Arab of the village came and begged us to take him to Baghdad where his wife was very ill and we took him on the Ford van greatly to the delight of the inhabitants.

Our car started last and after we had gone some six or seven miles unfortunately the connection between the engine and the radiator burst and we lost most of our water. We had to cut up an inner tube to make a new connection and while I helped the driver do this, Cole and Heaton (the other two occupants of my car) offered to go to the River which looked a mile away for some more water.

They were an hour away - the river which seemed so near was actually 3 miles distant. They never reached it, but after walking 2 miles came across an Arab village where they purchased a bucketful. However, with our engine filled up we were soon off and had a splendid run home. Just over the Hinaidi Bund, a relief car which had been sent out to find us came along, and produced four bottles of beer, which went down like nectar. We arrived home about 7.40 and although we were very tired, we were contented, for we slept well and can look back to an enjoyable day.

## **Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

During Ramadhan (the Mahommedan so-called Fast) we lent an 18-pounder Gun to the Arabs and at sunset the Gun is fired. This is the signal that the day is over and that true Believers may eat, drink and be merry. It can be heard all over the city. It is fired at North gate, and while Tucker and I were having a stroll before dinner outside South Gate, we heard it quite distinctly as if it were only ½ a mile away instead of 2 miles.

As I'm writing this I can hear the tinkle tankle tink tonk of the Arab music. Every cafe is full at this moment (11 o'clock) and in the Bazaars and elsewhere they set out dozens if additional benches (which seat 3) to meet the demand.

It is warming up nicely and maximum shade temperature today 102.9 deg. and at night it has been nearly 80 deg. owing to the South Wind blowing. Tonight I have had to shut all my windows as a terrific sandstorm is blowing and the City is under a pall of dust, which is blowing in the room. Those up on the roof have all had to bring their beds down again. I haven't gone up on the roof for sleeping yet – I have such a nice cool room.

### **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

In the afternoon went with Major Middleton-West and Colonel Davidson to the Bilkert's new houe, to tea. It is over Kotah Bridge, through the Kotah Bazaar and along the River front some distance – a nice new house, airy and roomy and with a nice high roof. We had tea in the surdab /serdab, a cool half underground room with no windows, very nice in hot weather, and afterwards went up on the balcony overlooking the river. There is a surdab bedroom for sleeping in during the afternoon and upstairs two nice open rooms suitable for cold weather or evening use. The family all sleep on the roof. There is of course the spacious central courtyard.

In the evening we had our usual guest night. I had been careful not to smoke very much and though I didn't feel like it to start with, I pulled myself together and excelled myself! (So I'm told) I sang "Funiculi funicula", "Landlord of the Old Ship Inn", "Beauty of the Guards", "Italiano" and "Signora". The last song is the star turn and I had the whole dozen sitting round singing – all except Colonel Carey who wouldn't let himself go. Afterwards we had monkey tricks and broke up about 12.

### **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

This morning met Colonel Dwyer. One of our guests last night had told him of our mess entertainment, and he now wants heaton and me to join the R.A.S.C. Concert party. Fortunately I am going to India in 3 weeks time. Today the wind has changed, and before breakfast it was nice and cool. Captain Tucker has 2 horses and this morning I went out with him and had a most enjoyable hours ride out past Jilaine/ Gilani Camp into the desert. My mare was a bit frisky and wanted some holding in. The exercise did me good and breakfast was very welcome.

In the afternoon out at 3 pm. with Mr Toplis and Padre Thomas, picked up Barkham and went to the Race Club. We played a foursome, Barkham and I against the other two. Padre Thomas is rather good, but I played badly and at the finish of the 18 holes we were all square. At least my driving was bad, I mean, my other shots and my putting were good. It was delightfully cool out there and we greatly enjoyed our drinks and tea served on the lawn. Quite a number of people go there every afternoon.

### **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

What an enormous benefit the occupation of Mesopotamia (and of Baghdad in particular) by the British has been to the Arab cannot be denied. The institution of electric light and power, the water supply, the establishment of the Sanitary Services and Health service. The making of roads and bridges, the substitution of an upright Government and just Courts of Justice for the venial Turkish forms, are but a few of the things which come to one's mind.

The other evening my dog knocked over an electric lamp in my room and when I switched it on afterwards it caused the fuse wire to go. At once all my lights went out and my fan stopped. The lights didn't so much matter, but the fan did. I commenced to perspire like a sponge being squeezed, got hot and wet – to sleep was impossible. I had to get a friend out to mend the fuse, and soon all was well again. How Europeans did here before fans were installed goodness knows.

Had over an hours good Badminton tonight, practising for tomorrow, and after dinner went with Major West , Heaton and Tucker to the Cinema, but thought it a very poor show on the whole.

### **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

Much cooler today – it being over-clouded most of the time. During the morning a few drops of rain fell but nothing to record and we shall get no more rain now until next November. This afternoon "C" Mess played the two Audit messes, who had combined for the occasion, at Badminton. 6 men from each of the Audit Messes played 6 of "C" Mess at doubles – that is there were nine matches of 21 points up. We won only 4 matches to their 5, but as the contest was to be decided on points that didn't matter, for "C" Mess scored 163 points to their 159. Very close indeed – that and we didn't win until the last game had been decided. I played with Heaton, who was rather erratic in his play. We led in all 3 of our games only to be beaten in the end 21-18, 21-19 and 21-16. In the middle we had tea and ices and after the Tournament was over adjourned to the Mess Room – about 20 of us – and

had drinks and sang songs; taking it all round we had a very enjoyable and successful afternoon.

### **Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

A slight drop in temperature these last two days but previously over 100 deg. in the shade every day – though the nights are still fairly cool.

Lovely cool morning when I went to Church at 7.20, and nice and cool again coming home from Church tonight. I shall miss these nice cool nights when I go to Basrah and India, I expect.

As I write this my dog is insisting I throw his ball for him to fetch. He's not a bad dog, but he won't stay at the Office when I take him. After a time he gets fed up and goes home. He also has frequent fights with Tucker's Irish Terrier. They go at it hammer and tongs for 5 – 10 minutes, but neither gets much hurt. But there are too many dogs in the Mess now (4) so when I leave on 10<sup>th</sup> June I am giving him to Cole, one of my staff who lives in the Chelsea Terrace Mess. He's a loveable sort of dog, but the Indian servants make such a pet of him and feed him that he sometimes prefers them to me.

Went with Heaton this morning and signed my name in the G.O.C's book, and left an invitation for him to dine at the Mess next Thursday.

### **Monday 15<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

I feel now that so much of the time has gone that I came out to do, and, as it is quite possible that one may be packing up for home, 5 months from now, that I can begin to long for home and England. Apart from the fact that two years in this climate is quite long enough for the Englishman, without leave, the separation from one's dear ones is a far harder thing to bear. One's friends are always very kind, but they are all men; I expect they think just the same. Most of the things we do, the excursions we make, are purely for the purpose of killing time and keeping our thoughts from brooding too much on Home. The extreme care one has always to take of oneself, the continual fear that something may happen; every little ill, every little touch of tummy trouble carefully watched in case it may be the forerunner of something more serious. Yet it is all necessary. The danger of the sun, of chill, of infected water, bad food, mosquitoes (malaria) sandflies and many other things, make life quite a strain. Even my trip to India ( I shall be 2 ½ months away from Baghdad) is no light undertaking – but I be very glad of it for the change it will give. But I wish the time would speed up more.

## **Tuesday 16th May 1922**

Yesterday I went down to the Government Bookshop and bought some Passe-partout paper and also some pieces of glass in the Bazaar – and since then I have interested myself fixing up half a dozen photos and hanging them in my room. I have now got 11 framed photos on my walls, and 5 others unframed and many people come in and admire my picture gallery.

This afternoon after tea we played Badminton until nearly 7.00 – and splendid fun and exercise we got out of it. Mr Toplis and I played our two Champions (Major Middleton-West and Capt. Waite) and beat them one game. Played 5 or 6 games in all each time except 2 with different partners. It's every bit as good exercise as the tennis, and a good deal cheaper. At tennis, a set of 6 balls (Rupees 11) only lasts about 3 games.

In the evening practised a few songs, as the G.O.C. - General Theodore Fraser – is dining with the Mess on Thursday night as well as 4 or 5 Colonels. It will be a big night and I'm sorry Rice will be away. He is hung up at Shergat between Mosul and Baghdad (where the ruins of old Assur, the ancient capital of Assyria, are.)

## **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

Today, being the Birthday of Major Middleton-West, has been a fete day. He is a very popular man- and deserves his popularity.

This afternoon he entertained the Mess to tea (the only outsiders invited being the Bilkerts and Padre Brown) The cook made us all sorts of fancy cakes and sweets (coconut ice is his speciality.) and ice-creams ad lib. As soon as tea was over we all played Badminton. As a matter of fact I had been playing since 4 and I'm afraid (it being a hot close day) I ate too many ice-creams – four plates – and spoilt my voice for the evening.

We had a special dinner in the evening with all the drinks – champagne, liqueurs, etc. at Major West's expense and afterwards Mr Toplis presented him with his prize won in our Badminton Tournament in a very happy speech. Then we others in turn all made speeches and sang "For he's a jolly good fellow" and Major West replied. We finished up with songs and parlour games – dumb charades, Buzz-buzz, spelling-bee and so on. That's how husband's amuse themselves in Mesopotamia.

## **Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

Rather late to bed last night and my voice is still groggy owing to yesterday's ice-cream orgy – and felt very tired today. So early to bed after tiffin and had a good long sleep until tea, hoping to get fit for the evening. This is an extraordinary country for feeling quite fit one day and quite groggy the next.

In the evening entertained the General Officer Commanding – Lieut. General Theodore Fraser – to dinner. He is known as "Frosty Face", or "Snowball" – the latter in reference to his white hair. Colonel Fanshawe came, Colonel Douglas, Colonel Davidson and some others. Colonel Douglas is a V.C. So it was a distinguished gathering. We had a splendid dinner – one of the best we have ever put up – 9 courses – tho' unfortunately Waite, our Mess Secretary, was down with fever. After dinner Heaton and I sang- and I even got the General singing and acting "Signora" with the best of them. Many people offered to bet me beforehand that I wouldn't do it!

I sang "The Floral Dance" best. All told I gave "Funiculi Funicula", "Floral Dance", "Beauty of the Guards" , "Italiano" and "Signora". At the finish when the General said goodbye, he shook hands with Heaton and me and said he had enjoyed the evening immensely. I hear he wants to come again.

## **Friday 19<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

Colonel Dwyer has asked me again to join his Concert Party. There are 4 Officers and 4 ladies already in it and Heaton and I would make 10. I told him that I couldn't consider it until I came back from India and would make no promise to do so even then.

Hear from everybody General very pleased with last night. Very glad as I didn't do so well as usual on the whole.

At 3.30 a Vauxhall called at "C" Mess and Mr Toplis, Padre Thomas and I went down to the Golf Club, picking up Barkham on the way. Thomas played very well, Toplis rather badly, Barkham and I played fairly well in the first 9 holes but badly in the second 9 holes. I would rather play a two ball match rather than a foursome. We beat them by 1 hole only. Quite a small crowd on the Race Club Lawn having tea, perhaps 20 ladies among them.. It is so nice and cool out there they bring their kiddies out when the sun goes down. On the drive between the Club and the North Gate Barracks between gardens and groves of tall date palms it was delightfully cool, but at the Barracks, near the city, we were met with a hot air blast from the sun-baked desert. If only Mesopotamia were properly cultivated it would probably be 20 deg cooler in

the summer.

## **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

Yesterday evening Major West, Capt. Tucker and I went to the Cinema and saw another portion of "Dare-Devil Jack", cram full of stupid bandits. (n.b. 1920 silent film starring Jack Dempsey) Soon after we were seated a dust storm arose and as the cinema has no roof I was soon covered with dust and then the rain came down and nearly soaked us. However these things don't count for much in Mesopotamia, and as soon as they had got a canvas covering overhead we returned to our seats.

But this afternoon's dust storm was a much better one. The wind blew with hurricane force – it lightened and thundered and just when the air was full of choking dust, the rain came - enough to make the streets quite muddy. Something went wrong with our electricity supply and we were left without lights and fans for some time. If the fans fail on a really hot stuffy day, one can get wet through with perspiration in 5 minutes.

Played Badminton in the afternoon before the dust storm and in the evening after dinner – bridge.

Nearly bought another carpet today – or rather nearly swapped my Bijar for another one + 40 Rupees. I offered 35 Rupees but the Arab wouldn't accept.

## **Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May 1922**

The chief affliction of the tropical night is the high temperature. Even today the night temp. (10.30) in my room is 83deg. And I should be mighty uncomfortable were it not for my ceiling fans. As it is I perspire freely about the neck and make my pillow so wet that it wakes me and I have to change it over. I used to do that 4 times a night during the hottest nights last summer. It's time one went up on the roof to sleep – but the night storms have kept on very late this summer, and I shan't go up until I come back from India now.

To early Communion and after breakfast to GHQ and got my letter – the mail being in today.

Wrote all the morning, in the afternoon had Capt. Randall, the Army Cashier to tea and showed him my rugs – also Rice's large Bokhara which he rather wants to buy.

To Church in the evening – every member of the Mess went to Church tonight – and after dinner sat with Tucker in his room and discussed wives and babies – he is expecting news any day now that his wife has her baby. She is in a Nursing Home at Bombay – a beastly hole at this time of year.

### **Monday 22 May 1922**

Up early this morning and left "C" Mess at 5.50 to meet Rice. But the tram from Shergat got in at 5.30 and I missed him as he came home on the Ford Vanette with his baggage.

All these Mesopotamian trains leave Baghdad at night- generally at 10 or 10.30, and arrive at Baghdad at 5.30 or 6.30 in the morning – which altho' it is very inconvenient for anyone seeing passengers off or meeting them, is best for the passengers, as it enables the journey to be done in the cool of the night instead of the heat of the scorching day. The journey to Basra takes 2 nights and 1 whole day- but that can't be avoided owing to the distance.

I'm glad I didn't have the Mosul trip, on the whole, as Rice and Walden have had to live part of the time in tents, and the continual moving from one place to another means constant change of food, which is a thing to be avoided in Mesopotamia. Rice looks well, but is quite glad to be back "home" and at dinner this evening we drank his health and welcomed him "home".

The temperature is now over 100deg. each day, but we had a heavy rainstorm about 5 o'clock tonight and the evening was delightfully cool afterwards, a pleasant change from the close nights we've had lately.

### **Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1922**

Now that Rice is back I am hoping that the work which has been coming to me in his absence will ease off, so as to enable me to gather the materials for my Poona trip. I have been doing all his work for three weeks, and I feel confident now that if Mr Toplis hadn't come out again Rice and I could have carried it through.

It has been very sticky today – being all damp after yesterday's downpour and the temperature over 100deg. In the afternoon I went and watched the tennis for some time, but soon came back and had an hour's badminton in our own court. That made me wet through.

My boy and Rice's boy nearly came to blows today, Usman says Joseph owes

him 23 Rupees but Joseph says he only owes 5. I told them I could have nothing to do with their quarrels. Usman said something in Hindustani which made Joseph fly at him like a mad bull and only Waite's opportune appearance saved Usman, For Joseph is a very strong fellow.

After dinner played Bridge – but old Harrison is so slow that it becomes also a game (or at any rate a trial) of Patience also.

### **Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

This afternoon Heaton and I went down to 23 B.S.H. to have tea with the Nursing Sisters there. Colonel Radcliffe, Colonel Fanshawe and Major Herepath also came. There were 7 or 8 sisters there, some in uniform and some in mufti. Apparently it was Miss Alban's Birthday, but we none of us knew of it. Heaton and I took our songs and had a merry time after tea, and eventually they cleared the tables and chairs out of the big room and we had dancing. I danced with Miss Alban and Miss Campaign and the latter was about my height and a topping dancer (but no corsets on – I suppose its too hot for such things.)

We tore home in our car and only just had time to bath and dress for dinner – and it is a law that no-one may be late for dinner guest night. Major Bilderbeck, the Regimental Paymaster was my guest and we had 18 to dinner. Heaton and I had to go all through our show again, but it was a most successful show and Bilderbeck said "Well old chap I'd sooner see your show than go to the Coliseum any day". We had "parlour tricks" afterwards and the Principal Chaplain (one of the guests) created a record for him by keeping awake after dinner until 11.30.

### **Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

The sentence on the Kent clerk whose prosecution I carried through at Basrah in March was promulgated today. The finding of the Court is confirmed but the sentence was reduced to 3 years penal servitude.

Today on looking over some a/cs of April and May 1921 of the Labour Officer, Abadan, I observed that the A.P.O.C. had been undercharged on a/c of labour supplied – Rs. 33,778 – so tomorrow or the next day when I have made a full statement of the case (a claim made a year late always wants strong substantiation) they will have a bill for £2200, which they thought they'd got out of, I bet.

I mention the above as instances of the work we are doing. It keeps one

interested. And these are only small items really and the work of one man only. Collectively we have paid for ourselves many times over, especially in the effect we have had on the whole Army as regards accounts, stoppage of waste. The accounts which are now being examined are infinitely better than those of last year, due mostly to our continual pressure.

Played Toplis golf this afternoon at the Race Club Course. I gave him 24 strokes over the course and at the 14<sup>th</sup> hole when we gave up, I was 23 strokes ahead and he hadn't won a hole.

### **Friday 26<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

We heard from Nyilassy, who is at Basrah, that they have been having terrific heat for the time of year – highest shade temperature so far 113deg. I hope it moderates for my fortnight there. Here at Baghdad the highest temperature so far has been 103deg. Only, and not hot nights thank goodness.

This afternoon it was 103deg. - and well we knew it, Waite and I. We played one strenuous game of Badminton which lasted  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour and when we had finished I was wringing wet through and Waite practically as bad. One's hair gets wet through, and the perspiration pours out of every pore and runs down the face and neck, chest and back in streams. I simply sat down and dripped from my nose and chin and from my ten fingers.. It does one good though it keeps you thin.

Tucker and I went out to dinner tonight at the principal Chaplain's. A really good dinner, very daintily served. He has been buying carpets by the dozen, and after having shown them to us we went out on the balcony and he fell fast asleep – while Tucker and I talked and kept one another awake. But it was very drowsy on that nice cool balcony, the night so dark and still, the river underneath, just the stars showing.

### **Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> May 1921**

Today cleared up my work at the Office so that I may have next week to getting together material for my Poona visit. There is plenty to do still and the work has not dropped enough yet to make the drop really felt.

Went up to Mespers (as the Mesopotamia-Persia Corporation is called) and arranged about my cabin on the S.S. "Zenobia" which sails for Basrah next Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> June. I am promised a nice cabin with a fan in it.

In the afternoon played Waite at Badminton again and then just slacked until 7 doing nothing.

In the evening Major Bilderbeck called for Rice and Middleton-West and me and we went down to the Alwiyah Club to dinner. It was a good dinner served on the lawn under strings of electric lights – with the band of the East Yorks Regiment playing. Quite a lot of women there, but none who raised in me any wish for a dance (except one, Col. Davidson's wife, who is a lovely dancer) So we went into the Billiards room and had a game of snooker at which Rice showed unexpected proficiency. The dances were all played by a Jazz Band, called the Minz-a-beak Band (see the joke?) It was a pleasant evening, and a nice change.

### **Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

Today ends the fast of Ramadhan or Ramazan. The new moon which in the Mohammedan year starts a new month, having been seen at Mecca. In the morning many of the G.H.Q. Officers went to the Serai and shook hands with King Feisul (to show that he is still backed by the British Army) and in the evening 21 guns were fired as a feu-de-joie, to the accompaniment of great cheering by the Arabs. Today and tomorrow are Mohammedan holidays and made the occasion of much merriment. Still we're just as bad at Easter and Xmas, so have nothing to sneer at.

In the early morning to Communion and after breakfast cleared away a host of old papers, in view of my departure on Friday.

As usual wrote all the morning and slept all the afternoon and in the evening to Church again, where a very nice service, though only a small congregation. As the evenings get warmer less people have the energy to turn out.

Our bearers (except the Christians) have been en fete today and produced all sorts of fruits and wonderful concoctions for their masters to eat called "Kissmiss", after our Christmas day. But most of it was uneatable, so the Indians have cleared it away and are now eating, to much merriment and noises in our garden – just below my window.

### **Monday 29<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

Today Rice and I had a run round the Bazaar after tiffin. I wanted to buy some silk (crepe de Chine) but although we tried six or seven shops I couldn't get the quality I wanted and in the end I bought a piece of Japanese silk instead. There is unfortunately not much new stuff coming into the

country now owing to the tightness of money, and merchants are more keen on unloading stocks they have already got. The silk I bought is good, I think; I paid Rs. 5 per yard for it.

We called at Ali Akbar's shop, and finding some pretty silver spoons (from Zinjan in Persia) bargained for them and finally got them for Rs. 10 for 6. Rice had 6 and so did I. Ali Akbar first asked Rs.15 for them.

The to an Arab outfitter, and bought a complete Arab costume – an abba, black with gold collar; a zaboon, the long undergarment; a belt; a waistcoat, a kafiye, or head kerchief and a silver and wool coil to hold the kafiye on. After the usual bargaining I got the whole lot for Rs 26, the Arab asked Rs 50. On our way back I bought a pair of red shoes for Rs 3; the shoemaker wanted Rs5.

Back at 4.00 and at 4.30 the Bilkerts came to tea, which we had in my room. It was a nice tea Waite gave us – with ice-cream. We had Badminton afterwards which the Bilkerts hugely enjoy – quite a happy afternoon for all of us.

## **Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> May 1922**

The temperature has made a sudden jump today. As we walked home from the Office at midday we were met by a hot wind like a blast from a furnace – almost enough to singe one's eyebrows. It was a south wind blowing from across the desert. Tucker put up his thermometer outside my room and it soon registered 110 deg. That was at 2.30, under a wide verandah, and on the shady side of the billet. Afterwards I found that the official shade temperature for the day was 112 deg. and the temperature (maximum) in the sun 161 deg. How's that for May?

In the afternoon after tea I played some strenuous Badminton – one set of singles with Major Middleton-West lasting  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour and finished up wringing wet, almost as if I had fallen into a river and just got out. I ought to have changed at once and had a bath, but instead I enjoyed some icy-cold whisky and soda, and cooled down.

After we had come up for bed at night, Major Middleton-West came in my room and challenged me to box him. We sparred for a couple of minutes and then he suggested wrestling. So I took him on and had a three minute and strenuous battle. We gave up by mutual consent, puffed, but then I found that I had strained one of my back muscles – or else bought on an attack of muscular rheumatism and I had rather a bad night with the pain.

## **Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> May 1922**

The pain in my back had developed badly during the night, as I had feared, and I had to lie in bed all day and soak myself with aspirin to keep the pain down and abort the rheumatism. It was most unfortunate coming like this, the last day of the month, the day when I have to get out our Mess accounts, our guest night too, while in 2 days time I leave for Basrah. I took it easy during the morning, but in the afternoon I felt well enough to get out our Mess accounts, so that's one good thing done.

The pain was located chiefly in the muscles of the spinal column, exactly between the shoulder-blades and every now and again a pain shot through me as if I had been bayoneted. At 6.30 I had 15 grains of Aspirin in the hope I might be able to get down to dinner and it did the trick for I was able to bath at 9.15 and dress. The drug, however, took all the stuffing out of me and I felt like the skeleton at the feast. But I managed to sing a few songs afterwards though not at all well. The aspirin had taken all the ring out of my voice (I had 45 grains in all today) and I was not well enough to do any of my action songs. I was rather sorry as Toplis had asked Colonel Ingram to dinner (of "B" Mess) – and he has scoffed at our entertainments on guest nights. However it served him right, for his scoffing, that he came on a night when the songsters were off song!