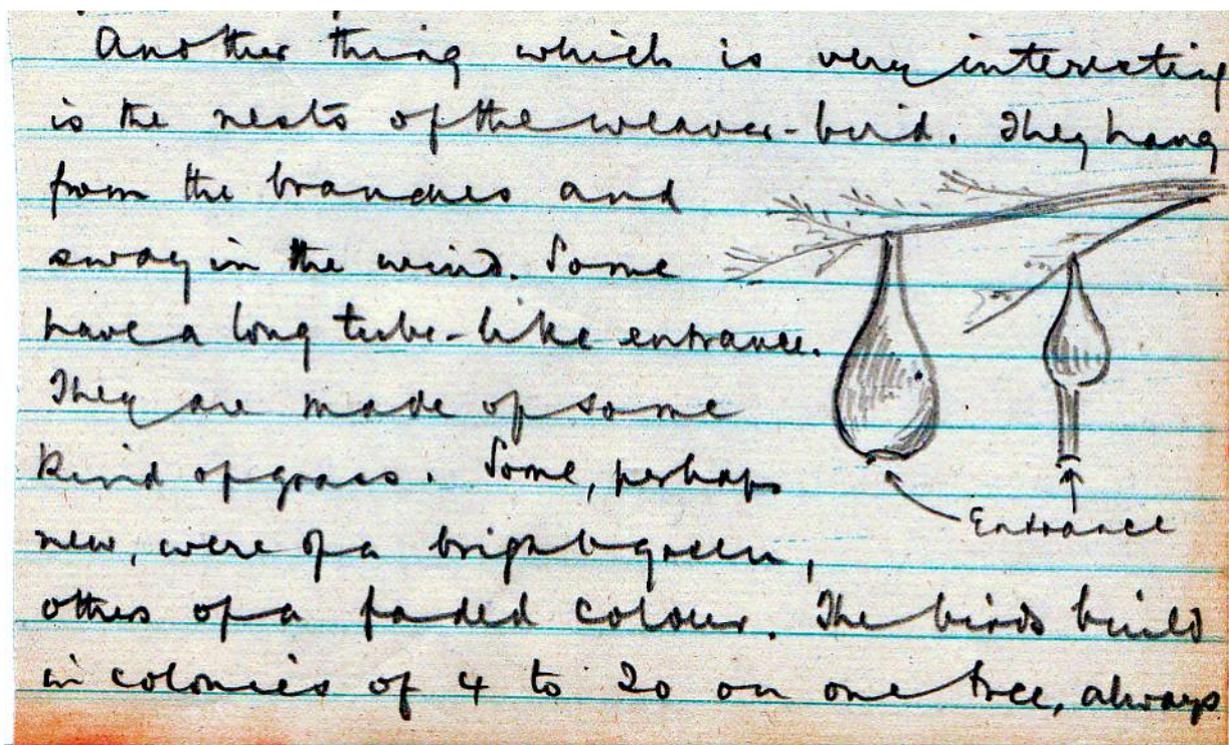


Friday 1st. September 1922

My claim that I carry the Monsoon about with me received its usual support even at Ajmer, where they have been praying for rain. Last night there was a wind storm and a little rain, and this morning quite a good shower. There is promise of more to come, as heavy clouds are coming up from the south and ranging low over the Ajmeri hills. I mentioned to Mrs. Patterson at Jaipur on Wednesday night that the Monsoon appeared wherever I went and she said that if I could bring the Monsoon to Ajmer the people would worship me as a God. I was, however, unfortunately unable to wait for that.

Caught the 8.40a.m. to Ahmedabad and had the same comfy compartment, I might almost say apartment. The country until Beawar was reached was flat, with ranges of hills in the distance on either side. From Beawar, however, we suddenly ran into the mountains. The hills are formed of a hard grey-brown rock, worn by the wind and rain of ages into many strange shapes. Some of these rock hills resemble nothing so much as gigantic primeval ruins the rocks composing them being rounded and hollowed and worn by the weather and sometimes split in halves as clean as if hewn by man.

Another thing which is very interesting is the nests of the weaver bird. They hang from the branches and sway in the wind. Some have a long tube-like entrance. They are made of some kind of grass. Some perhaps new, were of a bright green, others of a faded colour. The birds build in colonies of 4 to 20 on one tree...



choosing the side away from the wind, i.e. the North side. It must be a very small bird which builds this remarkable nest, judging by the size of the entrance which makes it an all the more extraordinary effort.

The railway line still continues to cross "sand-rivers", or dry water courses. I am told it is within the memory of the old inhabitants when the rainfall in Rajputana was much higher than it is now. Perhaps in those old days rain filled these sandy channels and carved them out of the plains. Perhaps the day will come again when the rains will return – it is a beautiful country and with more rain could produce millions of tons of grain and cotton.

The distant Aravalli mountains on the East look dim blue in the setting sun and huge as they tower from the plain. We are travelling parallel to them now.

Presently a flock of huge stork-like birds, with red heads and long necks and legs, flush up, startled by the train, and show white against the mountains. Though they have such huge wings they fly no faster than the train (20 miles per hour, or 30 perhaps) They are Sarus Cranes.

On both sides of the railway the highest peaks of the hills are wreathed in cloud. In the Aravalli Mountains on the East it is raining hard, as well as at Mt. Abu on the West, its huge bulk half hidden by cloud. At Mt. Abu they are no less than 15 ½ inches deficient in rainfall but it has now a chance to make up. Here are the celebrated caves, hewn by the old Hindoo's out of the solid rock, with images and carving all complete. How I wish I could have spared another day.

Near Mt. Abu, and at other places on the route, I saw some of the famous black-faced Langur monkeys sitting in the trees or on the ground. Big serious looking fellows they are, with long tails, and said to be very gentle.

I passed some fine specimens of two other Indian curiosities:

1. some fine Banyan trees – one a very fine tree with over 50 strong upright root- stems, all grown from aerial feelers which had taken root.
2. There is a cactus which grows everywhere along this line – not the flat-leaved cactus of Poona, but one which looks like a many-branched candlestick. It is quite bare except for the sharp thorns along the stems, but the extremities of the stems spread out into leaves. These cacti are anything up to 6 or 7 feet high.

We reached Ahmedabad at 21.40 hrs. about half an hour late. Here the metre-gauge line ends and we have to change on to the broad-gauge line

which will take us to Bombay.

This is a big manufacturing city (especially for cotton goods) and the station was crowded. In the First Class compartment next to mine was some Indian Parsee Potentate, with about 20 people to see him off. He had a huge garland of flowers around his neck and a bouquet in his hand. (At Bombay, 20 others met him and fixed him up with fresh garlands and bouquets there.)

We started away late, but that doesn't matter I don't mind how late the train is. Tomorrow I reach Bombay and my Indian tour is ended. I have done nearly 2500 miles through India and I am contented. I wouldn't have missed it – except for one thing.

Saturday 2nd September 1922

Woke up this morning in a different country. North it has been dry and rainless; here, along the Bombay coast, it was water-soaked and wet. The monsoon breaks against the Western Ghats and the shore district gets all the rain. Only a portion gets over the mountains.

We are running parallel to the seashore and now and again we got a glimpse of the sea. It is very fertile land – everywhere with sturdy rice growing.

The train was rather late and it was nearly 11 o'clock when we began to enter the suburbs of Bombay. The houses are now continuous (so different from the plains, where one seldom sees a village at all) This is a damp, hot, true tropical region. Bananas and coconuts are plentiful. The latter have their green nuts almost ready to pick. At Bandra thousands of sheep and goats were packed around the slaughterhouses, awaiting slaughtering for the population of Bombay.

We reached Colaba station at 11.30 a.m. and while Joseph took my luggage to the Hotel, I walked. How crowded Bombay seems after the country, how big and how oppressive. It rains here every day and the damp heat is bringing out my prickly heat again.

Met Makings at the Hotel and talked with him until tea-time. The Majestic is much fuller than when we came through two months ago – people are now beginning to come in for what is termed the "cold weather". It certainly does seem a bit cooler, and I might like it better if the rain would stop. But I prefer Ajmer and Jaipur.

Sunday 3rd September 1922

Went to Holy Communion at Colaba Church – the first time for three weeks.

During the morning lazed about, unpacked my things, looked through my official work, wrote up my diary, and so on. In fact had a good old laze, the first I have had for weeks. But Bombay is the place for lazing – it is close and hot and damp and one has no energy to do anything.

In the afternoon went for a drive to Malabar Hill, but it came on to rain hard – so back we came home. Capt Jackson, a Basrah friend, is staying here at the Majestic, and came with us. In the evening we went to the Excelsior to see Gaby Deslys last film, "The God of Luck". All this seems so potty after my last fortnight – but there's not much to do in Bombay but go to theatres.

Monday 4th September 1922

In the morning went to interview the Divisional Marine Transport Officer, Bombay, regarding the question of freight rates between Bombay and Mesopotamia. (Commander Beatty R.I.M.) Had a long morning with him, but satisfactory. After tiffin slept for 2 hours.

Makings and I went out after tea inspecting the Bombay curiosity shops as he wants to buy a brass tray-table. Naturally things are dearer here than in Jaipur, nor is the work so good, but they are fairly reasonable. Eventually hit on quite a nice one 2 ft across for Rs. 20

Have received a telegram postponing the Dadar Conference until 8th September. This means that I shall not get away until a week later.

Tuesday 5th September 1922

Spent another morning at the Div. Marine Transport Officer's office and went afterwards to see the Embarkation Commandant. I have ascertained that no trooper leaves Bombay for U.K. between 30 Oct ("Hecuba") and 2nd December ("Glengorm Castle"). I'm sure I cannot manage the first one and I asked the Embarkation Commandant to promise me a berth on the "Glengorm Castle". That arrives Southampton on Xmas Day; this is unfortunate, but is better than arriving a week later, and cannot be helped.

In the afternoon, after tea, went to the Parsee Headquarters and obtained a permit to view the famous Parsee "Towers of Silence" on Malabar Hill. On our way up we came across a Hindu procession – miles long and thousands in it, wending its way to Chowpatty Bay. It was the annual festival of Ganapati the Elephant-headed god, and hundreds of images of the god were

being carried in procession. Many most gorgeously decorated with flowers, coloured paper and having coloured umbrellas over them. These images are made of clay, made smooth and painted pink, and are dressed up like big dolls. Arrived at the seashore, the images are thrown in and dissolve in the water. Many of the people wade almost half a mile out to sea with their images.

We drove up to the Towers of Silence and there was a Parsee funeral party in the grounds and we were not able to go in. Still, the view from the Hill-top of the Chowpatty sands was wonderful – there must have been tens of thousands of people there.

Wednesday 6th September 1922

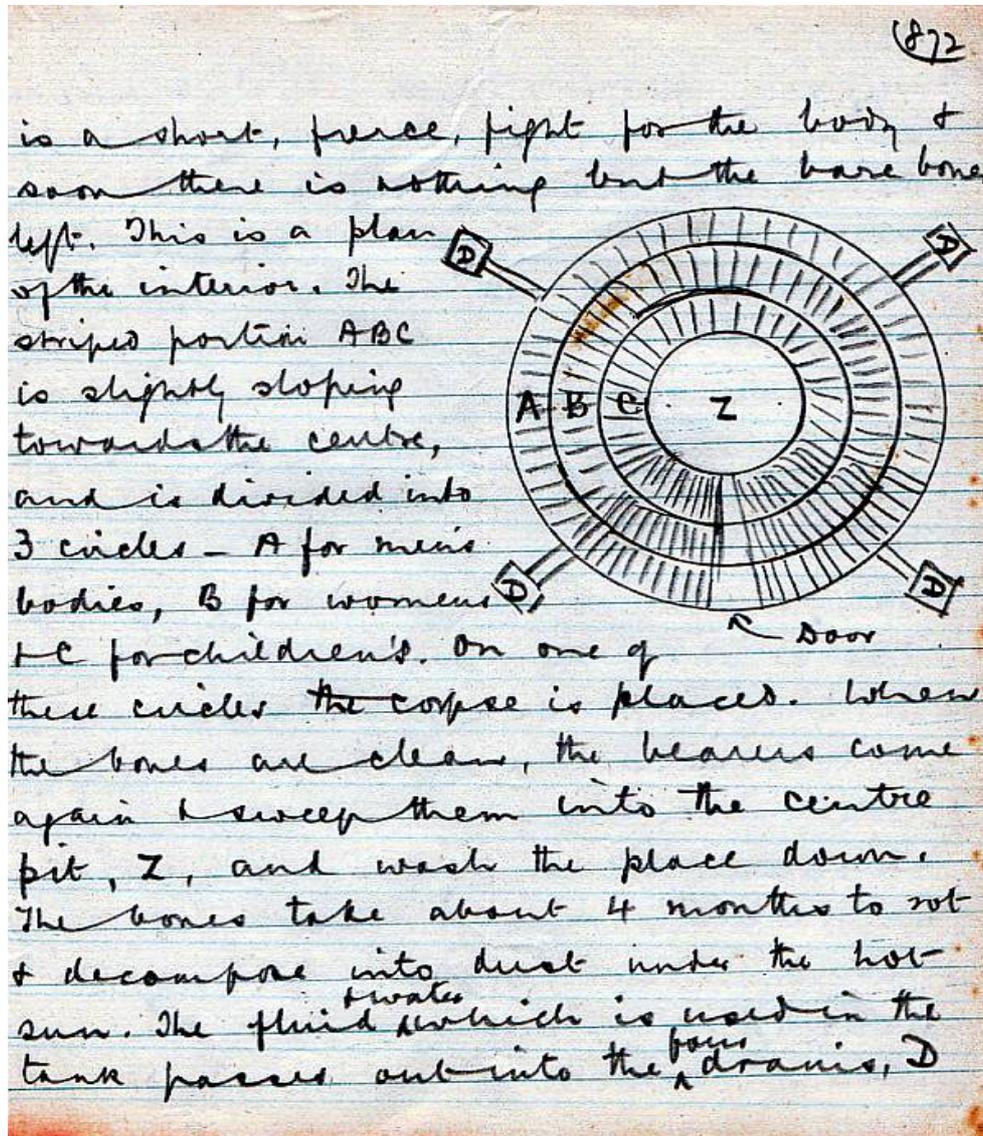
Last night Capt Jackson took us to see the Will o' the Wisps Concert Party at the Excelsior, to celebrate having got a refund of passage money which he paid in 1919 – Rs. 1377! Quite a good show and enjoyed it very much.

After breakfast went to Kodaks to see how my Delhi, Jaipur + Ajmer photos had turned out. Delighted to find that with the exception of the two taken in the Jain Temple, and one other, all good – 33 out of 36!

Afterwards went to Dadar, a suburb 6 miles out of Bombay, to interview the Chief Auditor, Dadar. He didn't turn up until 20 minutes to 12. He is an Indian named Dewan Bahadur R. Sundarachari, dressed in European clothes except for his turban. His boots had never seen polish, his blue suit was all greasy and spotted with dirt, his shirt was on inside out and open down the front, the cuffs were ragged – one fastened by a cuff-link, the other loose; his collar was filthy and all crumpled and limp with perspiration, his chin unshaven. He was a sight! I asked him a good many questions and got a fairly good idea of his office and its work which will come in useful for the conference on the 8th.

In the afternoon went with Makings to the Parsee Towers of Silence. We stood for some time awaiting our guide by the Parsee Temple, where the sacred fire is always kept burning. The sweet smell of incense was in the air and in the temple were priests reciting prayers for the dead. Each adopted a different tone and the effect was weird in the extreme. Vultures were wheeling overhead and the garden was so still. When our guide arrived he took us into the grounds which are nicely laid out and showed us the Towers, of which there were 5 – one was for suicides and hospital cases, viz. those whose bodies have been defiled. The walls of the Towers are low – about twice a man's height, and about half way up is the door through which the body is put. All around the Tower walls stood vultures, hundreds of them –

waiting. The burial service having been held, the relatives wait some distance off while the corpse is put into the Tower by special bearers – and then they turn and go back home. At the same moment the vultures sweep down, there is a short, fierce, fight for the body and soon there is nothing but the bare bones left. This is a plan of the interior:



The striped portion ABC is slightly sloping towards the centre, and is divided into 3 circles – A for men's bodies, B for women's and C for children's. On one of these circles the corpse is placed. When the bones are clean, the bearers come again and sweep them into the centre pit, Z, and wash the place down. The bones take about 4 months to rot and decompose into dust under the hot sun. The fluid and water which is used in the tank passes out into the four drains, D, where it passes through charcoal and sand and is thus purified before it enters the earth. So - "dust unto dust".

This ceremony dates back 3000 years and has for its reason the Parsee worship of the elements. They do not cremate their dead, because fire is

sacred and the corpse would defile it; nor bury them in the ground for that would defile the earth.

We drove out to the end of the island where is Government House and having explored the grounds, retraced our steps and got back to the Hotel about 6.30p.m.

After dinner M and I went down to the seafront and sat talking and smoking for nearly an hour enjoying the breezes. Just after we got in it poured. There were lots of people sitting out there on the Front – in muslins and white things; it was sudden and they have got pretty wet.

Thursday 7th September 1922

Today another visit to the D.M.T.O.'s and there until 12.30. Afterwards several places with M (who sails tomorrow for Basrah) and home about 1.30p.m.

In the afternoon I had a telegram fixing the Dadar Conference for 10a.m. tomorrow, so what with my notes for that and letters and reports for Makings to take to Baghdad tomorrow, I have been busy all afternoon and evening. Owing to the late arrival of the Mail boat from England, which the "Vasna" must wait for, she won't actually sail until 2.30 a.m. on Saturday and I might have caught her after all if I hadn't cancelled my passage. I shall be alone in Bombay for a week, which will be perfectly beastly and shan't get to Mesopotamia until 22/9.

Friday 8th September 1922

This morning Col. R. Prince, the Deputy Military Accountant general, arrived from Simla and Col. Ormsby-Johnson and SSM Feehally from Poona about 8 a.m. We all breakfasted at the Hotel and afterwards caught the 10.05 train to Dadar. Col. Prince had had the misfortune to lose 500 Rupees on the way from Simla, either his pocket-book was stolen or he had dropped it somewhere.

This time Sundara Chari was there to meet us, and not quite in such a dirty condition. We got to business immediately. The return of staff which he had prepared at my request proved most useful and formed the basis of our attack. He had at the time a total staff of approximately 400 of whom some were under notice, leaving 315 whom he had proposed to keep from 1.10.22. He had prepared a revised estimate showing 265 now required, hoping no doubt to conciliate us with the sacrifice of another 50. However that served

him nothing, and after having investigated every detail of his office work, and decided on certain work which could be cut out and the manner of closing it, estimated that 100 clerks only would be necessary for carrying on after 1.10.22, with a further reduction before the end of the year.

We got back to the Hotel about 6 p.m. very hungry, having had nothing since 8 a.m. Makings was waiting to say goodbye, having got all his baggage on board the "Vasna", which was to sail that night, but no berth allotted to him.

We discussed the day up until dinner time and after dinner all of us adjourned to my room, where we drafted our report on the investigation. We broke up about 12 midnight.

Saturday 9th September 1922

Col. Prince came at 10.a.m. And he and I revised our report on Dadar and completed it and afterwards took it round to the D.M.T.O. to be typed. At the same time we discussed other business with the D.M.T.O. for Col. Prince to take up at Simla. Col. Prince left at 12 noon for Peshawar.

This conference was held in response to a cable from the War Office for the purpose of arranging "for the early clearance and reduction of staff and expenses at Dadar." I think we have done very well and the further recommendations we have made should dispose of it altogether by 31.3.22.

After my strenuous time I took it very easy this afternoon and evening, feeling the strain of the last few days slightly. Bombay has a most enervating climate, and isn't the place for strenuous work!

Sunday 10th September 1922

Up early to Holy Communion at Colaba Church. During the morning completed my work on the Dadar Conference and now, except getting it all typed and despatched my Indian work is completed. It has been a very busy 10 weeks and I shall be glad of a few days rest to pick up my arrears of correspondence.

After tea I went for a walk towards Back Bay and in Cuffe Parade Road, which runs alongside the Bay I came across the rainbow broke loose. It was the Parsee New Year's Day and this was the Parsee Parade. Every Parsee who owned a car was there, and having found a place on the Parade Road there they drew up and sat, in the car, the whole family. I suppose the road is ½ a mile long and the cars and carriages 3 deep. But those that came

there without and just paraded along the sea-front they were the show. Mostly women it seemed, and all dressed in their best, probably new for the New Year. The Parsee Sari serves as an over-skirt and is then brought up from one side over the head from where it drops gracefully down the front of the body. It is generally of fine silk, one colour, one piece, with an edge from 1 to 3 inches wide beautifully embroidered with silk or gold thread. I was delighted with the beauty and colour of the clothes of the Hindu women at Jaipur and Ajmer, but that was different – it was the East and barbaric in its essentials. Here it was more refined, educated, Grecian even. Every colour of the rainbow vied with each other -but not the bright crude colours of Jaipur with its flaming reds and yellows. These colours were more subdued but infinitely beautiful, and rendered all the more effective by the grace with which they were worn, the extraordinary beauty of the draping and the perfect undeniable taste of the wearers for colour and effect.

I do believe that no dress parade in all the world could have held a candle to this remarkable show. For pure taste and grace it was perfect and nothing is lost in that every costume was the same in style. Practically the only opportunity for distinction is the sari. No hat is worn but plenty of jewellery, tho' always tasteful jewellery, not the barbaric anklets and bangles of the Hindus. And I should say that there can't have been less than 5000 women there, most of them good-looking, not one ugly.

Monday 11th September 1922

A hot stuffy day with only a few degrees difference between the day and night temperatures; with a humidity between 80 and 90 deg.

Went round to the Embarkation Commandant in the morning to make certain about my passage on Friday. Ascertained that Makings had a cabin allotted to him and that it was duly handed over to him before the ship sailed. Also to the D.M.T.O. to get my reports but found they were not yet ready. He kindly offered me his launch to go to Elephanta on Wednesday.

After tea wandered about and eventually to Kodak's, but the prints had been so badly done they had sent them back. Then to Rose's and bought some music. After dinner to Excelsior Theatre, but didn't like the show so came back. Decided that the best thing is to go to bed when you feel like this.

Tuesday 12th September 1922

This morning went out Byculla and visited the Victoria Gardens, where is a really splendid collection of tropical trees and plants growing in the open.

Graceful palms of every kind, strange tropical trees, bamboos, trailing vines, beds of brilliant flowers – charming lakes abounding with wildfowl – combine to make this a garden of delight (if it weren't so hot). Among the clumps of trees, evenly scattered through the grounds, are compounds and cages with wild animals and birds, living in the open under conditions that suit them – an extraordinarily interesting zoo.

In the afternoon went to the D.M.T.O.'s office and read through the reports which had been typed up for me, and got them off. That, thank goodness, is the end of my work here.

Wednesday 13th September 1922

Set off at 9.45 a.m. from Ballard Bunder for Elephanta Island. The D.M.T.O. had placed at my disposal the R.I.M. Motor launch "Duke of Devonshire", a roomy white-painted craft which would have held 20, probably. It is 6 miles across to the Island and it took nearly an hour. I had feared that the journey might upset me, being usually so bad a sailor, but for once I felt absolutely topping and although we rolled about a bit at times, I enjoyed every minute on board. We landed at a rough concrete pier which juts out through a mangrove swamp. One often reads of "mangrove swamps" in books of tropical countries. It is just a flat stretch of oozy mud which is covered with water at high tide in which the stumpy sturdy mangrove tree grows thickly. In the earlier summer these bear pretty white flowers. It is strange how well they thrive in this salty mud. This is indeed a lovely island, thickly wooded with every kind of tropical tree, from tall graceful coconut palms to the stubbly mountain bush, and covered with tall grass, creepers and flowers and ferns of all kinds. As I walked up the long stone pathway to the top I was struck with the luxuriance of the jungle and the fertility of the soil.

Natives, both men and women were bringing down huge sheaves of rich green grass taller than corn, which is shipped to Bombay for cattle. If, as tradition says, a great and mighty city one time had its being on the island, the luxuriant tropical jungle has swallowed it up, for no sign of it can now be seen until one reaches the top of the granite pathway. There, just a little further on, in the midst of this jungle, is the entrance to the famous Caves. This entrance is cut out of a solid cliff of grey rock, which towers above, itself overgrown with shrubs and creepers which somehow gain a foothold.

The cave itself, which is 250 feet above sea level, is not so large as I had expected – being about 130 feet square. I had also expected it to be dark, but there is actually splendid light inside due to its being open at both sides. The great centre court is supported by massive columns though maybe there

is no real need for them, for the whole temple is hewn out of the solid rock. It is a huge piece of work, and wonderful, seeing it was fashioned 1500 years ago, but there is nothing colossal about it, except perhaps the great triple bust at the back of Brahma, the Creator; Vishnu, the Preserver and Siva, the Destroyer, the three chief Gods of the Hindu Pantheon. These Gods assumed dozens of different forms, all of which have different names, and have any number of children, relatives and friends, so there are hundreds of Gods altogether. It is strange that of all of them Brahma, the Creator, is rarely if ever worshipped. Most of the Hindu temples, like this one, are dedicated to Siva, the Destroyer. The argument of these enlightened? people is apparently that it is a waste of time worrying about the beneficent Gods – but it's very important to get on the right side of the bad ones. Very sound too!

No doubt this is what our able politicians have in mind – Montague & Co. - when they say that the Indian is now sufficiently advanced to assume the government of India. The Indian, taken as a whole, is not fit to govern a haddock, so far as I have seen.

In each corner there are deep relief carvings showing scenes in Siva's life, of his wife the Goddess Parvati, and of their son Ganesh or Ganpatty, the elephant-headed god of wisdom. There are two square shrines which each contain Siva's emblem or "lingam" (the male organ). This is the chief object of veneration. Siva has a third eye, in his forehead – the Eye of Knowledge. This is one day to break forth in flames and destroy the earth. Hence his title, the Destroyer. Another carving shows Siva as Bhairava ('Horror') conducting a human sacrifice. He has 8 arms for this purpose, only 3 remain intact. One wields the sword, another rings the bell, and the third holds the bowl to catch the blood. Siva was a jolly old God when he liked, though, for in another carving he is dancing the Tandava. Although called the Destroyer, his name, Siva signifies "he of whom growth, increase and prosperity is."

Both of the side courts are open to the sky and still better lighted. There is, however, nothing extraordinarily striking about them – but in the western one is a pool of clear spring water, said to be good for drinking tho' there are monster frogs in it. I had some, to please my guide, but very little. They regard it as sacred, and have a tradition that the Ganges flows through it one night in February each year. This wants believing, in my opinion, as the Ganges is over 1000 miles away.

However Elephanta was well worth the visit, and the trip there and back was worth it, too. And I only expended 9 annas in "bucksheesh", so with the launch free this was easily my cheapest trip. I ate the best meal at tiffin that

I have eaten in Bombay.

Thursday 14th September 1922

Went to see Robert Courtneidge's Company the other night in "The Man from Toronto" - most excellently acted. Quite the best show I have seen since I left London.

This morning said goodbye to my friend Commander Beatty, the D.M.T.O., and saw to my packing up. Also verified that my cabin on the "Varela" is booked. The boat sails tomorrow at 2 p.m. and as the Monsoon now appears to be over I am anticipating a better passage back to Iraq than I had coming here.

All the afternoon wrote and made up all arrears in my correspondence, went out for a little walk in the evening and to bed tired and glad to think I leave Bombay tomorrow. I shall like it much better when I come back in November – on my way home!

Friday 15th September 1922

Up in the morning early and all my things packed for I'm glad to be getting away. So after breakfast paid my bills, said goodbye to the Majestic and by gharry to the Victoria Docks. On shore the usual crowd of all colours, preparing to go aboard the "Varela", but there was no reason why I should hang about so I went straight on board with my belongings and got fixed up in my cabin.

After watching for some time the gangs coaling a ship lying alongside I came back to my cabin and bumped straight into Donald, Robinson, Byfield and some other fellows of the R.A.F. Audit Staff who are on their way out to Mesopotamia to relieve us. The three I have mentioned are all old War Office men who transferred to the Air Ministry during the war.

Tiffin at 1 o'clock and at 2 o'clock we weighed anchor and moved out – a strong wind blowing.

Saturday 16th September 1922

Soon after we had got out of the harbour yesterday and entered the Arabian Sea, it became evident that although we are only in the fag-end of the monsoon, yet the monsoon swell was in full swing, and our boat was soon rolling from side to side as badly as when I came over at the end of June. At 4 o'clock I gave it best and came down to my cabin. It's no use trying to

stick it out, I only feel sick and ill, and it's clear to me that I shall never be able to overcome this seasickness. So long as I am lying down I am alright, and I can take all my meals and keep cheerful and keep them, too. This ship is a notorious roller, being top-heavy and having very little cargo and a low draught. The least side wind starts her rolling, and I suggest she should be re-christened the "Varola". The "Vasna" is not so bad, not having such a heavy top deck, but the "Vita" and "Varsova" are the same.

Sunday 17th September 1922

We entered Karachi Harbour this morning at 2 a.m., very glad to get a short rest from the rolling. Here it is quite calm. As soon as day broke dhows came sailing alongside bringing fresh passengers and taking away those whose destination was Karachi. Most of our passengers (3rd Class) are Mohammedan pilgrims going to the holy cities of Kerbela and Nejef in Mesopotamia.

We took on a lot of cargo and also 2-300 men of the 14th Sikhs and fervently prayed that these might steady the ship. Sir John Salmond, the Air-Vice-Marshal, who is taking over command in Mesopotamia from 1.10.22 also came aboard, but the sea gave no consideration even to so great a man, and as soon as we were out of the harbour again – 1 o'clock – we were rolling merrily as ever. So down to my cabin again, where I feel alright except for a slight discomfort in my tummy.

Monday and Tuesday 18th & 19th September 1922

All day Monday in my berth, and feeling quite fit again by the evening, for we are now in the Gulf of Oman, and the swell has practically disappeared. Had a jolly good dinner Monday night and on Tuesday morning up with the lark (or whatever it is takes its place at sea) and had a good bath and proceeded to adorn the deck.

We are still in the Gulf of Oman, and in the morning came across a big school of porpoises which kept alongside the ship for some time to the great delight of the Indian troops aboard. The porpoises were in great form, stretching out in a long line for perhaps a mile, and leaping out of the water occasionally as much as 10 feet high, coming down with a bang onto the water, each bang cheered heartily by the Sikhs. This was their first sea voyage and they were enjoying it heartily, now that the ship had stopped rolling.

Wednesday 20th September 1922

We passed through the Straits of Ormuz yesterday about noon, and got our first glimpse of the Arabian Coast, sterile and scorched. The name of the particular strait ships generally choose – between the mainland and three small islands on one of which is a lighthouse - is, translated, "Gates of Hell", a not inappropriate name for the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia if heat is any criterion.

We can see the Persian Coast most of the time, bare and forbidding, tho' here and there the map shows names of towns, which one cannot see. At 6 p.m. We came in sight of Bushire, supposed to be a port, but we, who only draft 16ft., have to anchor 7 miles out, while even small steamers like the "Banala" can get no further than 3 miles in. We maintain a regiment of Indian Infantry here and a big ammunition dump.

Thursday 21st September 1922

This morning at 8 a.m. We crossed the "Bar" or mud-bank which lies right across the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab. On a little platform at the side of the ship a lascar sings out the depth as we progress – 20 feet it is, and we draw 17 ft. The Braemar Castle which is bringing out R.A.F. Personnel from England and due to arrive at Basrah on 9th October, will have to transfer all her passengers and freight outside the Bar into a ship of lesser draught. Another bloomer by the people in London – Air Ministry, I suppose.

We pass Fao, near the mouth, where the cable from India lands, and steam on until we come to the reservoirs and chimneys of Abadan the A.P.O.C. Depot. There were 6 big oil-tankers lying in the river, awaiting their load of oil for London. What a tremendous concern this has grown to! Here we dropped three passengers – a man and his wife and little girl of 4 – Scotch people.

On through the interminable date-gardens which fringe the river each side until we reach Mohammuah at 12 noon.

At the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab and in many places on the way to Mohammuah were flocks of pelicans sitting on the water, generally herded close together like flocks of sheep. If we passed near enough one would fly up, and immediately the rest would start up and follow him – just like sheep. And just like sheep they would all settle when one settled. One flock we started up must have consisted of 300 I should say. They are quite graceful flyers though they only skim the surface of the water – rarely more than a foot above it – and as they fly they open out into long lines, each bird exactly

the same distance from the next, - no regiment could do it better. They look silly birds, but by the way they fly and keep together there is evidently some kind of organisation among them.

All along the right bank of the river right up to Basrah were stacked boxes of dates, awaiting shipment – tens of thousands of them each containing 70lbs. These are the dates sold by the lb. in England. Here they cost 15/- per cwt. The date harvest is practically over – not many remain to be gathered in Basrah District and is said to have been a good one.

We arrived at Magil Wharf at about 4.30, but it always takes some time to disembark. I met Laverock, and he at once asked me to be his guest at H.Q. Basrah District. So after having seen my cabin companion (a Frenchman named Chatamain who is travelling to Teheran) safely through the customs and into a taxi for Ashar, I went to Makina and arrived just in time for a bath and dinner. I'm glad to be on shore again.

Friday 22nd September 1922

All the way up the Persian Gulf and the Shatt-el-Arab we had a head wind. This was nice and cool in the Gulf, but it turned into a hot wind in the Shatt, and on land it remains a hot wind – the "date-ripeners" which blows until the end of September. The temperature today is 110deg.

Found all my letters awaiting me at H.Q. Office and had a joyous hour reading them. Also a letter from Mr. Toplis telling me to go up to Baghdad as soon as possible. I shall go up Sunday night by express train.

Also found plenty to occupy myself for the next two days. Busy the whole morning at the Office.

In the afternoon slept and after tea walked to the Combined Base Depot and back. Found all the Air Force Audit Staff gone up to Baghdad except Byfield. Very glad I don't have to live at the C.B.D.

Saturday 23rd September 1922

In the morning by car to the Hospital landing stage and then by motor boat to Tanormah to see Colonel Ward, the Port Director. I had previously seen him on Thursday evening on the "Varela", and talked things over with him. We now had over an hour's interesting full-dress discussion with him and other Port Officials regarding the proposal to appoint marine Transport Officers and Staffs at Bombay and Basrah. I think I ought to be able to get

that turned down and so save old England a little more money.

Stayed nearly an hour longer (11 – 12 noon) and had tea and biscuits with Mrs Ward, who was very nice.

After tea walked over to the Garrison Adjutants and found Padre Jacques who is feeling very bucked at the idea of going home on the "Braemar Castle". Met several other people, including Burgess, the Base Cashier.

Sunday 24th September 1922

Jacques called for me this morning at quarter to 6! But I was ready, having been awakened by my servant at 5.15, so off we went to the Ashar Church, where Jacques held the Communion Service. Mrs Ward was there.

J. ran me back in his car and all during the morning I worked, writing out the results of my investigations of the past two days.

To tiffin with Jacques and the Principal Chaplain, who is down here on a day's visit. Jacques is to go home on the Braemar Castle and I have asked him to call at Meadview.

Early dinner and then after saying goodbye to the H.Q.-ites, to the station in plenty of time for the train, which leaves at 9.15p.m. I am travelling up to Baghdad with the P.C. and Colonel Carly, the Chief Engineer.

Monday 25th September 1922

I have often used several pages of my Journal to describe a day's railway ride in India, but in Mespot I think one page is sufficient. The "express" had made good progress during the night and by the time we had finished breakfast we had reached Samawah. Here I met Tucker, going down to Basrah.

The scrub and camel-thorn which grows on the desert is beginning to turn brown and flocks have, to a great extent disappeared to the mountains in the East where grass is. There is just the "limitless desert" with its solitudes broken only by a canal here and there; and there habitations and green things are. We crossed the Euphrates three times, twice near Samawah – at one the river was dry right across and once near Hillah at Jubariyah. Very pretty here. Arrived at Baghdad at 7.30 – ten minutes before time, having taken 22 ¼ hours only.

Tuesday 26th September 1922

Rice met me last night at Baghdad West Station and having arrived at the Mess found all the members waiting to greet me. Had a great reception and after dinner sang several of the old songs – by request.

This morning back to the Office and after nearly the whole morning spent greeting all my old friends tried to settle down to work, with poor results. I have unfortunately got a sore throat and the touch of tonsillitis in fact, and it gives me a lot of trouble. I ought not to have sung last night.

In the afternoon went out with Rice for a walk round the Bazaars. Ordered one or two silver things. Baghdad is just as squalid and dirty as ever and yet its heat is quite as bearable as the Indian heat, being so much drier altho' 20 or more degrees above Mesopot. Heat is not so bad.

Wednesday 27th September 1922

Today Mr. Toplis received a wire from the W.O. Telling him that he must stay until the last. I mustn't build too much on this but it may mean that I may get away in November.

In the afternoon with Topsy, Thomas and Barkham up to the Golf Club and played a four ball match. It gets dark very soon after 6 o'clock now and we played only 12 holes – of which I won 5. I played badly at first being unused to the hard course, but pulled up afterwards. The course is entirely different to Poona and strikes me as very easy.

Our guest night in the evening I would not sing owing to my sore throat, but we got a lot of fun out of some parlour tricks. Very cheery these old guest nights are. I like them.

Thursday 28th September 1922

The temperature these days at Baghdad is delightful – maximum about 100 deg. minimum about 60 deg. with humidity of 23%. If this goes on one will soon have to put on warmer things! Every day the brilliant sun and blue sky, not a cloud to mar the scene. It's a pity it's so dusty. Several new buildings have gone up since I left Baghdad last 2nd June, which have improved the place a bit, but it will be many years before New Street ceases to be a reproach.

In the afternoon Rice had the Bilkerts to tea (and me) – a sort of farewell

tea, as they are off to Basrah tomorrow. We played badminton afterwards. Quite a good game.

After dinner Heaton and I went up to the Maude Hotel, but found my friend Chabanian had gone.

Friday 29th September 1922

If it weren't for the dust the climate these days would be delightful. There is only the one metalled road in Baghdad and that is kept well watered. The other roads are just earth roads and seem to be watered less this year than ever (I suppose the City authorities are short of funds) Consequently they get ankle deep in dust almost. All animal traffic into Baghdad is sent along the road past "C" Mess and in the morning one can hardly see across the road for dust sometimes.

In the afternoon went with Rice into the Bazaar, but it was very dusty and so many of the shops were shut (it being the Mahommedan Sunday)) that it wasn't very enjoyable. Bought a hand – printed table cover for Rs.7

Saturday 30th September 1922

Today is the last day of the Army regime in Mesopotamia – tomorrow the military administration of Mespot, or Iraq as we ought to call it, is taken over by the R..F. I am sure nothing has happened during the past two years that has caused more talk and discussion than the cancellation of the voyage of the "Braemar Castle" to Basrah, and its diversion to Constantinople.

"Noah's Ark" she was called, and she was taking away the Army administration who were replaced by the R.A.F. Now everyone has to wait until she turns up, I expect, which cannot be until mid-November. This may put us all back, perhaps, for a few weeks.

Mr Toplis told me today that in the revised list of dates he had put me down for 5th November (and himself too) but I'm afraid we shall not get away until after that.