

Letter dated January 29th 1925, from Baghdad.

Practically nothing has happened during this last week worth telling you about. The weather remains very bright and extremely cold -- 14 degrees of frost most days. Work progresses satisfactorily and easily, and my general circumstances at the moment are conducive to considerable contentment of mind. Did I tell you that I have now moved out of No. 2 Mess, to No. 10 Mess, just outside the East Gate of Baghdad? It is a very small cosy mess, whereas No. 2 was very large and formal, and I have in my new quarters the companionship of J-S., and the remainder of my new Mess-mates are also friendly and congenial. So that's all right.

Colonel D. chief of the Intelligence here, has gone on six months' leave to England, and it is rumoured almost for certain that he will not return. He was a clever but peculiar personality, and his attitude to the Air Force was by no means sympathetic, I think, so possibly to the few Air Force officers in the Intelligence Branch, his absence will not necessarily be a disaster!

It is strange what unexpected antagonisms one meets with in all official life! I found a good deal that was difficult and discouraging when I first arrived here, but all is shaping much more satisfactorily now. So that's all right too!

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Letter dated March 9th. 1925, from Baghdad.

With us the hot season has officially started. A week ago we were suddenly ordered into tropical kit and sun helmets - quite oblivious of the fact that the weather was not in any way tropical and the temperature not much over freezing point in the evenings ! However I had no such kit in my possession and had to have it made. I am wearing it today for the first time; curiously enough in conjunction with a very thick shirt and gum boots. Last night it blew and rained and thundered, and today the good old Baghdad mud is again triumphant everywhere ! Actually the weather is warmer than last week, so I have missed the chilliness of the first change into thin kit. But how ridiculous to have to exist in conditions where one may not even feel cold or hot except by special permission through the correct channels !!

The only item of news this week is the attack on the Baghdad-Beyrout motor convoy. It was ambushed by tribesmen who looted the convoy and killed poor little Madame M., the wife of the French Vice-Consul. I did not know the lady personally, but have often seen her. A shocking affair; particulars of which are few at present. The M's had their small child with them, but as far as the news goes at present, the kiddy does not seem to have been hurt. People

get so accustomed to these queer natives out here, that they are inclined to forget how very wild and primitive they really are. In some ways I think it is surprising that the two motor routes have been so little interfered with. The tribes concerned will have to be taught a severe lesson -- more killing and mutilating, I suppose that means; bombs, machine-guns, etc., upon their encampments. There must be terrible suffering after these raids on desert tribes, but it is absolutely the only means of authority they seem to understand.

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Letter dated March 16th., 1925, from Baghdad.

J. is due back this afternoon from tour. He has been away nearly three weeks, having had a good deal of bad luck, and finally being held up for a week at a remote spot by floods and heavy rain! He has had to leave the cars behind, and is arriving today by civilian river steamer. We have been having high floods during this last week. Usually there is a wide space of river bank between our house and the water, but the floods rose over this and about six feet up the wall which acts as a kind of foundation and buttress for the building. At one period the water was

almost level with our lower balconies ! As a part of the house juts right out, one side took the full force of the stream, and we hoped the foundations were nice and solid ! It seemed likely that the floods of two years ago were about to repeat themselves and the Maude Bridge was reported to be about to break away, but the water suddenly went down and all was well. They expect even higher floods next month, however.

7.30 p.m. J. has arrived back all right, and we are just off on our way to dine together.

Letter dated April 6th. 1925. from Baghdad.

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I remain fit, very fit, except for the unfortunate fact that I have developed a Baghdad boil ! This has made its appearance on the upper lobe of my right ear. These boils usually come only singly, and are not dangerous in any sort of way, though most disagreeable to look upon !! Fortunately this is tucked away where it hardly shows at all. "Baghdad boils" are most prevalent just now, and many are suffering from them. Some people have them on the cheek, and two poor ladies I know have them on the nose, leading to results which for the time being are truly shocking. So I must be thankful that mine is of so comparatively inconspicuous a kind. They last as a rule about eight months, but they never return and leave no permanent scar, and are of no particular harm, except for their unsightliness at the time.

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Baghdad, May 25th., 1925.

J. and I returned from a little "farewell" week-end expedition last evening, having started off on Friday afternoon. We hired a little motor-launch, with an Arab crew of two, and set off with books, and lots of nice cool drinks and pleasant simple food. Our kit was of the simplest, but mattresses and a valise provided comfortable sleeping gear. However the weather was not kind at first and we left Baghdad in a sandstorm! Proceeding leisurely up stream — after brief excitements in tackling Baghdad's two very low bridges, one of which tried to carry off our roof! — we halted for the first night just beyond Khademain. A sultry stillness followed the sandstorm, and when we lighted lanterns and the stove to cook our supper, we were assailed by unbelievable masses of flies and midges, tiresome and tickly! We decided to put out the lamps before eating, so as not to notice the multitude of boiled midges which formed a covering to it. And we then were able to enjoy our excellent meal! "What the eye does not see "!!

We soon climbed on to the roof of the launch for the night, and rolled into our blankets. But alas, almost at once arose a hurricane, and most successfully unrolled us! It was a really furious gale, and it seemed at first that

all our clothes and blankets would be whirled away. However we were cunning and eventually devised means of securing our kit and even sleeping, though the storm howled and whirled all night, making funny noises in the palm trees, and rousing the river into quite a good imitation of the Atlantic on a stormy night ! And it was such a cold wind - amazing for the end of May.

Next day, however, all was well, with glorious sunshine and a pleasant breeze. We really had an ideal time, lying on the roof of the launch reading our books, or watching the scenes we passed through. The river is broad, though sometimes shallow, with interesting islands. We passed successively through Baghdad city, past the deep palm-groves of Khazimain, with its gold-domed mosque gleaming above them, then through the pleasant suburb of Muadham, where many wealthy natives have their residences, and thence into the open country. All the way — some thirty miles northwards — there were interesting things to see, and the banks were green with palms, and with many groves of other trees; whenever we liked we stopped to explore, and we spent much time bathing, especially on a quaint and spacious island, covered with birds, and cupping numerous pools of clear water, of delightful temperature for swimming. Also in one little bay we found some curious soft mud. We

first discovered this by slipping accidentally into it, but found it so soft and warm and soothing, that we stayed there, and sat in it almost up to our necks for quite a while. It was much of the consistency of the mud as advertised by London "beauty specialists" and certainly it had a most cleansing effect on the skin. Of course clothes were used to a minimum degree throughout the trip. In our more dressy moments we wore a pair of shorts, and added a shirt for the fashionable area of Baghdad.