

Letter dated 18th November, 1925. from Ramadi.

I had intended a somewhat long and descriptive letter this mail - but alas I fear this cannot be. As a matter of fact my comparatively settled contentment has been a little severely shaken by a telegram only just received - a very unexpected one - announcing my transfer to Diwaniyah ! I am off to Baghdad tomorrow, thence to Diwaniyah to take over from M. After that I return to Ramadi to hand over my own job to D., and then I proceed permanently to Diwaniyah. As I had been given to understand that I should not be moved, I am a little disturbed and exasperated. With the full knowledge of the "authorities" I have just made all my arrangements for moving into a better house here, more suited to the entertainment of Irâqui officials and Shaikhs, for which I have personally purchased a good deal of furniture, and also have just completed transactions for the purchase of a new horse. So there seems again to be evident a certain unnecessary lack of consideration in high places ! But most of all I am sorry to leave because I seem only just to have gained a sound knowledge of personalities and places in my present area. I am on good terms with everyone - which has taken a good deal of doing - and

am at last on a satisfactory basis to make myself possibly of a little real service in this district. Now I shall have to relearn a completely new, and totally different type of district. Apparently the Colonel considers Diwaniyah important. But under the circumstances I feel I could be of far more use here. Just about the time I shall begin to understand Diwaniyah I shall be due for home-leave - and certainly don't intend to forfeit that !

No, I don't like Diwaniyah much ! However as a matter of fact the move may prove quite interesting, and will help to make time pass. And perhaps my successor will buy my furniture etc., here.

My servants all clamour to go with me ! Despite the fact that they are Sunnis and Diwaniyah is a bigoted Shi'a town ! I think I shall take them.

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P.S. My recent visit to Baghdad has passed most agreeably, everyone being surprisingly kind to me, both officially and unofficially. I spent two nights with L. in No.2. Mess, one night with a fellow in No.8. Squadron, and one

with a fellow in No.45. Squadron. So I spread my visit widely ! And everywhere people were most refreshingly kind - one of those visits, in fact, from which one returns with a sort of comfortable glow inside -- not all an alcoholic glow either !

And, after all, perhaps this move is really unavoidable, and not mere lack of consideration ! We won't form judgments too soon !

Letter dated 2nd December, 1925. from Baghdad.

Since writing, I have been up to the frontier at al Qaim, returned for one day to Ramadi to make up my monthly accounts and write up a report, then today have proceeded to Baghdad where I now am. On Sunday I proceed up to Shergat with a view to starting on a month's tour through the Jazirah desert. We were to have started tomorrow, but plans have been altered. I am not sorry to have this breathing space, except that I have arrived equipped for the desert and not for the alleged "refinements" of Baghdad, so that my wardrobe is scanty, and also I have all my "savages" to arrange for - two wild and woolly tribesmen who are to be my guides - and Mullah Muhammad who is an Arab on my "staff" who generally travels with me on desert shows. He is a relation of one of the Anizah shaikhs, and is useful and rather picturesque, also intelligent.

Prior to this recent tour to al Qaim, I had, as you know, visited Diwaniyah, proceeding by car to Baghdad, and by air to Diwaniyah. There I stayed three days, taking over from M., and thence by train to Baghdad, where again I stayed, this time two days. As all messes were full I lodged at the Carlton Hotel, a new and quite comfortable

hotel which has risen in its civilized pretentiousness upon the original site of the quaint and primitive Maude Hotel. Then there were no French chefs, no hot and cold water bathrooms, and there were no "modern conveniences" with real chains and the sound of many waters - but it was a very friendly, cheery spot, with which many memories are connected. B. J., and I often went to dine there, or to meet for a chat. It all seems a long time ago.

On this next desert expedition I shall have armoured cars with me - two I think - and my S.S.O.'s party; as well as the "savages" there will be Lt. D. a very nice R.E. bloke, and D. who has newly arrived from the School of Oriental Languages, and is "under instruction" as an S.S.O. In all, combined with the Armoured cars, we shall be a most cheery party. I am thoroughly enjoying all my work, though it certainly has been a bit of a rush!

Letter dated 15th December, 1925. from Tikrit R.S.

Arrived here today from Rawah, on the second crossing of the Jazirah desert by my little expedition of Ford cars - two tourers and an "armed Ford". I had to leave the section of Armoured cars behind me at the first crossing of the Wadi Tharthar, where they became stranded ! My party proceeded on to Rawah (near Anah, and on left bank of Euphrates) via the ancient city of Hatra - a really wonderful ruined city, with a magnificent palace in its midst, by whose walls we camped for the night. It was quite an awe-inspiring place to camp in, and my lonely turn of duty as watch during part of the night was a strange experience of almost audible silences and strange far sounds that one seemed just unable to hear! And there was a vast assembly of curious shadows in the great halls and courtyards around us.

During the run from Hatra to Rawah we had an adventure when I rescued a shepherd from a party of Shammar raiders, who had trussed him up and very severely ill-used him. They were in the midst of looting his sheep and personal clothing when we appeared on the scene. With the three cars we rounded up all the raiders but two, and, by a generous display of revolvers and the machine gun,

forced them to restore the looted property. They were too numerous for our small party safely to detain for long, so I then marched them all away to a distance of sufficient miles to prevent their return to murder the shepherd before he had made good his escape to a neighbouring friendly encampment !

It was an entirely tribal affair, so it was not desirable for me to interfere in too great detail. We much bewildered the whole party by distributing food impartially both to raiders and raided ! The food they all ate ravenously, still covered by our revolvers !

From Rawah to Tikrit has been easy going on the whole. Last night we camped at a second crossing of the Wadi Tharthar - another very lonely spot - and decidedly chilly it was there too ! Another night we spent with a Shaikh of the Jagharfat tribe - a very wild and woolly crowd, but most hospitable to us.

Tomorrow we hope to start on our third crossing of the Jazirah desert, with the intention of reaching Ramadi in a two days' run. All goes excellently well, and is being most interesting.

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Am writing by light of a dim lamp at this funny little station, in a hut that calls itself the "passengers' waiting shed".

A.H.Q. Christmas Eve.

Back temporarily from my wanderings, and proceed to Ramadi to spend Xmas. Another desert show of about two or three weeks' duration will start about New Year's Day, so shall not be "civilized" for long !

I expect to have quite a restful Xmas Day in my own wee house, and shall probably dine with Major and Mrs. W. who are now in Ramadi. He is the new A.I. and therefore my new "boss". We get on excellently so far.

I take over duties at Diwanayah as soon as the desert expeditions in the Jazirah are over.

DESERT VOICES.

'Tis said each arid wind gust often brings  
A wild enthralling melody of Desert Songs  
Guiding the Pathless Ones to virile springs,  
Haunting the Pools of Rahma on soft wings.

Of Life there is no subtle query then  
And all forgotten are the bonds of sheltered ways,  
Where Destiny welds no recording pen  
But sets his Record in the Eyes of Men !