

Letter dated June 8th., 1926, from Diwanayah. (M).

At last our little war is over ! and successfully too. We did not have to resort to bombing, so the schemers have been successfully frustrated ! But it was a very near thing, and we were all extremely busy keeping the matter in hand, and steering clear of all sorts of little traps laid out for us to fall in !

Sha'alon abu *ahon* the bad bold Shaikh I have mentioned before, did his utmost to make the trouble spread, and to frustrate all the endeavours of the Government to reach a peaceful settlement. However K., the A.I. here, is an extremely sound fellow, and eventually secured the personal and unconditional surrender of the occupants of the fort. I think they have now realized what silly young fools they have been, and how nearly led to disaster by listening to evil advice. It is extraordinary how complicated these tribal affairs can become, and how rapidly they can grow to importance from trivial beginnings. The fort has now been levelled to the ground, but there has been no loss of life, except during the actual tribal fighting, when the people in the fort used the hand bombs which they unexpectedly produced from somewhere or other !

K. and I have been working in very close co-operation

throughout, and have grown to like one another rather well in the process, I think ! He is a man who takes a lot of knowing, though we have always hit it off quite reasonably. Now we are busy watching the after effects of the "war" and the desires of certain people to create fresh ill-feeling from it. However, in the main it has left the tribes in a sound frame of mind — far better than promiscuous bombing would have done — though the presence of aeroplanes in the district had a most satisfactory effect. The aeroplanes, pilots, and necessary airmen have all left now, and I have my house to myself once more ! Rather a relief in some ways, though they were jolly nice fellows. I had fourteen extra people lodged with me for ten days !

This little "war" is the biggest of its kind that there has been for about two years. The last was out Dagharah way, but on that occasion heavy bombing had to take place.

.....Just now I seem to have written such a continuous flow of "reports" that I am quite fed up with the sight of paper, pens or pencil !!

I expect to visit Baghdad in a day or two. The Dagharah Target Map is finished, and seems to be considered successful, so thank goodness for that !

..... I do so love your letters these days -

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a cool refreshing breeze from nice fresh un-Arab people and places !

Letter dated June 21st., 1926, from Baghdad.

I have now been in Baghdad for just over a week, and return to Diwaniyah tomorrow morning. I have had nothing very special to detain me so long, but the Colonel seemed rather to favour the idea of my taking a rest — and I did not greatly object to this for a brief spell !

In spite, however, of the consideration shown by my "boss" in this matter, in a matter of much greater importance he maintained an attitude of infuriating indecision. In my interview with him in the long outstanding question of leave, he adopted a policy of exasperating half-statements, which really seems to me ~~an~~ extremely ungenerous ~~policy~~.

Another thing that annoyed me was a series of futile little criticisms by a new Squadron-Leader in "I" Branch on my maps and tribal lists — he sitting in his spacious office with electric fans and an iced drink at his side, quite forgetting that all my work had to be done at the end of long days riding across country in

the sun, with only an empty mud hut to work in by the light of a single hurricane-lamp -- the lamp seeming to attract a million different types of buzzing, biting, tickling insects, which cover one's papers and make themselves at home down one's neck or up one's sleeves ! In this, however, the Colonel is far more reasonable, and seems to understand one's difficulties, and to appreciate results. I have also had a word of praise from another source -- so all's well in the main.

I hope the Hachamah Fort "war" is now quite over. It was an important little show in a minor way, and revealed a lot of petty intrigue -- and not a little anti-British feeling. A report of mine was apparently forwarded by A.H.Q. to the High Commissioner together with the A.I.'s comments on it. The High Commissioner apparently decided favourably upon the general tendency of my report, despite the fact that it was somewhat opposed to the A.I.'s viewpoint ! and I believe I have achieved the reprimand of certain anti-British personages ! I cannot comprehend the attitude of protectiveness sometimes shown by British Civilian officials to obviously aggressive and Anti-British Irâquis ! I am of course inexperienced in the ways of this queer Government, and that's why those things

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anger me perhaps ! Often I believe it is actually impolitic to show up the faults of Irâqui officials, because there is no better material with which to replace them ! But that policy can be carried too far surely !

Incidentally no one has yet been punished for that revolting and most illegal torturing episode some months ago ! Odd, is not it !

I rather enjoyed the Harbamañ Fort affair ! - right from its first announcement, which was made to me while out riding on my mapping work at Dagharah. I suddenly espied two Arab horsemen galloping towards me at headlong speed, their cloaks trailing romantically in the wind. The Arab loves a spot of the dramatic, and these fellows charged up to me as though they were about to announce the outbreak of another "Great Revolt" ! However I guessed — and rightly — that it wasn't quite as urgent as all that, though it seemed sufficiently interesting to investigate at once. This I did, and this was the prelude to my visit to the Shaikhs in their long-contested fortress, etc., etc.

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I enclose a "returned letter" of mine, and a snap-shot

of Razouki feeling pleased with himself just after building up my staircase at Dagharah ! Also a second snap-shot of him in his negligé.

P.S. I still live in hopes of leave ! So much so that I have had two "lovely" new suits made ! Also I have got George a job as Government driver at M.T. Pool (to ensure that he won't be left stranded). Razouki will buy himself a Ford to run as a taxi. But not till I have actually left. Both intend to return to me after my leave, it seems.

DIARY.The Death of Miss Gertrude Bell.

Just before leaving Diwaniyah I heard from K. that Miss Gertrude Bell died suddenly three days ago. Since visiting Baghdad I have further details of this loss, more personal to the people of Irâq than is perhaps fully realized at present. Nevertheless already the funeral of this brave little Lady has been made the occasion of a demonstration of real significance, and it seems the people themselves do somewhat realize how valuable a champion they have lost. A great concourse lined the streets to the British Cemetery, in which were large numbers of women of all creeds, many of whom wailed and tore their clothing as the sad little procession passed by them.

And so has ended an exceptional and brilliant career — and though I am in no way qualified to speak of its merits, I somehow feel that this little spontaneous demonstration of affection from the people she loved, would be as valuable a reward as any to the Lady in whose great memory it has been offered.

I myself had been privileged to meet her only on a few

occasions, and found her always gracious and very interesting. As often happens towards the climax of an exceptional career, disappointment and the resultant unhappiness had, it seems, of late years touched this lady's life. Circumstances change, and people, especially in official and public departments are quick to forget, and the very enthusiasm which they most praise when their purpose is served by it, they most heartlessly belittle when their superficial interest has cooled, or they have no more to gain. They may even accord blame at length for the very individuality which enabled the successful accomplishment of purposes which only an exceptional character could attain to.

In pondering on this one cannot but think of another famous name -- that of Lawrence. I saw him once in the Hejaz, and again in Cairo. A charming personality he seemed -- but shy and youthful-looking, and unconventional. Now so many people seem to remember only that he is unusual -- some prefer the term eccentric -- and often people forget to mention the unusual -- eccentric if you prefer it -- services he performed for his country when his "eccentricity" was of undeniable value to us !

Letter dated June 28th., 1926., from Diwaniyah. (D).

Back in my "home" once more and glad to be back despite the fact that my surroundings are somewhat sultry these days — 110 to 115 most afternoons, and no fans or punkahs ! However I have made an arrangement with the Railway Canteen to supply me daily with ice, and also am having what you know, I think, as "kus-kus" tatties," and here are known as "agoubis" made for my windows, which will greatly add to my easefulness. I can't pretend that conditions in this heat are ideal, but I really think I am far less consciously distressed by climatic conditions than people in Baghdad, with their electric fans, iced drinks and shower baths always to hand ! They are many of them pathetically miserable — and certainly I don't as a rule find myself at all miserable !

Did I tell you of my young aviator friends during our local "war," who upon arrival in Diwaniyah and finding no fans or ice, immediately telegraphed to Baghdad for permission to establish a "heat-stroke station" here ! Their request was firmly and briefly refused, needless to say ! As a matter of fact there was an "ulterior motive" also in their request, as a heat-stroke station would of course have lots of ice,

in which bottles of beer as well as collapsed airman could conveniently repose !

The Colonel has said he does not wish me to be too energetic at present, and to cut down touring to a minimum ! This is reasonable, for following on the widespread floods, a most exceptional prevalence of fever has occurred. On return to my house I found my whole household stricken, and lying about looking most sorry for itself -- one worthy Arab "attendant" making an almost immediate request for assistance in compiling his will -- so cheerful of him, what ! The good man however did not expire and has already lost the "will," I think.

However the wretched people of this town and of the whole district are suffering severely. In front of my house is a boat bridge, across which corpses are carried with a cheerless persistency. Processions of dolefully chanting men and wailing women by no means tend to a "brighter Diwaniyah" ! Three wretched young women dumped their mother's corpse at my very gate yesterday afternoon, and wept consistently over it for about four hours on end ! Across the river pathetic little groups carry in their sick friends to the overflowing and ramshackle "hospital," and sit patiently

awaiting notice. Sometimes they show a touching care for their sick, whom they may have carried in for miles; others are amazingly callous. I myself am very fit -- and taking all the prescribed remedies against fever. I also had a full-sized enteric injection before leaving Baghdad! So that's all right. The fever period is however now nearly over, and the sickness is lessening daily. My poor young Razouki has been quite ill -- a temperature of 106 -- but is quite O.K. now. George has left me -- I had already got him a good job as a driver, at M.T. Pool, and although he wanted to stay, I would not let him chuck up the other job, which may lead to good employment later. A lonely Christian lad and his old mother can't afford to lose opportunities in this inhospitable land! I have an Indian servant in his place, who used to be with M., and he seems a good fellow. Razouki has decided to stay with me -- despite the fact that his future wife's relations tried to induce him to return to Ramadi -- even threatening to break off the "engagement," if he didn't! I did not know about this little squabble until after his decision to stay!

I can't pretend that the fact that my leave is almost certainly postponed is quite acceptable to me --

but the less said the sooner mended on such occasions. It would be nice to be civilized and normal for a bit ! There are moments when these people nauseate me. They are so crude, so devious, and in some things so bestial

And yet, when one is nauseated, one hopes that in a small way one is at least doing a bit for the prestige of our country. Thank goodness, the other two Britishers here are sound and decent fellows, against whom the Arabs can talk no beastly scandal. I don't mind a fellow having his own vices — provided he manages them decently, and does not let the whole of his nation down by parading them before the Arabs — and there are some unfortunate cases of that.

I continue to be busy — an interesting case again ! We are now suddenly presented with a large intrigue, being manoeuvred by the wealthiest tribal leader of the district — he has at least fifty thousand pounds in gold actually stored in his grounds. A dangerous man to be loose amongst a lot of greedy tribesmen ! We are very much occupied frustrating his plans, which are very cunningly devised as a rule. It's all rather fun ! This man's brother paid me a

"friendly" call yesterday afternoon, and stayed chatting for an hour. Am awfully interested in the newspapers you have sent me. Thank God that one can still be proud of one's own country. The story of the strike is amazing — it gives one quite a choky sensation to think of what might have happened and the ~~****~~ good-heartedness with which it was frustrated.

I believe at any moment I may be sent on a long tour to Mosul ! The Colonel seems anxious to get me out of the "fever" area, which is both reasonable and considerate, is not it !

P.S. I will write a detailed comment on Bob's most interesting land propositions later on. Land in Africa is an acquisition well worth considering. Major D. (the head engineer on this section of the railway) and his wife own a thousand pounds-worth of land there, and are enthusiastic. They are charming and by no means well off and are a reasonable pair, not liable to take risks, I think. They hope to retire there with their son in a year or two. They went to see the land before purchasing.