

LAWRENCE
AND THE ARABS

ROBERT GRAVES



LAWRENCE AND THE ARABS



PRESENTED

TO

**THE CORPS OF ROYAL
NEW ZEALAND ENGINEERS**

by

..Mr B. A. Norman.

on

.....April 1975.....

Received by the Corps Curator

ECMAC 8804

FLORIN BOOKS

*A list of other books issued uniform
in size and price with this volume
will be found at the end of the book.*

LAWRENCE AND THE ARABS

By
ROBERT GRAVES

Author of
Good-bye to All That



[CONCISE EDITION]

LONDON
JONATHAN CAPE 30 BEDFORD SQUARE
AND AT TORONTO

FIRST PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 1927
REPRINTED NOVEMBER 1927
REPRINTED NOVEMBER 1927
REPRINTED DECEMBER 1927
RE-ISSUED IN *Florin Books* (Concise Edition) 1934
REPRINTED APRIL 1934

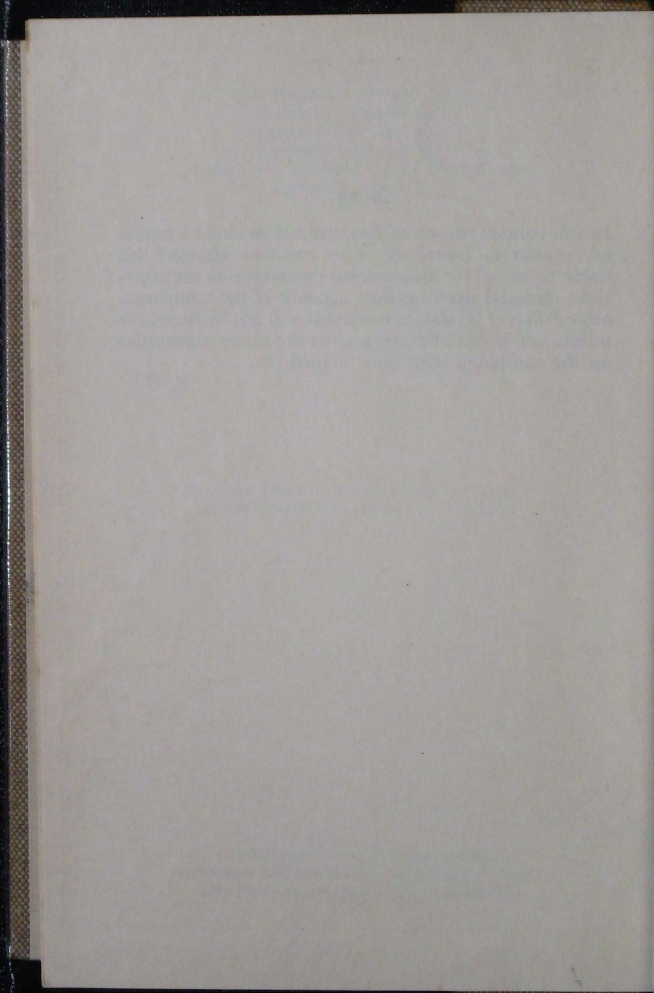
JONATHAN CAPE LTD. 30 BEDFORD SQUARE LONDON
AND 91 WELLINGTON STREET WEST, TORONTO

PRINTED AND BOUND IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY BUTLER AND TANNER LTD., FROME AND LONDON
PAPER SUPPLIED BY SPALDING AND HODGE LTD.

Note

IN this concise edition of *Lawrence and the Arabs* I repeat my thanks to Lawrence (who has now changed his name to Shaw) for his generous permission to use copyright material from his own account of the campaign, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, a book that will not be issued for public sale in his lifetime: and to the many authorities on the campaign who have helped me.

R. G.

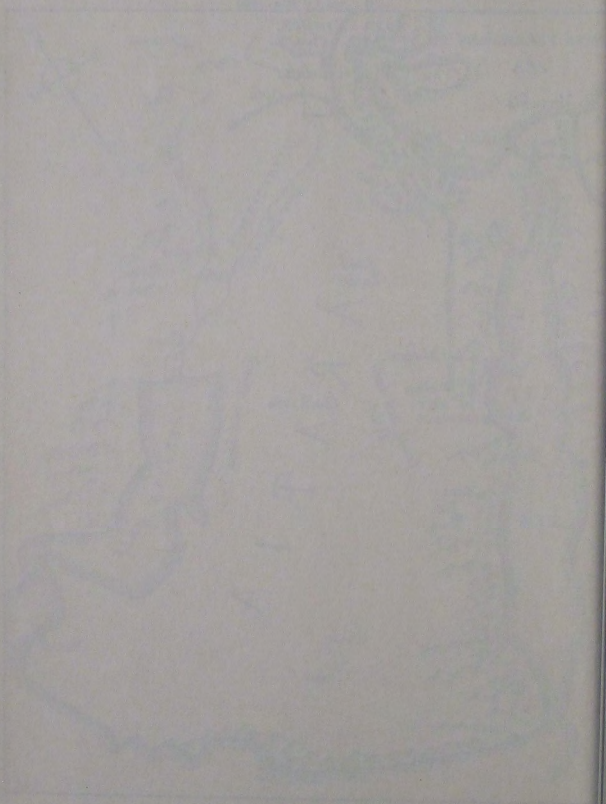


THE ARAB AREA

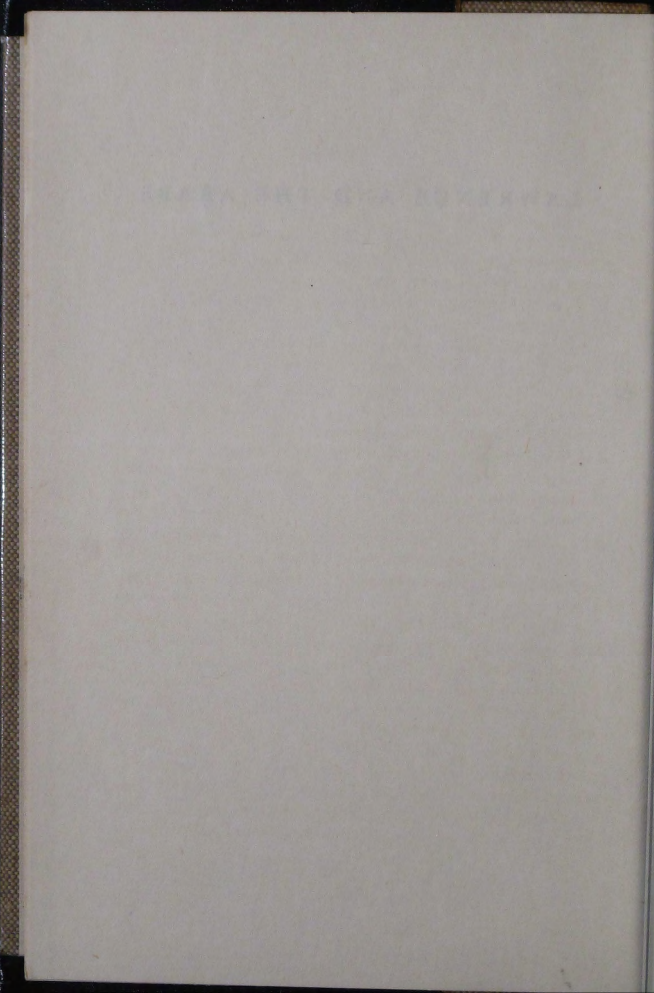
Miles
0 100 200 300



THE ARAB AREA



LAWRENCE AND THE ARABS



Chapter I

AFTER the first exciting days of Mohammedan conquest, when the Arabs overran half the known world, their huge new empire had to be knit together. They had no ruling power themselves and had to rely on the non-Semitic peoples whom they had conquered to provide a system of government. This was the opportunity of the Turks, late converts to Mohammedanism, whose chief virtue was the soldierly one of united action against their neighbours. They were first the servants, then the helpers, then the rulers of the Arab races. Finally they became tyrants and burned and destroyed everything that annoyed their soldier-minds by its beauty or superiority. They robbed the Arabs of their richest possessions and gave them nothing in return. They were not even great road-makers and bridge-builders and marsh-drainers. They neglected public works and were the enemies of art, literature and ideas. They gradually banished the Arabic language from courts, offices, the Government service and superior schools. Arabs might only serve the State, now a mere Turkish Empire, by becoming imitation Turks.

There was everywhere great resistance to this tyranny. Many revolts took place in Syria, Mesopotamia and Arabia; but the Turks were too strong. The Arabs lost their racial pride and all their proud traditions. But of one thing they could not be robbed, the Koran, the sacred book of all Mohammedans, to study which was every man's first religious duty, whether Arab or Turk. Not only was the Koran the foundation of the legal

system used throughout the Arabic-speaking world, except where the Turks had lately imposed their more Western code, but it was the finest example of Arabic literature. In reading the Koran every Arab had a standard by which to judge the dull minds of his Turkish masters. And the Arabs did succeed in keeping their rich and flexible language, and actually in filling the crude Turkish with Arabic words.

The last Sultan of Turkey, Abdul Hamid, who reigned during the first few years of this century, went even further than those before him. He was jealous of the power of the Arab Grand Sherif of Mecca, who was the head of the priestly family of sherifs (or men descended from the prophet Mohammed) and ruled with great honour in the Holy City. Previous Turkish Sultans finding the Sherif of Mecca too strong to be destroyed had saved their own dignity by solemnly confirming in power whatever Sherif was elected by his family, which numbered about two thousand persons. But Abdul Hamid, who, for autocratic reasons, laid new stress on his inherited title of Caliph or Ruler of the Faithful (the orthodox Mohammedans), wanted the Holy Cities to be under his direct rule; until now he had been safely able to garrison them with soldiers only by means of the Suez Canal. He decided to build the pilgrims' railway and to increase Turkish influence among the tribes of Arabia by money, intrigue, and armed expeditions. Finally, not content with interfering with the Sherif's rule even in Mecca itself, he even took away important members of the Prophet's family to Constantinople, as hostages for the good behaviour of the rest.

Among these captives were Hussein, the future Sherif, and his four sons, Ali, Abdulla, Feisal and Zeid, who are important in this story. Hussein gave his sons a modern education at Constantinople and the experi-

ence which afterwards helped them as leaders of the Arab revolt against the Turks. But he also kept them good Mohammedans and when he returned to Mecca took good care to cure them of any Western softness. He sent them out into the desert in command of the Sherifian troops that guarded the pilgrim road between Medina and Mecca, and kept them there for months at a time.

Four years before the War, Abdul Hamid was deposed by a political party known as the Young Turks. The Young Turks believed in Western political ideas learned from the American schools founded in Turkey, and in military methods learned from their advisers, the Germans; but French culture and government gave them their clearest model to imitate. They objected to Abdul Hamid's idea of a religious empire ruled by a Sultan who was both head of the State and spiritual ruler. They favoured the Western idea of a military state - Turkey - ruling its subject races merely by the sword, with religion a matter of less importance. As part of this policy they sent Hussein and his family back to Mecca. This nationalist movement in Turkey was really one of self-protection. Already Western ideas about the rights of subject races to govern themselves had begun to crumble up the Turkish Empire.

After their first success against the Sultan the Young Turks began to behave foolishly. They preached 'Turkish brotherhood'; meaning no more than to rally together all men of Turkish blood. Turkey should be the absolute mistress of a subject empire in the modern French style; not merely the chief state of a religious Empire only bound together by the Arabic language and the Koran. They also hoped to get back into their state the Turkish population which was at the time under Russian rule in Central Asia. But the subject races, who far outnumbered the Turks, did not under-

stand this. Seeing that the Turks even in their own country were dependent on Greeks, Albanians, Bulgarians, Persians and others for the running of all their government offices and doing all their business except the simple military part, they thought that the Young Turks meant to have an Empire something like the white part of the British Empire, one in which Turkey was to be the head of a number of free states, self-governed but contributing to the general expenses of the Empire. The Young Turks saw their mistake and immediately made their intentions quite plain. Led by Enver, the son of the late Sultan's chief furniture-maker, and a soldier-politician who had worked his way up, it was said, by murdering in turn every superior officer who stood in his way, they stopped at nothing. The Armenians began to take up arms for freedom. The Turks crushed them – the Armenian leaders failed their followers – and massacred men, women and children in hundreds of thousands. They massacred them not because they were Christians but because they were Armenians and wanted to be independent. The Syrian Arabs, since they were nearest to Europe, first caught fire, and the Young Turks took what measures they dared to take short of massacre. The Arab members of the Turkish Congress were scattered, Arab political societies were suppressed. The public use of the Arabic language except for strictly religious purposes was forbidden all over the Empire. Any talk of Arab self-government was a punishable offence. As a result of this oppression, secret societies sprang up of a more violently revolutionary kind. One of these, the Syrian society, was numerous, well organized, and kept its secret so well that the Turks, though they had suspicions, could not find any clear evidence of its leaders or membership, and without evidence dared not begin another reign of terror of the Armenian kind for fear of

European opinion. Another society was composed almost entirely of Arab officers serving in the Turkish army, who were sworn to turn against their masters as soon as a chance offered. This society was founded in Mesopotamia and was so fanatically pro-Arab that its leaders would not even have dealings with the English, French and Russians, who might otherwise have been their allies, because they did not believe that if they accepted European help they would be allowed to keep any freedom that they might win. They preferred a single bad tyranny which they knew well to a possible new tyranny of several nations whom they did not know so well; and at the end of the War members of the society were still commanding Turkish divisions against the English. The Syrian society, however, looked for help to England, to Egypt, to the Sherif of Mecca, to anyone in fact who would do the Arabs' work for them.

These freedom societies grew until in 1914 the War broke out: then European opinion did not matter much and the Turks, with the power given them by the general mobilization of the Army, could act. Nearly one-third of the original Turkish Army was Arabic-speaking, and after the first few months of the War when they had recognized the danger the Turks took good care to send Arab regiments as far away as possible from their homes, to the northern battle fronts, and there put them into the firing line as quickly as possible. But before this, a few Syrian revolutionaries were found to have been appealing to France for help in their campaign for freedom, and here was an excuse for a reign of terror. Arab Mohammedans and Arab Christians were crowded into the same prisons, and by the end of 1915 the whole of Syria was united by a cause that suppression only made stronger.

Early in the same year the Young Turks were convinced by arguments and pressure from the part of their

German allies that in order to win their war, which was pressing them very hard, they must work up some religious enthusiasm, proclaim a Holy War. In spite of their former decision to give religion an unimportant position in the empire, Holy War was necessary for more than one reason; they wanted the support of the religious party in Turkey; they wanted their soldiers, now badly fed and badly equipped, to fight bravely in the confidence of going straight to Paradise if they were killed; and they also wanted to encourage Mohammedan soldiers in the French and British armies to throw down their arms. In India particularly, such a proclamation was expected to have an immense effect. The Holy War was therefore proclaimed at Constantinople, and the Sherif of Mecca was invited, or rather ordered, to confirm the proclamation.

If Hussein had done so the course of the War might have been very different. But he did not wish to take the step. He hated the Turks, whom he knew for bad Mohammedans without honour or good feelings, and he believed that a true Holy War could only be a defensive one, and this was clearly aggressive. Besides, Germany, a Christian ally, made a Holy War look absurd. He refused.

Hussein was shrewd, honourable and deeply pious. His position, however, was difficult. The yearly pilgrimage ended with the outbreak of war and with it went a great part of his revenues. As he was for the Allies an enemy subject, there was danger of their stopping the usual food-ships from India. And if he angered the Turks they might stop food from coming to him by the desert railway; and his own province could not grow food enough for its population. So having refused to proclaim the Holy War he begged the Allies not to starve his people out for what was not their fault. The Turks, in reply to his refusal, began a partial blockade

of Hussein's province by controlling the traffic on the railway. The British, on the other hand, allowed the food vessels to come as usual. This decided Hussein. He decided to revolt (as his neighbour Ibn Saud of the central oases had successfully done four or five years previously) and had a secret meeting with a party of British officers on a deserted reef on the Red Sea coast near Mecca. He was given assurance that England would give him what help he needed in guns and stores for his war. He had also just been secretly asked for his support by leaders of both secret societies, the Syrian and the Mesopotamian. A military mutiny was proposed in Syria. Hussein undertook to do his best for them. He therefore sent Feisal, his third son, to report to him from Syria what were the chances of a successful revolt.

Feisal, who had been a member of the Turkish Government and was therefore able to travel about freely, went and reported that prospects were good in Syria, but that the war in general was going against the Allies; the time was not yet. If, however, the Australian divisions then in Egypt were landed, as was expected, at Alexandretta in Syria, a military mutiny of the Arab divisions then stationed in Syria would certainly be successful. The Arabs could make a quick peace with the Turks, securing their freedom, and after this even if Germany won the world-war they might hold what they had won.

But he was not in touch with Allied politics. The French were afraid that if British forces were once landed in Syria, they would never leave it; and Syria was a country in which they were themselves interested. A joint French and British expedition would not have been so bad, but the French had no troops to spare. So, as it has been responsibly stated, the French Government put pressure on the British to cancel their arrange-

ments for the Alexandretta landing. After much delay the Australians were landed with numerous other British and Indian troops and a small French detachment to give an Allied colouring, not in Syria, but the other side of Asia Minor, at the Dardanelles. It was an attempt, nearly successful, to capture Constantinople and so end the eastern war at a blow. After the landing the English asked Hussein to begin his revolt; on Feisal's advice he replied that the Allies must first put a screen of troops between him and Constantinople; the English, however, were no longer able to find troops for a landing in Syria even with French consent.

Feisal went up to the Dardanelles to watch how things went. After several months the Turkish Army, though successful in holding its position, had been crippled by enormous losses. Feisal, seeing this, returned to Syria, thinking that the time was at last come for the mutiny, even without Allied help. But there he found that the Turks had broken up all the Arab divisions, sending them to the various distant war-fronts; and his Syrian revolutionary friends were all either under arrest or in hiding, and numbers had already been hanged on various political charges. He had lost his opportunity.

He wrote to his father to wait until England grew stronger and Turkey still weaker. Unfortunately England, quite apart from the difficulties of the *Entente*, was in a very bad position in the Near East, forced to withdraw from the Dardanelles after losses as heavy as the Turks had suffered. Bulgaria, too, had lately joined with the Turks and Germans, so that the French insisted on the Dardanelles troops being landed not at Alexandretta, even this time, as had been intended, but at Salonika. To make matters worse, a British Army was surrounded and starving in the town of Kut, on the Mesopotamian front. Feisal's own position grew very dangerous. He had to live at Damascus as the

guest of Jemal Pasha, the Turkish general in command of the forces in Syria, and being himself an officer in the Turkish Army had to swallow whatever insults the bullying Jemal threw at the Arabs in his drunken fits. Feisal had, moreover, been president of the secret freedom society in Syria before the War and was at the mercy of its members; if he was denounced by any of these – perhaps a condemned man might try to buy his life with the information – he was lost. So Feisal had to stay anxiously with Jemal at Damascus, and spent his time rubbing up his military knowledge. His elder brother Ali was now raising troops down in Arabia, giving as the excuse that he and Feisal intended to lead them in an attack against the English in Egypt. But the troops were really intended for use against the Turks as soon as Feisal gave the word. Jemal with his brutal Turkish humour would send for Feisal and take him to see the hanging of his Syrian revolutionary friends. The doomed men dared not show that they knew what Feisal's real intentions were, for fear that he and his family would share their fate – Feisal was the one leader in whom Syria had confidence. Nor could Feisal show them what his feelings were by word or look; he was under the watchful eye of Jemal.

Feisal's correspondence with his father in Mecca was an extremely dangerous one: old family retainers were used to take messages up and down the pilgrim's railway, messages hidden in sword hilts, in cakes, sewn between the soles of sandals, or written in invisible ink on the wrappers of harmless packages. In all his letters Feisal begged his father to wait, to delay the revolt until a wiser time. But Hussein decided that the soldiers of his province were able to beat the Turks in fair fight. He sent a message to Feisal with the news that all was now ready. Ali had raised the troops and they were waiting for Feisal's inspection before starting for the front.

Feisal told Jemal of his father's message (without, of course, explaining its hostile significance) and asked permission to go down to Medina. To his dismay Jemal replied that Enver Pasha, the Turkish Commander-in-Chief, was now on his way to the province and that Enver, Feisal and himself would attend the inspection together. Feisal had planned to raise his father's crimson banner of revolt as soon as he arrived in Medina and so take the Turks unawares: but now he was saddled with two uninvited guests, the two chief generals of his enemy, to whom, by the Arab laws of hospitality, he could do no harm. They would probably delay his action so long that the secret of the revolt would be given away.

In the end, however, everything passed off well, though the irony of the review was almost unbearable, Enver, Jemal and Feisal watched the troops manœuvring in the dusty plain outside the city gate, rushing up and down in sham camel-fights or playing the ancient Arab game of javelin-throwing on horseback. At last Enver turned to Feisal and asked, 'Are these all volunteers for the Holy War?' 'Yes,' said Feisal, with another Holy War in mind. 'Willing to fight to the death against the enemies of the faithful?' 'Yes,' said Feisal again, and then the Arab chiefs came up to be presented, and one of the prophet's family drew Feisal aside privately, whispering, 'My lord, shall we kill them now?' Feisal answered, 'No, they are our guests.'

The chiefs protested that it must be done, for so the war could be ended in two blows. They tried to force Feisal's hand, and he had actually to go among them, just out of hearing of Enver and Jemal, to plead for the lives of these two uninvited guests of his, monsters who had murdered his best friends. In the end he had to make excuses and take the party quickly back into the town under his personal protection and from there escort

them all the way to Damascus with a guard of his own slaves to save them from death on the way. He explained this action as being merely great courtesy shown to distinguished guests. But Enver and Jemal were most suspicious of what they had seen and at once sent large Turkish forces by the railway to garrison the holy cities. They wanted to keep Feisal captive at Damascus; but telegrams came from the Turks at Medina asking for him to return at once to prevent disorder, and Jemal reluctantly let him go. Feisal was forced, however, to leave his suite behind as hostages.

Feisal found Medina full of Turks, an entire Army Corps of them, and his hope of a surprise rush, winning success with hardly a shot fired, had become impossible. His chivalry had ruined him. However, he had been prudent too long now. On the same day that Feisal's suite escaped from Damascus, riding out into the desert to take refuge with a desert chief, Feisal showed his hand: he raised the banner of revolt outside Medina.

His first rush on Medina was a desperate business. The Arabs were badly armed and short of ammunition, the Turks were in great force. In the middle of the battle one of the principal Arab tribes broke and ran, and the whole force was driven outside the walls into the open plain. The Turks then opened fire on them with artillery and machine-guns. The Arabs, who only used muzzle-loading guns in their tribal battles, were terrified: and thought that the noise of the bursting shells was equalled by their killing powers. Feisal as a trained soldier knew better, and with his kinsman, young Ali ibn el Hussein, rode about on his mare among the shell-bursts to show that the danger was not so great as the tribesmen feared. But not even Feisal could draw the Arabs to the charge. Part of the tribe that had first broken approached the Turkish commander and offered to surrender if its villages were spared. There was a

lull in the fighting and the Turkish general invited the chiefs to talk over the matter; secretly at the same time he sent troops to surround one of the suburbs of the city which he singled out for his object lesson in Turkish terror. While the conference was in progress these Turks were ordered to carry the suburb by assault and massacre every living creature in it. It was done, horribly. Those who were not butchered were burned alive – men, women and children together.

The massacre sent a shock of incredulous horror across Arabia. The first rule of Arab war was that women and children too young to fight must be spared and that property which could not be carried off in fair raiding should be left undamaged. Feisal's men realized what Feisal knew already, that the Turks would stick at nothing, and they fell back to consider what must now be done. They were in honour bound, because of the massacre, to fight to the last man; and yet their arms were plainly worth nothing against modern Turkish (and German) rifles and machine-guns and artillery. The Turks in Medina, realizing that they were henceforward in a state of real or threatened siege, made their situation better by driving out into the desert many hundreds of the poorer Arab townsmen whom they would otherwise have had to feed.

Feisal's attack on Medina had been timed to the day of his father's attempt on the Turks at Mecca. Hussein was more successful; he succeeded in capturing the city itself at the first rush, but it was some days before he could silence the Turkish forts that commanded the city from the hills outside. The Turks were foolish enough to shell the holy Mosque which was the goal of the yearly pilgrimage. It contained the Kaaba, a cubical shrine into whose walls was built the sacred black stone. In the bombardment a Turkish shell killed

several worshippers praying before the Kaaba itself and a second shudder of horror ran through the Mohammedan world. Jiddah, the port of Mecca, was also captured with the assistance of the British Navy; and the whole province, with the exception of Medina, was after a time cleared of Turks.

From their camp to the west of Medina, Feisal and Ali sent messenger after messenger to the Red Sea port, Rabegh, which was on the roundabout road between Medina and Mecca. They knew that the British, at their father's request, were landing military stores there. Yet they got nothing from Rabegh but a little food and a consignment of Japanese rifles, rusty relics of the fighting at Port Arthur ten years before, which burst as soon as fired. Their father remained in Mecca.

Ali went at last to see what was happening: he found that the local chief at Rabegh had decided that the Turks were bound to win and so had decided to join them. Ali made a demonstration and got help from another brother, Zeid, and the chief fled as an outlaw to the hills. Ali and Zeid took possession of his villages and found in them great stores of arms and food landed from the British ships. The temptation to settle down for a spell of ease and comfort was too much for them. They stopped where they were.

Feisal was left to carry on the war alone a hundred and fifty miles away inland. In August 1915 he visited another port on the Red Sea farther north than Rabegh, called Yenbo, where the British Navy had landed a force of marines and captured the Turkish garrison. Here he met a British colonel who was acting under orders of the High Commissioner in Egypt, and asked him for military help. After some time he was sent a battery of mountain-guns and some maxims which were to be handled by Egyptian Army gunners. The Arabs with Feisal rejoiced when the Egyptians arrived outside

Medina, and thought that they were now the equal of the Turks. They went forward in a mob and drove in first the Turkish outposts and then the supports, so that the commander in the city was alarmed. He reinforced the threatened flank, bringing up heavy guns which opened long-range fire on the Arabs. One shell burst close to Feisal's tent where he was sitting with his Staff. The Egyptian gunners were asked to return the fire and knock out the Turkish guns: but they had to admit that they were helpless. The Turkish guns were nine thousand yards away and their own – twenty-year-old Krupp guns – only had a range of three thousand. The Arabs laughed scornfully and retreated again to their defiles in the hills.

Feisal was greatly discouraged. His men were tired; he had had heavy losses. Money was running short and his army was gradually melting away. He did not like having to carry on entirely by himself while his brother Abdulla remained in Mecca and Ali and Zeid at Rabegh. He fell back with his main body to a position nearer the coast, leaving local tribes to carry on his policy of sudden raids on Turkish supply columns and night attacks on the outposts. It was at this point in the history of the Revolt that Lawrence appeared and turned the tide.

Chapter 2

A BRIEF description of Lawrence: - He is short (five feet five and a half inches), with his body long in proportion to his legs. He has a big head of a Norse type, rising steeply at the back. His hair is fair (not blond) and rather fine: his complexion is fair and he could go unshaved longer than most men without showing it. The upper part of his face is kindly, almost maternal; the lower part is severe, almost cruel. His eyes are blue grey and constantly in motion. His hands and feet are small. He is, or was, of great physical strength: he has been seen to raise up a rifle at arm's length, holding it by the barrel-end, until it was parallel with the ground - yet no one would suspect him of being more than tough. In Arabia he won the respect of the desert fighters by his feats of strength and agility as much as by his other qualities. The pass-test of the highest order of fighters was the feat of springing off a trotting camel and leaping on again with one hand on the saddle and a rifle in the other. It is said that Lawrence passed the test. Of his powers of physical endurance the story will tell. He does not drink or smoke.

He has a trick of holding his hands loosely folded below his breast, the elbows to his sides, and carries his head a little tilted, the eyes on the ground. He can sit or stand for hours at a stretch without moving a muscle. He talks in short sentences, deliberately and quietly without accenting his words strongly. He grins a lot and laughs seldom. He is a dead shot with a pistol and a good rifle-shot. His greatest natural gift is being able

to switch off the current of his personality whenever he wishes to be unnoticed in company. He can look heavy and stupid, even vulgar; and uses this power constantly in self-protection.

He was one of a family of four brothers and no sisters, of mixed Irish, Highland-Scottish, Spanish and Scandinavian blood. He was born in Wales and educated at Oxford, where he went to the University and took an honours degree in history. Before the War he was an archæologist, working at Carchemish on the Euphrates under Leonard Woolley on the excavation of the ancient Hittite city. He had been at this work for four years and was now on the best terms with his workmen, who were of mixed races: Kurds, Turks, Arabs, and so on. With the Arabs he had great sympathy and in the winter and summer off-seasons did not usually return to England but wandered instead all over Syria and the Near East studying antiquities, learning Arabic and getting in touch with members of the various Arab freedom societies.

In the winter of 1913 he had joined a surveying party in the desert of Sinai which was ordered by Lord Kitchener for military reasons, though put under an archæological disguise. The survey could not be completed without certain bearings taken at the Red Sea port of Akaba, but the Turks had refused permission for military reasons. Lawrence told Captain Newcombe, the leader of the party, that he would go and look at the place. He got there without opposition and took what notes he wanted. Then he had a sudden desire to explore the ancient ruins on a little island called Faroun Island which lies a quarter of a mile from the coast. He asked permission to use the one boat that was on the beach. The Turks refused and a large party drew the boat up on the beach so that he could not possibly move it. That did not stop Lawrence. In the

middle of the day when all Turkish soldiers go to sleep he made a raft out of three of his large camel water-tanks. These copper tanks hold eighteen gallons apiece and measure about three feet six inches by one foot three inches, and are nine inches deep; they make excellent rafts. The wind took him safely across and he inspected the ruins, but he had difficulty on the return journey. The water was full of sharks.

At the outbreak of the War, Lawrence, who was then twenty-five years old, had to give up the idea of continuing at Carchemish, which was in Turkish territory. It was expected that Turkey would join Germany and Austria. He was at the time on holiday at Oxford. He much resented this interruption of what had been to him a nearly perfect life. He tried to join an Officers' Training Corps at Oxford, but without success. He tried again in London; but it was no good. It has been incorrectly said that he was marked as 'physically below fighting standard.' He was given a week's trial, as a favour, by Colonel Hedley, the head of the Geographic Section of the General Staff at Whitehall. Three weeks later he was 'running the entire department,' according to Hedley himself. His task here was making maps of Sinai, Belgium and France.

Four months later, on Turkey's entering the War, Lord Kitchener ordered all members of the Sinai Survey expedition to be sent immediately to Egypt, where their knowledge would be useful in view of a possible Turkish invasion of Egypt. General Maxwell wired that they were not wanted. Kitchener wired back that they were already on their way. In Cairo Lawrence naturally went to the Military Map Department of the Intelligence Service, where again he made his presence felt. About certain parts of Syria and Mesopotamia he knew even more than the Turks themselves. At the same time he was engaged in general intelligence as

staff-captain at General Headquarters, Egypt. He was charged with making out a periodic report to the General Staff as to the position of the various divisions and smaller units of the Turkish Army: this information came from spies or from prisoners captured on the various fronts. Although a most valuable officer he was not popular with the senior military officers about him, particularly with those fresh from England who did not believe that a civilian like Lawrence was competent to talk about military subjects. There was annoyance, for instance, when he interrupted two generals discussing a reported movement of Turkish troops from So-and-So to Such-and-Such by saying: 'Nonsense; they can't make the distance in twice the time you give them. The roads are bad and there's no local transport. Besides, their commanding officer is a very lazy fellow.' Also he was looked on with disfavour for going about without a military belt, in patent-leather shoes, and not wearing the right-coloured socks or tie. His reports, too, were not written in the style favoured. The War Office handbook of information about the Turkish Army, of which he was joint editor for fourteen editions, contained such comments as 'General Abd el Mahmoud commanding the - th Division is half-Albanian by birth and a consumptive; an able officer and a gunnery expert; but a vicious scoundrel, and will accept bribes.' These personal comments were thought unnecessary: the theory held by the British was that their officer opponents were gallant fellows entitled to every courtesy. An objection was also raised to such scholarly footnotes as a comparison between the new Boy Scout movement in Turkey and the Corps of Pages kept in Egypt in the time of the Janissaries. The General Staff disliked history and suspected a joke. Among Lawrence's other tasks was questioning suspected persons; he had the gift of being able to tell at once from small points in a

man's dress and from the dialect he spoke more or less what he was and where he came from.

In 1915 Cairo got so full of generals and colonels with nothing to do but send unnecessary messages about and get in the way of the few people who were doing any work, that it was mere comic opera. No less than three General Staffs fully officered were collected in Egypt, and it was impossible for any one of them to define exactly where its duties began and ended. There was current a wicked parody of an old Egyptian-Christian creed, in which occurred the phrase, 'And yet there are not three Incompetents but one Incompetent.' One of the most intimate glimpses we get of Lawrence in 1915 is of a small grinning second-lieutenant, with hair of unmilitary length and no belt, hiding behind a screen in the Savoy Hotel with another equally unmilitary colleague, softly counting 'One, two, three, four!' . . . through a hole in the screen. They were counting generals. An important conference was going on in the room, for generals only. His colleague swears to me that Lawrence counted up to sixty-five. He himself only made it sixty-four, but one of the Brigadier-Generals may have moved.

Lawrence went on several trips to the Suez Canal, where a weak Turkish attack had been made and a strong one was always expected, and one to the Senussi Desert in the West of Egypt (I believe to discover the whereabouts of British prisoners captured by the hostile Arabs there). He was also sent to Athens to get contact with the Levant group of the British Secret Service, whose agent in Egypt he was for a time until the work grew too important for an officer of his low rank to perform. He also was engaged in getting information about the anti-British revolutionary societies in Egypt and, because the Egyptians are not as loyal in their secret societies as the Syrians and Mesopotamians, was always

having visitors; one party after another came offering to betray the names of its fellow-members until he had seen nearly the whole society. Lawrence's chief difficulty was to prevent the various parties meeting each other on the office stairs. Social life in Egypt bored him. 'It's a bad life this,' he wrote at the end of March 1915, 'living at close quarters with a khaki crowd very intent on "Banker" and parades and lunch. I am a total abstainer from all of these and so a snob.' In April 1916 he was sent to Mesopotamia. He had an official task in which he was not much interested and a private intention known only to a few colleagues whom he could trust.

In Mesopotamia an army composed of mixed Indian and British troops had been marching up the Tigris from the Persian Gulf and had at first met with success, but sickness, transport difficulties, bad strategy and strong Turkish forces had held up the advance, which became a retreat: and soon General Townshend with a large force was cut off and besieged in the town of Kut. Provisions were failing and the fall was believed to be a certainty because reinforcements could not arrive from India in time. Lawrence's official task, given him direct from the War Office at London, was to go as member of a secret mission to the Turkish commander who was besieging Kut: to persuade him not to press the siege. It was thought possible that a large bribe might work because it was known that the Turks were themselves in difficulties. They had few troops – the Arabic-speaking regiments were openly mutinous – and a Russian army to the North had just captured the town of Erzeroum, the capital of Kurdistan, in the famous snow battle. The Russians were pressing on towards Anatolia, the Turks' home province; so that at any moment the siege might collapse. As a matter of fact the capture of Erzeroum had been 'arranged' and the War

Office hoped that the same success could be repeated at Kut. Nevertheless bribes would be useless, Lawrence had told those who sent him, and would only encourage the Turks. The Turkish commander, being a nephew of Enver, the chief Young Turk, never needed to worry about money.

The British Generals in Mesopotamia were not pleased with the idea of this conference. Two of them told Lawrence that his intentions (which they did not know) were dishonourable and unworthy of a soldier (which he never acknowledged himself to be). Now this Mesopotamian Army was under the orders of the Government of India and though Lord Kitchener, who was in general command of the Imperial British Forces, had early in the War approached two leaders of the secret freedom society of Mesopotamia to offer to help in a mutiny which might have cleared Mesopotamia of the Turks at a single blow, his hand had been held. The Indian Government was afraid that if the Arabs mutinied it would not be able to grant Mesopotamia those benefits of British protection which had been granted to Burma some years before; the Arabs would want to remain free. So the help that Kitchener would have given was withheld and the mutiny did not come about. Instead, an army was sent from India to act without the Arabs: with disastrous results. The British and Indians were looked upon as invaders as unwelcome as the Turks and were not only given no help but were constantly being raided and robbed by the local Arab tribes.

Lawrence's private intention, which was the real reason of his coming, had been to see whether the situation in Mesopotamia would allow of local co-operation on Nationalist lines between the British and the Euphrates tribes, whom he knew well from his Carchemish days. Some of these were already in revolt - he hoped further

to get in touch with the great Ruwalla tribe of the Northern Syrian desert – and with his assistance might soon have cut all Turkish communications by holding up river traffic and raiding supply columns until the army before Kut would be in a state of siege itself. Kut could hold out until he had made his preparations; if only eight more aeroplanes could be found for dropping provisions into the town. But he found that it was hopeless. The policy of wresting Mesopotamia without Arab help and making it part of the Empire was to be stubbornly maintained; sooner, almost, than recognize the Arabs as a political force the English would leave the country to the Turks. The result was that Lawrence did not do what he intended.

The conference with the Turkish General to which he and two others went across the Turkish lines with a white flag and with handkerchiefs bound over their eyes, was merely an attempt to ransom, on grounds of humanity or interest, those of the garrison of Kut whose health had suffered by the siege and whom captivity would kill, and to persuade the general not to punish the Arab civilians in Kut who had helped the British. After these things had been not very satisfactorily settled – they got nearly a thousand of the sick exchanged against healthy Turks; they should have got three thousand – the conference developed into a mere exchange of courtesies. In these, however, Lawrence and Colonel Aubrey Herbert, who was with him, would not join. When the Turk said, 'After all, gentlemen, our interests as Empire builders are much the same as yours. There is nothing that need stand between us,' Herbert, according to Lawrence, replied shortly, 'Only a million dead Armenians,' and that ended the conference. (Herbert said that the remark was Lawrence's.) It sounds more like his.

Lawrence had one more task; to explain to the British

Staff in Mesopotamia, on behalf of the High Commissioner of Egypt, that the help promised to Sherif Hussein did not include a support of his claim to the Caliphate, the spiritual headship of the Mohammedan world, as was believed in India, with alarm. The official Caliph was still the ex-sultan Abdul Hamid. Having done this, he came away. Kut surrendered (half its garrison died in captivity and the Turks hanged a number of the Arab civilians) and the remainder of the British Army, whose advance the local Arabs continued to resent, lost enormous numbers of men and spent another two years in reaching Bagdad.

Things were going from bad to worse. The British High Commissioner, who had made the promises to Sherif Hussein on behalf of the British Foreign Office, found himself in difficulties. The general commanding the British forces in Egypt, who took his orders only from the War Office, did not believe in the Revolt and was not going to waste men, arms or money over it. His rule was 'No side-shows.' It is possible also that he did not like the High Commissioner, a civilian, to be interfering in military matters. So, outside Medina, Feisal, waiting every day anxiously for the artillery and other stores which had been promised him, and with his own private treasure nearly spent in paying his armies, was left in disappointment and inaction. After the landing of a few native Egyptian troops and stores at Rabegh nothing much more was done; and it seemed that the Revolt was already over. Many of the staff officers at Cairo looked on all this as a great joke at the expense of the High Commissioner. They laughed that Hussein would soon find himself on a Turkish scaffold. As plain soldiers they had a fellow-feeling for the Turk, and could not see the tragedy and dishonour that they were intending. To make matters worse a French military mission was arranging an intrigue against Hussein

in his towns of Jiddah and Mecca, and was also proposing to the harassed old man military schemes that would have ruined his cause in the eyes of all Moham-medans.

In Cairo Lawrence had come to be more plagued then ever by generals and colonels, and he discovered that since his great interest in the Arab Revolt was known he was about to be put in a position where he could not do much more to help it. He decided to get away in time. He asked for permission to go, but it was not given, so he began making himself so obnoxious that the General Staff would be only too glad to be rid of him. He was already known as a conceited young puppy and began a campaign of pin-pricks, correcting the grammar of the most senior officers and commenting on their ignorance of the geography and customs of the East. The break came in this way. The chief of staff one day rang him up on the telephone. 'Is that Captain Lawrence? Where exactly is the Turkish Forty-first Division now stationed?' Lawrence said, 'At So-and-So near Aleppo. The 131st, 132nd, 133rd regiments compose it. They are quartered in the villages So-and-So, So-and-So, and So-and-So.'

'Have you those villages marked on the map?'

'Yes.'

'Have you noted them yet on the Dislocation files?'

'No.'

'Why not?'

'Because they are better in my head until I can check the information.'

'Yes, but you can't send your head along to Ismailia every time.' (Ismailia was a long way from Cairo.)

'I wish to goodness I could,' said Lawrence, and rang off.

This had the desired effect; it was decided to get rid of Lawrence somehow. He took the opportunity to ask

for ten days' leave to go for a holiday on the Red Sea in company with a Foreign Office official, Storrs (afterwards the first Christian Governor of Jerusalem since the Crusades), who was visiting the Sherif on important business. He got his leave, and at the same time made arrangements to be transferred from the Military Intelligence Service to the 'Arab Bureau,' which was under the direct orders of the British Foreign Office. The Arab bureau was a department that had just been formed for helping the Arab Revolt and was run by a small group of men, some of them old friends of Lawrence's, who really knew something about the Arabs – and about the Turks. Lawrence's transfer was arranged directly between the War Office and the Foreign Office in London, so that gave him time. He intended to do much in his ten days' leave.

Lawrence and Storrs arrived at Jiddah in October 1916. The Sherif's second son Abdulla came to meet them riding on a white mare, with a guard of richly armed slaves. He had just come home victorious from a battle at Taif, inland from Mecca, which he had won from the Turks in a sudden rush; he was in great good humour. Abdulla was reported to be the real leader of revolt, the brain behind Hussein, but Lawrence, summing him up, decided that he might be a good statesman and useful later to the Arabs if ever they succeeded in winning freedom (and his judgment of the present King of Transjordan was correct), but he did not seem somehow to be the prophet who was needed to make the revolt a success. He was too affable, too shrewd, too cheerful: prophets are men of a different stuff. Lawrence's chief object in coming to Jiddah was to find the real prophet, if there was one, whose enthusiasm would set the desert on fire; so he decided at once to look elsewhere.

Meanwhile Abdulla talked to Lawrence about the campaign, and gave him a report to be repeated to headquarters in Egypt. He said that the English were largely responsible for the Arab lack of success. They had neglected to cut the pilgrims' railway, and the Turks had therefore been able to collect transport and supplies to reinforce Medina. Feisal had been driven from Medina and the enemy there was now preparing a large force to advance on Rabegh, the Red Sea port. The Arabs with Feisal who were barring their road through the hills were too weak in supplies and arms to hold out long. Lawrence replied that Hussein had asked the British not to cut the railway because he would soon need it for his victorious advance into Syria, and that the dynamite which had been sent to him had been returned as too dangerous to be used by Arabs. Moreover, Feisal had not asked for more supplies or arms since the time when Egyptian gunners had been sent.

Abdulla answered that, if the Turks advanced, the Arab tribe called The Harb between them and Rabegh would join them and all would be lost. His father would then put himself at the head of his few troops and die fighting in defence of the city. At this point the telephone bell rang and the Sherif himself from Mecca spoke to Abdulla. Abdulla told him what was being said, and the Sherif answered, 'Yes, that is so! The Turks will only enter over my dead body,' and rang off. Abdulla smiled a little and asked whether in order to prevent such a disaster a British brigade, if possible composed of Mohammedan troops, might be sent to Suez, with ships waiting there to rush it to Rabegh as soon as the Turks began their march from Medina. To reach Mecca the Turks had to go through Rabegh because of the water supply, and if Rabegh could be held for a little while, he would himself soon lead up his

victorious troops to Medina by the eastern road. When he was in position his brothers Feisal from the west and Ali from the south would close in and a grand attack would be made on Medina from three sides.

Lawrence did not like the idea of sending troops to Rabegh, and replied that there were difficulties about providing shipping for a whole brigade. There were no wholly Mohammedan regiments in the British Army, and a brigade was not large enough anyhow. Ships' guns would defend the beach, which was all that the brigade could defend, just as well as men on the shore. Moreover, if Christian troops were sent to the assistance of the Holy City against the Turks, it would cause bad feeling in India, where the action would be misunderstood; already there had been great excitement in India when a small British Fleet had bombarded the Turks at Jiddah, the port of Mecca. Still, he would do his best and tell the British in Egypt what Abdulla's views were. Meanwhile might he go to Rabegh, see what the country was like and also talk with Feisal? He could find out from Feisal whether the hills could be held against the Turks if more help in arms and stores were sent from Egypt.

Abdulla consented but had to get permission from his father; which after some difficulty (for Hussein was very suspicious) was given. Abdulla wrote to his brother Ali telling him to mount Lawrence well and convey him safely and speedily to Feisal's camp. This was all that Lawrence wanted. That night a sad-looking brass band, in tattered Turkish uniforms, whom Abdulla had captured at Taif played them Turkish and German tunes, and Abdulla told Lawrence of the plans he had made some time before for winning freedom from the Turks by the simple method of detaining important pilgrims to Mecca and holding them as hostages: but

Feisal had disagreed. Then Abdulla asked Lawrence how many generations back King George could trace his ancestry: Lawrence replied, 'Twenty-six generations; to Cedric the Saxon.' (Or however many it was: I have forgotten, but of course Lawrence knew.) Abdulla proudly remarked that this was not bad, but that he could go seventeen better. Clearly Abdulla was not the prophet. Next day Lawrence took boat to Rabegh and there gave the letter to Ali.

Lawrence took a fancy to Ali, who was the eldest of the four brothers, a man of thirty-seven: he was pleasant mannered, well read in Arabic literature, pious, conscientious; but he was a consumptive and his weakness made him nervous and moody. If Feisal was not what Lawrence hoped him to be, Ali would perhaps lead the revolt very fairly well. With Ali was another brother, Zeid, a boy of nineteen. He was calm and flippant and not zealous for the Revolt. He had been brought up in the harem and had not yet found himself as a man of action; but Lawrence liked him and he was more pleasant than Ali, who did not like the idea of a Christian, even with the permission of the Sherif, travelling in the Holy Province. Ali did not allow Lawrence to start until after sunset lest any of his followers, whom he could not trust, should see him leave the camp. He kept the journey a secret even from his slaves, gave Lawrence an Arab cloak and headcloth to wrap round his uniform and told the old guide who was to go with him to keep his charge from all questioning and curiosity by the way, and to avoid all camps. The Arabs in Rabegh and the district were of the Harb tribe whose chief was pro-Turkish and had fled to the hills when Ali came to Rabegh with his army. They owed this chief obedience, and if he heard of Lawrence's journey to Feisal, a band of them might be sent to stop him.

Lawrence, out of training after two years of office work in Cairo, found the journey trying, though the experience of riding a first-class camel of the sort trained in its paces for Arab princes was new and delightful. There were no good camels in Egypt, or in the Sinai Desert, where the animals though hardy and strong had not been properly trained. The party rode all night except for a short rest and sleep between midnight and the grey dawn. The road was at first over soft flat sand, along the coast between the beach and the hills. After some hours they struck the bed of what in the short rainy season of Arabia is a broad flood-river, but now was merely a wide field of stones, with here and there clumps of thorn bushes and scrub. Here the going was better for the camels and in the early sunlight they made a steady trot towards Masturah, where was the next watering-place out from Rabegh on the pilgrims' road. Here the guide's son watered the camels, climbing twenty feet down the side of the stone well and drawing up water in a goatskin, which he poured into a shallow trough. The camels drank about five gallons each, while Lawrence rested in the shade of a ruined stone wall, and the son smoked a cigarette.

Presently some Harb tribesmen came up and watered their she-camels. The guide did not speak to them, for they belonged to a clan with whom his own people, their neighbours, had until recently been at war and even now had little friendship. As Lawrence watched the watering two more Arabs arrived from the direction in which he was bound. Both were young and well mounted; but one was dressed in rich silk robes and embroidered headcloth, the other more plainly in white cotton with a red cotton head-dress, evidently his servant. They halted beside the well and the more splendid one slipped gracefully to the ground without making his camel kneel and said to his companion:

'Water the camels while I go over there and rest.' He strolled over to the wall where Lawrence was sitting and pretended to be at his ease, offering a cigarette just rolled and licked. 'Your presence is from Syria?' he asked. Lawrence politely parried the question, not wishing to reveal himself, and asked in turn: 'Your presence is from Mecca?' The Arab also was unwilling to reveal himself.

Then there a comedy was played which Lawrence did not understand until the guide explained it later. The servant stood holding the camels' halters waiting for the Harb herdsmen to finish their watering. 'What is it, Mustafa?' said his richly dressed master, 'Water them at once!' 'They will not let me,' said the servant dismally. The master grew furious and struck his servant about the head and shoulders with his riding stick. The servant looked hurt, astonished and angry, and was about to hit back when he thought better of it and ran to the well. The herdsmen were shocked and out of pity made way for him. As his camels drank from their trough they whispered, 'Who is he?' The servant answered, 'The Sherif's cousin, from Mecca.' The herdsmen at once untied bundles of green leaves and buds from the thorn trees and fed the camels of this honourable visitor. He watched them contentedly and called God's blessing on them: soon he and his servant rode away south along the road to Mecca, while Lawrence and his guides went off in the opposite direction.

The old guide began to chuckle and explain the joke. The two men were both of noble birth. The one who played the part of master was Ali ibn el Hussein, a sherif, the other was his cousin. They were nobles of the Harith tribe and blood enemies of the Harb clan to which these herdsmen belonged. Fearing that they would be delayed or driven off the water if they were

recognized, they pretended to be master and servant from Mecca. Ali ibn el Hussein afterwards became Lawrence's best friend among the Arab fighting men and at one time saved his life: he had already made a name for himself in the fighting at Medina and had been the leader of the Ateiba tribesmen in much camel-fighting with the Turks. Ali had run away from home at the age of eleven to his uncle, a famous robber chieftain, and lived by his hands for months until his father caught him. The old guide grew enthusiastic in his account of Ali, ending with the local proverb, 'The children of Harith are children of battle.'

The day's ride which began over shingle continued over pure white sand. The glare dazzled the eyes, so that Lawrence had to frown hard and pull his head-cloth forward as a peak over his eyes and beneath them too. The heat beat up in waves from the ground. After awhile the pilgrims' road was left and a short cut was taken inland over a gradually rising ground of rock ridges covered with drift sand. Here grew patches of hard wiry grass and shrubs, on which a few sheep and goats were pasturing. The guide then showed Lawrence a boundary stone and said with some relief that he was now at home in his own tribal ground and might come off his guard.

By sunset they reached a hamlet of twenty huts where the guide bought flour and kneaded a dough cake with water, two inches thick and eight across. He cooked it in a brushwood fire that a woman provided for him and, shaking off the ashes, shared it with Lawrence. They had come sixty miles from Rabegh since the evening before and still had as far again to go before they reached Feisal's camp. Lawrence was stiff and aching, his skin blistered and his eyes weary. They stopped at the hamlet for two hours and rode on in pitch darkness up valleys and down valleys. Underfoot it seemed to

be sand, for there was no noise, and the only change came from the heat of the air in the hollows and the comparative coolness of the open places. Lawrence kept on falling asleep in the saddle and being woken up again suddenly and sickeningly as he made a clutch by instinct at the saddle-post to recover his balance. Long after midnight they halted, slept for three hours and went on again under a moon. The road was among trees along another watercourse with sharp-pointed hills on either side, black and white in the moonlight: the air was stifling. Day came as they entered a broader part of the valley with dust spinning round here and there in the dawn wind. On the right lay another hamlet of brown and white houses looking like a dolls' village in the shadow of a huge precipice thousands of feet high.

From the houses after awhile came out a talkative old man on a camel and joined the party. The guide gave him short answers and showed that he was unwelcome, and the old man to make things easier burrowed in his saddle pouch and offered the party food. It was yesterday's dough cake moistened with liquid butter and dusted with sugar. One made pellets of it with the fingers and ate it that way. Lawrence accepted little, but the guide and his son ate greedily, so that the old man went short: and this was as it should be, for it was considered effeminate for an Arab to carry so much food on a journey of a mere hundred miles. The old man gave news of Feisal; the day before he had been repulsed in an attack and had had a few men wounded: he gave the names of the men and details of their wounds.

They were riding over a firm pebbly ground among acacia and tamarisk trees and their long morning shadows. The valley was like a park; a quarter of a mile broad. It was walled in by precipices, a thousand feet

high, of brown and dark-red with pink stains, at the base were long streaks of dark-green stone. After seven miles they came to a tumbledown barrier which ran across the valley and right up the hill-sides wherever the slope was not too steep to take the wall: in the middle were two walled-in enclosures. Lawrence asked the old man what the wall meant. He answered instead that he had been in Damascus, Constantinople and Cairo and had friends among the great men of Egypt, and asked whether Lawrence knew any of the English there? He was very inquisitive about Lawrence's intentions and tried to trip him in Egyptian phrases. Lawrence answered in the Syrian dialect of Aleppo, whereupon the old man told him of prominent Syrians whom he knew. Lawrence knew them too. The man then began to talk local politics, of the Sherif and his sons, and asked Lawrence what Feisal would do next. Lawrence, as usual, avoided answering, and indeed he knew nothing of Feisal's plans. The guide came to the rescue and changed the subject. Later Lawrence found that the old man was a spy in Turkish pay who used to send frequent reports to Medina of what came past his village for Feisal's army.

After a long morning's travel, through two more valleys and across a saddle of hills, the party found itself in a third valley, where the old spy had told them that they would soon find Feisal. In this valley they stopped at a large village where there was a strip of clear water two hundred yards long and twelve wide, bordered with grass and flowers. Here they were given bread and dates by negro slaves – the best dates Lawrence had ever tasted – at the house of a principal man. The owner was, however, away with Feisal, and his wife and children were in tents in the hills, looking after the camels. The climate was feverish in these valleys and the Arabs only spent five months in the year in their

houses: in their absence the negroes did the work for them. The black men did not mind the climate and prospered with their gardening, growing melons, marrows, cucumber, grapes, tobacco, which gave them pocket-money. They married among themselves, built their own houses and were well treated by the Arabs. Indeed so many of them had been given their freedom that there were thirteen purely negro villages in this valley alone.

After their bread and dates, the party went on farther up the valley, which was about four hundred yards broad and enclosed by bare red and black rocks with sharp edges and ridges, and soon came upon parties of Feisal's soldiers and grazing herds of camels. The guide exchanged greetings with them and hurried his pace; they pressed towards the hamlet where Feisal was encamped. Here there were about a hundred mud houses with luxuriant gardens. They were all built upon mounds of earth twenty feet high, which had been carefully piled up, basket-full by basket-full, in the course of generations. These mounds became islands in the rainy season, with the flood-water rushing between them. At the village where they had just been there were scores of similar islands, but hundreds more had been washed away and their occupants drowned in a cloud-burst some years before; an eight-foot wall of water had raced down the valley and carried everything before it. The guide led on to the top of one of these mounds where they made their camels kneel by the yard-gate of a long low house. A slave with a silver-hilted sword in his hand took Lawrence to an inner court. The account of Lawrence's meeting there with Feisal can best be given in Lawrence's own words:

'On the farther side of the inner court, framed between the uprights of a black doorway, stood a white

figure waiting tensely for me. I felt at first glance that this was the man I had come to Arabia to seek – the leader who would bring the Arab Revolt to full glory. Feisal looked very tall and pillar-like, very slender, in his long white silk robes and his brown headcloth bound with a brilliant scarlet and gold cord. His eyelids were dropped; and his black beard and colourless face were like a mask against the strange still watchfulness of his body. His hands were crossed in front of him on his dagger.

‘I greeted him. He made way for me into the room and sat down on his carpet near the door. As my eyes grew accustomed to the shade, they saw that the little room held many silent figures, looking at me or at Feisal steadily. He remained staring down at his hands, which were twisting slowly about his dagger. At last he inquired softly how I had found the journey. I spoke of the heat and he asked how long from Rabegh, commenting that I had ridden fast for the season.

“And do you like our place here in Wadi Safra?”

“Well; but it is far from Damascus.”

‘The word had fallen like a sword into their midst. There was a quiver. Then everybody present stiffened where he sat, and held his breath for a silent minute. Some, perhaps, were dreaming of far-off success: others may have thought it a reflection on their late defeat. Feisal at length lifted his eyes, smiling at me, and said, “Praise be to God, there are Turks nearer us than that.” We all smiled with him, and I rose and excused myself for the moment.’

Lawrence visited the Egyptian gunners, who seemed unhappy. Egyptians are a home-loving race and they were fighting against the Turks, for whom they had a sentimental feeling, among the Bedouins, whom they thought savages. Under British officers they had learned

to be soldierly, to keep themselves smart, to pitch their tents in a regular line, to salute their officers smartly. The Arabs were always laughing at them for all this, and their feelings were hurt. Next Lawrence had a long talk with Feisal and his supporter Maulud, an Arab who had been an officer in the Turkish Army and had twice been degraded for talking of Arab freedom. Maulud had been captured by the British while commanding a Turkish cavalry regiment against them in Mesopotamia. But as soon as he heard of the Sherif's Revolt he had volunteered to fight the Turks, and many other Arab officers with him. So now he began to complain bitterly that the Arab Army was being utterly neglected: the Sherif sent them thirty thousand pounds a month for expenses but not enough barley, rice, flour, ammunition or rifles, and they got no machine-guns, mountain-guns, technical help or information. Lawrence stopped Maulud and said that he came for the very purpose of hearing and reporting to the British in Egypt what was needed, but that he must first know exactly how the campaign was going. Feisal gave him the whole history of the Revolt and said that until Medina fell they had to remain on guard, for the Turks were certainly intending to recapture Mecca. He did not think that the Arabs would want to defend the hill-country between Medina and Rabegh merely by sitting still and sniping from the hills. If the Turks moved, he proposed to move too. He favoured an attack on Medina from four sides at once with four armies of tribesmen, with himself and his three brothers each at the head of an army. Whatever the success of the attack, it would check the advance on Mecca and give his father time to arm and train regular troops.

For without regular troops a steady war against the Turks was impossible; the tribesmen could not be persuaded to stay away from their families more than a

month or two at a time, and soon got bored with the war if there was no chance of exciting camel-charges and loot. Feisal talked at some length, and Maulud, who had sat fidgeting, cried out, 'Don't write a history of us. The only thing to be done is to fight and fight and kill them. Give me a battery of mountain-guns and machine-guns and I will finish this war off for you. We talk and talk and do nothing.'

Feisal was dead tired: his eyes were bloodshot, his cheeks hollow. He looked years older than thirty-one. For the rest, he was tall, graceful, vigorous, with a royal dignity of head and shoulders, and beautiful movements. He knew of these gifts and therefore much of his public speech was by sign and gesture. His men loved him, and he lived for nothing but his work.

At supper that night there was a mixed company of sheikhs of many desert tribes, Arabs from Mesopotamia, men of the Prophet's family from Mecca. Lawrence, who had not revealed himself except to Feisal and Maulud, spoke as a Syrian Arab and introduced subjects for argument which would excite the company to speak their minds. He wished to sound their courage at once. Feisal, smoking continual cigarettes, kept control of the conversation even at its hottest, and without seeming to do so stamped his mind on the speakers. Lawrence spoke with sorrow of the Syrian Arabs whom the Turks had executed for preaching freedom. The sheikhs took him up sharply. The men, they said, had got what they deserved for intriguing with the French and English: they had been prepared, if the Turks were beaten, to accept the English or French in their place. Feisal smiled, almost winked at Lawrence, and said that though proud to be allies of the English, the Arabs were rather afraid of a friendship so powerful that it might smother them with over-attention. Feisal was a man of education, but Lawrence was surprised at the grasp

that these tribesmen, the ragged and lousy ones even, had of the idea of Arab national freedom. Freedom was an entirely new idea to the country, and one that they could hardly have been taught by the educated townsmen of Mecca and Medina. But it appeared that the Sherif had wisely made his priestly family into missionaries of this idea; their words carried much weight.

The Sherif had had the sense too, in spite of his great piety as a Mohammedan, to keep religion out of the war. Though one of his chief personal reasons for declaring war was that the Young Turks were irreligious, he realized that this would be an insufficient reason for the tribes. They knew that their own allies the British were Christians. 'Christian fights Christian, why not Mohammedan Mohammedan? We want a Government which speaks our own language and will let us live in peace. And we hate the Turks.' They were not troubled by questions of how the Arab Empire was to be ruled when the Turkish Empire was ended. They could only think of the Arab world as a confederation of independent tribes, and if they helped to free Bagdad and Damascus it would be only to give these cities the gift of independence as new members of the Arab family. If the Sherif liked to call himself Emperor of the Arabs, he might do so, but it was only a title to impress the outer world. Except for the departure of the Turks everything would go on much as before in the land.

The next morning Lawrence was up early and walking by himself among Feisal's troops. He was anxious to find out what they were worth as fighters by the same means that he had used the night before with their chiefs. There was not much time to spare for getting the information he wanted and he had to be very observant. The smallest signs might be of use for the report

which he was to make to Egypt, one which perhaps might rouse the same confidence in the Revolt that he had always had. The men received him cheerfully, lolling in the shade of bush or rock. They chaffed him for his khaki uniform, taking him for a Turkish deserter. They were a tough crowd of all ages from twelve to sixty, with dark faces; some looked half negro. They were thin, but strong and active. They would ride immense distances, day after day, run barefoot in the heat through sand and over rocks without pain, and climb the jagged hills. Their clothing was for the most part a loose shirt with sometimes short cotton drawers and a head shawl usually of red cloth, which acted in turn as towel, handkerchief or sack. They were hung with cartridge-bandoliers, several apiece, and fired off their rifles for fun at every excuse. They were in great spirits and would have liked the war to last another ten years. The Sherif was feeding them and their families and paying two pounds a month for every man and four pounds extra for the use of his camel.

There were eight thousand men with Feisal, of whom eight hundred were camel-fighters: the rest were hill men. They served only under their own tribal sheikhs and only near their own territory, arranging for their own food and transport. Each sheikh had a company of about a hundred men. When larger forces were used they were commanded by a Sherif, that is, a member of the Prophet's family, whose dignity raised him above tribal jealousies. Blood-feuds between clans were supposed to be healed by the fact of the national war and were at least suspended. The Billi, Juheina, Ateiba and other tribes were serving together in friendship for the first time in the history of Arabia. Nevertheless, members of one tribe were shy of those of another and even within a tribe no man quite trusted his neighbour; for there were also blood-feuds between clan and clan,

family and family; and though all hated the Turk, family grudges might still be paid off in a big attack where it was impossible to keep track of every bullet fired.

Lawrence decided that in spite of what Feisal had said the tribesmen were good for irregular fighting and defence only. They loved loot and would tear up railways, plunder caravans and capture camels, but they were too independent to fight a pitched battle under a single command. A man who can fight well by himself is usually a 'bad soldier' in the army sense and it seemed absurd to try to drill these wild heroes. But if they were given Lewis guns (light machine-guns looking like overgrown rifles) to handle themselves, they might be able to hold the hills while a regular army was built up at Rabegh. This regular army was already being formed under command of another Arab deserter from the Turkish Army, somewhat of a martinet, called Aziz el Masri. In the British prisoners-of-war camps in Egypt and Mesopotamia were hundreds of Syrians and Mesopotamians who would volunteer against the Turks if called upon. Being mostly townsmen and therefore not so independent, they were the right material for Aziz to train. While the desert fighters harassed the Turks by raids and sudden alarms, this regular force could be used to do the regular fighting. As for the immediate danger, the advance through the hills – Lawrence had seen what the hills were like. The only passes were valleys full of twists and turns, sometimes four hundred, sometimes only twenty yards across, between precipices; and the Arabs were fine snipers. Two hundred good men could hold up an army. Without Arab treachery the Turks could not break through; and even with treachery it would be dangerous. They could never be sure that the Arabs might not rise behind them, and if they had to guard all the passes behind them

they would have few men left when they reached the coast.

The only trouble was that the Arabs were still terrified of artillery. The fear might pass in time, but at present the sound of a shell exploding sent the Arabs for miles round scuttling to shelter. They were not afraid of bullets or, indeed, of death, but the manner of death by shell-fire was too much for their imagination. It was necessary then to get guns, useful or useless, but noisy, on the Arab side. From Feisal down to the youngest boy in the army the talk was all of artillery, artillery, artillery. When Lawrence told Feisal's men that howitzers were being landed at Rabegh that could fire a shell as thick as a man's thigh, there was great rejoicing. The guns, of course, would be no military use; on the contrary. As fighters the Arabs were most useful in scattered irregular warfare. If they were sent guns they would crowd together for protection, and as a mob they could always be beaten by even a small force of Turks. Only, if they were given no guns, it was clear that they would go home, and this would end the Revolt. Artillery, then, was the only problem; the Revolt itself was a real thing, the deep enthusiasm of a whole province.

Later Lawrence saw Feisal again and promised to do what he could. Stores and supplies for his exclusive use would be landed at Yenbo, a hundred and twenty miles north of Rabegh, and about seventy miles from where he now was at Hamra. He would arrange, if he could, for more volunteers from the prisoners' camps. Gun crews and machine-gun crews would be formed from such volunteers, and they would be given whatever mountain-guns or light machine-guns could be spared in Egypt. Lastly, he would ask for British Army officers, a few good men with technical knowledge, to be sent to him as advisers and to keep touch for him

with Egypt. Feisal thanked Lawrence warmly and asked him to return soon. Lawrence replied that his duties in Cairo prevented him from actual fighting, but perhaps his chiefs would let him pay a visit later when Feisal's present needs were satisfied and things were going better. Meanwhile he wished to go to Yenbo and so on to Egypt as quickly as possible.

Feisal gave him an escort of fourteen noblemen of the Juheina tribe, and in the evening he rode off. The same desolate country as before, but more broken, with shallow valleys and lava hills and finally a great stretch of sand-dunes to the distant sea. To the right, twenty miles away, was the great mountain Jebel Rudhwa, one of the grandest in the country, rising sheer from the plain; Lawrence had seen it from a hundred miles away from the well where Ali ibn el Hussein and his cousin had watered. At Yenbo Lawrence stayed at the house of Feisal's agent, and while waiting for the ship which was to take him off, wrote out his report. After four days the ship appeared; the commander was Captain Boyle, who had helped in the taking of Jiddah. Captain Boyle did not like Lawrence at first sight, because he was wearing a native headcloth, which he thought unsoldierlike. However, he took him to Jiddah, where he met Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, the British Admiral in command of the Red Sea Fleet, who was just about to cross over to the Sudan.

The Navy under Sir Rosslyn had been of the greatest assistance to the Sherif, giving him guns, machine-guns, landing parties and every other sort of help; whereas the British Army in Egypt was doing nothing for the Revolt. Practically no military help came except from the native Egyptian Army, the only troops at the disposal of the British High Commissioner. Lawrence crossed over with the Admiral and at Port Sudan met two English officers of the Egyptian Army on their way

to command the Egyptian troops which were with the Sherif, and to help train the regular forces now being formed at Rabegh. Of one of these, Joyce, we shall hear again: the other, Davenport, also did much for the Arab Army but, working in the southern theatre of Revolt, was not with Lawrence in his northern campaign. In the Sudan, at Khartoum, Lawrence met the Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Army, who a few days later was made the new High Commissioner in Egypt. He was an old believer in the Revolt and glad to hear the hopeful news Lawrence brought: with his good wishes Lawrence returned to Cairo.

In Cairo there was great argument about the threatened Turkish advance on Mecca: the question was whether a brigade of Allied troops should be sent there: aeroplanes had already gone. The French were very anxious that this step should be taken, and their representative at Jiddah, a Colonel, had recently brought to Suez, to tempt the British, some artillery, machine-guns, and cavalry and infantry, all Mohammedan soldiers from the French colony of Algeria, with French officers. It was nearly decided to send British troops with these to Rabegh, under the French colonel's command. Lawrence decided to stop this. He wrote a strong report to Headquarters saying that the Arab tribes could defend the hills between Medina and Rabegh quite well by themselves if given guns and advice, but they would certainly scatter to their tents if they heard of a landing of foreigners. Moreover, on his way up from Rabegh he had learned that the road through Rabegh, though the most used, was not the only approach to Mecca. The Turks could take a short cut by using wells of which no mention had been made in any report, and avoid Rabegh altogether; so a brigade landed there would be useless anyhow. Lawrence accused the French colonel of having motives of his

own (not military ones) for wishing to land troops, and of intriguing against the Sherif and against the English: he gave evidence in support of these charges.

The Commander-in-Chief of the British Army was only too glad of Lawrence's report as he still had no wish to help the 'side-show.' He sent for Lawrence. But first the Chief of Staff took Lawrence aside, talked amicably and patronizingly to him about general subjects and how jolly it was to have been at Oxford as an undergrad – he apparently thought that Lawrence was a youngster who had left for the War in his first year at college – and begged him not to frighten or encourage the Commander-in-Chief into sending troops to Rabegh, because there were no men to spare on side-shows. Lawrence agreed on condition that the Chief of Staff would see that at least extra stores and arms and a few capable officers were sent. The bargain was struck and kept. The brigade was never sent. Lawrence was much amused at the change in the attitude of the staff towards him. He was no longer a conceited young puppy, but a very valuable officer, of great intelligence, with a pungent style of writing. All because, for a wonder, his view of the Revolt was agreeable to them. It is recorded that the Commander-in-Chief was asked, after Lawrence's interview with him, what he thought of Lawrence. He merely replied: 'I was disappointed: he did not come in dancing-pumps.'

The friendly Head of the Arab Bureau, to which Lawrence was now transferred, told him that his place was with Feisal as his military adviser. Lawrence protested that he was not a real soldier, that he hated responsibility, and that regular officers were shortly being sent from London to direct the war properly. But his protest was overruled. The regular officers might not arrive for months, and meanwhile some responsible Englishman had to be with Feisal. So he went and left

his map-making, his *Arab Bulletin* (a secret record of the progress of the revolutionary movements) and his reports about the whereabouts of the different Turkish divisions, to other hands, to play a part for which he felt no inclination.

Chapter 3

IN December he went by ship to Yenbo, which on his advice had been made the special base for landing supplies for Feisal's army. Here he found a British officer, Captain Garland of the Royal Engineers, teaching the Arabs the proper use of dynamite for destroying railways. Garland spoke Arabic well and knew the quick ways both of destruction and of instruction. From him Lawrence, too, learned not to be afraid of high explosive: Garland would shovel detonators, fuse and the whole bag of tricks into his pocket and jump on his camel for a week's ride to the pilgrims' railway. He had a weak heart and was constantly ill, but he was as careless of his health as of his detonators and kept on until he had derailed the first Turkish train and broken the first bridge. Shortly after this he died.

The general position was now this: The advanced tribes this side of Medina were keeping up the pressure on the Turks and every day sent in to Feisal captured camels or Turkish rifles or prisoners or deserters, for which he paid at a fixed rate. His brother Zeid was taking his place in Harb territory while he made sure of the tribes who were covering Yenbo. His other brother Abdulla had moved up from Mecca to the east of Medina, and by the end of November 1916 was cutting off the city's supplies from the central oases. But he could only blockade Medina, he could not make the joint attack with Feisal and Ali and Zeid because he had with him only three machine-guns and ten almost useless mountain-guns captured from the Turks at Taif and

Mecca. At Rabegh four British aeroplanes had arrived and twenty-three guns, mostly obsolete and of fourteen different patterns, but still guns. There were now three thousand Arab infantry with Ali, of whom two thousand belonged to the new regular army which Aziz was training: also nine hundred camel corps and three hundred troops from the Egyptian Army. French gunners were promised. At Yenbo, Feisal was also having his peasants, slaves and paupers organized into regular battalions in imitation of Aziz's model. Garland held bombing classes there, fired guns, repaired machine-guns, wheels and harness, and the rifles of the whole army.

Lawrence had decided that the next thing to be done was to attack Wejh, a big port two hundred miles away from Yenbo up the Red Sea. The chief Arab tribe in those parts was the Billi; Feisal was in touch with these, and had thoughts of asking the Juheina tribe, whose territory was between Yenbo and Wejh, to make an expedition against the place. Lawrence said he would go to help raise the tribe and would give military advice. So he rode inland in company with Sherif Abd el Kerim, a half-brother of the Emir of the Juheina. Lawrence was surprised at the sherif's colour; Abd el Kerim was a coal-black Abyssinian, son of a slave girl whom the old Emir had married late in life. He was twenty-six years old, restless and active, and was very merry and intimate with everyone. He hated the Turks, who despised him for his colour (the Arabs had little colour-feeling against Africans: much more against the Indians). He was also a famous rider and made a point of taking his journeys at three times the usual speed. On this occasion Lawrence, since the camel he was riding was not his own and the day was cool, did not object.

They started in the early afternoon from Yenbo at a

canter which they kept up for three hours without a pause. Then they stopped and ate bread and drank coffee while Abd el Kerim, who made no pretence at dignity, rolled about on his carpet in a dog-fight with one of his men: after this he sat up exhausted, and they exchanged comic stories until they were rested enough to get up and dance. At sunset they remounted and an hour's mad race in the dusk brought them to the end of the flat country and a low range of hills. Here the panting camels had to walk up a narrow winding valley, which so annoyed Abd el Kerim that when he reached the top he galloped the party downhill in the dark at break-neck speed; in half an hour they reached the plain on the other side, where were the chief date gardens of the Southern Juheina. At Yenbo it had been said that these gardens and Nakhl Mubarak, the village beside them, were deserted, but as they came up they saw the flame-lit smoke of camp-fires and heard the roaring of thousands of excited camels, the shouting of lost men, volleys of signal shots, squealing of mules. Abd el Kerim was alarmed. They quietly rode into the village and, finding a deserted courtyard, hobbled the camels inside out of view. Then Abd el Kerim loaded his rifle and went on tiptoe down the street to find out what was happening; the others waited anxiously. Soon he returned to say that Feisal had arrived with his camel corps and wished to see Lawrence.

They went through the village and came on a wild noisy confusion of men and camels: pressing through these they suddenly found themselves in a dry but still slimy river-bed where the army was encamped, filling the valley from side to side. There were hundreds of fires of crackling thorn-wood with Arabs eating or making coffee or sleeping close together muffled in their cloaks. Camels were everywhere, couched or tied by one leg to the ground, with new ones always coming in

and the old ones jumping up on three legs to join them, roaring with hunger and alarm. Caravans were being unloaded, patrols going out, and dozens of Egyptian mules were bucking angrily in the middle of the scene. In a calm region in the middle of the river-bed was Feisal, sitting on his carpet with Maulud the Mesopotamian patriot and a silent cousin, Sharraf, who was the chief magistrate of Taif. Feisal was dictating to a kneeling secretary while at the same time another secretary was reading the latest reports aloud by the light of a silvered lamp held by a slave.

Feisal, quiet as ever, welcomed Lawrence with a smile until he could finish his dictation. After it was done he apologized for the confusion and waved the slaves back so that the talk could be private. The slaves and onlookers cleared a space, but at that moment a wild camel broke through the ring, plunging and trumpeting. Maulud dashed at its head to drag it away, but it dragged him instead, and its load coming untied, an avalanche of camel-fodder came pouring over the lamp, Lawrence and Feisal's cousin. Feisal said gravely, 'God be praised that it was neither butter nor bags of gold.' Then he explained what had happened in the last twenty-four hours.

A big Turkish column had slipped behind the barrier of Harb tribesmen on guard in the valley where Lawrence had first met Feisal, and cut their retreat. The tribesmen farther down the valley panicked; instead of holding up the Turks by sniping from the hills they ran away in twos and threes to save their families before it was too late. Turkish mounted men rushed down the valley to Zeid's headquarters, and nearly caught Zeid asleep in his tent: however, he got warning in time and managed to hold up the attack while most of his tents and baggage were packed on camels and driven away. Then he escaped himself; his army became a loose mob.

They rode wildly towards Yenbo, which was three days' journey away, by the road south of the one that Lawrence had just taken.

Feisal, hearing the news, had rushed down here to protect the main road to Yenbo which now lay open: he had only arrived an hour before Lawrence. He had five thousand men with him and the Egyptian gunners, the Turks perhaps had three or four thousand. But his spy-system was breaking down – the Harb tribesmen were bringing in wild and contradictory reports – and he had no idea whether the Turks would attack Yenbo, or leave it alone and attack Rabegh, a hundred and twenty miles down the coast, and so go on to Mecca. The best that could happen would be if they heard of Feisal's presence here and wasted time trying to catch his main army (which was what the military textbooks would have advised) while Yenbo had time to put up proper defences.

Meanwhile he sat here on his carpet and did all he could. He listened to the news, and settled all the petitions, complaints and difficulties that came up before him. This went on until half-past four in the morning, when it grew very cold in the damp valley and a mist rose, soaking everyone's clothes. The camp gradually settled down for the night. Feisal finished his most urgent work, and the party, after eating a few dates, curled up on the wet carpet and went to sleep. Lawrence, shivering, saw Feisal's guards creep up and spread their cloaks gently over Feisal when they were sure that he was asleep. Awake, he would have refused such luxury.

An hour later the party rose stiffly and the slaves lit a fire of the ribs of palm-leaves to warm them. Messengers were still coming in from all sides with rumours of an immediate attack and the camp was not far off panic. So Feisal decided to move, partly because if it rained in

the hills they would be flooded out, partly to work off the general restlessness. His drums beat, the camels were loaded hurriedly. At the second drum, everyone leapt into the saddle and drew off to right or left, leaving a broad lane down which Feisal rode on his mare; his cousin followed a pace behind him. Then came a wild-looking standard-bearer with a face like a hawk and long plaits of black hair falling on either side of his face: he was dressed in bright colours and rode a tall camel. Behind was a bodyguard of eight hundred men. Feisal chose a good camping-ground not far off, to the north of the village of the date-palms.

The next two days Lawrence spent with Feisal and got a close view of his methods of dealing with a badly shaken army. He restored their lost spirits by his never-failing calm courage and listened to every man who came with petitions. He did not cut them short even when they put their troubles into verse and sang songs of many stanzas at his tent door. This extreme patience taught Lawrence much. Feisal's self-control seemed equally great. One of Zeid's principal men came in to explain the shameful story of their flight. Feisal just laughed at him in public and sent him aside to wait while he saw the sheikhs of the Harb and of the Ageyl whose carelessness in letting the Turks get by in the first place had brought about the disaster. He did not reproach them, but chaffed them gently about the fine show they had put up and the fine losses that they had suffered. Then he called back Zeid's messenger and lowered the tent-flap to show that this was private business.

Lawrence remembering that Feisal's name meant 'the sword flashing down at the stroke' was afraid that an angry scene would follow, but Feisal merely made room for the messenger on the carpet and said, 'Come and give us more of your Arabian Nights' Entertainment:

amuse us.' The man, falling into the spirit of the joke, began to describe young Zeid in flight, the terror of a certain famous brigand with him, and, greatest disgrace of all, how the venerable father of Ali ibn el Hussein had lost his coffee-pots; one of the 'children of Harith' too!

At Feisal's camp the routine was simple. Just before dawn a man with a harsh powerful voice who was prayer-leader for the whole army would climb to the top of the little hill above the sleeping army and utter a tremendous call to prayers, which went echoing down the valley. As soon as he ended, Feisal's own prayer-leader called gently and sweetly from just outside the tent. In a minute, Feisal's five slaves (who were actually freedmen, but preferred to go on serving) brought cups of sweetened coffee. An hour or so later, the flap of Feisal's sleeping tent would be raised, his invitation to private callers. Four or five would be present and after the morning's news came a tray of breakfast. Breakfast was mainly dates; sometimes Feisal's Circassian grandmother would send up a batch of her famous spiced cakes from Mecca, sometimes a slave would cook biscuits. After breakfast little cups of syrupy green tea and bitter coffee went round while Feisal dictated the morning's letters to his secretary. Feisal's sleeping tent was an ordinary bell-tent furnished merely with a camp-bed, cigarettes, two rugs and a prayer carpet.

At about eight o'clock Feisal would buckle on his ceremonial dagger and walk across to the big reception tent, which was open at one side. He sat at the end of this, his principal men spreading out to left and right with their backs against the sides of the tent. The slaves regulated the crowd of men who came with petitions or complaints. If possible, business was over by noon.

Feisal and his household, which included Lawrence, then went back to the other of his two private tents, the

living tent, where dinner was brought. Feisal ate little but smoked much. He pretended to be busy with the beans, lentils, spinach, rice, or sweet cakes until he judged that his guests had eaten. He then waved his hand and the tray disappeared. Slaves came forward to wash the eaters' hands with water: the desert Arabs use their fingers for eating. After dinner there was talk, with more coffee and tea. Then till two o'clock Feisal retired to his living tent and pulled down the flap to show that he was not to be disturbed, after which he returned to the reception tent to the same duties as before. Lawrence never saw an Arab come away from Feisal's presence dissatisfied or hurt; and this meant not only tact on Feisal's part but a very long memory. In giving judgment he had to recall exactly who every man was, how he was related by birth or marriage, what possessions, what character he had, the history and blood-feuds of his family and clan; and Feisal never seemed to stumble over facts. After this was over, if there was time, he would go out walking with his friends, talking of horses or plants, looking at camels or asking someone the names of rocks and ridges and such-like in the neighbourhood.

At sunset came the evening prayer and afterwards, in his living tent, Feisal planned what patrols and raiding parties were going out that night. Between six and seven came the evening meal: it was like dinner except that cubes of boiled mutton were mixed in the great tray of rice. Silence was kept until the meal was over. This meal ended the day except for occasional glasses of tea. Feisal did not sleep till very late and never hurried his guests away. He relaxed in the evening and avoided work as much as he could. He would send for some local sheikh to tell stories of tribal history; or the tribal poets would sing their long epics, stock pieces which, with the change of names only, did service for every

tribe in Arabia. Lawrence learned from him a great deal about people and parties among the Arabs that was useful to him later.

Feisal asked Lawrence if he would wear Arab dress like his own while in the camp: it was more comfortable, and more convenient because the tribesmen only knew khaki as Turkish uniform and every time that Lawrence went into Feisal's tent and strangers were there an explanation had to be made. Lawrence gladly agreed and Feisal's slave fitted him out in splendid white silk wedding-garments embroidered with gold which had lately been sent to his master, possibly as a hint, by a great-aunt in Mecca. Arab clothes were not a novelty to Lawrence. He had frequently worn them in Syria before the War.

He decided to go back to Yenbo to organize the defence because Feisal's stand could not be more than a short pause. With the hills undefended the Turks could strike where and when they pleased, and they were much better armed and better trained than Feisal's Arabs. So Feisal lent him a fine bay camel and he raced back by a more northerly route, for fear of Turkish patrols that were reported to have pushed round to the road by which he had come. He arrived at Yenbo just before dawn, in time to see Zeid's beaten army ride in, about eight hundred camel fighters, without noise but apparently without any sense of shame at their defeat. Zeid himself pretended to be less concerned about it than anyone else: as he rode in he remarked to the Governor, 'Why! your town is half in ruins. I must telegraph to my father for forty masons to repair the public buildings,' and this he actually did. Meanwhile Lawrence had telegraphed to Captain Boyle at Jiddah that Yenbo was threatened and Boyle promptly replied that he would come there at once with his fleet. Then came more bad news: Feisal had been attacked in force be-

fore his troops had recovered from their fright: after a short fight he had broken off and was falling back on Yenbo. It seemed that the war was nearly over, the Revolt crushed. With Feisal were two thousand men, but Lawrence saw at once that the Juheina tribe was absent: there must have been treachery, a thing that neither Lawrence nor Feisal had believed possible from the Juheina.

Lawrence, though dead tired after three days with hardly any sleep, went to see Feisal at once and heard the news. The Turks had broken in from the south and threatened to cut Feisal off from Yenbo: their guide was a Juheina chief, hereditary lawgiver to the tribe, who had a private quarrel with the Emir of the Juheina. They had seven useful guns with which they shelled Feisal's camp. Feisal, undismayed, held his ground and sent round the Juheina to work down the great valley to the left and fall on the Turkish right wing. He then posted the Egyptian gunners on the right and began to shell the palm groves, where the Turkish centre was concealed, with his own two guns. These guns were a present from Egypt, old rubbish, but good enough, it was thought, for the wild Arabs – like the sixty thousand rifles also sent which had been condemned as useless for the British Army after hard service at the Dardanelles.

A Syrian Arab, Rasim, who had once been in command of a Turkish battery, was working these guns but without sights, range-finder, range-tables or high explosive. He was using shrapnel, old stock left over from the Boer War, the copper fuses green with mould. Most of it burst short if it burst at all. However, Rasim had no means of getting his ammunition away if things went wrong, so he blazed away at full speed, shouting with laughter at this way of making war. The tribesmen were much impressed with the noise and smoke and

Rasim's laughter. 'By God,' said one, 'those are the real guns: the importance of their noise!' Rasim swore that the Turks were dying in heaps. The Arabs charged forward happily. Feisal was hoping for a big victory when suddenly the Juheina on his left under their Emir and Abd el Kerim, his brother, halted and finally turned and rode back to the camping-ground. The battle was lost: he called to Rasim to save the guns at least, and Rasim yoked up his teams and trotted off to the right towards Yenbo. After him streamed the centre and right, Feisal and his bodyguard bringing up the rear and leaving the cowardly or treacherous Juheina to look after themselves.

As the tale was still being told, and Lawrence was joining in the general curse against the Emir of the Juheina and Abd el Kerim, there was a stir at the door and who should come running in but Abd el Kerim himself! He kissed Feisal's head-robe in greeting and sat down. Feisal stared and gasped and said 'How?' Abd el Kerim answered that the Juheina had been dismayed at Feisal's sudden flight: he and his brother had been left to fight the Turks for the whole night alone, without artillery, and the gallant tribesmen had resisted until they were forced out of the date-palms by weight of numbers. Half the tribe were just coming along with his brother, the other half had gone inland, for water. 'But why did you retreat to the camping-ground behind us during the battle?' asked Feisal. 'Only to make ourselves a cup of coffee: we had fought all day and it was dusk: we were very tired and thirsty.' Feisal and Lawrence lay back and laughed; and then went to see what could be done to save Yenbo.

The first thing was to send the Juheina back to join their fellows and keep up a constant pressure on the Turkish communications with raids and sniping. The Turks would have to leave so many men behind, strung

out in small garrisons, to guard their supplies, that by the time they reached Yenbo the defenders would be stronger than themselves. Yenbo was easy to defend by day at least; the town was on the top of a flat coral reef twenty feet above the sea, surrounded on two sides by water, and on the other two by a flat stretch of sand without any cover for the attackers. Guns were being landed from Boyle's ships, of which he had brought five, and the Arabs were delighted with their size and number, and were much impressed by the fleet. All day long the whole army worked hard under Garland's direction at the task of fortification, using the old town wall as a rampart for the Arabs to defend under the protection of the naval guns. Barbed-wire entanglements were strung outside and machine-guns grouped in the bastions of the wall. There was great excitement and confidence, and nearly everyone sat up all night. Lawrence himself was sound asleep on one of the ships.

There was one alarm that night at about eleven o'clock. The Arab outposts had met the Turks only three miles from the town. The garrison was roused by a crier and every man took his place quietly on the wall without a shout or a shot fired. The search-lights of the ships, which were anchored close to the town, crossed and re-crossed over the plain. But no further alarm was given and when dawn came it was found that the Turks had turned back. They had been frightened, it was discovered later, by the search-lights and the blaze of lighted ships crowding the harbour, and by the silence of the usually noisy Arabs. Yenbo was saved.

A few days later Boyle dispersed his ships, promising to bring them back at an hour's notice to Yenbo if the Turks tried again. In one of these ships Lawrence went down to Rabegh, where he met the French Colonel. The Colonel was still trying to get a mixed British and French brigade landed to help the Arabs, and tried to

convert Lawrence to his views. He said that so soon as Mecca was safe the Arabs ought not to be encouraged to go on further with the War, which the Allies could manage far better than they. His plan apparently was that if the brigade were landed at Rabegh, the Arab tribes would suspect Hussein of selling his province to the English and French and stop fighting for him. This brigade would then be his main defence against the Turks, and when the war against the Turks was won on the other battlefields, Hussein could be confirmed as King of Mecca and Medina as a reward for his loyalty. The Colonel's general attitude seemed to be 'We Allies must stick together and outwit these Arabs who are savages not worth the consideration of us Westerners.'

Lawrence thought that he saw the game. The Frenchman was afraid that if the Revolt were carried farther north to Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul, the Arabs might capture these cities from the Turks and keep them after the War; and they were cities that France wanted to add to her colonial empire. Moreover, in the Sykes-Picot Treaty, made between France, England and Russia in 1916 for dividing up the Turkish Empire after the War, the French had actually agreed that independent Arab governments, though in the French 'sphere of influence,' should be established in these cities if they were freed by the Arabs themselves – an event that none of the signatories thought possible at the time; it was a matter of form, merely, to suggest it. At the time Lawrence knew nothing of this treaty, which was a secret one, but he suspected the Frenchman, and he had no intention of letting the Arabs down for the sake of the *Entente Cordiale*. The Colonel, hearing of Lawrence's and Feisal's intention to continue with the plan of attacking Wejh that had been interrupted by the Turkish advance, did his best to discourage it. On his honour as a staff-officer (and he had a very distinguished record) he said that it

was suicide to make such a move; and gave many reasons. Lawrence brushed him aside. He believed that the Arabs had a chance now of a wide and lasting success, and Wejh was the first step.

The Turks meanwhile were being hard pressed by the Juheina who, split up in small parties, made their lives wretched by constant raids, sniping, and looting of supplies: and British seaplanes began bombing their camp in the palm-groves of Nakhl Mubarak. They decided to attack Rabegh. There Feisal's brother Ali, who had now nearly seven thousand men, was ready to advance against them, and Feisal and the younger brother Zeid planned to move round inland behind the Turks and take them in a trap. Feisal had difficulty with the Emir of the Juheina, whom he asked to move forward with him; the Emir was jealous of Feisal's growing power with the tribes. But Feisal made them move without their Emir. He then rode south to raise the Harb. All was going well until he heard from Ali that his army had gone a little way forward when, hearing false reports of treachery, it had rushed back in disorder to Rabegh. Feisal could do nothing, he could not even count for certain on the Harb, who might join the Turks if they got the chance and whose territory ran down south of Rabegh.

Then Colonel Wilson, who was British representative in the province, came up to Yenbo from Jiddah and begged Feisal to leave the Turks alone and make the attack on Wejh. The plan was now to move up with the whole Juheina fighting force and the regular battalions from Yenbo; the British Fleet would give all the help it could. Feisal saw that Wejh could be taken in this way, but Yenbo was left defenceless; he pointed out that the Turks were still able to strike and that Ali's army seemed to have little fight in it, and might not even defend Rabegh, which was the bulwark of Mecca. However,

Colonel Wilson gave Feisal his word that Rabegh would be kept safe with naval help until Wejh had fallen, and Feisal accepted it. He saw that the attack on Wejh was the best diversion that the Arabs could make to draw the Turks off Mecca, and started at once; at the same time sending his brother Abdulla machine-guns and stores and asking him to move to the impregnable hills sixty miles north of Medina, Juheina territory, where his forces could both threaten the railway and continue to hold up the eastern supply caravans.

The Turks were still making for Rabegh, but very slowly, and with an increasing sick-list among the men and animals, due to overwork and poor food. They were also losing an average of forty camels a day and twenty men killed and wounded in raids by the Harb tribes in their rear. They were eighty miles from Medina and, as Lawrence had foreseen, each mile that they went forward made their lines of communication more exposed to attack. Their pace got slower and slower till it was no more than five miles a day, and on the eighteenth of January 1917 they withdrew, when still thirty miles from Rabegh. It was Feisal's and Abdulla's new moves which finally recalled the expedition to Medina, and for the next two years until the War ended and the Holy City surrendered, the Turks were kept sitting helplessly in trenches outside it, waiting for an attack which never came.

Chapter 4

ON New Year's Day 1917 Feisal and Lawrence, who was still rather a foreign adviser than an actual fighter in the Arab cause, sat down at Yenbo to consider the Wejh expedition. The army now consisted of six thousand men, most of them mounted on their own camels. The first fierce eagerness had left them but they had gained in staying power, and the farther away they moved from their homes, the more regular their military habits became. They still worked independently, by tribes, only bound by goodwill to Feisal's command, but when he came by, they now at least fell into a ragged line and together made the bow and sweep of the arm to the lips which was the Arab salute. They kept their weapons in good enough order, though they did not oil them, and looked after their camels properly. In mass they were not dangerous: in fact their use in battle lessened as their numbers increased. A company of trained Turks could defeat a thousand Arabs in open fighting, yet three or four Arabs in their own hills could hold up a dozen Turks.

After the battle of the date-palms it was decided not to mix Egyptian troops with Arabs. They did not go well together. The Arabs were apt to let the Egyptians do more than their share of the fighting because they looked so military; they would even wander away in the middle of a battle and leave them to finish it. So the Egyptian gunners were sent home (and went gladly), while their guns and equipment were handed over to Rasim, Feisal's own gunner, and to Feisal's machine-

gun officer; who in their place formed Arab detachments mostly of Turk-trained Syrian and Mesopotamian deserters. Maulud got together a force of fifty mule-mounted men whom he called cavalry and, since they were townsmen and not Bedouin, soon made regular soldiers of them. They were so useful that Lawrence telegraphed to Egypt for fifty mules more.

Now although the Arabs were of less use in mass than in small groups, it was necessary to make this march on Wejh a huge parade of tribes to impress all Arabia. Feisal decided to take all the Juheina tribe and add enough of the Harb, Billi, Ateiba and Ageyl to make it the biggest expedition in Arab memory. It would be clear that the Revolt was now a real national movement, and when Wejh was taken and the tribes returned home with the news, there would be no more petty jealousies and desertions of clans to hinder the campaign. Feisal and Lawrence did not expect any hard fighting at Wejh because the Turks had no spare troops to send to its defence or time to send them. It would take them weeks to withdraw their Rabegh expedition – the hindering of which with Harb help was now Zeid's occupation – and if the Arab Army could reach Wejh in three weeks' time, they would surely take it unprepared.

Lawrence was anxious to take part in a small raid on the Turks, just to get the feel of it for future information, so on January the second 1917 he set out with thirty-five tribesmen. They rode some miles south-east until they came to a valley near the Turkish lines of communication. Ten men stayed guarding the camels, while Lawrence and the remaining twenty-five climbed over the sharp-edged crumbling cliffs on the farther side of the valley to another valley, where a Turkish post was known to be. There they waited shivering for hours in the mist. When dawn came they saw the tips of a group of Turkish bell-tents, three hundred yards below, just

showing over a small spur that lay between. They put bullets through these tent-tops, and when the Turks rushed out to man their trenches, shot at them; but the Turks ran so fast that probably few were hit. From the trenches the Turks fired back wildly and rapidly in all directions as if signalling for help to the nearest big Turkish garrison – there were garrisons strung all along the road for eighty miles back. As the enemy was ten times their number already, the raiders might soon have been cut off. Lawrence decided to do no more: they crawled back over the hill to the first valley, where they stumbled over two stray Turks and carried them back to Yenbo as prisoners.

That morning the army started for Wejh, first making for a group of wells fifteen miles north of Yenbo. At their head rode Feisal dressed in white, his cousin beside him on the right in a red headcloth and reddish-yellow tunic and cloak, Lawrence on the left in white and scarlet. Next came three standard-bearers carrying an Arab flag of faded crimson silk with gilt spikes. Then the drummers playing a march, then the wild mass of Fiesal's bodyguard, twelve hundred bouncing well-fed camels, with coloured trappings, packed closely together, their riders dressed in every possible combination of bright colours. This bodyguard was of camel-men called the Ageyl. They were not a desert tribe but a company of young peasants from the oasis country of Central Arabia. They had signed on for a term of years first of all for service with the Turkish Army but had soon gone over in a body when the Revolt started. Having no blood enemies in the desert and being the sons of desert traders, they were most useful in the later campaign.

Beside the road were lined the rest of the army, tribe by tribe, each man standing beside his couched camel, waiting his turn to join the procession. They saluted

Feisal in silence, and Feisal cheerfully called back 'Peace be with you!' and the head sheikhs returned the phrase. The procession swelled, the broad column filled the valley in length as far as the eye could see, and, the drums beating, everyone burst into a loud chant in praise of Feisal and his family.

Lawrence went back on his racing camel to Yenbo: he had to make sure that the naval help for the attack on Wejh would be properly timed. But first of all, feeling anxious about a possible Turkish attack on deserted Yenbo, he got a big British vessel, the *Hardinge*, formerly a troop-ship, to take on board all the principal stores of the town, including eight thousand rifles, three million cartridges, thousands of shells, two tons of high explosive, quantities of rice and flour. Boyle promised to lend the *Hardinge* as a supply ship for the force on its way up the coast, landing food and water wherever needed. This solved the chief problem, which was how to maintain ten thousand men with only a small supply column; and, for the rest, Boyle promised that half the Red Sea fleet would mass at Wejh; landing-parties were already being trained.

The Billi tribesmen who lived about Wejh were friendly, and knew moreover that if they did not welcome Feisal's army it would be the worse for them, so it seemed certain now that Wejh would be taken. Boyle promised to take on board the *Hardinge* an Arab landing-party of several hundred Harb and Juheina tribesmen. While this was being settled Lawrence heard that the three regular British officers who had been instructed to help Feisal direct the campaign were now on their way from Egypt. One of these, Vickery, arrived first. He was an artillery officer, with a good knowledge of Arabic; and what Lawrence thought that the Arabs needed, a trained staff-officer.

On the sixteenth of January Vickery, Boyle, Feisal,

Maulud, Lawrence, met in Feisal's camp, now half-way to Wejh, to discuss the advance. It was decided to break the army up into sections and send them forward one after the other, because of the difficulty of watering a whole army at the same time at the few wells or ponds on the line of march. These sections should then meet on the twentieth of January at a place fifty miles from Wejh where there was water, and make the last stage together. Boyle agreed to land tanks of water two days later at a small harbour only twelve miles from Wejh. On the twenty-third the attack was to be made; the Arab landing-party would go ashore from the *Hardinge* north of the town while Feisal's mounted men cut all the roads of escape south and east. It all looked very promising and there was no news from Yenbo that was not good. Abdulla was moving up to his position north of Medina, and news came that he had just captured a well-known Turkish agent, a former brigand, who was going with bribes among the desert tribes, and was on his way to Yemen far down in the south where a Turkish garrison was cut off. Abdulla took with this man twenty thousand Turkish pounds in gold, robes of honour, costly presents, some interesting papers and camel loads of rifles and pistols. It was the greatest good fortune.

In the tent with Vickery and Boyle, Lawrence had forgotten his usual calm and said that in a year the Arab army would be tapping on the gates of Damascus. There was no response from Vickery, who was angered at what he thought was a romantic boast that could only come from a man like Lawrence who did not know his job as a soldier. Lawrence was disappointed in Vickery, who was so much a soldier that he did not realize what the Arab Revolt was. It was not like a war in which large trained armies, with complicated modern equipment, manœuvre from town to town, seeking each to destroy or cut off the other. It was more like a general

strike over an immense area. The only big army was the Turkish and even that was not free to move about as it liked, because of the difficulties of the country. Lawrence knew that his boast had not been a vain one; five months later he was secretly in Damascus arranging for the help of its townsmen when Feisal's forces should arrive to free them. And a year later he did in fact enter the city in triumph and become temporary governor. Vickery had not seen that with a grand alliance of Semites, an idea and an armed prophet, anything might happen.

The next morning there was trouble with the second batch of fifty mules which had arrived for Maulud and was landed by the *Hardinge* along with the other stores. The mules were sent without halters, bridles or saddles, and once ashore stampeded into the little town near by, where they took possession of the market-place and began bucking among the stalls. Fortunately among the stores taken for safety from Yenbo were spare ropes and bits, so that after an exciting tussle the mules were captured and tamed. The shops were reopened and the damage paid for.

Lawrence remained with Feisal's army for the rest of the advance. From this half-way halt they started on January the eighteenth at midday. The Ageyl rode spread out in wings for two or three hundred yards to the right and left of Feisal's party. Soon there came then a warning patter of drums from the right wing – it was the custom to set the poets and musicians on the wings – and a poet began to sing two rhyming lines which he had just invented, about Feisal and the pleasures that he would provide for the army at Wejh. The men with him listened carefully and took up the verse in chorus, repeating it three times with pride and satisfaction and challenge. Before they could sing it a fourth time, the rival poet of the left wing capped it with a rhyme in the

same metre and sentiment. The left cheered with a roar of triumph, then the drums tapped again, the standard-bearers spread out their great crimson banners, and the whole bodyguard, right, left and centre, broke simultaneously into the Ageyl marching song. The Ageyl sang of their own towns left behind and the women whom they might never see again, and of the great perils ahead of them. The camels loved the rhythm of the song and quickened their pace, while it lasted, over the long desolate sand-dunes between mountains and sea.

Two horsemen came riding after them. Lawrence knew one of these as the Emir of the Juheina, the other he could not make out. But soon he recognized the red face, strong mouth and staring eyes of his old friend Colonel Newcombe of the Sinai surveying party, who was now come here as the chief British military adviser to the Arabs. Newcombe quickly became friendly with Feisal, and the rest of the journey was made even happier by his enthusiasm. Lawrence, comparing notes with him, was glad to find that they both had the same general views. The march was uneventful. Water was the one problem, and though water-scouts went ahead to find what they could, the advance was delayed by its scarcity, so that it was clear that Feisal would be two days late for the rendezvous with the *Hardinge* on the twenty-second. Newcombe rode ahead on a fast camel to ask the *Hardinge* to come again with its water-tanks on the twenty-fourth, and to delay the naval attack if possible until the twenty-fifth.

Many helpers joined Feisal during his advance; the Billi chiefs met him at their tribal boundary, and later Nasir rode up, the brother of the Emir of Medina. His family was respected in Arabia only second to the Sherifs of Mecca, being also descended from the Prophet but from the younger son of Mohammed's only daughter. Nasir was the forerunner of Feisal's movement; he had

fired the first shot at Medina and was to fire the last shot beyond Aleppo, a thousand miles north, on the day that the Turks asked for an armistice. He was a sensitive, pleasant young man who loved gardens better than the desert and had been forced unwillingly into fighting since boyhood. He had been here blockading Wejh from the desert for the last two months. He and Feisal were close friends. His news was that the Turkish camel-corps outpost barring the advance had been withdrawn that day to a position nearer to the town.

The last three days of the advance were painful; the animals were without food for nearly three days, and the men came the last fifty miles on half a gallon of water and with nothing to eat: many of them were on foot. The *Hardinge* was at the rendezvous on the twenty-fourth and landed the water promised; but this did not go far. The mules were allowed first drink, and what little was left was given to the more thirsty of the foot-men. Crowds of suffering Arabs waited all that night at the water-tanks, in the rays of the search-lights, hoping for another drink if the sailors came again. But the sea was too rough for the ship's boat to make another trip.

From the *Hardinge* Lawrence heard that the attack on Wejh had already been made the day before; for Boyle was afraid that the Turks would run away if he waited. As a matter of fact the Turkish Governor had already addressed the garrison saying that Wejh must be held to the last drop of blood: after his speech he had got up on his camel and ridden off in the darkness with the few mounted men whom he had with him, making for the railway a hundred and fifty miles inland across the mountains. The two hundred Turkish infantry left behind decided to follow his orders rather than his example, but they were outnumbered three to one and the fleet shelled them heavily. The landing was made by the sailors and the Arab force, and Wejh was taken. But

the *Hardinge* had come away before the end, so the advancing force could not be sure whether it would find the town still in Turkish hands.

At dawn on the twenty-fifth the leading tribes halted at a spot a few miles from the town and waited for the others to come up. Various small scattered parties of Turks were met; most surrendered, only one put up a short fight. When they reached the ridge behind which Wejh lay, the Ageyl bodyguard dismounted, stripping off all their clothes except their cotton drawers, and advanced to the attack: their nakedness was protection against bullet wounds, which would strike cleaner this way. They advanced company by company, at the run, and in good order with an interval of four or five yards between each man. There was no shouting. Soon they reached the ridge-top without a shot fired. So Lawrence watching knew that the fighting was over.

The Arab landing-party was in possession of the town, and Vickery, who had directed the battle, was satisfied. But when Lawrence found that twenty Arabs and a British flying officer had been killed, he was not at all pleased. He considered the fighting unnecessary; the Turks would soon have had to surrender for want of food if the town had been surrounded, and the killing of dozens of Turks did not make up for the loss of a single Arab. The Arabs were not pressed men accustomed to be treated as cannon-fodder like most regular soldiers. The Arab army was composed rather of individuals, and its losses were not reckoned merely by arithmetic. And because kinship is so strong a force in the desert, twenty men killed meant a far wider range of mourning than a thousand names in a European casualty list. Moreover, the ships' guns had smashed up the town badly, which was a great loss to the Arabs, who needed it as a base for their future attacks inland on the railway. The town's boats and barges, too, had been sunk, so the landing

of stores was a difficulty, and all the shops and houses had been looted by the Arab landing-party as a compensation for their losses. The townsmen were mostly Egyptians who could not make up their minds in time to join the Arab cause.

Still, Wejh was taken, the coast was cleared of Turks, and the march had been a great advertisement. Abd el Kerim of the Juheina, who had come to Lawrence a week before to beg for a mule to ride, and had been put off with the promise 'when Wejh is taken,' had said almost regretfully, 'We Arabs are a nation now'; the regret was for the good old days of tribal wars and raids which now were at an end. More than a nation the Arab army seemed to some of the tribesmen. 'The whole world is moving up to Wejh,' said one old man.

The success at Wejh stirred the British in Egypt to realize suddenly the value of the Revolt: the Commander-in-Chief remembered that there were more Turks fighting the Arabs than were fighting him. Gold, rifles, mules, more machine-guns and mountain-guns were promised, and in time sent, all except the mountain-guns, which were the most urgent need of all. Field-guns were no use because of the hilly roadless country of Western Arabia, but the British Army could, it seemed, spare no mountain-guns except a sort that fired only ten-pound shells, useless except against bows and arrows. It was maddening that the Turks should always be able to outrange the Arabs by three or four thousand yards. The French Colonel had some excellent mountain-guns at Suez with Algerian gunners, but would not send them unless an Allied brigade was landed at Rabegh to take over the conduct of the war from the Arabs. These guns were kept at Suez for a year; but then the French Colonel was recalled and his successor sent them; with their help the final victory was made possible. Meanwhile a great deal of harm was done to the reputation of the French,

for every Arab officer passing through Suez on his way to Egypt or back saw these idle guns as a proof of French hostility to the Revolt.

But while the news of the taking of Wejh was still fresh, the French Colonel called on Lawrence at Cairo to congratulate him; he said that the success confirmed his opinion of Lawrence's military talent and encouraged him to expect help in extending the success. He wanted to occupy Akaba with an Anglo-French force and naval help. Akaba was the port at the very extreme point of the Red Sea on the opposite side of the Sinai peninsula from Suez, and a brigade landed there might advance eighty miles inland towards Maan. Maan was an important town on the pilgrims' railway about two hundred miles south of Damascus, and on the left flank of the Turkish Army opposing the British on the borders of Palestine. Lawrence, who knew Akaba from his surveying days in the winter of 1913, told the Colonel that the scheme was impossible, because, though Akaba itself could be taken, the granite mountains behind it could be held by the Turks against any expedition trying to force the passes. The best thing was for Bedouin Arabs to take it from behind without naval help.

Lawrence suspected that the Colonel wanted to put this Anglo-French force in as a screen between the Arabs and Damascus, to keep them in Arabia wasting themselves in an attack on Medina. He himself, on the other hand, wanted to take them into Damascus and beyond. Both men knew what the other's intention was, but there was a natural concealment of the real issue. At last the Colonel, rather unwisely, told Lawrence that he was going to Wejh to talk to Feisal, and Lawrence, who had not warned Feisal about French policy, decided to go too. By hurrying he was able to get there first and also to see and warn Newcombe.

When the Colonel arrived at Wejh eight days after

Lawrence, he began by presenting Feisal with six Hotchkiss automatic guns complete with instructors. This was a noble gift, but Feisal asked for the quick-firing mountain-guns at Suez. The Frenchman put him off by saying that guns were no real use in Arabia; the thing to do was for the Arabs to climb about the country like goats and tear up the railway. Feisal was annoyed by the 'goats,' which is an insult in Arabic, and asked the Colonel if he had ever tried to 'goat' himself. The Colonel spoke of Akaba, and Feisal, who had had Lawrence's account of the geography of the place, told him that it was asking too much of the British to get them to risk heavy losses over such an expedition. The Colonel, annoyed by Lawrence's Oriental smile where he sat in a corner, pointedly asked Feisal to beg the British at least to spare the armoured cars which were at Suez. Lawrence smiled again and said that they had already started. Then the Colonel went away, defeated, and Lawrence returned to Cairo, where he begged the Commander-in-Chief not to send the brigade that was already waiting to be sent to Akaba. The Commander-in-Chief was delighted to find that this 'side-show,' too, was unnecessary.

Back again in Wejh a few days later Lawrence began hardening himself for his coming campaign, tramping barefoot over the coral or burning-hot sand. The Arabs wondered why he did not ride a horse, like every other important man. Feisal was busy with politics, winning over new tribes to the cause, keeping his father at Mecca in good humour, and his brothers in their places. He had to put down a small mutiny: the Ageyl had risen against their commander for fining and flogging them too heavily. They looted his tent and beat his servants, and then getting more excited remembered a grudge that they had against the Ateiba tribe and went off to do some killing. Feisal saw their torches and rushed to stop

them, beating at them with the flat of his sword; his slaves followed. They subdued the Ageyl at last, but only by firing rockets from pistols among them, which set fire to their robes and frightened them. Only two men were killed; thirty were wounded. The commander of the Ageyl then resigned and there was no more trouble.

A wireless signalling set was mounted at Wejh by the Navy, and the two armoured cars from Suez arrived. They had just been released from the campaign in East Africa. The Arabs were delighted with the cars and with the motor-bicycles that were sent with them. They called the motor-bicycles 'devil horses,' the children of the cars, which were themselves the sons and daughters of the trains on the pilgrims' railway. About this time came Jaafar, a Mesopotamian Arab from Bagdad, whom Feisal at once made commander-in-chief of the regular Arab forces under him. Jaafar had been in the Turkish Army and had fought well against the British. He had been chosen by Enver to organize the Senussi tribes in the desert west of Egypt, and going by submarine had made the wild men into a good fighting force. The British captured him at last and he was imprisoned at Cairo. He tried to escape one night from the Citadel there, slipping down a blanket rope, but fell, hurt his leg, and was recaptured. Later in hospital he read a newspaper account of the Sherif's Revolt and of the executions of Arab nationalists in Syria; he suddenly realized that he had been fighting on the wrong side.

Feisal's politics were going well. The Billi tribe and the Moahib joined him and the Howeitat and Beni Atiyeh beyond, so that he now had control of the whole country between the railway and the sea from a point a hundred and fifty miles north of Wejh right down to Mecca. Beyond the Howeitat and Beni Atiyeh, to the

north, and spreading over the wide gravel and lava desert to the borders of Mesopotamia lived the powerful Ruwalla tribe, whose Emir Nuri was one of the four great Arabian princes, the others being Ibn Saud of Nejd in the central oases, the Emir of Jebel Shammar, and the Sherif of Mecca. Nuri was a hard old man whose word was law and who could not be either bullied or coaxed; he had won his supremacy by the murder of two brothers. Fortunately he had been on good terms with Feisal for years, and Feisal's messengers going to him to ask permission for the Arab Army to pass through Ruwalla territory met Nuri's messengers already on the way with a valuable gift of baggage camels for Feisal. Nuri could not give armed help at present because if the Turks suspected him they would half-starve his tribesmen in three months; but Feisal could count on him, when the right time came, for armed help too. It was most important to have Nuri friendly because he controlled Sirhan, the one great chain of camping-grounds and water-holes across the northern desert to the Syrian border where lived the famous tribe, the Howeitat. One Howeitat clan, the Abu Tayi, was ruled by Auda, the greatest fighting man in Northern Arabia; and to get in touch with Auda had been Feisal's and Lawrence's ambition for months. With Auda friendly it should be possible to win over all the tribes between Maan and Akaba, and then, after taking Akaba, to carry revolt farther north still behind the Turkish lines in Syria. And Auda did prove friendly; his cousin came in with presents on the seventeenth of February 1917, and the same day arrived a chief of another Howeitat clan that was settled near Maan. Further arrivals that day were Sherarat tribesmen from the desert between Wejh and the railway with a gift of ostrich eggs, Nuri's son with the gift of a mare, and the chief of another Howeitat clan from the coast south of Akaba. This last chief brought Feisal the

spoils of the two Turkish posts on the Red Sea which he had just taken.

The roads to Wejh swarmed with messengers and volunteers and great sheikhs riding in to swear allegiance, and the Billi, who had hitherto only been lukewarm in the cause, caught the enthusiasm of the rest. Feisal's way of swearing in new converts was to hold the Koran between his hands, which they kissed and promised, 'We shall wait while you wait and march when you march. We shall yield obedience to no Turk. We shall deal kindly with all who speak Arabic whether Arabians, Mesopotamians, Syrians or others. We shall put Arab independence above life, family or goods.' When the chiefs came to Feisal it happened sometimes that blood-enemies met in his presence, when he would gravely introduce them and later act as peacemaker, striking a balance of profit and loss between them. He would even help things on by contributing from his own purse for the benefit of the tribe that had suffered most loss. For two years this peace-making was Feisal's daily task, the combining of the thousands of hostile forces in Arabia against a common enemy. There was no feud left alive in the districts through which he passed, and no one ever questioned his justice. He was recognized as a power above tribal jealousies and quarrels, and finally gained authority over the Bedouin from Medina in the south to a point far beyond Damascus.

Early in March information came to Lawrence from Egypt that Enver, the Turkish Commander-in-Chief had ordered the Turks to leave Medina at once. The message had been intercepted on the pilgrims' railway, where Newcombe and Garland were already busy with Arab help blowing up bridges and tearing up the rails. The Turks were ordered to march out in mass along the line with railway trains enclosed in their columns; they were to go for four hundred miles north to a station

(Tebuk) below Maan where they would form a strong left flank to the army facing the British. As the Turks in Medina were a whole Army-Corps of the best Anatolian troops with a great deal of artillery, the British were anxious to keep them away. So Feisal was therefore begged (and Lawrence instructed) either to take Medina at once or to destroy the garrison on its way up the line. Feisal replied that he would do his best, though the Turkish message was days old and the move was already timed to begin. Feisal's forces were, at the moment, all moving forward to harry the railway inland from Wejh along a length of a hundred and fifty miles; so that the second part of the demand from Egypt was being met. If it was not too late to catch the Turks coming out it might be possible to destroy the whole force. The Arabs would damage the railway line until it was too hopelessly broken for the store trains to pass, and the Turks would therefore be without supplies to take them farther. When they turned back they would find the line broken behind them too. Lawrence himself decided to go to Abdulla, who had now moved to a position just northwest of Medina, to find out whether it was possible, if the Turks were still in Medina, to attack them there.

When he started he was very weak with dysentery brought on by drinking the bad water at Wejh: he had a high temperature and also boils on his back which made camel-riding painful. With a party of thirteen men, of various tribes, including four Ageyl and a Moor, he set out at dawn through the granite mountains on his hundred-and-fifty-mile ride. He had two fainting fits on the way and could hardly keep in the saddle. At one point on the journey the ill-assorted party began to quarrel and the Moor treacherously murdered one of the Ageyl. A hurried court-martial was held and the Moor was privately executed, with general consent, by a member of

the party who had no kin for the other Moors in Feisal's army to start a blood-feud against.

One can well imagine Lawrence's loneliness on this ride. He was no longer merely a British officer; his enthusiasm for the Revolt on its own account had cut him off from that. Nor was he a genuine Arab, as his tribelessness reminded him only too strongly. He hovered somewhere midway between the one thing and the other like Mohammed's coffin in the fable. More immediately disturbing was the possibility of being too ill to ride farther, and so of falling into the hands of desert tribesmen whose idea of medicine was to burn holes in the patient's body to let the evil spirits out: when the patient screamed they would say that it was the devil in him protesting. Eventually he reached Abdulla's camp just in time to stave off the collapse. He gave Abdulla Feisal's message, and then went off to lie in a tent where his weakness kept him helpless for the next ten days.

This forced idleness had important results: though his body was weak, his brain cleared and he began to think about the Arab Revolt more carefully than he had yet done. It was something to do to keep his mind off his physical condition. Hitherto he had acted from instinct, never looking more than a step or two ahead at a time: now he could exercise his reason. He remembered the military writers whose works he had read at Oxford: he had not been required by his tutors to become acquainted with any campaigns later than Napoleon's, but he had, it seems, out of curiosity read most of the more modern military writers, such as the great Clausewitz, and von Moltke and the recent Frenchmen. He began by recalling the main principle on which all these writers agreed, that wars were won by destroying the enemy's main army in battle. But somehow it would not fit the Arab campaign; and this worried him.

He began to ask himself why they were bothering to

attack Medina. What was the good of it to the Arabs if they captured it? It was no longer a threat as it had been when there were troops in it to spare for the attack on Mecca. It was no use as a base or a store-house. The Turks in it were powerless to harm the Arabs, and were now eating their own transport animals which they could no longer feed. Why not let them keep the town? Why do more than continue to blockade it? What of the railway, which used up a vast quantity of men in guard posts all down the line and yet was too long to be properly defended? Why not be content with frequent raids on it, between guard posts, blowing up trains and bridges, and yet allowing it to be just – only just – kept in working order, so that it would be a continual drain on the Turks to the north to keep it going and to feed the troops in Medina? To cut it permanently would be a mistake. The surrender of Medina would mean that the captured Turks would have to be fed, many of the troops guarding the railway would make their way back north, and the drain on the Turks of men and trains and food would stop. The Allied cause would, in fact, be best served by attracting and keeping as many Turkish troops as possible in this unimportant theatre of war, and by using as many Arabs as possible in the important theatre of war, which was Palestine.

When Lawrence got better, therefore, and left his stinking, fly-swarmed tent he did not urge Abdulla to attack Medina but suggested a series of pin-pricking raids against the railway, offering to set an example in these himself. Abdulla was more a politician than a man of action and more interested in field sports and practical joking than in generalship. However, he permitted Sherif Shakir, his picturesque half-Bedouin cousin, to make a raid against the nearest station on the railway, a hundred miles away, with a party of Ateiba tribesmen and one of the mountain-guns which the

Egyptian gunners had left with Feisal and which Feisal had lately sent to Abdulla as a present. Lawrence, convalescent, went with Shakir, and, on the twenty-seventh of March, laid his first mine, an automatic one, on the railway. Because it was his first it was not very successful. He caught the front wheel of a train all right, but the charge was not big enough to do serious damage. Nor did Shakir succeed in his raid beyond killing a score of Turks, damaging the water-tower and station buildings with his gun, and setting a few wagons on fire; there was, that is to say, no looting.

The fruits of Lawrence's visit to Abdulla, measured in action, were small. Abdulla did not have his brother Feisal's energy and military keenness, and had been allotted an unattractive part in the campaign, the blockade of Medina, which encouraged the inactive side of his character. (The siege of the city was never pressed and dragged on until after the Armistice in October 1918 when the commander, Fakhri Pasha, was given orders from Constantinople to hand Medina over to the Arab forces; and did so, compelled by a mutiny of his chief staff-officers.) But, apart from action, Lawrence's visit to Abdulla was of considerable importance; it marked a turning-point in the Arab campaign. We find him acting hereafter with great deliberation and confidence, in striking contrast to his previous hesitating attitude as adviser to Feisal in the Yenbo and Wejh operations.

On April the tenth Lawrence returned to Wejh by leisurely stages. Abdulla had been very hospitable, but Lawrence preferred the atmosphere of Feisal's camp, where there was a more energetic spirit and a determination to win the war with as little Allied help as possible. A good way farther north on the railway than he had laid his mines there were now two parties doing demolitions (Garland's and Newcombe's, and Horn-

by's), but the Turks would find it just a shade less difficult to keep the railway going between Damascus and Medina than to arrange for the long and dangerous march-out of the Medina garrison. At Wejh he found things going on well. More armoured cars had come from Egypt, and Yenbo and Rabegh had been emptied of their stores and men as a proof that the Revolt was now safe in the south and was moving north. The aeroplanes under Major Ross were here and also a new machine-gun company of amusing history. When Yenbo was abandoned there were left behind some heaps of broken weapons and two English armourer-sergeants. Also thirty sick and wounded Arabs. The armourer-sergeants, finding things boring, had dosed and healed the men and mended the machine-guns, and combined them into a company. The sergeants knew no Arabic but trained the men so well by dumb-show that they were as good as the best company in the Arab Army.

Chapter 5

LAWRENCE was about to withdraw from Feisal's tent at Wejh after the exchange of news and greetings, when there was a stir of excitement. A messenger came in and whispered to Feisal. Feisal turned to Lawrence with shining eyes, trying to be calm, and said: 'Auda is here.' The tent-flap was drawn back, and a deep voice boomed out salutations to 'Our Lord, the Commander of the Faithful,' then entered a tall strong figure, with a haggard face, passionate and tragic. It was Auda; and with him Mohammed, his only surviving son, a boy of eleven years old, already a fighting man. Feisal had sprung to his feet, an honour not due to Auda on account of his rank, for nobler chiefs had been received sitting, but because he was Auda, the greatest fighting man in Arabia. Auda caught Feisal's hand and kissed it; then they drew aside a pace or two and looked at each other approvingly. It was their first meeting.

Auda was simply dressed in white cotton robes and a red headcloth. He looked over fifty and his black hair was streaked with white: yet he was straight and vigorous, and as active as a much younger man. His hospitality was such that only very hungry guests did not find it inconvenient; his generosity kept him poor in spite of the profits of a hundred raids. He had married twenty-eight times, and had been wounded thirteen times. He had killed seventy-five men with his own hand in battle and never a man except in battle. These were all Arabs; Turks he did not count and could not guess at the score. Nearly all his family and kin had been killed in the wars

which he had provoked. He made a point of being at enmity with nearly all the tribes of the desert so that he might have proper scope for raids, which he made as often as possible. There was always an element of foresight in his maddest adventures, and his patience in battle was great. If he got angry his face would twitch uncontrollably and he would burst into a fit of shaking passion which could only be calmed by battle: at such times he was like a wild beast and men fled from his presence. Nothing on earth could make him change his mind or obey an order or do anything of which he disapproved. Yet he was modest, simple as a child, honest, kind-hearted.

Auda had come down to Wejh chafing at the delay of the campaign, anxious only to spread the bounds of Arab freedom to his own desert lands. The weight of anxiety was off the minds of Feisal and Lawrence before even they sat down to supper. It was a cheerful meal but suddenly interrupted by Auda, who leaped up with a loud 'God forbid!' and ran from the tent. A loud hammering was heard outside and the rest of the company stared at each other. It was Auda pounding his false teeth to fragments on a stone. 'I had forgotten,' he explained, 'that Jemal Pasha' (the Turkish commander in Syria who had hanged so many of the Arab leaders) 'gave me these. I was eating my Lord Feisal's bread with Turkish teeth!' As a result Auda, having few teeth of his own, went about half-nourished for two months until a dentist was sent from Egypt to make him an Allied set.

Auda and Lawrence liked each other at first sight. They took counsel together for a journey northward to catch Auda's Howeitat in their spring pastures of the Syrian desert: they would raise a camel-corps there and take Akaba by surprise from the east without guns or machine-guns. This would mean an encircling march of

six hundred miles to capture a position which was within gun-fire of the British Fleet – which indeed was raiding the port at the moment. Yet the longest way was the only way; for Akaba was so strongly protected by the hills, elaborately fortified for miles back, that if a landing were attempted from the sea a small Turkish force could hold up a whole Allied division in the defiles. On the other hand, the Turks had never thought of facing their fortifications east against attack from inland. Auda's men could probably rush them easily with help of neighbouring clans of Howeitat from the coast and in the hills. The importance of Akaba was great. It was a constant threat to the British Army which had now reached the Gaza-Beersheba line and therefore left it behind the right flank: a small Turkish force from Akaba could do great damage and might even strike at Suez. But Lawrence saw that the Arabs needed Akaba as much and more than the British. If they took it, they could link up with the British Army at Beersheba, and show by their presence that they were a real national army, one to be reckoned with. Nothing but actual contact could ever convince the British that the Arabs were really worth considering as allies, and once the contact was made, there would be no more difficulty about guns, money and equipment: the Arab campaign would no longer be a side-show but part of the main battle, and the British would feed it properly.

Lawrence discussed with the British officers at Wejh, Feisal's advisers, the tactics that had occurred to him while he was lying sick. His views were disregarded. It had been decided some weeks before, chiefly on Lawrence's impulse, to march the whole force inland from Wejh and occupy a large stretch of the pilgrims' railway with mixed Egyptian and Arab troops; all arrangements had been made and it was hoped that Medina would soon surrender. But Lawrence had changed his

mind: he now argued against this scheme, that it had been found bad policy to mix Egyptians and Arabs, that the Arabs could not be trusted to attack or defend a line or a point against regular troops, that the country which they proposed to hold was barren, and that to force the Turks to waste men and arms and food in holding Medina and the railway line would harm them more than any military defeat that could be inflicted on them. However, plans were already too far advanced, and Lawrence could do nothing to sidetrack the expedition. He decided to go off on his own to take Akaba and to ask his seniors for no help in arms or stores that would in any way weaken their own expedition.

Feisal was his stand-by (Feisal thought and planned and worked for everyone) and gave him twenty-two thousand pounds in gold from his own purse to pay the wages of the party and of all the new men enrolled during the journey. Sherif Nasir, usual leader of forlorn hopes, was in command. Seventeen Ageyl went as escort, and to deal with the Syrian Arab converts in the north came Zeki and Nesib, both important men of Damascus. The gold was shared out between Nasir, Auda, Nesib and Zeki. The party started on May the ninth; every man carried a forty-five-pound bag of flour with him as his rations for six weeks. There were a few spare rifles for presents, and six camel-loads of blasting gelatine for blowing up rails, trains or bridges in the north. It seemed a small force to go out to win a new province, and so thought the French representative with Feisal, who rode up to take a farewell photograph. Auda was worth photographing; he was dressed in finery that he had bought at Wejh – a mouse-coloured great-coat of broadcloth with a velvet collar, and yellow elastic-sided boots. Nasir was the guide and knew this country almost as well as his own; after two years of fighting and preaching always beyond the front line of

THE RIDE TO AKABA

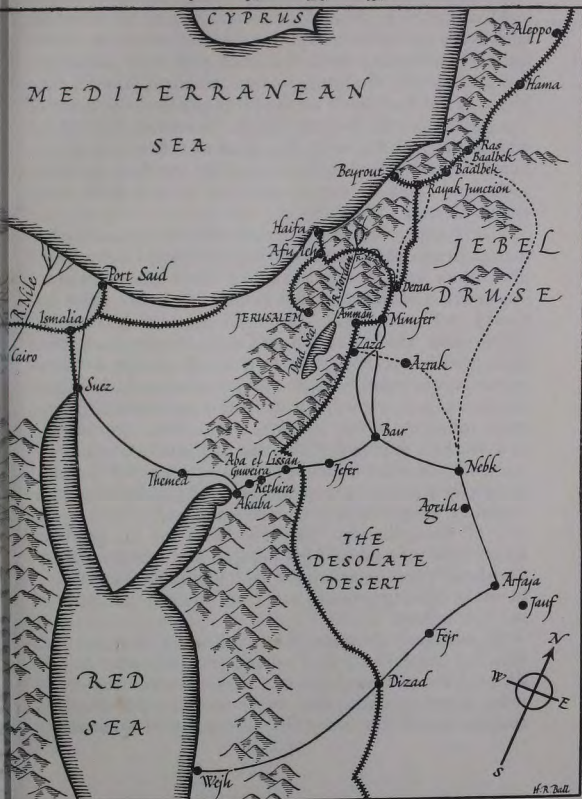
May 9 - July 6: 1917
Miles

0 50 100 150

CYPRUS

MEDITERRANEAN

SEA



Feisal's armies he was very weary and sunken in spirit. He talked sorrowfully to Lawrence of his beautiful home in Medina, the great cool house and its gardens planted with every sort of fruit-tree, the shady avenues, the vine-trellised swimming tank, the deep well with its wheel turned by oxen, the many fountains. Now, he said, the blight of the Turks was on the place: his fruit-trees were wasted, his palms chopped down. Even the great well, which had sounded with the creak of the wheel for six hundred years, had fallen silent; the garden, cracked with heat, was becoming as waste as the hills over which he now rode.

The baggage-camels went slowly, weak with the mange that was the curse of Wejh, grazing all the way. The riders were tempted to hurry them but Auda said no; because of the long ride before them they must go slowly and spare their beasts. This was a country of white sand which dazzled the eyes cruelly, and they were glad when they came to a small oasis in a valley where an old man, his wife and daughters, the only inhabitants, had a garden among the palm-trees. They grew tobacco, beans, melons, cucumbers, egg-plants, and worked day and night without much thought of the world outside. The old man laughed at his visitors, asking what more to eat and drink all this fighting and suffering would bring; he could not understand their talk of Arab liberty. He only lived for his garden. Every new year he sold his tobacco and bought a shirt for himself, and one each for his household; his felt cap, his only other garment, had been his grandfather's a century before.

At this place they met Rasim, Feisal's chief gunner, Maulud his A.D.C., and others, who said that Sherif Sharraf, Feisal's cousin, whom they were to meet at the next stopping-place, was away raiding. So they all rested for a day or two. The old man sold them vege-

tables, Rasim and Maulud provided tinned meat, and they had music each evening round the camp-fire. This was not the monotonous roaring ballad-music of the desert, or the exciting melodies of the Central Oases which the Ageyl sang, but the falsetto quarter-tones and trills of Damascus love-songs given bashfully on guitars by Maulud's soldier-musicians. Nesib and Zeki, too, would sing passionate songs of Arab freedom, and all the camp would listen dead silent until each stanza ended, then give a sighing longing echo of the last note. The old man went on splashing out his water into the clay channels of his garden, laughing at such foolishness.

Auda hated the luxuriance of the garden and longed for the desert again. So on the second night they pushed forward again, Auda riding ahead and singing an endless ballad of the Howeitat. 'Ho! Ho! Ho!' he boomed on three bass notes; and his voice guided the party through the dark valleys; Lawrence did not understand many words of the dialect, which was a very ancient form of Arabic. Of Lawrence's knowledge of Arabic he has written to me:

'In Oxford I picked up a little colloquial grammar, before I first went out. In the next four years I added a considerable (4,000 word) vocabulary to this skeleton of grammar; words useful in archaeological research mainly.

'Then for the first two years of the War I spoke hardly a word of it and as I had never learned the letters to read or write - and have not yet - naturally it almost all passed from me. So when I joined Feisal I had to take it all up again from the beginning in a fresh and very different dialect. As the campaign grew it carried me from dialect to dialect, so that I never settled down to learn one properly. Also I learned by ear (not knowing the written language) and therefore incorrectly; and

my teachers were my servants who were too respectful to go on reporting my mistakes to me. They found it easier to learn my Arabic than to teach me theirs.

'In the end I had control of some 12,000 words; a good vocabulary for English, but not enough for Arabic, which is a very wide language; and I used to fit these words together with a grammar and syntax of my own invention. Feisal called my Arabic "a perpetual adventure" and used to provoke me to speak to him so that he might enjoy it. . . .

'I've never heard an Englishman speak Arabic well enough to be taken for a native of any part of the Arabic-speaking world, for five minutes.'

The march was difficult, over rocky country; at last the track became a goat-path zigzagging up a hill too steep to climb except on all fours. The party dismounted and led the camels. Soon they had great difficulty in coaxing them along, and had to push and pull them, adjusting the loads to ease them. Two of the weaker camels broke down and had to be killed: they were at once cut up for meat and their loads repacked on the others. Lawrence was glad when they came to a plateau at the top: he was ill again with fever and boils. They rode over lava, between red and black sandstone hills, and at last halted in a deep dark gorge, wooded with tamarisk and oleander, where they found the camp of Sharraf. He was still away and they waited until he came three days later.

Sleeping here in a shepherd's fold Lawrence was awakened by the voice of an Ageyl boy pleading to him for compassion. His name was Daud and he had an inseparable friend called Farraj. Farraj had burned their tent in a frolic and would be beaten by the captain of the Ageyl who were with Sharraf. Would Lawrence beg him off? Lawrence spoke to the captain, who

answered that the pair were always in trouble and had lately been so outrageous in their tricks that he must make an example of them. All that he could do was to let Daud share Farraj's sentence. Daud jumped at the chance, kissed Lawrence's hand and the captain's and ran up the valley. The next day Farraj and Daud hobbled up to Lawrence, where he was discussing the march with Auda and Nasir, and said that they were for his service. Lawrence said that he wanted no servants and that anyhow after their beating they could not ride. Daud turned away defeated and angry, but Farraj went to Nasir, knelt humbly and begged him to persuade Lawrence to take them on: which he did.

Sharraf came and reassured them about water, which had been an anxiety; there were pools of new fallen rain-water farther on their road. They set out then and had not gone far before they met five riders coming from the railway. Lawrence riding in front with Auda had the thrill 'Friend or enemy?' of meeting strangers in the desert, but soon they saw that the riders were friendly Arabs, and riding in front was a fair-haired, shaggy-bearded Englishman in tattered uniform. Lawrence knew that this must be Hornby, Newcombe's pupil who vied with him in smashing the railway. The persistent pair would cling for weeks to the railway with few helpers and often with no food, blowing up bridges and rails until they had exhausted their explosives or their camels and had to return for more. Newcombe was hard on his camels, whom he worked at the trot and who quickly wore out in that thirsty district; the men with him had either to leave him on the road – a lasting disgrace in the desert – or founder their own beasts. They used to complain: 'Newcombe is like fire, he burns friend and enemy.' Lawrence was told that Newcombe would not sleep except with his head on the rails, and that when there was no gun-cotton left, Hornby would

worry the metals with his teeth. This was exaggerated, but gave a sense of their destructive energy which kept four Turkish labour battalions constantly busy patching up after them.

After greetings and exchange of news Hornby passed on and Lawrence's party continued the march over the lava desert. On this eighth day of their journey they camped in a damp valley full of thorny brushwood, which was, however, too bitter for the camels to feed on. But they ran about tearing up the bushes and heaping them on a big bonfire, where they baked bread. When the fire was hot, out wriggled a large black snake which must have been gathered, torpid, with the twigs. The ninth day's journey was still over long miles of lava broken with sandstone, a dead, weary, ghostly land without pasture. The camels were nearly spent.

At last the lava ended and they came to an open plain of fine scrub and golden sand with green bushes scattered over it. There were a few water-holes scooped by someone after the rainstorm of three weeks before. By these they camped, and drove the unloaded camels out to feed. There was an alarm when a dozen mounted men rode up from the direction of the railway and began firing at the herdsmen, but the party at the camp ran at once to the nearest mounds and rocks, shouting, and began firing too. The raiders, whoever they were, galloped off in alarm. Auda thought that they were a patrol of the Shammar tribe.

Daud and Farraj were proving good servants; they were brave and cheerful, rode well, worked willingly. They spent much time attending to Lawrence's camel which had the mange very badly on its face; having no proper ointment they rubbed in butter, which was a slight relief for the intolerable itch. This tenth day's journey brought the party to the railway which they had to cross near a station called Dizad. It ran in a long

valley. They happened on a deserted stretch of line and were much relieved, because Sharraf had warned them of constant Turkish patrols of mule-mounted men, camel-corps and trolleys carrying machine-guns. There was good pasture on both sides of the line, and the riding-camels were allowed to graze for a few minutes while Lawrence and the Ageyl began fixing gun-cotton and gelatine charges to the rails. The camels were then caught again and taken on to safety while the fuses of the charges were lighted in proper order: the hollow valley echoed with the bursts. This was Auda's first experience of dynamite, and he improvised some verses in praise of its power and glory. Then they cut three telegraph-wires, tied the free ends to the saddles of six riding-camels and drove the astonished team far across the valley with the growing weight of twanging wire and snapped poles dragging after them. When the camels could pull no more, the tangle was cut loose. They rode on in the growing dusk until the country, with its switchback of rock ridges, was too difficult to be crossed safely in the dark by weak camels. They halted, but no fire was lit for fear of alarming the Turks who, roused by the noise of the explosions, could be heard in the block-houses all along the line shouting loudly and shooting at shadows.

The next morning they left the rocky country behind and found themselves on a great desert, which was named 'The Desolate.' Here there were no tracks of gazelle, no lizards, rats or even birds. There was a hot wind blowing with a furnace-taste and, as the day went on and the sun rose, it blew stronger. By noon it was half a gale. The Arabs drew their headcloths tightly across their faces to keep the stinging sand from wearing open the sun-chapped skin into painful wounds. Lawrence's throat was so dry that he could not eat for three days after without pain. By sunset they had gone

fifty miles and came then to a valley full of scrub as dry as dead wood. The party dismounted wearily and gathered armfuls to build a great fire to show the rest of the party, from whom they had got separated the previous day after crossing the railway, where they were halting. When there was a fine heap gathered together they found that nobody had any matches. However, the main body came up an hour later, and that night they set sentries to watch because it was a district over which raiding parties frequently passed. They gave the camels the whole night for their grazing.

Noon of the twelfth day brought them to the place towards which they had been heading, an ancient stone well about thirty feet deep. The water was plentiful but rather brackish and soon grew foul when kept in a water-skin. On the thirteenth day out the sun was hotter than ever: at midday Auda and his nephew Zaal rode out hunting towards a green-looking stretch of country while the rest of the party rested in the shade under some cliffs. The hunters soon returned, each with a gazelle. Bread had been baked the day before at the well, and they had water in their skins, so they made a feast of it. On the fourteenth day they rode over monotonous glittering sand and over worse stretches of polished mud, often miles square and white as paper, which reflected back the sun until the eyes were tortured even through closed eyelids. It was not a steady pain but ebbed and flowed, piling up to an agony until the rider nearly swooned; then, falling away for a moment gave him time to get a new capacity for suffering. That night they baked bread; Lawrence gave half his share to his camel which was very tired and hungry. She was a pedigree camel given to Feisal by his father who had her as a gift from the Emir Ibn Saud of the Central Oases. The best camels were she-camels: they were better tempered, less noisy and more comfortable to

ride. They would go on marching long after they were worn out, indeed until they fell dead in their tracks of exhaustion: whereas the males when they grew tired would roar and fling themselves down, and die unnecessarily from sheer rage.

The fifteenth day was an anxious one: there was no water left, and another hot wind would delay them a third day in the desert. They had therefore started long before dawn over a huge plain strewn with brown flints which cut the camels' feet badly and soon set them limping. In the distance they saw puffs of dust. Auda said 'Ostriches,' and presently a man rode up with two great eggs. They decided to breakfast on these, but there was no more fuel than a wisp or two of grass. However, Lawrence opened a packet of blasting gelatine and shredded it carefully on the lighted grass, over which the eggs were propped on stones. Nasir and Nesib the Syrian stopped to scoff. Auda took his silver-hilted dagger and chipped the top of the first egg. A terrible stink arose and everyone ran out of range. The second egg was fresh enough and hard as a stone. They dug out the meat with the dagger, using flints for plates. Even Nasir, who never before in his life had fallen so low as to eat eggs – eggs were counted as paupers' food in Arabia – was persuaded to take his share. Later oryx were seen, the rare Arabian deer, with long slender horns and white bellies, which are the origin of the unicorn legend. Auda's men stalked them: they ran a little but, being unaccustomed to man, stopped still out of curiosity, and only ran away again when it was too late.

The Ageyl were dismounted and leading their camels for fear that if the wind blew stronger some of them would be dead before evening. Lawrence suddenly noticed that one of his men, a yellow-faced fellow called Gasim from the town of Maan, who had fled to the desert after killing a Turkish tax-gatherer, was not with

the rest. The Ageyl thought that he was with Auda's Howeitat, but when Lawrence went forward he found Gasim's camel riderless, with Gasim's rifle and food on it: it dawned on the party that Gasim was lost, probably miles back. He could not keep up with the caravan on foot, and the heat-mirage was so bad that the caravan was invisible two miles away, and the ground was so hard that it left no tracks. The Ageyl did not care much what happened to Gasim; he was a stranger and surly, lazy and ill-natured. Possibly someone in the party had owed him a grudge and paid it; or possibly he had dozed in the saddle and fallen off. His road-companion, a Syrian peasant called Mohammed, whose duty it was to look after him, had a foundered camel and knew nothing of the desert; it would be death for him to turn back. The Howeitat would have gone in search, but they were lost in the mirage, hunting or scouting. The Ageyl were so clannish that they would only put themselves out for each other. Lawrence had to go himself. If he shirked the duty it would make a bad impression on the men.

He turned his camel round and forced her grunting and moaning with unhappiness past the long line of her friends, into the emptiness behind. He was in no heroic temper; he was furious with his other servants for their indifference, and particularly with Gasim, a grumbling brutal fellow whose engagement he had much regretted. It seemed absurd to risk his life and all it meant to the Arab Revolt for a single worthless man. He had been keeping direction throughout the march with an oil-compass and hoped by its help to return nearly to that day's starting-place seventeen miles behind. He passed some shallow pits with sand in them and rode across these so that the camel tracks would show in them and mark the way for his return. After an hour and a half's ride he saw a figure, or a bush, or at least something

black ahead of him in the mirage. He turned his camel's head towards it, and saw that it was Gasim. He called and Gasim stood confusedly, nearly blinded and silly, with his arms held out to Lawrence and his black mouth gaping. Lawrence gave him water, a gift of the Ageyl, the last that they had, and he spilled it madly over his face and breast in his haste to drink. He stopped babbling and began to wail out his sorrows. Lawrence sat him, pillion, on the camel's rump and turned about. The camel seemed relieved at the turn and moved forward well.

Lawrence went back by his compass course so accurately that he often found the old tracks that he had made in the pits. The camel began to stride forward freely, and he was glad at this sign of her reserve strength. Gasim was moaning about the pain and terror and thirst; Lawrence told him to stop, but he would not and sat huddled loosely so that at each step of the camel he bumped down on her hind-quarters. This and his crying spurred her to greater speed. Lawrence was afraid that she might founder, and again told him to stop, but Gasim only screamed the louder. Then Lawrence struck him and swore that if he made another sound he would be pushed off and abandoned. He kept quiet then. After four miles a black bubble appeared in the mirage, bouncing about. Later it broke into three and Lawrence wondered if they were enemies. A minute later he recognized Auda with two of Nasir's men, who had come back to look for him. Lawrence yelled jests and scoffs at them for abandoning a friend in the desert. Auda pulled at his beard and grumbled that had he been present Lawrence would never have gone back. Gasim was transferred to another rider's camel with insults. As they went forward Auda said, 'For that thing not worth the price of a camel. . . .' Lawrence interrupted: 'Not worth half a crown,' and

Auda, laughing, rode up to Gasim, struck him sharply and made him, like a parrot, repeat his price. What had happened, apparently, was that Gasim had dismounted for something or other that morning, and sitting down had gone to sleep.

An hour later they caught up the caravan and towards evening they reached Sirhan, the chain of pastures and wells running up towards Syria. There among sandhills grown with tamarisk they halted. They had no water yet, but 'The Desolate' was crossed and they knew that they would get some the next day, so they rested the whole night and lit bonfires for the Emir of the Ruwalla's slave who had been with the caravan and had disappeared the same day. Nobody was anxious for him, for he had a camel and knew the country. He might be riding direct to Jauf, the capital of the Emir Nuri, to earn the reward of first news that the party was coming with gifts. However, he did not ride in that night or next day, and months afterwards the Emir told Lawrence that the man's dried body had lately been found lying beside his unplundered camel far out in the wilderness. He must have got lost in the mirage and wandered until his camel broke down, and there died of thirst and heat. Not a long death – the very strongest man would die on the second day in this summer season – but very painful. Fear and panic tore at the brain, and in an hour or two reduced the bravest man to a babbling lunatic; then the sun killed him. Lawrence himself learned to stand thirst as well as any of the Bedouin. He noticed that they did not drink on the march and learned to do as they did – to drink deeply at the wells and make it last, if need be, for two or three days. Only once in all his journeys did he get really ill from thirst.

The next day, the sixteenth of their journey, they came to the wells of Arfaja, grown about with a sweet-

smelling bush after which the place was named. The water was creamy to the touch, with a strong smell and brackish taste: it soon went bad in the water-skins. There was plenty of grazing for the camels, so they stayed a day and sent scouts to the southernmost well of Sirhan to inquire for news of Auda's Howeitat, in search of whom they came. If they were not in that direction they would be to the north, and by marching up Sirhan the party could not fail to find them.

There was an alarm at the wells when a Shammar patrol of three men was seen hiding among the bushes. Mohammed el Dheilan, Auda's cousin and second man of the clan, went after them with a few men, but did not press the chase because of the weakness of his camels. He was about thirty-eight years old, tall, strong and active; richer because less generous than Auda, with landed property and a little house at Maan. Under his influence the Howeitat war-parties would ride out delicately with sunshades and bottles of mineral-water. He was the brain of the clan and directed its politics.

Lawrence was taking coffee that night, sitting at the camp-fire with the Ageyl and Mohammed el Dheilan. While the coffee-beans were being pounded in the mortar (with three grains of cardamom seed for flavouring) and boiled and strained through a palm-fibre mat, and they were talking about the Revolt, suddenly a volley rang out and one of the Ageyl fell screaming. Instantly Mohammed el Dheilan quenched the fire with a kick of his foot that covered it with sand. The coffee party scattered to collect rifles and shot back vigorously. The raiders, a party of perhaps twenty, were surprised at the resistance and made off. The wounded man soon died. It was most disheartening to be troubled by inter-Arab warfare when all efforts should be concentrated on fighting the Turks.

The seventeenth and eighteenth days passed without

danger as they rode from oasis to oasis. Nesib and Zeki the Syrians were planning works of plantation and reclamation here for the Arab Government to undertake when it was at last established. It was typical of Syrian townsmen to plan wonderful schemes far ahead and leave present responsibilities to others. Some days before, Lawrence had said: 'Zeki, your camel is mangy.' 'Alas,' he agreed, 'but in the evening we shall make haste to dress her skin with ointment.' The following day Lawrence mentioned mange again and Zeki said that it had given him an idea. When Damascus was in Arab hands, he would have a Government Veterinary Department for the care of camels, horses, donkeys, even sheep and goats, with a staff of skilled surgeons. Central hospitals with students learning the business would be founded in four districts. There would be travelling inspectors, research laboratories and so on. . . . But his camel had not been treated yet.

The next day the talk went back to mange and Lawrence chaffed them about their schemes: but they began talking of stud-farms for improving the breeds of animals. On the sixth day the camel died. Zeki said: 'Yes, because you did not dress her.' Auda, Nasir and the rest kept their beasts going by constant care: they might perhaps survive until they reached a tribe that had proper remedies.

On this eighteenth day they met a Howeitat herdsman who guided them to the camp of one of the chiefs. The first part of the journey was happily over and the gold and explosives were safe. A council was held and it was decided to present six thousand pounds to Nuri by whose permission the Howeitat were here in Sirhan; Nuri would probably allow them to stop a few days longer and enrol volunteers, and when they moved off would protect the Howeitat families and tents and herds. Auda decided to go to Nuri on this embassy, be-

cause he was a friend. Nuri was too near and too powerful a neighbour for Auda to quarrel with, however great his delight in war, and the two men bore with each other's oddities in patient friendliness. Auda would explain to Nuri what he, Nasir and Lawrence hoped to do, and say that Feisal wished him to make a public demonstration of goodwill towards the Turks. Only by these means could he cover the advance to Akaba while still keeping the Turks favourably disposed. Feisal knew that Nuri was at the Turks' mercy still; they could blockade his province from the north. So Auda went off with six bags of gold and said that he would rouse all his clan, the Abu Tayi Howeitat, on the way. He would be back soon.

Meanwhile the local families promised unlimited hospitality, and Nasir, Lawrence, Nesib, Zeki and the rest were bound to accept it. Every morning they had to go to a different guest-tent and eat an enormous meal. About fifty men were present at each of these feasts and the food was always served on the same enormous copper dish, five feet across, which was lent from host to host and belonged really to Auda. It was always the same boiled mutton and rice, two or three whole sheep making a pyramid of meat in the middle with an embankment of rice all round, a foot wide and six inches deep, filled with legs and ribs of mutton. In the very centre were the boiled sheeps' heads propped upright with flapping ears and jaws pulled open to show the teeth. Cauldrons of boiling fat, full of bits of liver, intestines, skin, odd scraps of meat, were poured over the great dish until it began to overflow on the ground; and at this sign the host called them all to eat. They would rise with good-mannered shyness and crowd about the bowl, twenty-two at a time, each man kneeling on one knee.

Taking their time from Nasir, the most honourable

man of the company, they rolled up their right sleeves, said grace and dipped together with their fingers. Only the right hand might be used, for good manners. Lawrence always dipped cautiously; his fingers could hardly bear the hot fat. Nobody was allowed to talk, for it was an insult to the host not to appear to be very hungry indeed, eating at top speed. The host himself stood by and encouraged their appetites as they dipped, tore and gobbled. At last eating gradually slackened and each man crouched with his elbow on his knee, the hand hanging down from the wrist to drip over the edge of the tray. When all had finished Nasir cleared his throat for a signal and they rose together in haste, muttering, 'God requite it to you, host,' and then made room for the next twenty-two men. The more dainty eaters wiped the grease off their hands on a flap of the roof-cloth intended for this purpose. Then sighingly all sat down on carpets, while slaves splashed water over their hands and the tribal cake of soap went round. When the last man had eaten and coffee had been served, the guests remounted with a quiet blessing. Instantly the children would rush for what was left, and tear the gnawed bones from one another; some would escape with valuable pieces, to eat them safely behind a distant bush, the dogs yapping about finishing what was left. Nesib and Zeki soon broke down under this continual feeding, not being used to desert hospitality, so Nasir and Lawrence had to go out twice a day for a week and eat for the honour of Feisal.

On May the thirtieth they went forward again in company with the whole of the Abu Tayi; it was the first time that Lawrence had ever taken part in the march routine of a Bedouin tribe. There was no apparent order, but the caravan advanced simultaneously on a wide front, each family making a self-contained party. The men were on riding-camels; the black goat-

hair tents and the howdahs in which the women were hidden were carried on the baggage-camels. Farraj and Daud were behaving with more than usual mischief in this care-free atmosphere. They rode about leaving a trail of practical jokes behind them. Particularly they made jokes about snakes. Sirhan was visited that summer by a plague of snakes – horned vipers, puff-adders, cobras and black snakes. By night movement was dangerous and at last the party learned to beat the bushes with sticks as they walked. It was dangerous to draw water after dark, for snakes swam in the pools or gathered in clusters on their brinks. Twice puff-adders invaded the coffee-hearth, twisting among the seated men.

Lawrence's party of fifty killed about twenty snakes daily. Seven men were bitten. Three died, four recovered after great fear and pain. The Howeitat treatment was to bind up the bite with snake-skin plaster and read chapters of the Koran to the patient until he died. They also pulled on thick blue-tasselled red ankle-boots from Damascus over their feet when they went out at night. The snakes loved warmth and at night would lie beside the sleepers under or on the blankets: so great care was taken in getting up each morning. The constant danger was getting on everyone's nerves except Farraj's and Daud's. They thought it very witty to raise false alarms and give furious beatings to harmless twigs and roots: at last Lawrence at a noonday halt forbade them ever again to call out 'Snakes!' About an hour later, sitting on the sand, he noticed them smiling and nudging one another. His glance idly followed theirs to a bush close by where lay coiled a brown snake, about to strike at him.

He threw himself to one side and called out to another of his men, who jumped at the snake with a riding-cane and killed it. Lawrence then told him to give the boys

half a dozen strokes with the cane to teach them not to take things too literally at his expense. Nasir, dozing beside Lawrence, woke up shouting: 'And six more from me!' Nesib and Zeki and the rest who had all suffered from the boys' bad sense of humour called out for more punishment still. However, Lawrence saved Farraj and Daud from the full weight of their companions' anger; instead he proclaimed them moral outcasts and set them to gather sticks and draw water under the charge of the women, the greatest disgrace for sixteen-year-olds who counted themselves men.

The tribe moved on from well to well – the water always brackish – through a landscape of barren palms and bushes which were no use for grazing or firewood and only served to harbour snakes. At last they reached a place called Ageila where they came on a village of tents, and out rode Auda to meet them. He had a strong escort with him of Ruwalla horsemen, which showed that he had had success with Nuri. The Ruwalla, bareheaded and yelling, with brandished spears and wild firing of rifles and revolvers, welcomed the party to Nuri's empty house.

Here they stopped, pitched their tents, and received deputations from the clans and gifts of ostrich eggs, Damascus dainties, camels and scraggy horses. Three men were set to make coffee for the visitors, who came in to Nasir as Feisal's deputy and took the oath of allegiance to the Arab movement, promising to obey Nasir and follow him. Their presents included an unintentional one of lice; so that long before sunset Nasir and Lawrence were nearly mad with irritation. Auda had a stiff left arm due to an old wound, but experience had taught him how to poke a camel-stick up his left sleeve and turn it round and round against his ribs, which relieved the itch a good deal.

Nebk was the place decided upon for a rallying

ground, it had plentiful water and some grazing. Here Nasir and Auda sat down for days to discuss together how to enrol the volunteers and prepare the road to Akaba, now about a hundred and eighty miles to the west. This left Nesib, Zeki and Lawrence at leisure. As usual the Syrians let their imagination run ahead of them. In their enthusiasm they forgot all about Akaba and their immediate purpose, and spoke of marching straight to Damascus, rousing the Druse and Shaalan Arabs on the way. The Turks would be taken by surprise and the final objective won without troubling about the steps between.

This was absurd. There was a Turkish army massing at Aleppo to recover Mesopotamia, which could be rushed down to Damascus. Feisal was still in Wejh. The British were held up on the wrong side of Gaza. If Damascus should be taken now by Nasir he would be left unsupported, without resources or organization, without even a line of communication with his friends. But Nesib was infatuated with his idea, and Lawrence could only stop him by intrigue. So he went to Auda and told him that if Damascus were made the new objective, the credit and spoils would go to Nuri and not him; he went to Nasir and used the friendship between them to keep him on the Akaba plan and also flattered Nasir's distinguished birth at the expense of Nesib's, a Damascene of doubtful ancestry. This was sordid but necessary. For Damascus, even if captured by surprise, could not be held six weeks; the British at Gaza could not attack at a moment's notice, nor would transport be available for a landing at Beyrout. And a set-back at Damascus would end the rebellion: rebellions that stand still or go back are always doomed. Akaba must be taken first.

Fortunately, Auda and Nasir listened to Lawrence, but Nesib decided to go off with Zeki to the Druse

mountains to prepare the way for his great Damascus scheme. The gold that Feisal had shared out to him was not enough for his purpose, so he asked Lawrence for a promise of more if he raised a separate movement in Syria under his own leadership. Lawrence knew that he could not do this, so promised Nesib that, if he now lent Nasir some of his gold to help him reach Akaba, funds would be got together there for the Syrian movement. He agreed, and Nasir was glad of two unexpected bags of gold for the payment of new volunteers. Nesib went off optimistically: Lawrence knew that he could do no harm with the little money that he had with him, and by talking too much might mislead the Turks into thinking that an immediate attack really was intended on Damascus.

What follows next is the brief and unsatisfactory story of what seems to have been the maddest and most dangerous adventure undertaken by any man in the whole course of the World War: a four-hundred-mile tour through the Turks' country with visits to their key-positions, without any disguise but the unbelievable folly of the journey. Lawrence decided to visit Damascus and the railway to the north of it. The exact account of it he has never given, and I have been unable to piece it together accurately from the casual fragments which he has from time to time given his friends. But the motive of the journey seems clear, and the fact of it is beyond dispute. At Nebk, Lawrence had time to think about his own part in the Revolt, and was not pleased with it. He began to see clearly things that he had been hitherto content to put into the background.

First of all, he was more or less an Englishman and bound to the hope of staving off his country's defeat. Successful war in the East, with the present deadlock in the West, might turn the scale and save further slaugh-

ter. Next, he was an Arab by adoption: the tribes trusted and loved him, and he was bound to do his honourable best for them. The Arabs could help the British to success while fighting their own war for freedom. So far, so good, but then came the difficulty. The Revolt had begun on false pretences. The British Government, through the High Commissioner of Egypt, had agreed to Sherif Hussein's demand for Arab freedom not only in Arabia but in parts of Syria and Mesopotamia, 'saving the interests of our ally France.' This clause concealed the secret Sykes-Picot treaty between England, France and Russia, in which it was agreed to annex some of the promised areas and establish 'spheres of influence' over the rest: in fact there was no genuine freedom possible. The High Commissioner had not been told beforehand of this treaty and so the Sherif did not know about it either. What apparently had happened was that the Foreign Office had two departments, each responsible for one of these agreements, and neither had taken the other into proper confidence. The High Commissioner, it may be noted, when instructed by the Government to make the agreement, had sent a strongly worded message of warning. He had said that in helping the Nationalist cause in Arabia a most dangerous thing was being done. Freedom for the Arabs might grow one day into a Frankenstein's monster; and he urged that great care should be taken to deal honourably with the Arab leaders; particularly he recommended that a single Government Department should be entrusted with all negotiations.

The Russian revolution took place in the spring of 1917, and the Bolsheviki published the secret treaty, copies of which the Turks sent about where they would do harm to England. Nuri had just had a copy sent him and confronted Lawrence with it; it was a great shock to Lawrence to be asked which of two contradic-

tory pledges was to be believed. Lawrence did not know what to answer; he felt that the most honourable thing to do would be to send the Arabs home, and yet perhaps only by Arab help could the war in the East be won. So he said that England kept her word in letter and spirit, and that the later pledge cancelled the former treaty. This comforted Nuri, and the Arabs thereafter trusted Lawrence and fought finely with him: but instead of being proud he was bitterly ashamed of his deception. Later, he quieted his conscience as well as he might by telling Feisal all he knew and by refusing all decorations, rank and moneys that his part in the Revolt brought him personally. He would make the Revolt so well-armed a success that the Powers could not in honour or common sense rob the Arabs of what they had won: and he would fight another battle for the Arab Cause in the Council Chamber after the War ended.

But this was not all. He knew now that the War was entering another stage. In Syria the reputation of England was powerful and the reputation of the Bedouin leaders and of Mecca was low. He was the only man who, knowing the Syrians from before the War and having the confidence of the Arabians and being a representative of England, could carry the Revolt successfully north. All the responsibility fell on him. Was he strong enough to undertake it? He never had counted himself a man of action; books and maps were more in his line and he had left the Cairo office only under protest. And, again, towards what freedom was he leading the Arabs? A Confederation of Arab States, even if such could be founded against the wishes of France and England, would be necessarily the inheritor of the Turkish Empire. Town Syrians like Nesib and Zeki would run these states: their Governments might be more enterprising than the Turkish Government, but

would be as corrupt; and the innocence and idealism of the desert Arabs, on whose account alone he hoped for freedom, would be infected by the filth of Damascus or Basra. Was the gift of freedom worth giving?

In this tangle of thought and shame he seems to have decided in Bedouin style to throw himself on the mercy of fate. He would go out on this mad ride and, so far from taking precautions, would expose himself to every possible danger. If the Turks were so foolish as to let him get back safely, they must pay the penalty of their folly, for he would carry the Revolt through to a finish with no more qualms. If they caught him, on the other hand, the Revolt would get no farther than the deserts of Arabia.

On June the third, 1917, in the fifth week of the journey from Wejh, he started off northward with a few of his bodyguard and was away a fortnight. How he reached Damascus – he admits the visit – is not known, but it is possible that he went by way of the Druse mountains and the Lebanon, there visiting his friends the Christian Syrians, and that he turned south near Baalbek. He is said to have been convoyed by relays of local tribesmen, beginning with the Ruwalla, and changing them at each tribal boundary. Apparently none of his own men nor of Nasir's completed the journey with him. He is said to have been franked by private letters of Feisal's, but, as I say, nothing certain is known of his immediate purpose, his route or the results of his journey. At Ras Baalbek, south of Hama, considerably beyond Damascus and Baalbek, the farthest points associated by rumour with his journey, there was an important bridge over which all the railway traffic between Constantinople and Syria passed. An intercepted enemy report of that month mentions the destruction of the bridge and one hesitates to regard this as a coincidence; yet its demolition must have

meant the use of a great deal of explosive and Lawrence appears to have ridden light.

Of the Damascus visit little more than negative information can be given. Lawrence neither dined, lunched nor breakfasted with Ali Riza Pasha the Governor (as Mr. Lowell Thomas and others have stated), nor did he then or at any time since set eyes on Yasin, another Arab patriot. But it seems that he made arrangements with prominent members of the Freedom Committee in Damascus for the action to be taken when the Turks were finally expelled. There is a circumstantial story current that he rode into Damascus in English uniform on a camel and that seeing a notice pasted up offering a large reward for the capture alive or dead of 'El Orens, Destroyer of Railways,' with a portrait at the top, he decided to put the matter to a supreme test; he sat down to coffee under one of these notices: but, nobody connecting the man and the portrait, after an hour or two he went on. That while he was in the city the men with him camped outside the walls in a cherry orchard: that there they were disturbed by some inquisitive Turkish policemen who, however, lie buried under the cherry trees. The poster story at least is untrue: none such were put up, nor was any camera-portrait of enlargeable size available. On the positive side, Lawrence has told me that he was never disguised during this ride, either as a woman or as anything else, but instead put off necessary visits to dangerous places until after darkness had set in. In the dark his figure could not be distinguished from that of any other Arab of the desert fringe. A reference that he once made to his usually wearing British uniform when visiting enemy camps may well refer to a practice begun on this ride. Whether or no he regarded Damascus as a 'dangerous place' I cannot say. Other picturesque incidents reported of this journey are as demonstrably untrue as

the poster story. For instance, Mr. Lowell Thomas's account of his attempted visit to a military academy at Baalbek is disproved by there not having been a military academy there – only an infantry depot and a training camp. It is possible, though, that he visited these. Nor did he enter Rayak junction ('for the purpose of inspecting the railway repair shops' – another story) during the War. He seems, however, to have visited one or more of the bridges over the River Yarmuk, of which an account will be given in a later chapter, and to have been at Ziza, the headquarters of the Beni Sakhr tribe.

At all events, Lawrence's reticence about this ride is deliberate and based on private reasons, and it is my opinion that he has found mystification and perhaps statements deliberately misleading or contradictory the best way to hide the truth of what really happened, if anything of any serious importance did happen. His return journey was possibly by a Yarmuk bridge and across the Deraa-Amman railway to Azrak, and so to Nebk. I have marked the route, in the map, with dots to show my uncertainty. The next day they rode off making for Bair, sixty miles away in the direction of Akaba. There were five hundred in the party now and everyone was happy and confident.

Auda took Lawrence ahead: he wished to visit the grave of his favourite son, Annad, which was at Bair. Annad had been waylaid by his cousins of the Motalga tribe and fought them, one against five, until he was killed; Auda was bringing Lawrence to hear him mourn for the dead. As they rode down a slope to the grave, they were astonished to see smoke wreathing about the wells. They rode up carefully and found that the well-top had been shattered: looking down they found that the stone sides had been stripped and split and the shaft choked. Auda said, 'This is done by the Jazi.' They

went to see another well beyond: it was also ruined. So was a third. There was a smell of dynamite in the air. It was clear that the Turks had got wind of their coming, and had possibly also raided the wells at Jefer where they had planned to concentrate before the attack. But in any case they could not reach Jefer without the Bair water. There was still, however, a fourth well some way off. They visited this rather hopelessly, and were delighted to find it undamaged. It was a well belonging to the Jazi tribe and that it had been spared seemed to prove that Auda was right. But one well was not enough for five hundred camels. So it was necessary to open the least damaged of the others. Lawrence went down in a bucket and found that a set of charges fixed lower in the shaft had not all been exploded: the Turkish engineers had evidently been surprised before they had time to finish their work. So he carefully unpacked the charges and took them up with him. Soon they had two fit wells and a clear profit of thirty pounds of Nobel dynamite.

They decided to stay a week at Bair and meanwhile sent off a party to buy flour in the villages near the Dead Sea – it would be back in five or six days – and a party to inquire about the wells at Jefer. If Jefer was not spoilt for them they would cross the railway below Maan and seize the great pass that led down from the plateau of Maan to the red sandstone plain of Guweira. To hold this pass they would have to capture Aba el Lissan, sixteen miles from Maan, where was a large spring of water; the garrison was small and they should be able to rush it. They could then hold the road to Akaba from Maan and the Turkish posts along it would have to surrender within a week for want of food; but before then the hill-tribes would probably have risen in sympathy and wiped them out.

It was important not to frighten the Turks at Maan

before the attack began on Aba el Lissan, but the destruction of the Bair wells showed that the news of the Howeitat march had reached them. The only thing to do was to pretend that Akaba was not the place aimed at, but that they were driving farther north. Nuri had been misleading the Turks into thinking this and Newcombe had allowed some official papers to be stolen from him at Wejh in which was a plan for turning north at Jefer and attacking Damascus and Aleppo. Nesib was in Druse country preaching revolt, and Lawrence, in his Damascus ride, had himself, it seems, hinted to the Druse tribes that they would soon have the Arab Army there. The Turks were taken in by all this, and made preparations to resist the northern advance by strengthening their garrisons.

To make the plan seem more likely still, Lawrence decided to raid the line about a hundred and twenty miles north near Deraa. He went with Zaal and a hundred and ten chosen men and they rode hard in six-hour spells, with one- or two-hour intervals, day and night. It was a most eventful trip for Lawrence, because the raid was carried out on the conventional lines of a tribal raid, the first in which he or possibly any Westerner had ever taken part. On the second afternoon they reached a Circassian village north of Amman in Transjordan; there was a big bridge not far from here, suitable to be destroyed. Lawrence and Zaal walked down in the evening to have a look at it and found the Turks there in force. They saw that four arches of the bridge had been washed away by the spring flood and the line was laid on a temporary structure while the Turks repaired the arches. It was useless to bother about a bridge already in ruins; so they decided to try to blow up a train instead. This would attract more attention than a bridge, and the Turks would think that the main body of the forces was at Azrak in Sirhan, fifty miles to the

east. As they rode forward over a flat plain in the dark they heard a rumble and along came a train at great speed. If Lawrence had had two minutes' warning he could have blown the engine to scrap-iron, but it rushed past and was gone. At dawn they found an ideal ambush, an amphitheatre of rock with pasture for the camels, hidden from the railway which curved round it, and crowned with a ruined Arab watch-tower from which Lawrence could get a fine view of the line. He decided to lay a mine that night. However, in the middle of the morning, a force of a hundred and fifty Turkish cavalry, regulars, were seen riding from the north directly towards the hill. The Arabs slipped out of sight just in time and the Turks went by. The place was called Minifer.

The Arabs went on to another hill, from where they saw a number of black hair-tents, summer quarters of a tribe of friendly Syrian peasants. Zaal sent messengers who brought back a gift of bread. Lawrence was glad of this, for their own flour had long been exhausted and they only carried parched corn with them, which they chewed. It was too hard for his teeth, so he had fasted for the last two days. The peasants promised to tell the Turks that the party had ridden off towards Azrak. After dark Lawrence and Zaal buried a big mine and waited for a train to pass. But none appeared that night or the next morning. Late in the afternoon a company of about two hundred mule-mounted Turks came up from the south. Zaal was for attacking them; a hundred men on camels suddenly charging down from higher ground could sweep double that number of lighter-mounted men off their feet. It would be a certain victory and they would capture not only the men but their valuable animals. Lawrence asked Zaal what the Arab casualties would be. Zaal thought five or six; Lawrence said that this was too many to lose. They had only one

main object, the capture of Akaba; and they were here to mislead the Turks into thinking that the main body was at Azrak, not for loot. They could not afford to lose a man until Akaba had fallen. Zaal agreed, but the Howeitat were furious at having to let the Turks escape; they wanted the mules. To watch the company file unsuspecting by at point-blank range was too much for the patience of one boy, a cousin of Auda's, who sprang forward shouting to attract the Turks' attention and compel a battle. Zaal rushed after him, caught him, threw him down and began bludgeoning him until Lawrence feared that his now very different cries would arouse the Turks, after all. But they did not hear.

Now, if the Howeitat had had their battle, there would have been no keeping them on the Akaba plan. They would have driven home their captured mules in triumph to the tents by way of Azrak and not have come back again until too late. As for the prisoners, Nasir could not have fed them, so that they would have had to be murdered, or else let go, in which case they would have revealed the raiding party's strength to the enemy. So the victory was let slip. But, what was even more disappointing, no train came for the rest of the day. So at night they returned to the line and blew up the most-curved rails they could find: these were chosen because the Turks would have to send all the way to Damascus for new ones. (This took the Turks three days and then the repair-train caught the mine that had been left behind and damaged its engine: so traffic stopped for three days more while the line was searched for traps. But of this they only learned later.)

They caught two Turkish deserters: one had been badly wounded while escaping and died soon afterwards; the other, though only wounded slightly, was very weak and feeble, his body so covered with bruises

and weals, the cause of his desertion, that he dared only lie on his face. The Arabs gave him the last of their bread and water and did what they could for him; which was little. When they had to go away at midnight to water their camels some miles off they were forced to leave him behind on the hill. He could not walk or ride and they had no carriage for him. So Lawrence put a notice on the line in French and German to explain where the poor fellow was and to say that he had been captured wounded, after a hard fight. They hoped by this means to save him from being shot when the Turks found him, but coming back to Minifer six months later they saw his skeleton lying on their old camping-ground.

The next morning, many miles away on the return journey, they were watering their camels at the same cisterns that they had used on the way out, when a young Circassian came in sight driving three cows. This was dangerous, he might give an alarm. So Zaal sent off the men who had been most eager for a fight the day before, to stalk him. He was captured, unharmed but frightened. Circassians were swaggering fellows but cowards, and this fellow was in a cringing terror. To give him a chance of recovering his self-respect Zaal set him to fight at daggers with one of the party, a Sherari tribesman who had been caught stealing on the march: but after a scratch the man threw himself down weeping. He was a nuisance. They did not want to kill him, but if they let him go he would give the alarm and put the horsemen of his village on their trail. If they tied him up here he would die of hunger – they had no food to leave with him. And anyhow there was no rope to spare.

At last the Sherari said that he would settle it for them without murder. So he looped the man's wrist to his saddle and trotted him off with the rest of the party for

the first hour: they were still near the railway but four miles from the village when the Sherari dismounted, stripped the Circassian of his outer garments and threw him down on his face. Lawrence wondered what was coming next; the Sherari then drew his dagger and cut the man deeply across the soles of his feet. The Circassian howled as if he were being killed. Then Lawrence understood. The man would be able to crawl to the railway on his hands and knees; it would take him about an hour, but his nakedness would keep him there in the shadow of the rocks until sunset. It was kinder than killing him, though he did not seem to be grateful.

Soon they came to a small station consisting of two stone buildings and crept within a hundred yards behind limestone rocks. They heard singing from one of the buildings, and a soldier drove out a flock of young sheep to pasture. The Arabs counted them hungrily, weary of a parched corn diet. The sheep settled the fate of the station. Zaal led a party of men round another side of the station and Lawrence saw him take very careful aim at the party of officers and officials sipping coffee in shaded chairs outside the ticket-office. He pressed the trigger; there was a crack and the fattest man slowly bowed in his chair and sank to the ground among his horrified friends. This was the signal for a volley and a rush. Zaal's men broke into the nearest building and began plundering; but the door of the other clanged to and rifles were fired from behind the steel shutters. Lawrence's party fired back, but soon saw that it was no good and stopped: so did the Turks and allowed the plundering to go on.

The sheep were driven off into the hills, where the camels were tied up, and the plundered building was splashed with paraffin and set on fire. Meanwhile the Ageyl were measuring out explosive and fixing charges; which were afterwards fired. A culvert, many rails and

a quarter of a mile of telegraph-wire were destroyed. The explosions scared the sheep and the knee-haltered camels who shook off the rope-hitches and scattered in all directions. It took three hours to recapture them, but fortunately the Turks did not attempt anything in the interval, and the whole party reached Bair safely at dawn without losing a man. They had had a grand feast of mutton on the way; twenty-four sheep eaten at a sitting by a hundred and ten men. Nothing was left, for the riding-camels were trained to like cooked meat and finished off the scraps. The only difficulty had been the skinning, for there was a shortage of knives, but they had used flints instead.

At Bair they found that Nasir had bought a week's flour and were glad to think that they might well take Akaba before starving again. That day a messenger came post-haste from the Emir Nuri to say that four hundred Turkish cavalry had started from Deraa to Sirhan in search of them. He had sent his nephew as a guide to mislead them by devious routes, so that men and horses were suffering terribly from thirst. They were now near Nebk. The Turkish Government would believe that the expedition was still in Sirhan until the cavalry returned, and that would be some days. So the coast was clear, especially since the Turks thought that the Bair wells had been utterly destroyed and that therefore Maan was safe. The Jefer wells had been also destroyed, and that settled it. But Lawrence wondered whether the destruction of the wells at Jefer had not been bungled too. A Howeitat chief who had been present, and was one of those who had sworn allegiance at Wejh, sent secretly to say that the King's Well (Auda's family property and the biggest of the wells) had been dynamited from above; but that he had heard the upper stones clap together and key over the shaft. They hoped this was so and rode forward on June the

twenty-eighth to find out, over a hard mud-plain blinding white with salt.

Jefer seemed hopeless; the seven wells were completely wrecked. However, they sounded around the King's Well and the ground rang hollow, so volunteers of the Ageyl began to dig away the earth outside. As they dug, the core of the well stood up in the hollow like a rough tower, and they carefully removed the stones until at last they knew that the report had been true; they could hear the mud fragments slipping between the stones and splashing many feet below. They worked hard, in relays, while the rest of the men sang to encourage them, promising rewards of gold when water was found. At sunset came a rush and rumble, followed by a splash and yells; the well was opened. The key of stones had given way and one of the Ageyl had fallen in and was swimming about trying not to drown. All night long they watered there, while a squad of Ageyl, singing in chorus, built up a new well-head. The earth was stamped in around this and the well was, in appearance at least, as good as ever. The Ageyl were rewarded by being feasted on a weak camel which had failed in the march that day.

From Jefer the next step was the pass of Aba el Lisan, where a Turkish block-house guarded the crest. A neighbouring clan of the Howeitat had promised to settle it, so picked men went from Jefer to help them. The Turks were not, however, taken by surprise; they manned their stone breastworks and drove the tribesmen off into cover. Thinking that this was only an ordinary tribal raid, they then sent a mounted party to take vengeance on the nearest Arab encampment. They found one old man, six women, and seven children there and cut their throats. The tribesmen only saw what was happening too late, but then furiously charged down from the hill across the return road of

the murderers and cut them off almost to a man. They next attacked the now weakly garrisoned block-house, carried it in their first angry rush and took no prisoners.

Hearing this news at Jefer the same day, Lawrence, Nasir, Auda and the rest went forward towards Aba el Lissan: striking the railway twenty miles south of Maan and blowing up a long stretch of it, including ten bridges. Lawrence had learned to destroy these at small expense by stuffing the drainage holes in the spandrels with five-pound charges of gelatine. The explosion brought down the arch, shattered the uprights, and stripped the side-walls. With short fuses it took only six minutes to finish each bridge. They continued their demolitions until all their explosive was gone and then struck westward towards Aba el Lissan, camping that evening about five miles from the railway on the Akaba side. Hardly had they finished baking their bread when three men galloped up to say that Aba el Lissan, the block-house, the pass and the command of the Akaba road were lost again. A large column of Turks, infantry and guns, had just arrived from Maan, and the Arabs at Aba el Lissan, disorganized as usual by victory, had run away. Lawrence learned later that this sudden move was an accident. A Turkish battalion from the Caucasus had arrived at Maan to relieve another that had been garrisoned there for some time; while it was still formed up at the station news arrived of fighting at Aba el Lissan and the battalion, with the addition of some mountain-guns carried on mules, was marched off at once to relieve the block-house. When the Turks climbed up to the pass they had found the place deserted, except for the vultures flying in slow uneasy rings above the block-house walls. The battalion commander was afraid that the sight would be too much for his troops, young conscripts who had never been on a

battlefield before, and led them downhill again to the roadside spring, where they encamped all night.

The news was startling and unwelcome. The Arabs started off again at once, eating the hot bread as they rode. Auda was in front, singing, and the men joined in with the vigour of an army moving into battle. They rode all night and came at dawn to the hill-crest overlooking the pass. Here the head-men of the tribe that had captured the block-house the day before were waiting for them, the blood still splashed on their anxious faces. It was decided to attack; unless the battalion were dislodged the dangers and trials of the last two months would go for nothing. And the Turks made this easy for them; they slept on in the valley while the Arabs surrounded them, seizing the crests of all the hills unobserved; and were caught in a trap.

At dawn the Arabs began sniping while Zaal and the horsemen rode to cut the Maan telegraph and telephone in the plain behind. The sniping went on all day. The Turks every now and then would make a sortie in one direction or another, but were soon driven back again to their position under some cliffs by the water spring. It was terribly hot on the hills, hotter than Lawrence had ever known it in Arabia, and the anxiety and constant moving made it worse. To make up for their small numbers they had to run behind the hill-crests from point to point to pretend to be more numerous than they really were. The sharp limestone ridges cut their naked feet, so that long before evening the more energetic men left a rusty print on the ground at every stride. Even some of the tough tribesmen broke down under the heat and had to be thrown under the shade of rocks to recover.

By noon the rifles had become so hot with shooting that they burned the Arabs' hands, and the rocks from behind which they aimed scorched their arms and

breasts, from which later the skin peeled off in sheets. They were very thirsty, but had little water and could not spare men to fetch more; so everyone went without rather than that a few should drink. The only consolation was that the valley was far hotter, and the Turks less used to heat than themselves. The mountain-guns were being constantly fired, which made the Arabs laugh: the little shells burst far behind the hill-crests, though to the Turkish gunners they seemed to be doing great damage.

Just after noon Lawrence himself broke down with something like a heat-stroke, and crawled into a hollow behind the ridge where there was a trickle of mud on the slope. He sucked up some moisture, making his sleeve a filter. Nasir joined him, panting, with cracked and bleeding lips, and then old Auda appeared striding along, his eyes bloodshot and staring, his face working with excitement. He grinned maliciously to see them lying there under the bank and croaked to Lawrence, 'Well, how is it with the Howeitat? All talk and no work?' Lawrence was angry with himself for his weakness and with everyone else. He spat back at Auda, 'By God, indeed they shoot a lot and hit a little!' Auda, pale and trembling with rage, tore his headcloth off and threw it on the ground. Then he ran back up the hill like a madman shouting to the men in his dreadful strained voice. They gathered together and scattered downhill past Lawrence. Lawrence was afraid that things were going wrong. He struggled up to Auda, who stood alone on the hill-top glaring at the enemy, but all that Auda would say was: 'Get your camel if you want to see the old man's work!' Nasir and Lawrence mounted; the Howeitat were riding to a lower part of the ridge, across the crest of which was an easy slope down to the valley; it ran to a point rather below the spring where the Turks were huddled. Behind the crest

they found four hundred camel-men massed, waiting. Lawrence asked where the horsemen were and was told: 'With Auda yonder.' At that moment yells and shots poured up from the valley. The Arabs kicked their camels to the crest and saw the fifty horsemen galloping at full speed down another slope, making straight for the Turks and shooting from the saddle. Two or three went down, but the rest thundered forward. The Turks hesitated, broke and ran.

'Come on!' Nasir screamed to Lawrence with his bloody mouth, and away down over the crest plunged the four hundred camels, heading off the Turkish flight. The Turks did not see them coming until too late: then they fired a few shots, but for the most part only shrieked and ran faster. Lawrence's racing camel stretched herself out and charged at such a speed that she soon outdistanced the rest, and he found himself alone among the Turks, firing wildly with his pistol. Suddenly the camel tripped and fell headlong. Since she was going something like thirty miles an hour, Lawrence was torn from the saddle and went hurtling through the air for a great distance. He landed with a crash that drove all the power and feeling from his body and lay there waiting for the Turks to kill him, or the camels to trample him.

After a long time he sat up and saw that the battle was over. His camel's body behind him had divided the charge into two streams; he looked at it and saw that the heavy bullet of the fifth shot that he had fired from his revolver was embedded at the back of its skull!

A few of the enemy got away, the gunners on their mules and a few mounted men and officers. There were only a hundred and sixty prisoners taken, many of them wounded, for the Howeitat were avenging yesterday's murder of their women and children. Three hundred dead and dying were scattered in the valley. Auda came

up on foot, his eyes mad with delight of battle, and the words bubbling incoherently from his mouth: 'Work, work, where are words? Work, bullets, Abu Tayi . . .' and he held up his shattered field-glasses, his pierced pistol-holster, and his leather sword-scabbard cut to ribbons. He had been the target of a volley which had killed his mare under him, but the six bullets through his clothes had not touched him. He told Lawrence later in confidence that thirteen years before he had bought a miniature Koran as an amulet. It had cost him one hundred and twenty pounds and he had never since been wounded. The book was a Glasgow photographic reproduction and was priced at eighteen-pence inside the cover; but nothing that the deadly Auda did might be laughed at. Mohammed al Dheilán was angry with Auda and Lawrence, calling them fools and saying that Lawrence was worse than Auda for insulting him and provoking the folly that might have killed them all. However, Lawrence could not regret his action, for the Arabs had only had two men killed and he would have been content to have lost many more. Time was of the greatest importance because of the food shortage, and this victory would frighten the little Turkish garrisons between Aba el Lissan and Akaba into quick surrender. As for Maan, prisoners told him that there were only two companies of Turks left in the town, not enough to defend it; much less to send reinforcements to Aba el Lissan.

The Howeitat then clamoured to be led to Maan, a magnificent place to loot, though the day's plunder should have satisfied them. However, Nasir and Auda helped Lawrence to restrain them; it would have been absurd to have gone there without supports, regulars, guns or communications, without gold even – for they were already issuing notes with promises to pay 'when Akaba is taken,' the first notes ever passed current in

Arabia – and no base nearer than Wejh, three hundred miles away. Yet it would be wise to alarm Maan further, so mounted men went north and captured two small garrison-villages between them and it; and news of this, and of the Aba el Lissan disaster, and of the capture of herds of convalescent army camels pasturing north of Maan by another of these raiding parties, all reached Maan together and caused a proper panic.

That night Lawrence experienced the shameful reaction after the victory: he went walking among the plundered dead with a sick mind; Auda called him away; they must leave the battlefield. Partly this was a superstitious fear of the ghosts of the dead, partly a fear of Turkish reinforcements and of neighbouring clans, his blood-enemies, who might catch his force disorganized and pay off old grudges. So they moved on into the hills and camped in a hollow sheltered from the wind. While the tired men slept, Nasir and Auda dictated letters to the Howeitat near Akaba telling them of the victory and asking them to besiege the Turkish posts in their district until the force arrived. At the same time one of the captured officers to whom they had been kind wrote a letter for them to the garrisons at Guweira, Kethera and other posts on the way, advising surrender.

The food had been exhausted and water was scarce, so the expedition had to make haste forward. Fortunately the chief Howeitat sheikh of the hill tribes, an old fox who had been balancing in his mind which side to take, was impressed by the victory and captured the Guweira garrison of a hundred and twenty men. The next post on the Akaba road refused to surrender, so they decided to attack it, and in irony assigned the honour to the old fox and his less weary tribesmen, advising him to attack after dark. It was a strong post commanding the valley and looked costly to take. The sheikh shrank from the task and made difficulties, pleading the full moon. Law-

rence promised that there would be no moon that night; by the greatest good luck he had noticed in his diary that an eclipse was due. So while the superstitious Turkish soldiers were firing rifles and clanging copper pots to frighten off the demon of darkness who was devouring their moon, the Arabs crept up and captured the place without loss.

They went on through the defiles and found post after post deserted. News came that the defenders had all been withdrawn to trenches four miles from Akaba, a magnificent position for beating off a landing from the sea, though facing the wrong way for an attack from inland. They were, it was said, only three hundred men and had little food (the Arabs were in the same fix), but were prepared to resist strongly. This was found to be true. The Arabs sent a summons to surrender by white flag and by prisoners, but the Turks shot at both; at last a little Turkish conscript said that he could arrange it. He came back an hour later with a message that the Turks would surrender in two days if help did not come from Maan. This was folly; the tribesmen could not be held back much longer and it might mean the massacre of every Turk and loss to the Arabs too. So the conscript was given a sovereign and Lawrence and one or two more walked down close to the trenches with him again, sending him in to fetch an officer to parley with them. After some hesitation one came, and, when Lawrence explained that the Arab forces were growing and tempers were short, agreed to surrender next morning. The next morning fighting broke out again, hundreds of hill-men having come in that night knowing nothing of the arrangement; but Nasir stopped it and the surrender went off quietly after all. There were now no more Turks left between them and the sea. They raced on to Akaba in a driving sandstorm and splashed into the sea on July the sixth, exactly two months after setting out from Wejh.

Chapter 6

AKABA was in ruins. Repeated bombardments by French and British warships had knocked the little town to pieces. To the Arabs it seemed hardly worth while taking at the cost of so much blood and pain and hunger. And hunger was still with them. They now had seven hundred Turkish prisoners to feed in addition to their original five hundred men and two thousand allies, no money (or any market to buy food in); and the last meal had been two days before. All that they had to eat was riding-camels, a most expensive form of food and a poor one. And dates. But this was July and the dates were still green. Raw, they tasted very nasty, and cooking made them no better. The only alternative to constant hunger was violent pains. The forty-two officer-prisoners were an intolerable nuisance. The colonel of the Turkish battalion at Aba el Lissan had been a difficulty ever since his capture, when Nasir had only just saved him from the fury of the tribesmen: the silly man was trying to restore the battle with a little pocket-pistol. Later he had grumbled at being given a quarter loaf of brown Turkish ration bread. Farraj and Daud had looted it for their master Lawrence, who divided it up among the four of them. The colonel asked was it a fit breakfast for a Turkish officer. Lawrence answered, certainly it was (he himself a British staff-officer had eaten his with relish), and he must expect to make it do for lunch and dinner as well and probably for to-morrow's breakfast, lunch and dinner too. The Turk also complained that one of the Arabs had insulted him with an

obscene Turkish word. Lawrence answered that the man must have learned it from one of his Turkish masters and was rendering to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's. At Akaba it was worse still: the officer-prisoners were disgusted when they found how unprovided their captors were: they thought it was only a fraud to annoy them and would not believe that Lawrence and Nasir had not all the delicacies of Cairo hidden somewhere in their saddle-bags.

In the evening, the first reaction after success having passed off, they thought of defence. Auda went back to Guweira, and three other defensive posts were set in a semicircle about Akaba. Lawrence decided to go to Egypt at once with the great news and ask for food, money and arms to be sent at once by sea as reward. He chose eight men to go with him, mostly Howeitat, on the best camels of the force. A bad ride was ahead of them, and it was difficult to decide whether to go gently, sparing the animals, in which case they might fail with hunger; or whether to ride hard, when they might break down with exhaustion or sore feet in mid-desert. Lawrence decided in the end to keep at a walk; if they could hold out, they would reach Suez in fifty hours. But in such cases the test of endurance is harder for the man than for the camel, and Lawrence was near the end of his strength, having ridden an average of fifty miles a day for the last month, with very little food. To make halts for cooking unnecessary they carried lumps of boiled camel and cooked dates in a rag behind their saddles.

The camels were trembling for weariness early in the night, for the road wound up across the Sinai hills with a gradient of one in three and a half. When they reached the top one camel had to be sent back as unfit for further travel. The others were allowed to graze for an hour. About midnight they reached Themed, the only wells

on the journey, watered the camels and drank themselves but did not stay many minutes. They rode all that night and when the sun rose gave the camels half an hour's grazing, then on again all day until sunset, when they halted for an hour. They rode all that second night at a mechanical walk, over hills, and when dawn came saw a melon-field sown in this no-man's-land between the armies by some adventurous Arab. They halted for an hour and cracked the unripe melons to cool their mouths, then again forward until Suez came in sight, or something that probably was Suez, a jumble of points bobbing about far away in the mirage. They reached great trench lines with forts and barbed wire, roads and railways; but they were all deserted and falling into decay; the war had long since moved on a hundred and fifty miles to the north-east. At last in the middle of the afternoon of the third day they arrived at the Suez Canal. They had ridden for forty-nine hours without sleep and with only four short halts and had come a hundred and sixty-eight miles. When it is remembered that they were tired men before they started, and that the camels were exhausted too, this must rank as a good ride, though Lawrence surpassed it himself later.

He found himself still on the wrong side of the Canal, and the garrison-post that he had aimed for was deserted – he did not know why, but learned later that there had been an outbreak of plague, so the troops were out camping in the uninfected desert. He found a telephone in a deserted hut and called up the Canal Headquarters. He was told that they were sorry but they couldn't take him across; there were no free boats; but next morning for sure they would send across and take him to the Quarantine Department (for he was now technically infectious). He tried again, explaining that he had urgent messages for Headquarters at Cairo, but he was rung off. Fortunately the telephone-exchange operator told him with

friendly oaths that it was no use talking to the Canal people, and put him through to a Major, the Embarkation officer at Suez. He was an old friend of the Revolt, who would catch Red Sea warships as they entered the harbour and make them unwillingly pile their decks with stores for Wejh or Yenbo. The Major understood at once the urgency of the matter and sent his own launch from the harbour to take Lawrence across, making him swear not to tell the Canal authorities, until after the War, of this invasion of their sacred waters. The men and camels were sent up the Canal for ten miles to a rest-camp for animals; he arranged rations for them there by telephone.

At Suez, where he arrived verminous and filthy, with his clothes sticking to his saddle-sores, he went to an hotel and had six iced drinks, a good dinner, a hot bath, and a comfortable bed. He appreciated this dull hotel-comfort after having in the last four desperate weeks, though not yet recovered from a severe illness, ridden fourteen hundred miles on camel-back through hostile country. They were weeks of little sleep, poor food, frequent fighting and never-ceasing anxiety at the hottest time of the year in one of the hottest countries of the world. Later he found that he weighed only seven stone, nine stone being his normal weight.

He went to Cairo by train on a permit-ticket given him by the Embarkation officer. A mixed party of Egyptian and British military police on the train was most suspicious of him. When he said that he was in the uniform of a staff-officer of the Sherif of Mecca they could not believe it. They looked at his bare feet, white silk robes, gold head-rope and dagger. 'What army, sir?' asked the sergeant. 'The Meccan army,' Lawrence answered. 'Never heard of it, don't know the uniform,' the sergeant said. 'Well,' said Lawrence, 'would you recognize the uniform of a Montenegrin dragoon?' This

beat the sergeant. Any Allied troops in uniform might travel without permits, and the police, though expected to recognize all the uniforms of every army, were not even sure who all the Allies were. Mecca might be the name of some new country that had joined in without their knowledge. They wired up the line and a perspiring intelligence-officer boarded the train near Ismailia to check the statements of this possible spy; he was very angry to find that he had been sent on a fool's errand.

At Ismailia all changed and waited on the platform for the Port Said-Cairo express. Another train had also just arrived and from it stepped a tall, determined-looking general in company with Admiral Wemyss, the Naval Commander-in-Chief, and two or three important staff-officers. They marched up and down the platform deep in talk. After awhile Lawrence caught the eye of a naval captain, who came over and spoke to him, wondering who he was. When the captain heard of the surprise capture of Akaba he was properly excited, promising to have a relief-ship sent there at once loaded with all the spare food in Suez. He would make immediate arrangements on his own responsibility so as not to disturb General Allenby. 'Allenby? what's he doing here?' asked Lawrence. 'Oh, he's Commander-in-Chief now.' This was most important news. Allenby's predecessor, who at first had been against the Revolt, had gradually been brought to realize its value to him, and in his last dispatches to London had written in praise of the Arabs and particularly of Feisal. But after the second battle of Gaza, which had been forced on him by orders from London against his better judgment and ended in defeat, he had been recalled. Lawrence wondered whether he would have to spend months training Allenby in the same way to realize the importance of the Arabs. Allenby had been commanding divisions in

France since the outbreak of war and was full of Western Front notions of gun-power and masses of men wearing down the enemy by sheer slaughter, ideas which did not apply at all well to war in the East. But he was a cavalry man and ready perhaps to go back to the old-fashioned idea of a war of movement and manoeuvre.

Later at Cairo he sent for Lawrence, having got his report about Akaba. It was a comic interview. Lawrence was still in his Arab clothes, because when he went to the hotel to look out his old army uniform he found that insects had been at it. Allenby sat in his chair looking at Lawrence, very much puzzled at this haggard little man, with silk robes and a face burned brick-red with the sun, explaining with a map a fantastic plan for raising the Eastern Syrians in revolt behind the enemy lines. He listened quietly, asking few questions and trying to make up his mind how far Lawrence was a charlatan and how far a real performer – a doubt that was also constantly in Lawrence's own mind. He asked what help he wanted. Lawrence said, stores and arms and a fund of two hundred thousand pounds in gold to convince and control his converts. Allenby put up his chin at last, a well-known decisive gesture and said, 'Well, I will do for you what I can.' And meant it. The meeting of Lawrence with Feisal had begun a new successful phase of the war in Arabia, the meeting of Lawrence with Allenby began an even more successful one.

Hitherto Lawrence had sent few and misleading reports to Egypt – even these were, I am told, often doctored by the Staff on the way to the Commander-in-Chief – because he could not be sure how acceptable the truth would be, or how well his secrets would be kept; he had not, for instance, warned the Commander-in-Chief of his intended capture of Akaba. But he learned to take Allenby more deeply into his confidence and never afterwards regretted it. There was little personal intimacy

between the two then or afterwards – they have not met since 1921 – but great trust and liking.

Sixteen thousand pounds in English sovereigns were sent to Nasir at once to enable him to pay his debts. It was important to redeem the notes that he had given out, which were army telegraph-forms pencilled with promises to pay gold at Akaba. The money went to Suez to join the flour that was being quickly loaded there, ready to be rushed to famished Akaba. These were the first things that mattered. After this the changed aspect of the war in Arabia had to be discussed with the Arab Bureau.

Lawrence began talking with authority. His capture of Akaba made him a person of very much greater importance than before and had given him confidence in himself. He told his seniors that the big operations about the railway near Medina were a mistake. The war had moved north now. He suggested that the base at Wejh should be closed down, as Yenbo had been closed before, and that the whole of Feisal's army should move up north and make its base at Akaba. Akaba was on Allenby's right flank, only a hundred miles from his centre, but eight hundred miles from Mecca. Once there at Akaba, it was logical that Feisal should no longer be tied to his father at Mecca, the nominal Commander-in-Chief of the Arabs, but should be made an army-corps commander under direct control of Allenby. Lawrence had talked this over with Feisal long before in Wejh and Feisal had been ready to accept. The High Commissioner of Egypt, who hitherto had been the chief British partner, did not mind the transference being made; though Feisal's removal would weaken the forces in Arabia. Abdulla, Ali and Zeid were strong enough to keep the Turks in Medina from making another attempt on Mecca. There was only one difficulty and that was Feisal's father, the Sherif. Would he make any diffi-

culty? Fortunately Colonel Wilson, the High Commissioner's representative at Jiddah, talked him over, and Feisal decided to move up to Akaba at once. He sent his camel-corps up the coast and the remainder of the army under Jaafer was transported by a warship. More stores and ammunition were sent to Akaba, and British officers to distribute it properly at Feisal's orders.

Lawrence was at Jiddah with Wilson when two startling telegrams arrived from the intelligence service in Egypt. The first reported that the Howeitat at Akaba were carrying on a treacherous correspondence with the Turks at Maan, the next that Auda was connected with the plot. This was alarming, for though Lawrence could not believe it of Auda, Mohammed el Dheilán was quite capable of double play, and the old fox who had captured Guweira was still less to be trusted. Three days later Lawrence arrived by warship at Akaba, where Nasir had no notion of anything wrong. He only told Nasir that he wished to greet Auda, and asked for a swift camel and a guide. At dawn he arrived at Guweira and found Auda, Mohammed and Zaal in a tent together. They were confused at his sudden appearance but said that all was well and they ate together as friends. Other Howeitat chiefs came in and Lawrence distributed the Sherif's presents, telling them among other things that Nasir had at last got his month's leave to Mecca. The Sherif was enthusiastic for the Revolt and would not allow his officers leave from the front. Poor Nasir's banishment from his family had been a stock joke and it was said that he would certainly deserve a holiday when Akaba fell; but Nasir had not believed that it would be granted until he was handed Hussein's letter the day before. In gratitude Nasir sold Lawrence a famous pedigree camel, Ghazala, as the owner of which he had great honour among the Howeitat.

After lunch Lawrence took Auda and Mohammed for

a walk and mentioned their correspondence with the Turks. Auda began to laugh, Mohammed looked disgusted. Then they explained, telling a farcical story of how Mohammed had wanted to get money from the Turks by a confidence trick and had therefore taken Auda's seal and written to the Governor of Maan offering to desert to the Turks if he were given money. A large sum was gladly sent on account, but Auda had waylaid the messenger, taken the spoils and was now denying Mohammed his share. Lawrence laughed with them over the story, but knew that more lay behind it; the fact was, they had been angry that no guns or troops had yet arrived since Akaba had been taken a month before, and that no rewards had been given them for their part in it. Auda, feeling sorry for the Turks whom he had beaten so badly, was quite ready to fight on their side for a change: it was generosity rather than treachery with him. But both Auda and Mohammed were surprised at Lawrence's knowledge, wanting to know how he came by it and how much more he knew. He laughed at them, quoting, as if they were his own words, actual phrases of the letters that had been exchanged, and made them feel uncomfortable. Then he told them casually that Feisal's entire army was coming up, and that Allenby was sending rifles, guns, high-explosive, food and money. Finally he added that Auda's present expenses in hospitality must be great; would it help if something were advanced of the great gift that Feisal was bringing up to him? Auda readily agreed to accept the advance and with it to keep the Howeitat well fed and cheerful. So Lawrence went back to Akaba, took ship back to Egypt and reported that there was no treachery at Guweira: everything was going on well there. But he did not explain the whole story; Headquarters would not have understood it.

While waiting for Feisal's army to come up Lawrence

began getting his thoughts in order again. The war in Arabia was as good as over and Feisal's army, now under the wing of Allenby, was about to take part in the military deliverance of Syria. Syria Lawrence knew well. He had wandered up and down in it before the War, from city to city and tribe to tribe; he had even written a book about it. Syria was a fertile strip of land running between the eastern coast of the Mediterranean and the great Syrian desert, with a backbone of mountains dividing it. It had been for centuries a corridor between Arabia and Europe, Asia and Egypt, and held at one time or another by Turks, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Arabs, Persians, Assyrians and Hittites. It was naturally divided up into sections by the mountain spurs, and the constant passing to and fro of armies had filled the land with an extraordinary variety of peoples – to almost every valley a different population, each little colony kept separate from its neighbours by the spurs between. There were Circassians, Kurds, Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Persians, Algerians, Jews, Arabians, and many more, with as many varieties of religion among them as of race.

The six principal cities, Jerusalem, Beyrout, Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo, were also each of them entirely different in character. The only possible bond between most of these pieces of the Syrian mosaic was the common language, Arabic, and though at this time there was much talk of Arab freedom, it was impossible to think of Syria as a national unity. Freedom to the Syrians meant local home-rule for each little community in its valley or city, but a freedom impossible in modern civilization where roads, railways, taxes, armies, a postal system, supplies have all to be maintained by a central government. And whatever central government might be imposed on Syria, even though Arabic were the official language, would be a foreign government; for

there was no such thing as a true or typical Syrian. How to spread the Revolt up to Damascus over this chequer-board of communities, each divided against its neighbour naturally by geography and history, and artificially by Turkish intrigue, was a most baffling problem: which, however, Lawrence set himself to solve.

It was difficult to do anything on the Mediterranean side of the central mountain-range, where the mixed population was Europeanized and could probably not be converted to the idea of an Arab confederation with its headquarters in the ancient Arab capital of Damascus; it would prefer a French or English protectorate. But inland, between the mountains and the desert where the tribes were simpler and wilder, the national ideal might well be preached. Lawrence decided then to build up a ladder of friendly tribes in Eastern Syria, beginning at the south with the Howeitat, for three hundred miles until Azrak was reached, half-way to Damascus. It was the method that had been used before in Arabia from Jiddah through Rabegh, Yenbo, Wejh to Akaba. Once they were at Azrak, the Arabs of the Hauran would probably rise in sympathy; the Hauran being a huge fertile land, just south of Damascus, populous with warlike self-reliant Arab peasantry. This rising should end the war.

Once more the tactics should be tip and run, not the regular advance of an organized army, and for this the eastern desert was most convenient. One might look on it as a sort of sea in which to manœuvre with camel-parties instead of ships. The railway, to cover it from the British Fleet, had been built down the eastern side of the central mountains and could be raided from the desert without fear of retaliation, for the Turks had no camel-corps worth anything, and in any case no important point to strike back against. From the war in the south Lawrence had learned that the best tactics were to

use the smallest raiding parties on the fastest camels, and to strike at points widely separated with the most portable weapons of destruction. These weapons would be high-explosive for demolition work and light automatic guns, Hotchkiss or Lewis, which could be fired from the saddle of a camel running at eighteen miles an hour. Lawrence at once begged for quantities of these from Egypt.

The difficulty of the campaign was that, though all the tribes might join in the Revolt, their jealousies were such that no tribe could fight in a neighbour's territory and no tribal combinations were possible as they had been in Arabia. Feisal's authority in Syria was not great enough to heal the feuds. This meant that the brunt of the fighting had to be borne by a small force of Ageyl and others from the south, against whom, as distant strangers under the command of members of the Prophet's family, there was not so much prejudice. It was impossible for the Turks to foresee the strength and direction of the attacks: the camels could, after a watering, travel two hundred and fifty miles in three days; and in an emergency could go a hundred and ten miles in twenty-four hours. (Twice Lawrence's famous Ghazala did one hundred and forty-three miles of a march alone with him.) This meant that it might not be impossible to strike at points near Maan on Monday, near Amman on Thursday, near Deraa on Saturday, and to get fresh tribesmen and camels from each district to join in the attack. Above all, the regular raiders must be self-supporting. From Akaba they could go out with six-weeks' flour-ration and ammunition, explosive and gold, and do without the complicated system of supply-trains and dumps which slows down the pace and shortens the fighting range of every regular army.

There must be no discipline in the ordinary sense of a chain of command going down from general to colonel,

October
1917

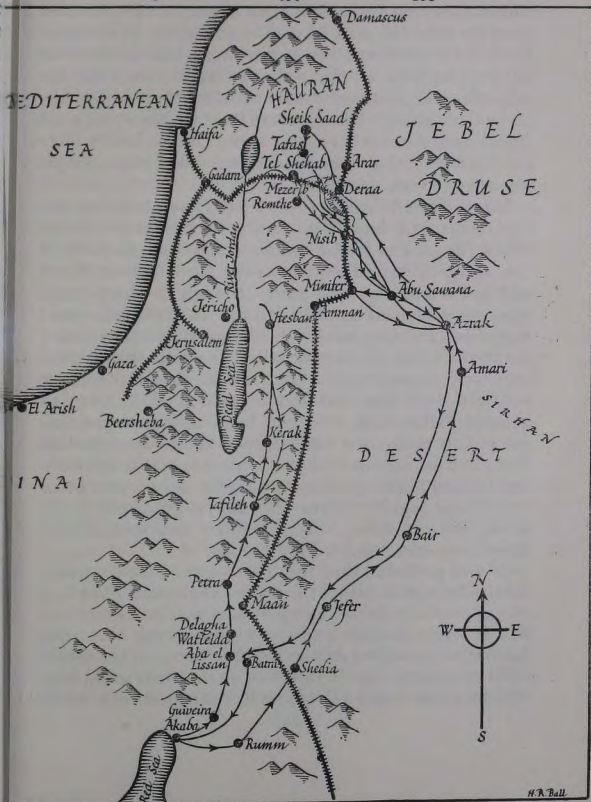
The Yarmuk Raid
The Spying in the Hauran

LAWRENCE'S RIDES

January
1918

The Mining at Minifer
The Battle at Tafileh

0 100 200



to captain, to lieutenant, to sergeant, to corporal, to private; every man must be his own commander-in-chief, ready, if need be, for single combat against the enemy without waiting for orders from above or co-operation from his fellows. And discipline could not in any case have been enforced: the Arabs were independent by nature and were serving voluntarily. Honour was the only contract and every man was free to draw his pay up to date and go home at any time he liked; only the Ageyl and the small regular army under Jaafar were serving for a definite term, so that the war when fought was fought with goodwill.

Six weeks had elapsed since the capture of Akaba, and the Arabs had had opportunity to strengthen themselves. Feisal and Jaafar had now arrived at Akaba with the army. Plentiful supplies were landed from Egypt and armoured cars and guns – though the long-range guns never arrived until the last month of the war – and Egyptian labourers to rebuild the town and turn round the fortifications to face inland. The defiles through the hills were strongly held. On the other hand, the Turks had also been busy and had the advice of the German general Falkenhayn who had been chiefly responsible for saving them two years before at the Dardanelles. They had sent down a whole division to Maan and fortified it until it was quite secure against attack except by the strong regular forces and heavy guns which the Arabs did not have. There was an aeroplane-station there now and great supply dumps.

It was probable that the Turks would try to retake Akaba by way of Aba el Lissan and Guweira. They had already pushed their way up to Aba el Lissan and fortified it while cavalry held the neighbouring hills. But Lawrence knew that Akaba was safe enough. He would even welcome a Turkish attempt on it, which could only end in great losses. There were Arab posts out north

and south of the pass, and old Maulud with his mule-mounted regiment had taken up his position in the ancient ruins of Petra north of Maan and was encouraging the local tribes to raid the Turkish communications in competition with their rivals at Delagha, a few miles to their south. Raiding went on for weeks and the Turks got more and more irritated. To prick them into retaliation a long distance air-raid was made on Maan, from El Arish on the left of the British Army.

Thirty-two bombs were dropped about breakfast-time in and about the unprepared station: the aeroplanes flew dangerously low but returned safely the same morning to a temporary landing-ground thirty miles north of Akaba where the airmen patched up the shrapnel-torn wings of their machines. Two of their bombs had struck the barracks and killed a number of Turks, eight struck the engine-shed, doing great damage, one fell in the General's kitchen, four on the aerodrome. The next morning they visited Aba el Lissan, bombed the horse-lines and stampeded the animals, and then the tents and stampeded the Turks. The same afternoon they decided to look for the battery of guns that had troubled them that morning; there was just enough petrol and bombs. Skimming the hill-crest they came over Aba el Lissan at a height of only three hundred feet. They interrupted the Turks' usual midday sleep and took the place completely by surprise. They dropped thirty bombs, silenced the battery and were off again. The Turkish commander at Maan set his men digging bomb-proof shelters and dispersed his aeroplanes, when they had been repaired, for fear of a fresh attack on the aerodrome.

The next plan that Lawrence had for the Arabs was to reduce the troops that the Turks could spare for the Akaba attack by making frequent raids on the railway and so forcing them to defend it more strongly. The gloomy reaction after Aba el Lissan had long passed and

left him adventurous as before and ready to kill without remorse. He thought out a series of demolitions for mid-September; it might be a good idea, too, to mine another train. He would try for one at a station called Mudowwara, eighty miles south of Maan, where a smashed train would greatly embarrass the enemy. Now, to make sure of the train new methods had to be found: the automatic mine was uncertain and might be set off by a trolley or by a train carrying civilian refugees which they would want to let pass; or, if the Turks put the engines to push instead of to pull the trains, might only explode under an unimportant wagon: and the train could then retire safely. What was wanted seemed to be a mine that could be exploded at will by electricity. The apparatus was sent to him from Egypt and explained by electricians on the guard-ship at Akaba. It consisted of a heavy white box, the exploder, and yards of heavy cable insulated with rubber. With the engine blown up and the train perhaps derailed, machine-guns and artillery would be needed to complete the destruction. For machine-guns, the Lewis guns would have to do, but artillery was a problem because to take along even the smallest mountain-guns meant slow travelling. Lawrence then thought of the Stokes trench-mortars which had lately been used successfully in France. They were simple affairs with a range of three hundred yards, which was not too short for a railway ambush. The Stokes shell was powerfully charged with ammonal.

Two sergeant-instructors were sent from Egypt to teach the Arabs at Akaba how to use these weapons. The one in charge of the Lewis guns was an Australian; reckless, talkative, tall and supple. The Stokes-mortar sergeant was an English countryman; slow, stocky, workmanlike and silent. Lawrence knew them as Lewis and Stokes, naming them after their guns. They were excellent instructors and though they knew no Arabic

taught the tribesmen by dumb-show, until in a month's time they could use the guns reasonably well.

Lawrence decided that his raid might include an attack on Mudowwara station. It was not strongly held and three hundred men might rush it at night and destroy the deep well there. Without its water, the only plentiful supply in the dry hot section below Maan, the trains would have to waste their wagon-space in carrying water-tanks. Lewis was anxious to join in the raid; he was sick of being a mere instructor at the base in Egypt and wanted to do some fighting. Stokes said that he would come too. Lawrence warned them what to expect, of hunger, heat and weariness, and explained that if anything happened to him it might go badly with them alone with the Arabs. This warning only excited Lewis and did not put off Stokes. Lawrence lent them two of his best camels.

So they started on September the seventh, riding up to Guweira where they collected some of Auda's Howeitat tribesmen. Lawrence was at first afraid that the heat would be too much for the sergeants. The granite walls of the valley down which they rode were burningly hot; a few days before in the cooler palm-gardens of Akaba beach the thermometer had shown a hundred and twenty degrees. It was now even hotter. As neither of the sergeants had ever been on a camel before he let them take the ride easily.

At Guweira Lawrence found the Howeitat all at odds. Auda, who drew the wages for the whole tribe, only a clan of which he ruled personally, was using his power to compel the smaller clans to accept him as their leader. This they resented, threatening either to go home or to join the Turks. Feisal had sent up a sherif, a close kinsman, to settle the dispute, but Auda was obstinate, knowing how much the success of the Revolt depended on him. Now some of the clans from the south towards

Mudowwara were about to desert the cause, and they were the very men on whom Lawrence was counting for help in his operations; but Auda would not give way. However, he told Lawrence to ride forward some miles with his twenty baggage-camels and halt to wait events.

They went, glad to leave behind the swarms of flies that plagued them at Guweira. Lawrence much admired the way that the sergeants stood the stifling heat, the worst that they had ever experienced; it was like a metal mask over the face. Not to lower themselves in the Arabs' estimation, they did not utter a word of complaint. They were, however, ignorant of Arabic or they would have known that the Arabs were themselves making a great fuss about it. Rumm, a place of springs, half-way to Mudowwara, should have been their first halt, but they went on by easy stages, stopping the night in a grove of rustling tamarisk under a tall red cliff.

They rode for hours the next day through the valley of Rumm, a broad tamarisk-grown avenue two miles wide between colossal red sandstone cliffs. The caravan felt awed and kept quite silent. Towards sunset there was a break in the cliffs to the right, leading to the water. They turned in here and found themselves in a vast oval amphitheatre floored with damp sand and dark shrubs. The entrance was only three hundred yards wide, which made the place more impressive still. At the foot of the enclosing precipices were enormous fallen blocks of sandstone, bigger than houses, and along a ledge at one side grew trees. A little path zigzagged up to the ledge and there, three hundred feet above the level of the plain, jetted the water-springs. They watered their camels here and cooked rice to add to the bully beef which the sergeants had brought, with biscuits, as their ration.

Coffee was also prepared for visitors: they had heard Arab voices shouting in the distance at the other end of

the place. The visitors soon arrived, head-men of the several Howeitat clans, all boiling with anger and jealousy against Auda. They suspected Lawrence of sympathizing with Auda's attempt to force them to offer him their allegiance; they refused to help Feisal further until he gave them assurance that they would be allowed complete independence as clans. Lawrence had to do the entertaining that night in place of the blinded sherif; the awkwardness of the occasion made his task doubly difficult. One of the head-men, by name Gasim abu Dumeik, a fine horseman who had led the hill-men at Aba el Lissan, was particularly furious in his denouncement of Auda. Lawrence singled him out for a verbal battle and finally silenced him. The other head-men, for shame, gradually veered round to Lawrence's side and spoke of riding with him the next day to Mudowwara. Lawrence then said that Zaal would arrive the next day and that the two of them would accept help from all the clans except Gasim abu Dumeik's. And that the good services of this clan would be wiped from Feisal's book because of Gasim's words and it would forfeit all the honour and rewards that it had earned. Gasim withdrew from the fireside, swearing to go over to the Turks at once. The cautious others tried in vain to stop his mouth. Next morning he was there with his men ready to join or oppose the expedition as the whim went. While he hesitated Zaal arrived and the pair had a violent quarrel. Lawrence and one or two more got between them and stopped the fight: the other chiefs then came quietly up in twos and threes as volunteers, begging Lawrence to assure Feisal of their loyalty.

He decided to go to Feisal at once to explain matters and, commending the sergeants to Zaal, who answered for their lives with his own, rode off hurriedly with a single attendant to Akaba. He found a short cut and

reached Akaba in six hours. Feisal was alarmed to see him back so soon, but the affair was soon explained and Feisal at once appointed a distinguished member of his family to go to Rumm as mediator. The sherif rode back to Rumm with Lawrence and there, gathering together the Arabs, including Gasim, began to smooth over their difficulties and persuade them to peace. Gasim, no longer defiant but sulky, would not make any public statement, so about a hundred men of the smaller clans dared defy him by promising to join the raid. This was better than nothing, but Lawrence had hoped for at least a force of three hundred to deal successfully with the station.

So the ride from Rumm began, unpropitiously, on the sixteenth of September; though half an hour after starting some shamefaced men of Gasim's clan rode out to join them, unable to endure the sight of others raiding without them. There was no common feeling between the different little parties that made up the force. There was not even a leader, for the original commander, a sherif of the Harith, had unfortunately been struck with sudden blindness on the way to Rumm. Gasim would have done, had he been willing. Zaal was the only other possible choice, but he was too closely related to Auda not to be suspected; and he was too sharp-tongued and sneering for even his good advice to be taken willingly. He was admittedly the most experienced fighter, yet the other sullen chiefs would not even allow him to settle the order of the march. Lawrence spent all his time riding up and down the column from one chief to the other trying to draw them together for the common purpose. He was treated by them with some respect, both as Feisal's deputy and as the owner of Ghazala, though Ghazala was that day matched with the only other camel in Northern Arabia better than herself, a beast called El Jedha, ridden by one Motlog, her old owner. El Jedha

had been a year or two before the sole occasion of a big tribal war.

It fell on Lawrence then to be the leader, a task to which he was opposed on principle. He had from the first made a point of letting the Arabs run their own campaign as far as possible by themselves: he was merely their technical adviser and assistant. But he now constantly found himself forced into leadership, not only because of his obvious qualities as a desert fighter and outwiter of the Turks, but because of his freedom from tribal complications, his wholehearted zeal for the Revolt, his disregard of loot and distinctions, his generosity and tact. Yet, again, he was a most unsuitable commander of a Bedouin raid. It meant his deciding such difficult questions as food-halts, pasturage, road-direction, pay, disputes, division of spoil, feuds and march-order. To be an efficient leader in this sense would mean a lifetime's training. However, he managed that day without mishap and was rewarded at night by seeing the party sit down at only three camp-fires. Around one were Lawrence's own men, including three Syrian peasants of the Hauran, from whom he intended to learn on the road such things as would be useful to him later when the Revolt was carried up to their country. At the second fire was Zaal with his twenty-five famous camel-riders. At the third were the other jealous clansmen from Rumm. Late at night, when hot bread and gazelle-meat had made tempers better, it was possible for Lawrence to gather all the chiefs together at his own neutral hearth to discuss the next day's fighting. It was decided to water the next evening at a well in a covered valley two or three miles the near side of Mudowwara station; and from there go forward to see whether it could be taken with the few men that they had.

Next day, then, they reached the well, an open pool a few yards square. It looked uninviting. There was a

green slime over the water with queer bladder-like islands on it, fatty-pink. The Arabs explained that the Turks had thrown dead camels into the well to make the water foul; but time had passed and the effect was wearing off. They filled their water-skins; it was all the drink that they could hope for unless they took Mudowwara. One of Zaal's men slipped in by mistake and when he struggled out again, leaving a black hole in the green scum, the disturbed water stank horribly of old dead camel. At dusk Zaal, Lawrence, the sergeants and one or two more crept forward quietly to a Turkish trench-position on a ridge four or five hundred yards from the station. It was deserted. The station lay below with its lighted doors and windows, and its tent-camp. Zaal and Lawrence decided to creep nearer. They went on until they could hear the soldiers talking in the tents. A young, sickly-looking officer sauntered out towards them; they could see his features in the light of a match with which he lit a cigarette, and were ready to spring up and gag him; but he happened to turn back. At the ridge they held a whispered council of war. The garrison was perhaps two hundred men – Lawrence had counted the tents – but the station buildings seemed too solid for the Stokes shells, which were time-fused, not bursting on percussion; and the hundred and sixteen Arabs, though they had the advantage of surprise, could not yet be trusted to fight honourably together. So Lawrence voted against the attack, which was put off until a better day. They went away then, deciding at least to make sure of a train. Mudowwara was not taken for another eleven months.

Some miles south of the station they found an ideal place for their mine and ambush. There was a low ridge of hills under cover of which they could ride quite close to the railway, and where the ridge ended was a curve such as Lawrence always chose for his mines because of

the difficulty of replacing curved rails. This curve was within range of the ridge, which was fifty feet above the level of the rails; and a raised embankment across a hollow seemed exactly the right spot for the mine, for in the middle there was a two-arched bridge which allowed for the passage of flood-water in the rainy season. Whatever the effect of the mine might be on the engine, the bridge would certainly go and the coaches behind would be derailed. From behind the ridge, which was on the outside, not the inside of the curve, Lewis could sweep the lines in either direction and Stokes could use his trench-mortar unobserved. Lawrence was glad to have his two chief responsibilities posted where they had a safe retreat, especially as Stokes was weak with dysentery from the Mudowwara water, and Lewis unwell too.

The camels were hobbled out of sight and Feisal's negro freedmen, who were in charge of the baggage-camels, carried their loads to the chosen place – the two Stokes guns with their shells, the two Lewis guns, the electric mine apparatus and the gelatine. Lawrence went to the bridge to dig a bed between the ends of two steel sleepers in which to bury his sandbag-full of gelatine, a fifty-pound shaking jelly. It took him two hours to do this properly because he had to remove the ballast which he had dug out, carrying it in a fold of his cloak, and dump it where it would not show. Also he had been forced to cross a sandbank and the tracks of his feet had to be covered. Then the two heavy wires, each two hundred yards long, had to be unrolled, connected with the charge and carried over the ridge where the exploder was to be put under cover. The wires were stiff and would not lie flat unless weighed down with stones, and it took three hours more to hide the marks made in burying them. Lawrence finally finished off the job with a pair of bellows and long brushings of his cloak to imitate a smooth wind-swept surface. It was well done; nobody

could see where the mine was, or how the wires ran. The man who fired the exploder, however, being out of sight of the bridge, had to be given the signal from a point fifty yards ahead of him; so Lawrence decided to give the signal rather than work the exploder himself. Feisal's favourite freedman Salem was given that honour and was taught on the disconnected exploder to bang down the handle exactly as Lawrence raised his hand for an imaginary engine on the bridge. Meanwhile the rest of the men, who had been left with the camels, had got tired of the valley and were perched upon the skyline with the sunset flaming behind them (the ambush was west of the line), in full view of a small Turkish hill-post four miles to the south and also of Mudowwara somewhat farther to the north. Lawrence and Zaal threw them off the ridge, but it was too late; the Turks had seen them and began to let off rifles at the lengthening shadows for fear of a surprise attack. However, Lawrence hoped that the Turks might think them gone if the place looked deserted in the morning; so they stayed in the valley, baked bread and settled down comfortably for the night. The party was now united, and, ashamed of their folly on the skyline, the jealous Howeitat tribesmen chose Zaal for their leader.

The next day, the nineteenth of September, Zaal and his cousin Howeimil managed with difficulty to keep the fidgeting Arabs in the hollow, but perhaps after all the Turks saw something, for at nine o'clock a party of forty men came out from the southern post, advancing in open order. If they were left alone they would discover the ambush in an hour's time; if they were opposed the railway would be alarmed and traffic held up. The only thing to do was to send a small party to snipe at them and, if possible, draw them away in pursuit behind another ridge of hills out of sight. This would hide the main position and reassure the Turks as to the size and

intention of the force they had seen. The trick worked well; they could hear by the shots gradually sounding fainter in the distance that the Turks were being drawn off.

An ordinary patrol of eight men and a stout corporal then came up the line from the south in search of mines or obstructions. Lawrence could see the corporal mopping his forehead, for it was now eleven o'clock and really hot. They walked over the mine without noticing anything, but a mile or two farther on halted under a culvert, lay down, drank from their water-bottles and at last went to sleep. It seemed that the Turks were quite satisfied that the ridge was deserted, but about noon Lawrence through his field-glasses saw a force of about a hundred soldiers coming up towards them from Mudowara, about six or seven miles away. They were marching very slowly and no doubt unwillingly at the thought of losing their accustomed midday sleep, but it could not be more than two hours before they arrived. Lawrence decided to pack up and move off, trusting to luck that the mine would not be noticed and that he might come back later and try again. They sent a messenger south to their drawing-off party to arrange a meeting-place behind some rocks a mile or two away. But a minute later the watchman reported smoke from the south. There was evidently a train in the next station and, as they watched, it came puffing out towards them. A wild scramble followed as the Arabs got into position behind the ridge. Stokes and Lewis forgot their dysentery and raced to their guns.

The train rushed on at full speed and Lawrence saw that there were two engines in front, not one, which rather upset his calculations: but he decided to fire the mine under the second. If he mined the first, the second might uncouple and steam away with the wagons. He was glad that it was not an automatic mine. The Arabs

with their rifles were only a hundred and fifty yards from the bridge, and the Stokes and Lewis guns three hundred; the exploder was in between, on the same ridge. On came the train at full speed and opened random fire into the desert where the Arabs had been reported. The firing sounded heavy and Lawrence wondered if his eighty men were enough for the battle. There were ten coaches with rifle-muzzles crowded at the windows and sandbag nests on the roofs, filled with sharpshooters. The whistles screamed round the curve, and Salem was dancing round the exploder on his knees, calling on God to make him fruitful. As the front wheels touched the bridge Lawrence raised his hand in the signal to Salem.

There was a terrific roar and the line vanished behind a column of black dust and smoke a hundred feet high and wide, while fragments of steel and iron struck clanging all about. An engine-wheel went whirling over the ridge and fell heavily in the desert behind. There followed a deathly silence. Lawrence ran to join the sergeants while Salem picked up a rifle and charged into the smoke. As Lawrence ran he heard shots, and the Bedouin could be seen leaping forward towards the track. The train was stationary and the Turks were tumbling out of the doors on the other side to shelter behind the railway embankment beyond. Then the Lewis gun opened fire straight down the train, and the long row of Turks on the roofs was swept off by the furious spray of bullets. When Lawrence reached Stokes and Lewis, the Turks behind the eleven-foot high embankment, in the middle of which the bridge had been, were firing point-blank at the Arabs between the wheels of the train. The Lewis gun could not reach them, protected by the train and by the curve of the embankment, but the Stokes mortar could. Its second shell dropped among them in the hollow and made a shambles of the place. The survivors ran in a panic across the desert,

throwing away their rifles and equipment. This was the turn of Lewis again, who, with his assistant, a Sherari boy, mowed down the Turks as they ran. That ended the battle. The Sherari dropped the Lewis gun and rushed down to join the others in the plundering. The whole affair had taken ten minutes. Lawrence looked north and saw the hundred men from Mudowwara breaking back uncertainly to the railway to meet the train-fugitives running up the line. He looked south and saw the other thirty Arabs racing each other to share in the spoil. The Turks with whom they had been fighting, were coming slowly after them firing volleys. Evidently the plunderers would be safe for half an hour more.

Lawrence ran down from the ridge to see what effect the mine had had. The bridge was gone and into the gap had fallen the front wagon, which had been filled with sick. The smash had killed all but three or four and rolled dead and dying in a bleeding heap at one end. One of those still alive called out the word 'typhus' in delirium. So Lawrence wedged the door shut, and left them until their friends should come. He was feeling pretty sick. The wagons following were derailed and smashed; the frames of some were buckled beyond repair. The second engine was a blanched pile of smoking iron. The first engine had come off better; though it was derailed and lying half over with the cab smashed, its driving gear was intact and the steam still at pressure. The destruction of locomotives was the chief object of the campaign against the railway, so Lawrence had kept a box of gun-cotton with fuse and detonator ready for this very emergency. He put it on the cylinder, lit the fuse and drove the plunderers back a little way. In half a minute the charge burst, destroying the cylinder and the axle too. The engine would not run again.

The Arabs had gone raving mad. They were running

about at top speed, bareheaded, half-naked, screaming, shooting in the air, clawing at each other, as they burst open trucks and staggered off with immense bales which they ripped open by the side of the railway, smashing what they did not want. The train had been packed with refugees, sick men, volunteers for boat-service on the Euphrates, and families of Turkish officers returning to Damascus. To one side of the wreck stood thirty or forty hysterical women, unveiled, tearing their clothes and hair, shrieking together. The Arabs paid no attention to them, busy looting their absolute fill for the first time in their lives. Never was such a litter of household goods – carpets, mattresses, blankets, clothes for men and women, clocks, cooking-pots, food, ornaments and weapons. Camels became common property: each man loaded the nearest with what it would carry and shooed it westward into the desert while he turned to his next fancy. The women, seeing Lawrence unemployed, rushed and caught at him, howling for mercy. He comforted them that there was no danger, but they would not let him go until they were knocked away by their husbands, who in turn grovelled at Lawrence's feet in an agony of terror, pleading for their lives. He kicked them off with his bare feet and broke free. Next a group of Austrian officers and non-commissioned officers, artillery instructors to the Turks, quietly appealed to him in Turkish for quarter: he answered in German. Then one of them, mortally wounded, asked in English for a doctor. There was none, but Lawrence said that the Turks would soon be there to care for him. The man was dead before that, and so were most of the others, for a dispute broke out between them and the Arabs; an Austrian foolishly fired at one of Lawrence's Syrians, and before Lawrence could interfere all but two or three were cut down.

Among the passengers were five Egyptian soldiers cap-

tured by the Turks in a night-raid of Davenport's two hundred miles down the line. They knew Lawrence and told him of Davenport's efforts in Abdulla's sector where he was constantly pegging away without much encouragement from the Arabs and forced to rely mostly on imported Egyptians like these. Lawrence set the five to march off the prisoners to the appointed rallying-place behind the hills westward. Lewis and Stokes had come down to help Lawrence, who was a little anxious about them. The Arabs in their madness were as ready to attack friend as enemy. Three times Lawrence had to defend himself when they pretended not to know him and snatched at his things. Lewis went across the railway to count the thirty men he had killed and to find Turkish gold and trophies in their haversacks. Stokes went into the hollow behind the embankment, where he saw the effect of his second shell and turned back hurriedly. One of Lawrence's Syrians came up with his arms full of booty and shouted to Lawrence that an old woman in the last wagon but one wished to see him. Lawrence told the man to put down the booty and go at once for Ghazala and some baggage-camels to remove the guns; for the Turks were coming close and the Arabs were escaping one by one towards the hills, driving their staggering camels before them. Lawrence was annoyed with himself for not having thought of moving the guns earlier. Meanwhile he went to the last wagon but one, found a trembling old invalid, the Lady Ayesha by name, a friend and hostess of Feisal's, who wanted to know what was happening. Lawrence reassured her that no harm would come to her and found the old negress, her servant, whom he sent to bring a drink from the leaking tender of the first engine. The grateful Lady Ayesha later sent him secretly from Damascus a charming letter and a little Baluchi carpet as a remembrance of their odd meeting.

The Syrian never brought the camels. All of Lawrence's servants, overcome with greed, had escaped with the Bedouin. No one was now left but the three Englishmen. They began to fear that they must abandon the guns and run for their lives, but just then saw two camels cantering back. It was Zaal and Howeimil, who had missed Lawrence and returned to find him. Lawrence and the sergeants were rolling up the cable, their only piece. Zaal dismounted and told Lawrence to climb up, but he loaded the camel with the wire and exploder instead; Zaal laughed at the quaint booty. Howeimil was lame from an old wound on the knee and could not walk, but couched his camel while the Lewis guns were hoisted across behind him, tied butt to butt and looking like scissors. There remained the mortars, but Stokes appeared unskilfully leading a stray baggage-camel which he had caught. Stokes was too weak to run, so he was given Zaal's camel with the mining apparatus; the trench-mortars were put on the baggage-camel, and Howeimil went off in charge of them. Meanwhile Lawrence, Lewis and Zaal, in a sheltered hollow behind the old gun-position, made a fire of cartridge-boxes, petrol and wreckage, banked the Lewis-gun drums and spare rifle ammunition round it, and gingerly laid some Stokes shells on top. Then they ran. As the flames reached the cordite and ammonal there was a colossal burst of fire, thousands of cartridges exploded in series like machine-guns, and the shells roared off in columns of dust and smoke. Both parties of Turks were impressed by this noise, and decided that the Arabs were posted strongly. They halted and began to send out flanking parties according to rule. Through the gap between the main body of the northern party and their flankers working round on the western side, the three men ran panting away into concealment among the farther ridges.

At the rallying-place Lawrence found his missing

camels and the Syrian servants with them. In his soft deadly voice he told the Syrians what he thought of them for their desertion. They pleaded that camels had become common property and that someone else had gone off with the right ones. But this did not excuse them for having found others for themselves and loaded them up with plunder. Lawrence asked if anyone was hurt and was told that a boy had been killed in the first Arab rush; three others were slightly wounded. The rush had not been ordered and was a mistake; the Lewis and Stokes guns could have managed the killing without Arab help, and Lawrence felt that he was not responsible for the boy's death. Then one of Feisal's freedmen said that Salem was missing, and others that he had been last seen lying wounded just beyond the engine. Lawrence had not been told and was angry, for Salem was under his charge. For the second time he had been put by Arab carelessness in the position of leaving a friend behind. He called for volunteers to rescue the negro. Zaal and twelve of his men said that they would try, but when they came near the train they saw that they were too late. A hundred and fifty Turks were swarming over the wreck and by now Salem would be dead, and not only dead but tortured and mutilated as the Turkish habit was. (The Arabs made a practice now of mercifully killing their own badly wounded to prevent them falling alive into Turkish hands.)

They had to go back without Salem, but took the opportunity of recovering some of the baggage, including the sergeants' kits, which had been left at the camping-ground. The Turks caught them at this and opened fire with a machine-gun. Others ran to cut them off. Zaal, a dead shot, stopped with five others at a ridge-top and fired back, calling to the remainder of the party to escape while he held up the Turks. So they retired from ridge to ridge, hitting at least thirteen or fourteen Turks

at the cost of four of their camels wounded. The Turks gave up the pursuit.

Victory always undid an Arab force: this was now no longer a raiding party but a stumbling baggage-caravan loaded to breaking-point with enough household goods to make an Arab tribe rich for years. Of the ninety prisoners, ten were friendly Arab women on the way to Damascus from Medina who had now decided to go instead to Mecca by way of Akaba. These and thirty-four wounded Turks were mounted in pairs on the spare camels that had been used for carrying the explosives and ammunition. The sergeants asked Lawrence to give them a sword each as a souvenir; and he was going down the column to look for something for them when suddenly he met Feisal's freedmen and to his astonishment saw, strapped on the crupper behind one of them, the missing Salem. He was unconscious and soaked with blood from a wound through his back near the spine. Apparently he had been hit in his rush downhill and left for dead near the engine; where the tribesmen stripped him of his cloak, dagger, rifle and head-gear. One of his fellows had found him alive and carried him off home without, as he should have done, telling Lawrence. Salem soon recovered, but ever afterwards bore Lawrence an undeserved grudge for abandoning him when wounded and under his charge.

They had to water again at the evil-smelling well – the prisoners had drunk all their water – and its nearness to Mudowwara made this dangerous. However, they made what haste they could and found it unoccupied. So back safely to Rumm by the same long avenue; in the dark this time, which made the cliffs more terrifying still, for they were invisible except as a jagged skyline high overhead on either side. From Rumm to Akaba, entering in glory laden with spoil, and boasting that the trains were now at their mercy.

The success excited the camp at Akaba. Everybody wanted to try this new and profitable sport of training. The French captain of the Algerian company of gunners at Akaba, by name Pisani, was the first volunteer, an active and ambitious officer on the look-out for decorations. Feisal provided three young noblemen of Damascus who were eager to lead tribal raids, and on the twenty-sixth of September the party rode to Rumm in search of tribesmen volunteers. Lawrence said that the next raid was especially intended for Gasim's clan. This was heaping coals of fire on the adversary's head, but the adversary was too greedy to refuse the chance. The difficulty indeed was to keep down the numbers. They took a hundred and fifty men and a huge train of baggage-camels for the spoils.

This time they worked in the direction of Maan, riding over the Syrian border into the high hills by Batra where the keen air of the northern desert came blowing at them through a pass at the top. From Batra they turned east and struck the railway, marching along it until they came to a convenient bridge in an embankment, as at Mudowwara. Here, between midnight and dawn, they buried an automatic mine of a new and wonderful lyddite type. They lay in ambush a thousand yards away among the wormwood thickets, but no train came that day or the following night. Lawrence found the waiting intolerable. The Arabs paid no attention to the leaders appointed by Feisal and would listen to no one but Lawrence, whose success was now beginning to have results very unwelcome to him. He was asked to act as judge and had to consent. With Feisal's example and his own pre-War experience at Carchemish to help him out, he settled during that six days' ride twelve cases of armed assault, four camel-thefts, a marriage, two ordinary thefts, a divorce, fourteen feuds, two cases of evil eye and a bewitchment.

The evil eyes he cured by staring at their possessors with his own for ten minutes ('horrible blue eyes,' as an old Arab woman once told him, 'like bits of sky through the eye-holes of a skull'), the bewitchment by casting a mock-spell of his own over the wizard. The stings of a scorpion on his left hand kept him awake that night. His arm was most painfully swollen. Early the next morning a train was reported and he jumped up to watch the success of the mine.

However, the train with its cargo of water-tanks passed over without accident. The Arabs, who wanted something better than water, thanked him as if he had intended this failure. He had then to go down to lay an electric mine over the other; the electric mine would set the first one off. The Turks did not catch him at work, for it was their hour of midday sleep. There were three bridges in the embankment and the southern one had been chosen for the ambush. Under the arch of the middle bridge Lawrence hid the exploder. The Lewis guns were put under the northern one to rake the far side of the train when the mine went off. On the near side was a convenient cross-channel in the valley, three hundred yards from the railway, where the Arabs could line up behind the wormwood bushes. No train came that day; enemy patrols went constantly up and down the rails, but without finding the mine. The next morning, the sixth of October, a train came out of Maan, but ahead of the train a patrol was walking, and there was an anxious wait to see which arrived first. If the patrol won the race it would give warning to the train; however, Lawrence calculated that it would be beaten by two or three hundred yards, so the Arabs took up their position. The train came on panting up the gradient. It was a heavy train with twelve loaded wagons.

Lawrence sat by a bush where he could see the mine, a hundred yards away, and the exploder and the Lewis

guns. He gave the signal when the engine was exactly over the arch and the history of Mudowwara was repeated. There was the same roar and cloud, but a green one this time, because lyddite was being used instead of gelatine, and then the Lewis gun rattled and the Arabs charged. Lawrence smiled sourly to see Pisani running excitedly at their head singing the Marseillaise, as if this was a battle for French freedom. A Turk on the buffers of the fourth wagon from the end uncoupled the tail of the train and let it slip downhill. Lawrence ran to stop it by putting a stone underneath a wheel, but was amused at the trucks sliding off on their own to safety; his effort was half-hearted. And he had reached a point of such carelessness about his own safety that he only laughed at a Turkish colonel in the runaway wagons who fired point-blank at him from a window with his pistol. The Western military idea of trying to end the War by reducing the enemy's man-power seemed comic in the desert. And the bullet only grazed his hip.

The train had been derailed, the engine ruined and the tender and front wagon telescoped. Twenty Turks were killed, the others taken prisoners, including four officers who stood in tears begging for their lives, which, however, the Arabs never intended to take. The wagons contained seventy tons of food-stuffs urgently needed down the line, as they learned from the captured way-bill. For a joke Lawrence receipted this and left it in the van, sending the duplicate to Feisal as detailed report of the success. What could not be taken was destroyed under the direction of Pisani. As before, the Arabs became merely camel-drivers, walking behind a long string of loaded animals. This time Lawrence was not deserted; Farraj held the camel, while Sheikh Salem (Gassim's brother) and another of the leading Arabs helped with the exploder and the heavy wire. But rescue parties of the Turks were four hundred yards away by

the time they got off. There were no Arabs killed or wounded.

Lawrence's pupils afterwards practised the art of mining by themselves and rumours of their success spread through the tribes, not always intelligently. The Beni Atiyeh tribe wrote to Feisal: 'Send us a *lurens* and we will blow up trains with it.' Feisal sent them one of the Ageyl who helped them to ambush a most important train. On board were the Turkish colonel who had left his garrison in the lurch at Wejh, twenty thousand pounds in gold, and precious trophies. The Ageyl repeated history by only saving the wire and exploder for his share. During the next four months seventeen engines were destroyed and much plunder taken. Travelling became a great terror for the Turks. People paid extra for the back seats in trains. The engine-drivers went on strike. Civilian traffic nearly ceased. The threat was extended to Aleppo merely by having notice posted in Damascus to say that all good Arabs would henceforward travel on the Syrian railway at their own risk. The Turks felt the loss severely; not only could they not any longer think of marching out of Medina, but they were short of engines in Palestine too, just when Allenby's threat began to trouble them.

Meanwhile, in the middle of September, Allenby, calling Lawrence to Egypt, asked him what exactly his aims were. Was this blowing up of the railway more than a melodramatic advertisement for Feisal's cause? Lawrence explained his policy, unchanged since he framed it in Abdulla's camp six months before. He was hoping to keep the line to Medina working, but only just working: the garrison was helpless to do the Arabs harm and cost less to feed than it would in a prisoners' camp in Egypt if it surrendered. And while the mining was going on, the Arab regulars were being properly trained for a move into Syria. Allenby asked about the pass to

Akaba north of Aba el Lissan where he knew from spies that the Turks intended a big attack. Lawrence explained that he and the Arabs had been working for months to provoke the Turks to come forward, and at last were about to be rewarded. The Turks had been hesitating because they had no idea of the strength of the Arabs, who being mostly irregulars went about in parties, not in stiff formation; so that neither aeroplanes nor spies could count them. On the other hand, Lawrence and Feisal always knew exactly what the Turkish forces were because they were regular troops and the Arab intelligence service was excellent. So the Arabs could always decide in time whether to fight or avoid fight.

Allenby understood then. And when at last the big attack was made from Maan on Akaba by way of the northern pass, Maulud with his regulars let the Turks into a trap from which few of them escaped. They never made another attempt on Akaba.

Chapter 7

IN October 1917 Allenby, who was fast reorganizing the British Army on the borders of Palestine, had decided on an attack of the Gaza-Beersheba line, to begin on the last day of the month. He had resolved that this time the attempt must not fail as before for want of artillery and troops, but since the Gaza end of the line (nearest the sea) was very strongly entrenched – its very strength seemed to have tempted the former disastrous British attacks – the scheme was to try south at the Beersheba end.

It was for Lawrence to decide how much help the Arabs could afford to give Allenby. He was in the unfortunate position of serving two masters. He admired both, yet found himself unable to explain the whole Arab situation to Allenby, or the whole British plan to Feisal. Allenby expected much from Lawrence as one of his officers. But Feisal trusted him implicitly, and this trust made him perhaps more careful on the Arab behalf than he might otherwise have been: and Feisal's was the weaker cause, always attractive to Lawrence. Now the country immediately behind the Turkish lines was peopled with tribes friendly to Feisal and a sudden rising there might have an enormous effect on the War. If Allenby was given a month's fine weather to make possible the advance of his cumbrous artillery and supplies he ought to be able to take not only Jerusalem, which he was aiming at, but Haifa too. In that case it would be a chance for the Arabs to strike from behind at the all-important junction of Deraa, the nerve-centre

of the Turkish Army in Palestine, where the Medina-Damascus railway joined the railway that ran to Haifa and to Jerusalem. Near Deraa were great untouched reserves of Arab fighting men, secretly taught and armed by Feisal from his base at Akaba. Four main Bedouin tribes could be used there and, better still, the peasants of the Hauran plain to the north, and the Druses, a settled mountain folk from the east.

The attack on Beersheba had not yet begun, so Lawrence was in doubt whether or not to call up all these helpers at once, to rush Deraa at the same time as Allenby attacked Gaza and Beersheba, smash all the railway lines, and even go on to surprise Damascus. He could count on at least twelve thousand men, and success would put the Turks facing Allenby into a desperate condition. He was greatly tempted to stake everything on immediate action but could not quite make up his mind. As a British officer he should have taken the risk, as a leader of the Arab Revolt he should not have. The Arabs in Syria were imploring him to come. Tallal, the great fighter who led the tribes about Deraa, sent repeated messages that, given only a few of Feisal's men in proof of support, he could take Deraa. This would have been all very well for Allenby, but Feisal could not decently accept Tallal's offer unless he was sure that Deraa could be held once it was taken. If anything went wrong with the British advance and the Turks sent reinforcements down from Aleppo and Damascus, Deraa would be recaptured and a general massacre would follow of all the splendid peasantry of the district. The Syrians could only rise once and when they did there must be no mistake. The English troops were brave fighters, but Lawrence could not yet trust Allenby, or rather the commanders under him who were, he thought, quite capable of ruining a perfectly sound scheme, as at the Suvla landing in the Dardanelles cam-

paign, by not profiting from their first sudden gains. And there was the weather. So he decided to postpone the rising until the following year. It is difficult to say now whether he was right. Allenby's army fought excellently, but was later held up by the rains.

He had to do something less than raising a general revolt, in return for Allenby's supplies and arms. So he decided that it would have to be a big raid made by a Bedouin tribe without disturbing the settled peoples, and something that would help Allenby in his pursuit of the enemy. The best plan was to blow up one of the bridges crossing the deep river-gorge of the Yarmuk just west of Deraa on the line leading to Jerusalem. This would temporarily cut off the Turkish Army in Palestine from its base at Damascus, and make it less able to resist or escape from Allenby's advance. It would be a fortnight before either of the two biggest bridges could be rebuilt. To reach the Yarmuk would mean a ride of about four hundred and twenty miles from Akaba by way of Azrak. The Turks thought the danger of an attempt on the bridges so slight that they did not guard them at all strongly. So Lawrence put the scheme before Allenby, who asked him to carry it out on November the fifth or one of the three days following. If the attempt succeeded and the weather held for the British advance, the chances were that few of the Turkish Army would get back to Damascus. The Arabs would then have the opportunity of carrying on the wave of the attack from a half-way point where the British, because of transport difficulties, must stop exhausted. They should be able to sweep on to Damascus.

In that case some important Arab was needed to lead the raid from Azrak. Nasir, the usual pioneer who had led the Akaba expedition, was away. But Ali ibn el Hussein was available, the young Harith chief whom Lawrence had met disguised in his first ride to see Feisal

a year before, and who had lately been active in raids on the railway down the line just above Davenport's section. Ali knew Syria, for he had been, with Feisal, the forced guest of the Turkish general Jemal at Damascus. Besides, his courage, resource and energy were proved, and no adventure had ever been too great or disaster too deep but Ali had faced it with his high yell of a laugh. He was so strong that he would kneel down, resting his forearms palm upwards on the ground, and rise to his feet with a man standing on each hand. He could also outstrip a trotting camel running with bare feet, keep his speed for a quarter of a mile, and then leap into the saddle. He was headstrong and conceited, reckless in word and deed, and the most admired fighter in the Arab forces. Ali would win over the tribe of Bani Sakhr, who were half-peasants, half-Bedouin, on the southern border of Syria. There were good hopes also of securing the Serahin, the tribe about Azrak, and there were others farther north on whom they might count for help.

Lawrence's plan was to rush from Azrak to the Yarmuk village which was the ancient Gadara; it commanded the most westerly of the two most important bridges, a huge steel erection guarded by a force of sixty men quartered in a railway station close by. No more than half a dozen sentries were, however, stationed actually on the girders and abutments of the bridge itself, as Lawrence had learned on his previous ride to Damascus through this country. He hoped to take some of Auda's tough Abu Tayi Howeitat with him under Zaal. They would make certain the actual storming of the bridge. To prevent enemy reinforcements coming up, machine-guns would sweep the approaches to the bridge; the men to handle these were a party of Mohammedan Indian cavalymen, now mounted on camels, under command of Jemadar Hassan Shah, a firm and

experienced man. They had been up-country from Wejh for months, destroying rails, and might be assumed to be by now expert camel-riders. The destruction of the great steel girders with only small weights of explosive was a problem. Lawrence decided to fix the charges in place with canvas strips and buckles and fire them electrically. But this was a dangerous task under fire, so Wood, an engineer officer at Akaba, came as a substitute in case Lawrence might be hit. Wood had been condemned as unfit for active service on the Western front after a bullet through the head.

They were making their last preparations when an unexpected ally arrived, the chief Abd el Kader. He was an Algerian of a family that had been living in Damascus since his grandfather, the defender of Algiers against the French, had been deported from there thirty years before. Abd el Kader, quarrelsome, deaf and boorish, was a religious fanatic who, being recently sent by the Turks on secret political business to Mecca, had paid a dutiful call instead on Sherif Hussein and come away with a crimson banner and noble gifts, half-persuaded of the right of the Arab cause. Now he offered Feisal the help of his Algerian villagers, exiles like himself, living on the north bank of the Yarmuk, half-way between the two important bridges but close to others whose destruction might answer nearly as well. This seemed excellent. As the Algerians did not mix with their Arab neighbours, the destruction of the bridge or bridges could be arranged quietly without exciting the whole peasant countryside into revolt.

Suddenly a telegram came from the French Colonel to say that Abd el Kader was a spy in Turkish pay. This was disconcerting, but there was no proof, and the Colonel was not greatly liked himself since his letter to Abdulla about the English and his earlier intrigues at Jiddah. Probably he was annoyed at Abd el Kader's

private and public denunciations of the French. So Feisal asked Abd el Kader to ride with Lawrence and Ali ibn el Hussein, telling Lawrence privately: 'I know he is mad, I think he is honest. Guard your heads and use him.' He joined the party. Whether or not he was a spy, he was a great annoyance to the party: being a religious fanatic he resented Lawrence's undisguised Christianity, and being ridiculously vain, resented being sent along with Ali whom the tribes treated as greater, and with Lawrence whom they treated as better than himself. Also his deafness was most inconvenient.

For his body-guard Lawrence took six Syrian recruits, chosen largely for their knowledge of the various districts through which he had to pass, with two Biasha tribesmen and the inseparable Farraj and Daud. These two were busy as usual at practical jokes and on the morning of October the twenty-fourth, the day of departure from Akaba, they completely disappeared. At noon came a message from fat Sheikh Yusuf, the Governor, to say that they were in prison and would Lawrence come and talk about it? Lawrence found Yusuf shaking between laughter and rage. His new cream-coloured riding-camel had strayed into the palm-garden where Lawrence's Ageyl were encamped. Farraj and Daud, not suspecting that the camel was the Governor's, had painted its body bright-red with henna and its legs blue with indigo before turning it loose. The camel caused an uproar in Akaba and when Yusuf with difficulty recognized the circus-like animal as his own, he hurried out his police to find the criminals. Farraj and Daud were found stained to their elbows with dye and though swearing innocence were soundly beaten and sent to prison in irons for a week. Lawrence arranged their release by lending the Governor a camel of his own until the dye had worn off the other, and

promising that the Governor should beat the boys again after the expedition. So they joined the caravan singing, though they had to walk mile after mile because of a new kind of saddle-soreness which they called 'Yusufitis.'

The expedition went by way of Rumm, crossing the railway line near Shedia, but it was not a compact or happy family. Abd el Kader was continually quarrelling with Ali ibn el Hussein, who prayed God to deliver him from the man's bad manners, deafness, conceit. Wood was ill and the Indians, who proved bad at loading and leading the baggage-camels, had to be helped by Lawrence's body-guard, and lagged far behind. They crossed the railway line in safety between two block-houses; contenting themselves merely with cutting the telegraph-wires. Ali and Abd el Kader were crossing the line farther north and soon came a rattle of machine-gun and rifle-fire: evidently they had not been lucky in their crossing. It turned out later that they had two men killed.

Lawrence's first stop was Jefer, where he had been before on the ride to Akaba and had repaired the damaged well: he took his party safely across the silver plain of polished mud and salt, and near Jefer found Auda encamped with a few of his tribesmen, including Zaal and Mohammed el Dheilan. The old man was having a violent dispute over the distribution of wages which he drew in bulk for the whole tribe, and was ashamed to be found in such difficulties. However, Lawrence did what he could to smooth them over and by giving the Arabs something else to think about, made them smile; which was half the battle. He then went to Zaal and explained his plan to destroy the Yarmuk bridges. Zaal disliked it very much. He had been most successful that summer in his fighting with the Turks, and wealth made life precious to him. And the

train-ambush at Mudowwara from which he had barely escaped with his life had tried his nerve; so now he said that he would only come if Lawrence insisted. Lawrence did not insist.

The first thing was to help Auda to settle the money disputes and to light again in the Howeitat the flame of enthusiasm now nearly extinct after months of hardship. At dark Lawrence sat by Auda's camp-fire, an Arab once more, talking in the hot persuasive tones that he had caught from Feisal, gradually kindling them to remember their oath, their promise to put the war with the Turks before all disputes and jealousy. He won them over, man by man, addressing them by name, reminding them of their ancestral glories, of their own brave deeds, of Feisal's bounty, of the baseness and the approaching collapse of the Turks. He was still at work near midnight when Auda held up his camel-stick for silence. They listened, wondering what the danger was, and after a while heard a rumble, a muttering like a very distant thunderstorm. Auda said: 'The English guns.' Allenby, a hundred miles north across the hills, was beginning the preparatory bombardment for his next day's successful attack on Beersheba, with Gaza to fall five days later. This sound closed the argument. The Arabs were always convinced by heavy artillery. When Lawrence and his party left the camp the next day in a happier atmosphere than they had found it, Auda gratefully came up and embraced Lawrence with 'Peace be with you.' But he also took the opportunity of the embrace to whisper windily, while his rough beard brushed Lawrence's ear: 'Beware of Abd el Kader.' He could not say more; there were too many people about.

They continued that day, the thirty-first of October, towards Bair. The winter was approaching; it was now a time of peaceful weather with misty dawns, mild sun-

light and an evening chill. The Indians were such bad camel-masters that they could manage no more than thirty-five miles a day – fifty was the least that an Arab would think of doing on a long march – and had to stop to eat three meals a day. The midday halt brought an alarm. Men on horses and camels were seen riding up from the north and west and closing in on the party. Rifles were snatched up and the Indians ran to their machine-guns. In thirty seconds the defence was ready; Ali ibn el Hussein cried out, 'Hold the fire until they come close.' Then one of Lawrence's body-guard, belonging to a despised clan of serfs, the Sherarat, but a devoted servant and brave fighter, sprang up laughing and waved his sleeve in the air as a signal of friendship. They fired at him, or perhaps over him. He lay down and fired back, one shot only over the head of the nearest man; that perplexed them, but after awhile they waved back in answer. Then he went forward, protected by the rifles of his party, to meet a man of the enemy, also advancing alone; it was a raiding party of Arabs of the Beni Sakhr tribe who pretended to be much surprised on hearing whom they had been about to attack, and rode in to apologize.

Ali ibn el Hussein was furious with the Beni Sakhr for their treacherous attack: they answered sullenly that it was their custom to shoot over the heads of strangers in the desert. 'A good custom,' said Ali, 'for the desert. But to come on us suddenly from three sides at once seems to me more like a carefully prepared ambush.' Border Arabs like the Beni Sakhr were always dangerous, being not villagers enough to have forgotten the Bedouin love of raiding, not Bedouin enough to keep the desert code. The Beni Sakhr raiders, ashamed, went forward to Bair to give warning of the approach of the party. Their chief thought it best to make up for the bad reception that such important men as Ali ibn el

Hussein and Lawrence had been given, by preparing a great feast for them. First there was a public reception, every man and horse in the tribe turned out, and there were wild cheers of welcome, volleys in the air, galloping and curvetings: and clouds of dust. 'God give victory to our Sherif,' they shouted to Ali, and to Lawrence, 'Welcome, Aurans, forerunner of fighting!'

Abd el Kader grew jealous. He began to show off, climbing up on the high Moorish saddle of his mare, and with his seven Algerian servants behind him in a file began the same prancing and curveting, shouting out 'Houp! Houp!' and firing a pistol unsteadily in the air. The Beni Sakhr chief came up to Ali and Lawrence, saying, 'Lords, please call off your servant. He cannot either shoot or ride, and if he hits someone, he will destroy our good luck of to-day.' The chief did not know Abd el Kader's family reputation for 'accidental' shootings in Damascus. His brother Mohammed Said had had three successive fatal accidents among his friends, so that Ali Riza, the Governor of Damascus and a secret pro-Arab, once said: 'Three things are notably impossible. The first, that Turkey should win this war. The second, that the Mediterranean should become champagne. The third, that I should be found in the same room with Mohammed Said, and he to be armed.'

The Beni Sakhr hospitality was even richer than that of the Howeitat. Lawrence, Ali and the rest ate ravenously, for good manners, at mutton and rice which was soused in so much liquid butter that they splashed their clothes and greased their faces in their first polite haste. The pace was slackening somewhat, though the meal was far from its end, when Abd el Kader grunted, rose to his feet, wiped his hands on a handkerchief and sat back on the carpets by the tent wall. Lawrence and the rest did not know whether to rise too, for the custom

was for all to rise together. They looked to Ali their leader, but he merely grunted, 'the boor!' and the eating went on until everyone was full and had begun licking his fingers. Then Ali cleared his throat as the usual signal, and they went back to the carpets, while the next relay fed and then the children.

Abd el Kader had not been behaving badly according to the standards of the border, which allowed the full-fed man to go off at his own time. But Ali was a sherif and a hero and therefore the good manners of the central desert ruled for that feast. So Abd el Kader was ashamed. He tried to carry it off by worse behaviour. He sat spitting, grunting and picking his teeth, and to show his grandeur further, sent a servant for his medicine chest and poured himself out a dose, grumbling that such tough meat gave him indigestion.

As the party sat about the tribal coffee-hearth, all but Abd el Kader, who had gone off to a fire of his own, they heard the guns again thudding away in preparation for the second day's bombardment of Gaza. It was a good moment for telling the chief why they had come. Lawrence said that they proposed a raid near Deraa and asked him for help. He did not mention the bridge, after his failure to get Zaal and his men; it might seem too forlorn a hope. However, the chief agreed to come himself and chose out fifteen of his best men and his own son Turki, a brave boy of seventeen, though ambitious and greedy like his father. He was an old friend of Ali's. Lawrence gave Turki a new silk robe, and he strutted among the tents in it, without his cloak, crying shame on any man who held back from the adventure.

That night they rode out from Bair, in company with the Beni Sakhr men. Their chief had first to pay his respects to his dead ancestor whose grave was near that of Auda's son. He decided that, as there was great

danger ahead, he would make a propitiatory offering of a head-cord to add to the ragged collection looped round the gravestone. And as the raid was Lawrence's idea, he thought he might ask Lawrence to provide one. Lawrence handed over a rich red silk and silver ornament, remarking with a smile that the virtue of the offering lay with the giver. The thrifty chief man pressed a halfpenny on Lawrence to make a pretence of purchase and get the virtue for himself. (A few weeks later Lawrence passed by again and noticed that the head-cord was gone. The chief cursed loudly in his hearing at the sacrilege. Some godless Sherari, he said, had robbed his ancestor: but Lawrence could guess where it really was.) When they halted that night the noise of Allenby's guns was very loud and clear, possibly because the hollows of the Dead Sea sent the noise echoing up to their high plateau. The Arabs whispered, 'They are nearer. The English are advancing. God deliver the men under that rain!'

The next day they went forward over ridges of sun-browned flints so closely grown over with a tiny saffron plant that the whole view was golden with it; and about noon saw from the top of a ridge a party of trotting camels coming fast towards them. Turki cantered forward, with carbine ready cocked, to see who the strangers were, but while they were still a mile off the Beni Sakhr chief recognized his kinsmen Fahad and Adhub, famous fighters, the war-leaders of the clan. They had heard the news of the raid and ridden at once to join it. Lawrence was glad of them. The next halt was Ammari in Sirhan where there were water-pools among the salty hummocks. They were mostly too bitter to drink, though there was one which was thought very good by contrast. It lay in a limestone hollow and the water, which tasted of mixed brine and ammonia, was of a deep yellow colour. Into this pool, for a joke, Daud

pushed Farraj fully dressed; he sank out of view and then rose quietly to the surface at the side of the pool under an overhanging rock-ledge and lay hid: Daud waited for him to rise, but when there was no sign of him, got into an agony of anxiety about his friend and, tearing off his cloak, jumped in after him. There was Farraj smiling under the ledge. They were fine swimmers, having once been pearl-divers in the Persian Gulf.

The next day Lawrence and Ali ibn el Hussein secretly explained the intentions of the raid to the old chief and his lieutenant. They listened gravely but said that the western bridge at Gadara was impossible because the Turks had just filled the woods about it with hundreds of military wood-cutters; the bridges in the middle they would not like to visit under the guidance of Abd el Kader whom they mistrusted and who would be among his own villagers there; the eastern bridge by Tell el Shehab was in the country of their blood-enemies who might take the opportunity to attack them in the rear. Also, if it rained the camels would not be able to trot over the muddy plains on the farther side of the line between Azrak and the bridges, and the whole party might be cut off and killed.

This was very bad. Lawrence's last hope was a party of a hundred Serahin who had just ridden into the camp to offer allegiance to Ali ibn el Hussein, as Feisal's proxy. If they refused to come, it would be impossible to destroy the bridge by the day that Allenby asked for it to be destroyed. So Ali ibn el Hussein and Lawrence collected the better men of the tribe and set them round the camp-fire with the chief of the Beni Sakhr and Fahad and Adhub to break cold prudence down with desperate talk. Though duty to Allenby provided the occasion, Lawrence was true Arab now, preaching with a prophetic eloquence the gospel of revolt. Its glory, he

urged, lay in bitterness and suffering, and the sacrifice of the body to the spirit. Failure was even more glorious than success; it was better to defy a hostile Fate by choosing out the sure road to death, proudly throwing away the poor resources of physical life and prosperity and so making Fate ashamed at the pooriness of its victory. To honourable men the forlorn hope was the only goal, and if by chance they escaped alive, then the next forlorn hope. They must believe that there was no final victory except at last after innumerable hazards to go down to death, still fighting. The Serahin listened entranced; their worldliness vanished, and before daylight came they were swearing to ride with Lawrence anywhere.

Lawrence and Ali ibn el Hussein took Abd el Kader aside and shouted into his ear that the Serahin were coming with the party and would be guided by him to the bridges near his home. He grunted that it was well, but Lawrence and Ali ibn el Hussein swore never again, if they survived, would they take a deaf man as a conspirator with them. Exhausted, they rested for an hour or so, but soon had to rise to review the Serahin. They looked wild and dashing, but blustered rather too much to be quite convincing. And they had no real leader; the chief's lieutenant was more a politician than a soldier. However, they were better than nothing, so the increased party went forward to Azrak, a place of ancient legends, where there was a great fort on a rock above rich meadows and palms and water-pools. Ali from the ridge that overlooked the place yelled out 'Grass!'; leaped off his camel and flung himself down among the harsh green stems that were so exciting to him after the salt and stony desert. Then with his Harith war-cry he raced along the marsh, his skirts girded up and his feet splashing among the reeds.

Soon they noticed that Abd el Kader had vanished.

They looked for him in the castle, among the palms, everywhere. At last they heard that he had ridden off northward not long after the start from the Serahin camp, making for the Druse mountains. The tribesmen had not known what the plans were, and, hating the man, had been glad to let him go without saying anything. But it was bad news. They must now give up the thought of destroying the middle bridges, and if Gadara was impossible because of the wood-cutters, the only bridge left for attack was Tell el Shehab. But Abd el Kader had certainly gone to the enemy with information of their plans and strength, and surely the Turks would trap them at the bridge. They took counsel with Fahad, who advised going on with the plan, trusting to the usual incompetence of the Turks. But the decision was not confidently taken.

The next day, the fourth of November, they were off again, through rich pasture valleys where gazelle were shot. The flesh was toasted on ramrods over the fire until the outside of the lumps was charred but the inside was juicy and sweet. At this midday halt two of Lawrence's body-guard quarrelled. One shot off the head-rope of the other, who fired back, putting a bullet through the assailant's cloak. Lawrence sprang between them and knocked their weapons up, ordering in a loud voice that the right thumb and forefinger of each should be cut off. This had the desired effect; they violently embraced and their companions offered to answer with their own lives that the quarrel was ended. Lawrence called Ali ibn el Hussein in as judge and he bound them over to good behaviour. But first they must seal their promise by the curious old penance of striking their own heads sharply with the edge of a heavy dagger until the blood trickled down to the waist. The wounds were not dangerous but ached for some time as a reminder of the promise given.

At Abu Sawana they found a long pool of delicious rain-water where they filled their water-skins. In the distance they saw a retreating party of Circassian horsemen sent by the Turks to see if this water was occupied – the two parties had missed each other by five minutes; which was lucky for both. On the fifth of November they reached the railway and, Lawrence and Fahad scouting ahead, crossed at dusk without interruption and rode five miles beyond. They camped in a hollow fifteen feet deep where there was grazing for the camels, but it was inconveniently near the railway, and they had to keep a close watch on the camels to prevent them from straying into view, and on the tribesmen to make them keep their heads down when patrols passed along the line.

At sunset, Lawrence and Ali ibn el Hussein decided that they would have to reach Tell el Shehab, blow up the bridge and get back east of the railway by the next dawn. This meant a ride of eighty miles in the thirteen hours of darkness with an elaborate mining operation thrown in. It was too much for the Indians, whose camels were tired out by bad handling – the fault of the Indians' cavalry training. So Lawrence only took the six best riders on the six best camels and Hassan Shah, their admirable officer, with a single machine-gun. The Serahin were doubtful fighters, so Ali and Lawrence decided, when the time came, to use them to guard the camels while a storming party of the Beni Sakhr, who could be trusted, went forward with the blasting gelatine to settle the bridge. The fighting force then consisted of Fahad and twenty Beni Sakhr, the seven Indians, forty Serahin, Ali ibn el Hussein with six slaves, Wood, and Lawrence with eight of his own men. The other two of Lawrence's men developed sudden illnesses which prevented them coming: Lawrence excused them for the night and afterwards of all duties whatsoever.

They and the rest of the party to be left behind were told to ride to Abu Sawana and wait there for news.

It was a nervous ride. First they stumbled on a terrified pedlar with two wives, two donkeys and a load of raisins, flour and cloaks on the way to the nearest Turkish railway station. One of the Serahin had to be left behind to guard them in case they gave the alarm. He was to release them at dawn and then escape over the line to Abu Sawana. Next a shepherd heard the party coming and fired shot after shot into the middle of them, but without hitting anybody. Then a dog barked. Then a camel loomed up suddenly on the track – but it was a stray and riderless. Then, in a hollow, they came on a woman, probably a gipsy, who ran off shrieking. They passed a village and were fired on while yet distant. These incidents delayed them and in any case the Indians, riding woodenly like cavalymen, were going much too slowly. Lawrence and Ali rode behind urging on the lagging animals with camel-sticks.

Then it began to rain and the fertile soil of the plain grew slippery. A camel of the Serahin fell, then one of the Beni Sakhr, but the men had them up in a moment and trotted forward. One of Ali ibn el Hussein's servants halted and dismounted. Ali hissed him on and, when the man mumbled, cut him across the head with his cane. The camel plunged forward and the man, snatching at the hinder girth, managed to swing himself into the saddle; Ali pursued him with the cane. At last the rain stopped and their pace increased as they trotted downhill. They heard a vague rushing sound in the distance; it would be Tell el Shehab waterfall. So they pressed forward confidently. A few minutes later they stopped on a grassy platform by a cairn of stones. Below them, in the darkness, lay the Yarmuk River in its deep gorge. The bridge would be on the right. They

unloaded. The moon was not yet over Mount Hermon, which stood before them, but the sky was bright with its rising. Lawrence served out the gelatine – four hundred and fifty pounds in thirty-pound bags – to the Serahin porters. They then started down.

First went the Beni Sakhr, scouting under Adhub. The ravine was slippery with the rain and two or three men fell heavily. When they were at the worst part of the descent, there was a clanking, screaming noise, and white puffs of steam came up from below. The Serahin hung back, but Wood drove them on. It was only a train from Galilee, low down in the ravine on the same side of the river. Lawrence, in the light of the engine furnace, could see open trucks in which were men in khaki – probably British prisoners being taken to Aleppo. They worked down to the right and at last saw the black shape of the bridge, and at the farther end a flicker of light, the fire by the sentries' guard tent. Wood stayed here with the Indians, who mounted their machine-gun ready to fire at the tent. Ali ibn el Hussein, Fahad, Lawrence, the Beni Sakhr chief, and the rest crept on downwards in single file until they reached the railway where it began to curve to the bridge. There the party halted while Lawrence and Fahad stole forward. They reached the bridge and slowly crawled along the abutment in the shadow of the rails until they reached a point where the girders began. They could see the sentry walking up and down before his fire, sixty yards away, without setting foot on the bridge itself. They wished him either much nearer or much farther. Fahad shuffled back and Lawrence followed, to bring the gelatine-porters along. He was going to attack the girders and risk the sentry.

Before he reached them there was a loud clatter and bump. Someone had fallen and dropped his rifle. The sentry started and stared up. He saw something mov-

ing high up in the light of the now risen moon; it was the machine-gunners climbing down to a new position so as to keep in the retreating shadow. He challenged them loudly, lifted his rifle and fired, yelling to the guard in the tent to turn out. Instantly, there was confusion and uproar. The Beni Sakhr blazed back at random. The Indians, caught on the move, were not able to use their machine-gun against the tent in time. The guard rushed out into its prepared trench and opened rapid fire at the flashes of the Beni Sakhr rifles. The Serahin porters had been told that gelatine would explode if hit, so they threw their sacks far down into the ravine and ran.

Lawrence and Fahad were left at the end of the bridge. It was hopeless now to climb down the ravine in search of the gelatine with no porters to help and sixty Turks firing from just across the bridge; so they ran back up the hill and told Wood and the Indians that it was all over. They reached the cairn where the Serahin were scrambling on their camels and did the same, trotting off at full speed. The whole countryside was roused. Lights sparkled everywhere over the plain, and rifle-fire began from all the neighbouring villages. They ran into a party of peasants returning from Deraa, and the Serahin, smarting under Lawrence's sarcasm about their fighting qualities, fell on them and robbed them bare. The victims ran off screaming for help; the village of Remthe heard them, and mounted men poured out to cut off the raiders' retreat. The Serahin lagged behind, encumbered with their booty, while Lawrence and Ali hurried forward to safety with the rest, driving the slower camels along, as before, with their sticks. The ground was still muddy and many camels fell; but the noise behind spurred them on again.

At dawn, the tired party reached the railway in safety

on the way back to Abu Sawana. Wood, Ali ibn el Hussein and the chiefs amused themselves by cutting the telegraph-wires to Medina. This, after their proud intention of the night before! Allenby's guns still drumming away on the right were a bitter reminder of failure. It began raining again, and when they reached the long pool at Abu Sawana they had to explain to the men left behind there the causes of their failure. Not a glorious failure even, thought Lawrence, remembering his speech of five days before, but a silly shameful one. Everyone was equally to blame, but that made it no better. The two body-guardsmen began to fight again; another of them refused to cook rice and Farraj and Daud knocked him about till he cried; Ali had two of his servants beaten – and nobody cared a bit. The party had come nearly a hundred miles, over bad country in bad conditions between sunrise and sunset, without halt or food.

They took counsel in the cold rain as to what must be done next. The Beni Sakhr wanted honour and the Serahin wanted to wipe out their disgrace. They still had the electric-mine apparatus and a thirty-pound bag of gelatine; so Ali ibn el Hussein said: 'Let's blow up a train.' Everyone looked at Lawrence. He would have liked to encourage them, but there were difficulties. They would have no food left after that night and, though the Arabs were accustomed to starving, the Indian machine-gunners were of no use unless well fed. And to mine a train properly the machine-guns were needed. The Indians could not even be given camel-flesh to eat; it was against their principles, though they were Mohammedans like the Arabs.

Lawrence explained this to Ali ibn el Hussein, who said: 'Only blow up the train and we Arabs will manage the wreck without the machine-guns.' The others agreed; so they sat down to make out a definite plan.

The Indians miserably moved off towards Azrak but, to make their departure honourable, Lawrence asked Wood to go with them. He consented, and wisely, for he was showing signs of pneumonia. The remaining sixty Arabs, with Lawrence as guide, went towards Minifer, to the camp behind the hill under the ruined watch-tower, where he had been in the spring.

At dusk they went down to lay a mine at the rebuilt culvert that he had blown up before. They had hardly got there when a train passed. This was annoying. It was still more annoying later when, after spending all night burying the gelatine under a sleeper on the arch of the bridge and hiding the wires – it was the mud that made him take so long – Lawrence was signalled at dawn to run back under cover while a patrol went by; for, in that interval, a train, seen too late through the mists, steamed past at full speed.

Ali ibn el Hussein said that bad luck was with the expedition. For fear that someone would next be accused of having the evil eye, Lawrence suggested putting out new watching posts, north and south, and gave as a task to the remainder to pretend not to be hungry. Waiting in cold wind and rain, without food, was bad; the only half-consolation was that Allenby was being held up by the bad weather too, and the Arabs would be partners with him next year when the Revolt was riper.

At last a train was signalled; an enormously long train, the report was, coming very slowly. Lawrence had only a sixty-yard length of wire and so had to put the exploder quite near the line behind a small bush, where he waited in suspense for half an hour wondering why the train did not appear. The engine was apparently out of order and the long gradient made it go very slowly on its wood fuel. At last it appeared. The first ten trucks were open ones, full of troops, but it was

too late to choose; so when the engine was over the mine, Lawrence pushed down the handle.

Nothing happened. He sawed it up and down four times. Still nothing happened, and he realized that the exploder was out of order and that he was kneeling behind a bush only a foot high with a Turkish troop-train crawling past fifty yards away. The Arabs were under cover two hundred yards behind him, wondering what he was at; but he could not dash back to them or the Turks would jump off the train and finish off the whole lot. So he sat still, pretending to be a casual Arab shepherd and, to steady himself, counting the trucks as they went by. There were eighteen open trucks, three box-wagons and three officers' coaches. The engine panted slower and slower and he thought every moment that it would break down. The troops took no particular notice of him, but the officers came out on the little platforms at the ends of the carriages, pointing and staring.

He was not dressed like a shepherd, with his gold circlet and white silk robes, but he was wet and mud-stained, and the Turks were ignorant about Arab costume. He waved innocently to them and the train slowly went on and disappeared into a cutting farther north. Lawrence picked up the exploder and ran. He was hardly in safety when the train finally stuck; and while it waited for nearly an hour to get up steam again, an officer's party came back and very carefully searched the ground by the bush. However, the wires were well hidden; they found nothing and, the engine picking up again, away the whole lot went.

The Arabs were most unhappy. Bad luck was certainly with them, grumbled the Serahin. Lawrence was sarcastic at their expense and a fight nearly started between the Serahin and the Beni Sakhr, who took Lawrence's part. Ali ibn el Hussein came running up. He

meal. There, Fahad and the other wounded men were attended to. The next day they went on to Azrak, showing their booty of rifles and medals and pretending that it was a victorious return and that they had done all that they had intended to do.

Chapter 8

THE weather had broken now finally and the Turks in Palestine were safe until the following year. Lawrence remained at Azrak with Ali ibn el Hussein and the Indians, and sent to Feisal for a caravan of winter supplies. It was a good place for preaching the Revolt and comfortable for the winter, once the ruined fort had been cleaned out and in part re-roofed. The Indian, Hassan Shah, took charge of the defence of the fort, mounting machine-guns in the towers and placing a sentry, an unheard-of thing in Arabia, at the postern gate. They settled down here with coffee-fires and story-telling, and Ali and Lawrence daily entertained the many visitors who came in to swear loyalty to the Revolt – Arab deserters from the Turks, Bedouin chiefs, head-men of peasant villages, Syrian-Arab politicians, Armenian refugees. There were also traders from Damascus with presents of sweetmeats, sesame, caramel, apricot paste, nuts, silk clothes, brocade cloaks, headcloths, sheepskins, patterned rugs and Persian carpets. In return the traders were given coffee, sugar, rice and rolls of cotton-sheeting, necessities of which the war had deprived them. The tale of plenty at Azrak would have a good political effect on Syria.

During this wet weather an opportunity came to Lawrence for having a look at the Hauran and in particular the Deraa district, the inevitable scene of the next Arab advance. For Tallal, the head-man of Tafas, a village in the Hauran, rode in one morning and consented to act as his guide. Tallal was a famous fighter,

outlawed by the Turks, of whom he had killed twenty-three with his own hands. There was a price on his head, but he was so powerful that he rode about as he pleased. He carried richly ornamented arms and wore a green cloth coat with silk frogs and a lining of Angora sheepskin. His other clothes were silk, his saddle was silver-mounted and he wore high boots. Under such guidance Lawrence had a safe and interesting trip round the vital railway junction which was to be the scene of heavy fighting in September 1918. He seems, though, to have got into trouble on the return journey, after he had parted with Tallal, for he records his arrest by the Turks (who took him for an army deserter) and his severe punishment in custody for his refusal to obey an order given him by the military governor, a Turkish major. This incident, apparently, did permanent damage to his nerve, coming as it did after the grave disappointments of the bridge and train failures and the exhaustion of the last few months.

Back at Azrak, he heard the story of Abd el Kader. The mad fellow, after his desertion of the Yarmuk party, had gone in triumph to his villages, flying the Arab flag, his men firing joy shots behind him. The people were astonished and Jemal, the Turkish governor, went to him protesting against the insult. Abd el Kader received Jemal in pomp, remarking that the whole country was now under the rule of the Sherif of Mecca, who graciously, however, confirmed all the existing Turkish officials in their appointments! Next morning he made a second progress through the district. Jemal complained again and Abd el Kader drew his gold-mounted Meccan sword and swore to cut off his head. The Turks saw that he was quite mad and so disbelieved his story that a raid was intended that night on the Yarmuk bridge. Later they employed him again, as before his ride to Mecca, to have secret dealings

with the Syrian-Arab nationalists and then to betray them.

The weather was now worse than ever, with sleet, snow and continual gales. It was obvious that there was nothing but talking to be done in Azrak. Lawrence felt himself a fraud, teaching and preaching armed revolt to this foreign people while knowing the whole time that it was unlikely that they would ever benefit by their strongest efforts. And he disliked the Syrian townsmen with their compliments and servility as they came 'craving an audience' with their 'Prince and Lord and Deliverer.' He preferred the simple desert manners of men who would come bluntly up to him with their requests, shouting: 'Ho, Aurans! Do this for me.' He decided to go off again to see if he could do anything active against the Turks on the Dead Sea. He handed over his remaining money and the care of the Indians to Ali ibn el Hussein. They took an affectionate farewell, exchanging clothes in sign of intimate friendship, and on November twenty-third Lawrence rode off south, alone except for Rahail, the strongest of his followers.

He was making by night for Akaba across the wet plain and the going was fearful. The camels were continually falling with their riders until, after some hours, Lawrence halted in despair and they lay down in the mud and slept till dawn. They rode on the next day, caked with mud. About noon, to the north of Bair, they were suddenly fired at by four men who rushed shouting from ambush. They asked Lawrence's name, saying that they were Jazi tribesmen. It was a plain lie, for Lawrence saw that their camel-brands were of the Faiz tribe. They covered Lawrence and Rahail with their rifles at four yards range and, jumping off their own camels, told them to do the same. It was to be murder, but Lawrence kept his head. He just laughed in their

faces and remained in the saddle. This puzzled them. Then he asked the man who appeared to be their leader whether he knew his name. The Arab stared, thinking Lawrence mad, but came nearer, his finger on the trigger. Lawrence, covering him with a pistol under his cloak, bent down and whispered: 'It must be *Teras*' (that is, Seller of Women), 'for no other tradesman could be so rude.' It was an insult which in the desert meant instant death for the man who uttered it, but the Arab was too astonished to shoot. He took a step back, looking round to see if Lawrence had a large armed party near; for otherwise he could never have dared so to provoke an armed man. Then Lawrence turned slowly, calling to Rahail to follow, and rode off. The Arabs stood and watched them go and only recovered their senses when they were a hundred yards away. Then they fired and charged in pursuit, but Lawrence and Rahail were well mounted and escaped. The Faiz were a shifty tribe. On one of Lawrence's rides in the previous summer he had been entertained by their chief, a member of the secret freedom society. Asleep on the rich rugs of the guest-tent, he had been roused by a whispered warning under the tent-flap. It was one of the chief's brothers, telling him that messengers had been sent by his host to the nearest Turkish garrison. Lawrence only just escaped in time: the traitor died shortly afterwards, probably murdered by his own people for disgracing them.

They passed Bair the next night and reached Jefer at dawn, having come a hundred and thirty miles in thirty hours over bad country. Lawrence had fever heavy on him and kept going at this pace because he wanted to reach Akaba before a caravan, that had gone there from Azrak to bring back stores, started back again. He had long ceased caring what happened to his own body and was resolved to humble Rahail, who had for

months been aggressively boasting of his strength and endurance, by riding him to a standstill. Before they passed Bair, Rahail was begging for a halt; before they reached Jefer he was crying with self-pity, but softly lest Lawrence should hear him. Beyond Jefer they came on Auda's tents, stopping only for a greeting and a few dates, and then on again. Rahail was past protest and riding white-faced and silent. They continued all that day and all the next night on their weary camels, crossing the railway. Lawrence's fever was dying down now and he fell into a trance in which he saw himself divided into different persons, one riding the camel, the others hovering in the air and discussing him. Rahail roused him at dawn, shouting that they had lost direction and were riding towards the Turkish lines at Aba el Lissan. They changed direction and reached Akaba by way of Rumm the following midnight.

To him at Akaba came urgent message from Allenby who had beaten the Turks in a series of battles, capturing Jaffa and the outskirts of Jerusalem, to report to him at once. Lawrence went by air, and arrived just in time to hear of the fall of Jerusalem. Allenby was too busy with news of victories to wish to hear details of the failure at the Yarmuk bridge, or to mind very much; a simple statement was enough. He kindly invited Lawrence to take part in the official ceremony of entry into Jerusalem and Lawrence accepted, with a quick-change into British staff-officer's uniform with brass-bound hat and red tabs.

For the Akaba success, by the way, Lawrence had been made a major and gazetted a Companion of the Bath, but steadfastly refused to wear the ribbons and has never accepted these or any other decorations. He was recommended by the High Commissioner of Egypt for the Victoria Cross, instead, but the recommendation was, much to Lawrence's relief, refused. Lawrence's

lieutenant-colonelcy came early in 1918, to put him on the same level as Lieutenant-Colonel Joyce who was graded as General Staff Officer, First Class, for liaison with the Arab Regular Army; Lawrence was General Staff Officer, First Class, for liaison with the Bedouin Arabs. His full-colonelcy Lawrence applied for himself (just after the capture of Damascus), much to the surprise of General Headquarters where his indifference to rank and awards was a standing joke. But he explained that he wanted the rank (special, temporary, acting and with all other possible qualifications) merely to secure for himself a berth on the staff-train through Italy which accepted no officers of lower rank than full colonels. He got his way. He called it his 'Taranto rank.'

Allenby and Lawrence exchanged military news and plans. Allenby said that he would be kept inactive until February, when he intended to push down to Jericho, which lies just north of the Dead Sea. Lawrence said that the Arab Army could link up with him there if the daily fifty tons of supplies that were usually landed at Akaba were sent to Jericho instead. Akaba could be abandoned as a base now that there was no more danger from the Turks in that quarter (they had soon to withdraw from Aba el Lissan to trenches just outside Maan). Allenby agreed gladly. It was important for the Arabs to move up to Jericho, for on the way they could stop the food that was reaching the Turkish Army from villages south of the Dead Sea, being taken up to the north end in boats from a little below Kerak in the south.

Back in Akaba with a month to wait before the move could begin, Lawrence decided to try the armoured cars in an experimental raid on the railway. They were now in Guweira, to which a motor-road had been built from Akaba by Egyptian labourers and the cars'

crews; from thence it was an easy run across dry mud-flats to the railway near Mudowwara. The trip was a holiday for Lawrence; there was little danger because the cars were proof against machine-guns and rifles and went very fast. The expedition consisted of three armoured Ford cars mounted with machine-guns, a half-battery of two ten-pounder guns carried by three more cars, Talbots, and open Rolls-Royces for scouting. The crews were all British and there was bully-beef, biscuit and tea, with two warm blankets for each man at night. It was these friendly outings with the Armoured Car and Air Force fellows that persuaded him, even then, that his best future, if he survived the War, was to enlist. The cars came up close to a Turkish post at the station next above Mudowwara and shelled and machine-gunned the trenches, but since the Turks did not surrender and there was no Arab force handy for charging, went off again to do the same at another station higher up. Lawrence only wanted to test the possibility of using the cars against the railway and as they were clearly a success came home to Guweira the same day.

The siege of Medina was still maintained in Central Arabia by Feisal's brothers, Abdulla and Ali; Yenbo was being used again as a base. Lawrence could not persuade the British advisers there, who were still under the High Commissioner of Egypt and not, like him, under Allenby, that there was no point in making Medina surrender. And when they asked him to cut the railway permanently at Maan because it was difficult for them to cut it where they were, he had to pretend that the troops with him were too cowardly to attempt the operation.

Lawrence increased his body-guard, which had started with Farraj, Daud and the Syrians. It was

advisable to do this because the price put on his head by the Turks – as also on Ali ibn el Hussein's – had risen to twenty thousand pounds. He chose followers who could live hard and ride hard, men proud of themselves and of good family. Two or three of these had joined him already and set a standard by which to judge new candidates. One day Lawrence was reading in his tent when one of the Ageyl noiselessly entered. He was thin, dark, short, but most gorgeously dressed, with three black plaited love-locks hanging on each side of his face. On his shoulder he carried a very beautiful, many-coloured saddle-bag. Greeting Lawrence with respect, he threw the saddle-bag on the carpet, saying: 'Yours,' and disappeared as suddenly as he had come. The next day he brought a camel saddle with its long brass horns exquisitely engraved. 'Yours,' he said again. The third day he came empty-handed in a poor cotton shirt, to show his humility, and sank down as a suppliant, asking to enter Lawrence's service. Lawrence asked him his name. 'Abdulla the Robber,' he answered (the nickname was, he said, inherited from his honoured father), and told his story sadly. He had been born in a town of the Central Oases and when quite young had been imprisoned for impiety. Later he had left home in a hurry, owing to an unlucky scandal about a married woman, and taken service with the local Emir, Ibn Saud, the present ruler of Mecca. For hard swearing in this puritanical service, he had suffered punishment and deserted to the service of another Emir. Unfortunately, he had then come to dislike his officer so much that he struck him in public with a camel-stick. After recovering in prison from the terrible beating that he got for this, he had taken a job on the pilgrims' railway which was then being built. A Turkish contractor docked his wages for sleeping at midday and he retaliated by docking the Turk of his head. He was

put into prison at Medina, escaped through a window, came to Mecca, and for his proved integrity and camel-manship was made carrier of the post between Mecca and Jiddah. Here he settled down, setting his parents up in a shop at Mecca with the bribe-money that he alternately got from merchants and robbers. After a year's prosperity, he was waylaid and lost his camel and its consignment. His shop was seized in compensation. He joined the Sherif's camel police and rose to be a sergeant, but for his hard swearing and dagger-fighting was reduced again. On this occasion he accused a tribesman of the Ateiba of bringing about his downfall through jealousy and stabbed the man in court in front of Feisal's cousin, Sharraf, who was trying the case. He nearly died of that beating. Then he entered Sharraf's service. When war broke out he became orderly to the captain of the Ageyl, but after the mutiny at Wejh, when the captain resigned and became an ambassador, the Robber missed the companionship of the ranks and now applied to enter Lawrence's service. He had a letter of recommendation from the captain. Lawrence read it. It said that Abdulla the Robber had been two years faithful but most disrespectful; that he was the most experienced of the Ageyl, having served every Prince in Arabia and having always been dismissed after stripes and prison for offences of too great individuality; that he was the best rider of the Ageyl, next to the writer of this letter, a great judge of camels and as brave as any son of Adam. Lawrence engaged him at once as captain of half the body-guard and never regretted it. This was only informal rank: his pay was the same as the rest.

Abdulla the Robber and Abdulla el Zaagi, the captain of the other half, a man of more normal officer type, examined all candidates for service between them, and a gang of desperate-looking villains grew about

Lawrence: the British at Akaba called them cut-throats, but they only cut throats at Lawrence's order. Most of them were Ageyl, wonderful camel-masters who would call their beasts by name from a hundred yards away and make them stand guard over the baggage. Lawrence paid them six pounds a month and provided them also with their camels and rations; whereas the ordinary Arab in Feisal's ranks had to provide his camel out of the same pay. So Lawrence had the pick of the countryside at his disposal. They spent their wages chiefly in buying clothes of every possible colour – only they did not presume to wear white, which was what Lawrence himself always wore. They fought like devils with Turks and outsiders, but not among themselves. The Robber and El Zaagi kept them in order with punishments so severe that they would have been monstrous had not the men, who were at liberty to resign whenever they liked, taken a perverse pride in them. They had for Lawrence a blind, half-superstitious devotion, and in his service nearly sixty of them died. The bravest individual deed of the War was performed by one of them who twice swam up the subterranean water-conduit into Medina and returned with a full report of the besieged town. Lawrence had to live up to their standard of hardness. He had learned to keep himself fit by breaking all civilized habits, eating much at one time, then going without food for as many as four days and afterwards over-eating. The same with sleep – doing without it for days except for drowsy naps taken while still riding, and riding carefully, on long night journeys. The men with him suffered less than he did from the heat, but he less than they in the frost and snow of the short winter that they passed in the mountains. In physical endurance there was equality between them, but in spirit and energy he outdid them.

On the eleventh of January 1918, Nasir, the usual

pioneer leader for Feisal, made an attack on Jurf, the nearest railway station to Tafleh, the group of villages commanding the south end of the Dead Sea. He took with him some Beni Sakhr tribesmen, some Arab regulars under Nuri Said (the chief-of-staff to General Jaafar, Feisal's commander-in-chief of the regular forces), a mountain-gun, and some machine-guns. They had luck in capturing the station, which the tribesmen camel-charged before Nuri Said intended them to, with a loss of only two killed. Two engines, the water-tower, the pump and the railway points were then blown up by the engineers. They took two hundred prisoners with seven officers and much booty, including weapons, mules and seven trucks of Damascus delicacies intended for the officers' messes at Medina. The regulars, mostly Syrians, then tasted olives, sesame paste, dried apricot and other sweets and pickles for the first time since they had left home three or four years before. There was also a whole truck of tobacco. When Feisal heard that the Medina garrison was now quite without anything to smoke, he was so sorry for the Turks, being a confirmed smoker himself, that he sent a number of pack-camels loaded with cheap cigarettes straying into their lines, with his compliments.

Lawrence was glad to see how well the army could manage without his personal direction. This was a raid merely, but Nasir and Lawrence soon followed it up by marching from Jefer to Tafleh with Auda and his tribesmen. Nasir appeared at dawn on a cliff above the valley, threatening to bombard the place if it did not surrender. It was only a bluff, because Nuri Said with the guns had gone back to the base, and the Turkish garrison may have known this. Supported by most of the villagers, they began to fire at the Howeitat, who spread out along the cliff and fired back. All except Auda. He rode in anger alone down the cliff-path, and

reining in close to the houses bellowed out: 'Dogs, do you not know Auda?' When they heard the terrible name of Auda, the villagers' hearts failed them and they compelled the Turks to surrender.

Feisal now sent up his brother Zeid, with more guns and machine-guns, to Tafleh to take charge of the Dead Sea operations; and Auda went back to his tents for a while. Suddenly on the twenty-fourth of January came the news that the Turks were advancing from Kerak to retake the village. Lawrence was astonished and annoyed. Tafleh was no possible use to the Turks: their only hope of holding Palestine against Allenby was to keep every possible man in reserve for the defence of the river Jordan. The Turkish general in command of the Amman garrison was in charge; he had with him about nine hundred infantry, a hundred cavalry, twenty-seven machine-guns and two mountain howitzers. Their cavalry drove in the Arab mounted posts guarding Tafleh on the north and by dusk were only about a mile off. Zeid decided to give the village to the Turks and defend the cliffs on the south side of the deep valley in which Tafleh lay. Lawrence objected strongly. To give up the village meant antagonizing the villagers and, in any case, the southern cliffs were dangerous to defend because a Turkish force could slip round from the railway on the east and cut off the defenders. Zeid listened to Lawrence's advice and decided to hold the northern cliffs of the valley, but not before most of the villagers had cleared out with their movable goods in a midnight panic.

Tafleh was about four thousand feet above sea-level, and it was freezing and blowing hard; Lawrence, who was up all night seeing to things, was in a furious temper at the disturbance. He decided that the Turks should pay for their greediness and stupidity. He would give them the pitched battle that they were so eager for and

obligingly kill them all. This was the one occasion in the War that Lawrence abandoned his principles of irregular mobility and fought a real battle, as a sort of bad joke, on the ordinary easy text-book lines. Zeid, who was a very cool young man and had learned much since his defeat by the Turks before Rabegh fourteen months previously, let Lawrence have his way.

There had been firing all night to the north. The local peasants were strongly resisting the Turks on the other side of the northern cliffs, and Lawrence had sent two young Motalga chiefs to tell them to hang on, for help was coming. The boys galloped off at once on their mares, with an uncle and about twenty relations, the most that could be rallied in the confusion, and the Turkish cavalry were held up till the morning. Then Lawrence started his battle in earnest.

First he sent forward Abdulla, a Mesopotamian machine-gun officer of Feisal's, with two automatic guns to test the strength and disposition of the enemy. He then found some of his body-guard turning over the goods lying in the street after the night's panic and helping themselves to whatever they fancied. He told them at once to get their camels and ride to the top of the northern cliffs by the long, winding road, and to bring another automatic gun. He took a short cut himself, climbing barefoot straight up the northern cliffs to the plateau at the top. There he found a convenient ridge about forty feet high which would do well for a defence position if he could find any troops to put there. At present he had nobody. But very soon he saw twenty of Zeid's Ageyl body-guard sitting in a hollow and by violent words managed to get them to arrange themselves on the ridge-top as if they were look-outs of a big force behind. He gave them his signet-ring to use as a token and told them to collect as many new men as they could, including the rest of his body-guard.

Abdulla's arrival had encouraged the Motalga and the peasants; together they had pushed the Turkish cavalry from the ridge across the corner of a two-mile-wide plain, triangular in shape, with the ridge as its base, and over the nearer end of another low ridge that made the left-hand side of the triangle. At this second ridge the Arabs stopped and took up a defensive position, behind a rocky bank. Lawrence, who, from climbing up the cliff, was warmer than he had been, went forward towards them, across the plain, until he came under shell-fire. The Turkish main body were shelling the ridge where the Arabs were, but the shrapnel that they were using was bursting far beyond in the plain. He met Abdulla on his way back to Zeid with news. Abdulla had lost five men and an automatic gun from shell-fire and had used up all his ammunition. He would ask Zeid to come forward with all the available troops. Lawrence was delighted and went on to the ridge.

When he reached it, the Turks had shortened the range and the shrapnel was bursting accurately overhead. Obviously some of the enemy must have come forward where they could get observation and signal back to the guns. He looked about and saw that the Turks were working round on the right of the ridge and would soon turn them out. There were about sixty Arabs at the ridge: the Motalga, dismounted, firing from the top, at the bottom sixty peasants on foot, blown and miserable, with all their ammunition gone, crying to Lawrence that the battle was lost. He answered gaily that it was only just beginning and pointed to the men on the reserve ridge, saying that the army was there in support. He told the peasants to run back, refill their cartridge-belts and hold on to the reserve ridge for good.

The Motalga held the forward ridge for another ten

minutes and had nobody hurt, but then had to leave in a hurry. They overtook Lawrence, who had started back before them since he had no horse, and one of the young chiefs lent him a stirrup to hold as he ran. Lawrence was counting his steps (it was a distraction from the pain of running with bare feet over sharp sticks and stones) to discover the exact range from the part of the ridge that they had just left to the reserve ridge. Here he found eighty men, and new ones were constantly arriving. The rest of his body-guard turned up with their automatic gun, and a hundred more Ageyl and two more guns. The Turks were occupying the ridge that the Motalga had just left, and to delay their attack Lawrence ordered the three automatic rifles to fire occasional shots. They were to fire short, so as to disturb the enemy, though not too much, and so make them delay their attack. It was just noon and Lawrence went to sleep for an hour or two, knowing that the Turks would do nothing for awhile. In the middle of the afternoon Zeid arrived with the rest of the army — twenty men on mules, thirty Motalga horsemen, two hundred villagers, five more automatic guns, four machine-guns and an Egyptian Army mountain-gun which had been right through the campaign since the battle of the date-palms. Lawrence woke up to welcome them.

He had all day long been making jokes about military tactics, quoting tags from the text-books. At the ridge with the Motalga he had told the young chief that the great Clausewitz had laid it down that a rear-guard effects its purpose more by being than by doing. But the joke would have been lost on the boy, even had twenty Turkish machine-guns not been in action against the top of the ridge and distracted his attention. Now he had Turk-trained Arab regular officers to try his wit upon: he sent Rasim, Feisal's chief gunner but a

cavalry leader for this occasion, to envelop the enemy's left wing, adding mock instructions to 'attack them upon a point, not a line. By going far enough along any finite wing, it will be found eventually reduced to a point consisting of a single man.' Rasim liked the joke and promised to bring back that man. With Rasim were five automatic guns and all the mounted troops, the Motalga horse, the mule-men and Lawrence's men on camels. The senior Motalga chief drew his sword and made a heroic speech to it, addressing it by name (every good sword in Arabia has a name, as in the days of European chivalry). They rode off under cover round the right-hand side of the triangular plain, where there was another ridge corresponding with the one that the Turks were occupying. They would take a few minutes to get round and meanwhile a hundred peasants arrived who were the herdsmen of this district: they had quarrelled with Zeid the day before about war-wages, but hearing of the fighting had generously sunk old differences and come up to help.

General Foch had somewhere advised attack only from one flank, but Lawrence decided to improve on him. He sent the herdsmen to work round on the left with three automatic guns. Knowing well every ridge and hollow, they managed to crawl unseen to within three hundred yards of the extreme Turkish right. The Turks had arranged their machine-guns in line right along the crest of the ridge with no post set out on either flank and no supports; it was lunacy. Lawrence, knowing the range, set four machine-guns to fire along the Turkish ridge-crest and keep the enemy busy. The crest was rocky and the flying chips of stone were as alarming as the bullets that scattered them.

It would soon be sunset and the Turks were losing heart at the unexpected resistance. 'Never have I seen rebels fight like this in my forty years of service,' said

their general. 'The force must advance.' But he spoke too late. Rasim on the right and the herdsmen on the left attacked simultaneously and wiped out the crews of the machine-guns on each Turkish flank with a burst of fire from their automatics. That was the signal for the main body of the Arabs. They charged forward, headed by Zeid's chief steward on a camel, his robes billowing in the wind, and the crimson standard of the Ageyl flapping over his head. Lawrence stayed behind with Zeid, who was clapping his hands for joy to see the Turkish centre collapse and stream back towards Kerak. Behind the Arabs followed a body of Armenian villagers, deported here some years before after the Turkish massacres; they were armed with long knives and howling for vengeance on the Turks.

Then Lawrence realized just what he had done: to avenge a personal spite against the Turks and to parody the usual farce of a regular battle, he had caused a wanton and useless massacre. And, worse, he had carelessly thrown away the lives of many of his Arab friends. It would have been quite possible to have refused battle, even without yielding the village, and by manœuvring about to have drawn the Turks into a trap from which they would have escaped with some loss and great irritation. But this was ghastly. The Turkish survivors were pouring down a steep defile back towards Kerak, with the whole force of Arabs in pursuit. It was too late now for Lawrence to run after and call the Arabs off, and he was too tired to try. In the end, only fifty exhausted Turks of the whole brigade got safely back. For though the Arab Army did not pursue the broken enemy for more than a mile or two, the peasants farther along the Kerak road shot them down one by one as they ran.

The Arabs had captured the two mountain howitzers (very useful to them afterwards), the twenty-seven

machine-guns, two hundred horses and mules, two hundred and fifty prisoners. But twenty or thirty dead Arabs were carried back across the cliff to Tafeleh and the sight filled Lawrence with shame. Then it began to snow and the wind blew to a blizzard. Only very late and with great difficulty they got in their own wounded; the Turkish wounded had to lie out and were all dead the next day. The blizzard continued and Lawrence was unable to follow up his success. He wrote a report of the battle to the British Army Headquarters in Palestine. It was a parody, like the battle itself, and full of all the usual military catchwords used in official despatches. It was taken quite seriously. Lawrence was thought to be a brilliant young amateur doing his best to imitate the great models and the bad joke was turned against him by the offer of another military decoration, the Distinguished Service Order this time.

He partly regained his self-respect three days later by a far more important piece of work, which was the stopping of the transport of food up the Dead Sea, which Allenby had asked him to undertake. He had arranged with a chief of the Beersheba Bedouin, encamped near by, to raid the Turkish ships that were at anchor in a little port below Kerak at the south-east end of the Dead Sea. This was one of the two occasions in British military history when mounted men have fought and sunk a fleet. The Bedouin, in a sudden charge at dawn, surprised the sailors asleep on the beach, then scuttled the launches and lighters in deep water and looted the port. They took sixty prisoners, burned the storehouse, and came away without any loss to themselves.

Lawrence in making his report ironically countered the award of the military D.S.O. by recommending himself for a naval D.S.O., which has a different coloured ribbon. But this time Headquarters saw the joke.

At Tafeleh it was colder than ever and though there

was food enough Lawrence could not stand the squalor of crowding with his twenty-seven men in two tiny rooms. It was the fleas and the painful smoke of green wood on the open fire, and the dripping mud roof. And his men's tempers. One of the Syrians who had given trouble before on the ride to the Yarmuk bridge had a dagger fight with Mahmas, a camel-driver. In Europe, Mahmas would have been called a homicidal maniac, so possibly it was not the guardsman's fault. If Mahmas was worsted in argument or laughed at, or even for a mere fancy, he would lean forward with his little dagger and rip the other man up. Three men at least he had killed so; once Lawrence had the unpleasant task of disarming him when he was running amok.

For his fight – quarrelling in the guard was an unforgivable offence – Mahmas was heavily whipped by El Zaagi, his captain, so was the other contestant. Lawrence, in the next room, could not endure the noise of the blows after his Deraa experience and stopped El Zaagi before he had gone very far. Mahmas was weeping before the punishment started and when it was over was in disgrace as a coward. To the Syrian, who had endured without complaint, Lawrence gave an embroidered silk headcloth next morning for his faithful services; but did not tell the man the real reason of the gift. After this, Lawrence decided to scatter his body-guard among the other houses. The men were too high-spirited to be shut up together in two small rooms with nothing to do. He went off himself on a journey to get the gold that Zeid would need, when the fine weather came, for enrolling the new tribesmen through whose territory the Arabs were to advance.

On the fourth of February 1918, Lawrence started towards Akaba with five men, on camels, across the hills; a most painful ride in bitter cold and whirling snow. At a night halt in the shelter of the rock the four

men with him, lying on the frozen ground beside their camels, resigned themselves to death. They would not speak or move when he called to them and he could only rouse them by pulling one of them up by the love-locks, which startled him painfully to life, and the others then woke up too. From Feisal in Akaba he got thirty thousand pounds in gold, two attendants of the Ateiba tribe and a party of twenty men under a sheikh to carry the gold. The gold was in £1,000 bags, each bag weighing about twenty-two pounds. Two were enough weight for each camel, swung on either side of the saddle. They had hardly started before the sheikh stopped for hospitality at the tent of a friend and said that perhaps he and his men might come on with Lawrence the next day, if the weather improved. Lawrence knew what delay this would mean and decided that the best way to get the party moving for sure the next day was to ride on ahead and shame them into following. So he went forward with his own attendants. The wind blew so bitter that the men, who, being from Central Arabia, had never experienced cold like this before and now saw snow for the first time in their lives, thought from the pains in their lungs that they were strangling. The party rode behind the hill where old Maulud and his regulars were besieging the Turks at Maan: for Lawrence wanted to spare his men the unhappiness of passing a friendly camp without a halt.

Maulud's men had been here for two solid months in dug-outs on the side of the hill. Their only fuel was wet wormwood, on which they with difficulty baked bread every other day. They had no clothes but khaki drill uniform; and when Feisal's supply officer had applied on their behalf to Egypt for ordinary khaki serge the answer had been that Arabia was a tropical country and that therefore only tropical kit could be issued. Nor could he get them sufficient army boots. (The regulars

got boots, most of them. The irregulars did not, though their need was as great.) They slept in wet verminous pits on empty flour sacks, six or eight huddled together in a bunch to make their few blankets go as far as possible. More than half of them died or were broken in health by the cold and wet. But Maulud, by his great heart, somehow kept the survivors in their places, daily exchanging shots with the Turks. Their camp was four thousand feet above sea-level.

Lawrence's journey grew worse, with frequent falls and a wind so violent that they could do no more than a mile an hour against it. They had frequently to dismount and pull the camels up mud-banks and through icy streams. After many hours the men flung themselves, weeping, on the ground and refused to go farther, so they camped there for the night in the slush between their camels. The next day, coming on a Howeitat camp, the two Ateiba tribesmen refused to go farther with Lawrence. They said that it would be death. Lawrence called them cowards and swore that he would go the rest of the journey alone with their four bags of gold, in addition to his own two. He had a very fine cream-coloured camel, by name Wodheiha, who saved his life that day: she refused to take a short cut over some frozen mud-flats, but, when he fell through the cat-ice and got bogged to the waist, came close so that he could pull himself out by grabbing at her fetlock. He did ten miles that afternoon, travelling all the time, and stopping the night at an old Crusaders' castle where a friendly chief was encamped. The old man was hospitable but mentioned, as he blessed the meal, that the next day his two hundred men must starve or rob, for they had neither food nor money and his messengers to Feisal were held up by the snow. Lawrence immediately gave him five hundred pounds on account until his subsidy came.

In the morning he rode out again on the last stage of his journey to Tafileh. With him came two men from the castle as escort, but they soon deserted him and he went on alone. That afternoon, climbing uphill through snowdrifts that completely hid the path, Wodheihā grew very tired, missed her footing and slipped eighteen feet, with Lawrence, down the steep hill-side into a frozen snowdrift. After the fall she rose trembling and stood still. He was afraid that she had come to the end of her strength and vainly tried to tow her out, up to his neck in snow. Then he hit her from behind but could not budge her. He mounted her and she sat down. He jumped off and heaved her up, wondering if the drift was too deep for her. With his bare hands and feet he scooped her a road. The crust was sharp and cut his wrists and bare ankles till they bled over the snow, but he carried the little road back to the path, mounted Wodheihā again and rushed her successfully up the hill-side. They went on cautiously, Lawrence sounding the path with his stick or digging new roads through the deeper drifts. In three hours they were on the mountain-ridge overlooking the valley of the Dead Sea. Thousands of feet below he could see village-gardens green and happy in their summer-like weather. Towards evening Wodheihā balked at a snow-bank and he was afraid that she would not manage it this time and would have to be left there to die. So he led her back a hundred yards and charged her over at a canter. The other side of the bank was slippery, having been exposed to the sun all the afternoon. Wodheihā lost her footing and went slithering down on her tail, with locked legs, for about a hundred feet; Lawrence still in the saddle. There were stones under the snow and she sprang up in rage, lashing her tail, then ran forward at ten miles an hour, sliding and plunging down the path towards the nearest mountain-village. Lawrence was

clinging to the saddle, in terror of broken bones. Some men of Zeid's were weather-bound at this village, and came out much amused at the distinguished entry. Lawrence made the last eight miles to Tafileh in safety, gave Zeid some money and his letters and went gladly to bed.

He went forward the next day to plan out the Arab advance to Kerak and so along the eastern side of the Dead Sea. The weather was improving and he was reassured that the steps of the advance would be easy. Jericho was still in Turkish hands, but would soon fall, and it would be as well to go forward at once to threaten the Turkish left flank on the eastern bank of the Jordan. He came back and told Zeid of his plans. But the Tafileh district had seen too many changes in the fortune of the Arab Revolt to decide on any more risks on its behalf. Zeid had to confess that to arrange a further advance was beyond his powers.

This was a facer for Lawrence, who had promised Allenby to fulfil a certain programme by certain dates and had drawn special credits for the operation. His scheme was now breaking down, not for military reasons, but because of a defect in propaganda, for the purpose of which Lawrence was attached to Feisal's headquarters. It therefore reflected personally upon him.

There was nothing for Lawrence to do but go at once to Allenby at his Headquarters at Beersheba, confess to failure and resign. He started late the same afternoon with four men, cutting straight across country, first down five thousand feet from the Tafileh hills and then up three thousand feet into Palestine. At Beersheba he met his old friend, Hogarth, and explained the whole business to him. That his breakdown should have been with Zeid, a little man whom he liked, put a finishing touch to his general feeling of exhaustion. Lawrence

went on to complain that never since he landed in Arabia had he been given an order, never anything more than requests and options. He was tired to death of free-will and responsibility, all he wanted now was to resign and be given a job in which he was not compelled to think or act for himself; any routine job would do. Also he had for the last year and a half ridden something like a thousand miles a month on camels, not to mention thousands of miles more in crazy aeroplanes and jolting cars. In each of his last five fights he had been wounded and he now so dreaded further pain that he had to force himself to go under fire. He had generally been hungry, and lately always cold. Frost and dirt had poisoned his wounds to a mass of festering sores. And the guilt of the fraud on the Arabs and of the deed of Tafileh was heavy on his mind.

However, it was not to be. Hogarth took him to the head of the Arab Bureau, who refused to let him resign. The Imperial War Cabinet was counting on Allenby to end the deadlock in the West by winning the war in the East. If Allenby could take Damascus and possibly Aleppo, Turkey would be forced to surrender and that might encourage Austria and Bulgaria to follow suit; the Germans could not then hold out longer. But Allenby could not win his war without a protected right flank and Lawrence was the only man with enough control of the Arabs to give him this. The matter of a few paltry thousand pounds was not going to stand in the way of victory. So he was actually ordered this time to take up the task, and quietly accepted the inevitable.

Allenby wanted to know whether Lawrence could still link up with him at Jericho, which had just been taken, and so continue the advance north to Amman. Lawrence said that he could not manage at present without a great deal of help. The first trouble was Maan, which was holding up the Arab army. Maan

must be taken and, now that the time had come, the pilgrims' railway must be permanently cut. The Arab Army could do it but would want seven hundred baggage camels for transport, also money, more guns, more machine-guns and protection from a counter-attack from Amman. Allenby promised all this, and Lawrence promised in return that when Maan fell the Arab army would move up to Jericho and join in Allenby's great advance on Damascus from the Mediterranean coast to the Dead Sea.

He went to Feisal at Akaba and explained that the Arabs would now soon be driven out of Tafileh by the Turks, but that Tafileh did not matter. Amman and Maan were the only important points from now on and a Turkish force in Tafileh would actually waste the Turkish strength. Feisal, anxious for Arab honour, sent a warning message to Zeid, but without avail; for six days later the Turks drove him out of the place.

Chapter 9

SPRING had come and the War was starting again in earnest. The Arab Army was now very well provided with transport and everything else it wanted except enough guns; it had a special branch of Allenby's staff to look after its interests, under Colonel Dawnay. The plan that was worked out was for the armoured cars to go to Mudowwara and permanently cut the railway there while the Arab regulars seized the railway a day's march north of Maan, and compelled the Turkish garrison to come out to fight if they would not starve. The Arab regulars were now easily a match for the Turks and would have the help of irregulars on their flanks. Feisal and Jaafar liked the plan but, unfortunately, the other officers wanted to make a direct assault on the town and old Maulud wrote to Feisal protesting against British interference with Arab liberty. Then, though the supplies, arms, pay and transport were all now being supplied by the British, Lawrence and Dawnay saw that it would be wise to give the Arabs their way even if it was a foolish way. The Arabs were volunteers in a far truer sense than the British Army, in which enlistment by every able-bodied man had now for some months, though 'deemed voluntary,' been in fact compulsory. Arab military service was literally voluntary, for any man was at perfect liberty to return home whenever he liked.

A large number of the Arab irregulars were going to Atara, seventy miles due north of Bair, there to wait for news of Allenby's attack on Amman, fifty miles to the

north-west. Lawrence went, too, with his body-guard. On the fourth of April the army started with its train of two thousand baggage camels and reached Atara four days later without loss. At the crossing of the railway, Lawrence happened to be ahead of his body-guard. It was near sunset and everything seemed peaceful enough; but as he rode up the embankment the camel's feet scrambled in the loose ballast and out of the long shadow of a culvert on the left, where no doubt he had slept all day, rose a Turkish soldier. He looked wildly at Lawrence, who had a pistol in his hand, and then with sadness at his own rifle yards away out of reach. Lawrence stared at him and said softly, 'God is merciful.' The Turk knew the sense of the Arabic phrase and a look of incredulous joy came over his fat, sleepy face. However, he made no answer. Lawrence pressed the camel's shoulder with his foot; she went carefully over the metals and down the bank on the other side. The Turk had enough good feeling not to shoot him in the back, and he rode away with the warmth of heart that a man always has towards a life he has saved. When, at a safe distance, he looked back, the Turk had his thumb to his nose and was twinkling his fingers in farewell.

At Atara everything was green and fresh with spring, and the camels were enjoying themselves greatly. News came that Amman was taken; the Arabs were making an immediate move farther north to join them, when further news reported it lost again. So the Arabs turned south. But first Lawrence went spying into Amman in company with three gipsy women and Farraj disguised, like himself, as one of them. He had a good look round and decided that the place should be left alone as too strong for Arab attack. As they were returning some Turkish soldiers stopped them and made love to them; they only escaped by running away at top speed. Law-

rence decided in future to use British khaki uniform again as the best disguise because too brazen to be suspected. Farraj was a changed person. Daud had died of the cold and wet that terrible winter, and Farraj went about heavy-eyed and restless, alone. He took greater care than ever of Lawrence's camel, saddles and clothes, and of the coffee-making, but never made another joke and began praying regularly three times a day. A week after this Amman visit he was himself dead, being mortally wounded in a mounted raid against a Turkish railway-patrol.

They then rode down towards Maan to see how the attack there was getting on. The Arabs had done well; under Jaafar they had cut the line north of Maan, destroying a station and three thousand rails; and south of Maan Nuri Said had accounted for another station and five thousand rails. They were making an attack now on Maan itself. Lawrence came upon old Maulud badly wounded, his thigh-bone splintered above the knee; but he called to Lawrence in a weak voice from the litter, 'Thanks be to God, it is nothing. We have taken Semna.' 'I am going there,' said Lawrence. Semna was the crescent-shaped hill overlooking Maan from the west, and Maulud, though hardly able to see or speak for exhaustion, craned over the side of the litter to point backwards to the hill and explain the best way of defending the place against counter-attack.

The next move was against the eighty miles of railway north of Mudowwara. Colonel Dawnay was in charge of the attack which was to be made by the armoured cars, with aeroplanes to drop bombs and Egyptians and Arab tribesmen to do the hand-to-hand fighting. He issued formal typewritten operation-orders with map references and an accurate programme of times and objectives. This rather amused Lawrence, whose fighting hitherto had all been of the careless

verbal sort, ('Let's attack that place over there; you go round this way and I'll go round the other, and afterwards we'll blow something up if we can'), and who did not regard the present operations as on a big enough scale to justify the use of the typewriter.

As Dawnay knew no Arabic, Lawrence came along as interpreter to look after the tribesmen and the Egyptians. He knew that one misunderstanding would spoil the delicate balance of the Arab Front and that such misunderstandings would be bound to occur unless somebody responsible was continually on the watch. As he was himself about the only man intimate enough with the Arabs to be ceaselessly with them without boring them into sulks, he tried to god-father every mixed expedition. The programme worked out exactly except that the Turks at the post north of the first station to be attacked surrendered ten minutes too soon and that the Arab tribesmen who took the south post did not advance in alternate rushes with covering fire, as they were expected, but made a camel-charge, steeple-chasing across the Turkish breastworks and trenches. Then the station itself surrendered and the Arabs enjoyed the maddest looting of their history. Lawrence broke his no-looting rule by taking off the brass station-bell. He was called in to settle a dangerous dispute about loot between the Arabs and the Egyptians. However, this was arranged, for nearly all the Arabs were, for once, completely satisfied with what they had got. They moved off home; only a few faithful ones were left behind for the attack on the next station. These few were rewarded. There was no fighting – the Turks had run away – and plenty of loot; so they praised themselves loudly for their loyalty. Mudowwara itself was the next objective, but there was a troop-train in the station and the Turks opened on the armoured cars with accurate gun-fire at four miles' range, so the attack was not pressed. Mean-

while, Lawrence and Hornby in Rolls-Royces were running up and down the line, blowing up bridges and rails. They used two tons of gun-cotton. Lawrence visited the place south of Mudowwara where he had mined his first train, and destroyed the long bridge under which the Turkish patrol had slept on that adventurous day in the previous September.

Mohammed el Dheilan (the victim of Auda's pearl-necklace story) and the Abu Tayi tribesmen then took five more stations between Maan and Mudowwara and so eighty miles of line were cut beyond repair. That settled the fate of Medina, four hundred miles to the south.

Early in May Lawrence went up to Palestine to discuss the future with Allenby, leaving the Arabs and English to make another eighty-mile break north of Maan. On arrival he found to his disgust that Allenby's chief of staff had decided on a raid against Salt, with the help of Beni Sakhr tribesmen. This was trespassing on Lawrence's ground, and clumsy trespassing. He asked who was to lead the Arab forces and was told: 'Fahad, at the head of twenty thousand tribesmen.' It was ridiculous. Fahad was never able to raise more than four hundred of his own clan and, in any case, he had now moved south to help the new operations just above Maan. Some of his greedy relations must have ridden over to Jerusalem to screw money out of the English by giving these impossible promises. Of course no Beni Sakhr appeared and the raid miscarried with heavy losses; the survivors only just escaped being cut off and captured.

The Arabs now found that there were disadvantages as well as advantages in being tied to the English. Allenby could not make his intended great attack because the Germans had begun their last big offensive and his best troops were being taken from him and hurried to France to save a break-through. The Arabs had to wait, too,

until new troops reached Allenby from India and his army was reorganized – a delay of perhaps four or five months. Meanwhile Allenby was lucky if he could hang on to his Jerusalem-Jaffa line. He told Lawrence so on May the fifth, the very day chosen for the great joint advance north. It was bad news for the Arabs besieging Maan with forces only half the size of the garrison. Maan was well supplied with stores and ammunition – the Turks had sent down a supply column of pack animals – and now that the pressure from the English was relaxed, big forces of Turks would probably come down from Amman, raise the siege and push the Arabs out of Aba el Lissan.

However, Allenby said that he would do his very best for Lawrence in helping the Arab Army in every way but with men. He promised repeated aeroplane raids on the railway and these turned out most useful in hindering the Turks in their advance. As Allenby was giving Lawrence tea that day, he happened to remark that he was sorry that he had been forced to abolish the Imperial Camel Brigade, which was in Sinai, but men were short and he had to use them as cavalry up at Jerusalem. Lawrence asked what was going to be done with the camels. Allenby told him to ask the Quartermaster-General. So Lawrence left the tea-table and went to the Quartermaster-General's office with the question. The Quartermaster-General, who was very Scotch, answered firmly that the camels were needed as transport for one of the new divisions which were on their way from India. Lawrence explained that he wanted two thousand of them. The Quartermaster-General answered briefly that he might go on wanting. So Lawrence went back and said aloud at the tea-table that there were for disposal two thousand two hundred riding camels and thirteen hundred baggage camels. All, he said, were earmarked for transport, but of course *riding camels were*

riding camels! The staff whistled and looked wise, as if they doubted whether riding camels could carry baggage. Lawrence had known that a technicality might be useful, even a sham one, for every British officer had to pretend that he understood animals, as a point of honour. So he was not surprised that night at dinner to find himself on one side of Allenby, with the Quartermaster-General on the other.

With the soup, Allenby began to talk of camels, and the Quartermaster-General immediately said how lucky it was that the Indian Division's transport would now be brought up to strength by the disbanding of the Camel Brigade. It was a bad move; Allenby cared nothing for strengths. He turned to Lawrence and said with a twinkle: 'And what do you want them for?' Lawrence answered hotly: 'To put a thousand men into Deraa any day you please.' Now Deraa junction (the secret of whose weakness against surprise Lawrence had bought at great cost to himself) was the nerve-centre of the Turkish Army. Its destruction would cut off, from Damascus and Aleppo, both the line south to Amman and Maan and the line east to Haifa and Northern Palestine. So Allenby turned to the Quartermaster-General again and smilingly said: 'Q, you lose.'

It was a princely gift, for now the Arab Army could move about freely far from its base and could win its war when and where it pleased. Lawrence hurried back to Feisal, who was at Aba el Lissan, and teased him by first talking at length about histories, tribes, migrations, the spring rains, pasture, and so on. At last casually he mentioned the gift of two thousand camels. Feisal gasped with delight and sent his slave running for Auda, Zaal, Fahad, and the rest of his chiefs. They came in anxiously asking: 'Please God, is it good?' He answered with shining eyes: 'Praise God!' The chiefs heard the news with astonishment and looked at Lawrence, who said:

'The bounty of Allenby.' Zaal spoke for them all: 'God keep his life and yours.' Lawrence replied: 'We have been made victorious.' The chiefs were as delighted as Feisal.

But before the camels could be used against Deraa the nearer danger must be settled. There was a big Turkish force gathering at Amman for the relief of Maan. Nasir was asked to delay it by another big breach of the railway at Hesa, half-way between the two towns. He succeeded by the old method of blowing up bridges north and south, the night before, and at dawn bombarding the station, with a camel-charge to follow. As usual, there were no losses at all. Hornby and others with explosives then hurriedly demolished fourteen miles of railway.

This was excellent: the Turks would be delayed at least a month and it would be the end of August before they could patch up the railway just north of Maan and be ready to attack Aba el Lissan. By that time, for it was now early June, Allenby would be nearly ready to advance again and the Turks might not dare to make the attempt. The Arab forces could then be divided into three main parties: a thousand camel-men to take Deraa, and two or three thousand infantry to join up with Allenby at Jericho, the remainder to continue to keep watch above Maan. Lawrence decided to get Sherif Hussein, as nominal commander-in-chief of the Arab armies, to send Feisal all the regular troops besieging Medina under his brothers, Abdulla and Ali. Medina was in a pitiful state now, with short rations and scurvy, cut off from Damascus by the railway-breach between Maan and Mudowwara, and needed no more harrying; while the Arab troops were urgently needed for the advance north. But the old man was jealous of Feisal's success and made difficulties. Lawrence went down to Jiddah to talk him over, bringing letters from

Feisal, Allenby and the High Commissioner of Egypt, the Sherif's paymaster. But the Sherif, pleading the fast of Ramadan, retired to Mecca, a holy place where Lawrence could not follow him. The Sherif consented to talk over the telephone, but sheltered himself behind the incompetence of the Mecca exchange whenever he did not like the conversation. Lawrence, in no mood for farce, rang off and came away.

Allenby was going to begin his attack on September the nineteenth and, to make sure that the Turks did not begin their move on Aba el Lissan before it started, something new was needed. Dawnay was then inspired to remember the surviving battalion of the Imperial Camel Corps, the one that had been in the Amman raid, three hundred men under their capable officer, Major Buxton. Allenby's chief-of-staff agreed to lend this battalion to the Arabs for a month, on two conditions: the first that a scheme of operations should be provided, the second – a quaint one – that there should be no casualties.

Buxton's march was to be the diversion; three weeks later the real blow was to be struck at Deraa. Lawrence calculated that the two thousand new camels would supply the necessary transport for five hundred Arab mule-mounted regulars, the battery of French quick-firing mountain-guns that had at last been sent from Suez, machine-guns, two armoured cars, engineers, camel-scouts and two aeroplanes. They would strike at Deraa, destroying the junction and paralysing the Turkish communications three days before Allenby launched his attack. Allenby had said that he would be content if 'three men and a boy with pistols' were before Deraa on September the sixteenth. This expedition was a liberal interpretation of the phrase. The arrangements for equipping this force would be made by the British officers at Akaba, while Lawrence went off with Buxton.

In these months of planning, Lawrence did not interrupt his active adventures. One ride in July took him to Kerak, Themed and Amman, all held by Turkish troops. He was inspecting the ground for the coming Arab advance to Jericho. At Kerak, where he arrived at midnight with a party of camel-men, the Turks were terrified and locked themselves into their barracks, expecting the worst. But nothing happened. The sheikh with Lawrence merely swore that he was hungry and had a sheep killed and cooked for him by the villagers. Later, in the pitch dark, they stumbled over some Turkish cavalry watering at a stream, and were fired on. Lawrence protested with fluent Turkish curses and the Turks replying bad-temperedly with a few more shots drew off.

Everywhere he went there was Arab hospitality, guestings and coffee-fires at which he preached revolt, until he had made sure of all the clans in the ladder of his advance. On the way back, the party was mistaken for Turks by some British aeroplanes which, swooping low, emptied drum after drum of Lewis-gun ammunition at them. Fortunately, the shooting was bad. (Later, in reporting the affair to Air Vice-Marshal Sir Geoffrey Salmond, Lawrence ironically recommended himself for the Distinguished Flying Cross, 'for presence of mind in not shooting down two Bristol Fighters which were attempting to machine-gun my party from the air.' He had made the regulation signal agreed upon for such cases; and had twenty automatic rifles in the party.) As soon as the aeroplanes had disappeared, a party of Turkish policemen tried to chase them.

Next day, near Jurf, where Lawrence was going to inspect the ground for an attack by Arab regulars – Jurf was the only water-supply for the Turks on that part of the line – much worse happened. A party of mixed horse and foot from the railway cut off his retreat and more troops appeared in front. There was no escape

and the Arabs with Lawrence, taking cover, resolved to hold out to the last. Lawrence, half-glad, saw that all was over. He decided to imitate Farraj and end it quickly. He rode alone against the enemy. The mounted Turks came forward to meet him, finger on trigger, calling out 'Testify!' He answered: 'There is no god but God; and Jesus is a prophet of God' – a queer statement which no Mohammedan could make, and yet no Christian could make either. They did not shoot; they gasped, stared and cried out: 'Aurans!' They were friends, a party of Arab regulars, raiding the railway, but dressed in the uniforms of slain Turks and mounted on captured horses. Their rifles, too, were Turkish. They had never seen Lawrence before and had mistaken his party for members of an unfriendly Arab tribe with whom they had just been fighting.

The plan that Lawrence had in mind for Buxton's camel-corps was this: it would start from the Suez Canal, across Sinai to Akaba, arriving on the second of August. The next step was from Akaba through the passes to Rumm. From Rumm it would make a raid on Mudowwara which was still holding out after having been threatened for over a year, and destroy the Turkish water-supply, thereby completing the strangle-hold on Medina. From Mudowwara it would go by the old Jefer and Bair route to Kissir on the railway, three miles south of Amman, to destroy the big bridge and tunnel which the British cavalry and camel raid had left undamaged: this would delay the Turkish relief of Maan for three weeks, by which time Allenby's offensive would be beginning. The camel-corps would then be back on Allenby's front by way of Tafileh and Beersheba on August the thirtieth.

Besides the Englishmen Lawrence would take his own body-guard and pick up sponsors from other Arab tribes

THE CAMPAIGN IN THE NORTH



as he went. The ride was a great responsibility for him. To take a large body of Christian troops in khaki through Arab tribal territory was at least as dangerous an adventure as the fighting that had to be done against the Turks.

Lawrence went with Buxton as far as Rumm and then rode back to Akaba where he collected his body-guard, sixty strong, and hurried with them to Guweira. El Zaagi had sorted them out in Ageyl fashion to ride in a long line with a poet to right and a poet to left, each among the best singers. Lawrence was on Ghazala, whose calf had recently died and left her in great grief. Abdulla the Robber, riding next to Lawrence, carried the calf's dried pelt behind his saddle. Ghazala in the middle of the singing began to tread uneasily, remembering her grief, and stopped, gently moaning. Abdulla leaped off his camel and spread the pelt before her. She stopped crying and sniffed at it three or four times, then whimpering went on again. This happened several times that day but in the end she forgot her grief. At Guweira he left his body-guard to wait. An aeroplane took him to Jefer - to Feisal who was there with Nuri, the Emir of the Ruwalla. It was Nuri who had given Lawrence and Auda leave a year before to ride through his territory on the way to Akaba. He had now to be asked a far greater favour, the passage through his country of British troops and armoured cars. If he consented it would mean war with the Turks towards whom, at Feisal's request, he had so far kept up a show of friendship. Nuri was a hard, short-spoken old man of seventy, and it was with great relief that Feisal and Lawrence heard his plain 'Yes.' It came at the end of a great conference of all the Ruwalla chiefs where Feisal and Lawrence in the tent at twilight sat preaching revolt. The combination was irresistible; their method, perfected after two years, was to say just enough to set the Ruwalla imagination on

fire so that the tribesmen almost believed themselves the inventors of the idea and began spurring Feisal and Lawrence to greater enthusiasm and more desperate action.

Lawrence's short stay at Rumm with Buxton's men had made him home-sick for England. So here at Jefer he accused himself of play-acting, of continuing his cruel fraud on the Arabs for the sake of England's victory.

But then Nuri once more came to him with documents. The English Government had been working with its foreign departments still at odds together. Besides the original pledges to the Sherif promising Arab independence and the later Sykes-Picot treaty partitioning up the Arab area between England, France and Russia, there were now two more statements: a promise made to seven prominent Arabs at Cairo that the Arabs should keep such territory as they conquered from the Turks during the War, and a promise to the Zionists for a Jewish National Home in Palestine. Which of all these was Nuri to believe? Once more Lawrence smiled and said, 'The latest in date.' Nuri took it good-humouredly and ever afterwards helped Lawrence well, yet warned him with a smile: 'But if ever henceforth I fail to keep a promise,' said Nuri, 'it will be because I have superseded it with a later intention.'

Lawrence's loyalty was further tried by his discovery that negotiations had been begun between the British Government and the Conservative Turks about the terms of Turkey's surrender. The news did not come to him officially but privately through friends in Turkey, and the Arabs had not been first consulted. This was most unfortunate because the Conservatives, unlike their powerful opponents the Nationalists (headed by Kemal, the present head of the Turkish Republic), were most unwilling to allow Arab governments to be set up in Syria. The British proposals would have been fatal to

villages that night, measuring out the heaps of corn on the threshing-floors under guard of troops of mounted infantry. Three such troops were in the three villages nearest the great bridge, villages close to which they would have to pass on their way to blow it up. And a Turkish aeroplane had come over their column that morning and probably seen them. They took counsel. Lawrence had no doubt that Buxton's men could deal with the Turkish bridge-guard and blow up the bridge. The only question was whether the business was worth its cost in British lives. The plan was to dismount nearly a mile from the bridge and advance on foot. The blowing up of the bridge with three tons of gun-cotton would wake up the whole district and Turkish patrols might stumble on the camel-park, which would be a disaster. Buxton's men could not, like Arabs, scatter like a swarm of birds after the explosion, to find their own way back. In night-fighting some of them would be sure to be cut off. They might lose altogether fifty men. This was too expensive. The destruction of the bridge, anyhow, was only to frighten and disturb the Turks so that they would leave Maan alone until August the thirtieth, when the great attack on Deraa was to be made from Azrak. This was already the twentieth. The danger seemed nearly over now, for the Turks had wasted the last month, doing nothing.

Buxton's men were most disappointed when they heard that the raid was off and that they would now have to return to Palestine, but Lawrence reassured them that the chief object of their coming would be gained. He sent men down to the villages to spread reports of a coming great attack on Amman, of which this was the advance guard. It was what the Turks dreaded most; patrols were sent up at once to report on the truth of the villagers' wild reports, and found the hill-top, where the raiders had been, littered with empty meat

tins, and the valley slopes cut up by the tracks of enormous cars. Very many tracks there were; as Lawrence, with his single car, had taken care that there should be. This alarm checked them for a week; the destruction of the bridge would only have added a few days more.

Chapter 10

AT Akaba preparations for the grand expedition of all arms to cut the railways at Deraa were complete – so complete that Dawnay and Joyce were both for the moment on holiday. Lawrence was glad to be there to cope with a most unexpected and absurd situation. The Sherif, Hussein, had issued a Royal Gazette from Mecca with a proclamation to the effect that fools were calling Jaafar Pasha the General Officer Commanding the Arab Northern Army, whereas there was no such rank, indeed no rank higher than captain in the Arab Army, in which Sheikh Jaafar, like many another, was doing his duty. Hussein had heard of Jaafar's C.M.G. and had published this proclamation in jealousy without warning Feisal. He intended by it to spite the Syrian and Mesopotamian Arabs in Feisal's army. They were fighting, he knew, to free their own countries for self-government, but he was aiming at a regular Arab Empire which he was ambitious to rule from Mecca, with the spiritual leadership of the Mohammedan world thrown in. Jaafar and all the Arab officers at once resigned. Feisal refused the resignations, pointing out that their commissions as officers were issued by himself and he alone was disgraced by the proclamation. He telegraphed to Mecca resigning command. Hussein appointed Zeid in his place. Zeid promptly refused to take command. Hussein sent threatening messages by cable and all military life was at an end from Akaba to Aba el Lissan.

Lawrence had to do something. The first alternative

was to put pressure on Hussein to withdraw his statement; the second to ignore the humours of this narrow-minded old man of seventy, and carry on; the third, to set up Feisal in independence of his father and, when Damascus fell, try to give him a throne there. But the difficulty was that the expedition had to start in three days' time if it was to reach Deraa before Allenby began his advance. The first course was best, to avoid the appearance of dissension among the Arabs, but might take weeks. So Allenby and the High Commissioner of Egypt (who provided Hussein's subsidy) were at once set to work on the Sherif, whose answers to Feisal through them were cabled across to Akaba in cipher. Lawrence, remembering Hussein's trick on the telephone, saw to it that the cable-station at Akaba only accepted the desirable parts of the messages and made a hopeless jumble of the others, notifying these to Mecca as 'corrupt.' Fortunately Hussein instead of repeating the censored passages, toned them down until at last there came a long message, the first half a lame apology and withdrawal of the proclamation, the other a renewal of the offence in a new form.

Lawrence suppressed this second half and took the first to Feisal marked 'very urgent.' The secretary decoded it and Feisal read it aloud to the staff about him, concealing his surprise at the meek words of his usually obstinate and tyrannical old father. At the end he said, 'The telegraph has saved all our honour.' Without Feisal the great expedition to Deraa, which it was hoped might mean also Damascus, would have been incomplete and Lawrence had pressed him to come in spite of his father; Feisal having resigned his command had offered very nobly to come under Lawrence's. So now he bent towards Lawrence, adding in an undertone: 'I mean the honour of nearly all of us.' Lawrence said demurely, 'I do not understand what you mean.' Feisal

answered, 'I offered to serve for this last march under your orders, why was that not enough?' 'Because it would not go with your honour,' said Lawrence. 'You always prefer mine before your own,' Feisal murmured, then sprang energetically to his feet saying, 'Now, sirs, praise God and work!' The expedition started only a day late.

Lawrence went by armoured car to Azrak and at Bair heard the news that the Turks at Hesa had moved suddenly to Tafeleh and were advancing south to the relief of Maan. The chief of the Beni Sakhr who brought the news thought Lawrence mad when he laughed aloud. But, now that the expedition had started, the Turks might relieve Maan and take Aba el Lissan, Guweira, Akaba itself for all he cared. The news meant that the Turks believed in the pretended threat to Amman and were making a counter-stroke. Every man that they sent south was a man, or rather ten men lost. Deraa was all that mattered now. To complete the deception Lawrence had sent thousands of his horse-men of St. George (British sovereigns) to the Beni Sakhr tribe to purchase all the barley on their threshing-floors for a force that would be shortly coming along from Azrak, through their villages, towards Amman. The Turks got the news soon, as was intended. Hornby was going in charge of the other expedition to join up with Allenby at Jericho, so that if the Deraa plan failed the combined parties could make the feint on Amman a reality. But the Turkish advance on Tafeleh checked him and he had instead to defend Shobek against them.

The Deraa expedition was now assembling at Azrak and on the twelfth of September was complete. First arrived Lawrence's body-guard, jolly on their well-fed camels, then two aeroplanes, then the rest of the armoured cars and a great baggage train. Feisal brought the Arab regular army, a thousand camel-men on Allen-

by's gift-camels; with the French Algerian gunners under Pisani. Nuri appeared with the Ruwalla tribesmen; and Auda with Mohammed el Dheilan and the Abu Tayi; and Fahad and Adhub with their Beni Sakhr; and the chief of the Serahin; and many more Bedouin, Druses and town-Syrians flocking from all directions. And the great outlaw Tallal arrived, who had taken Lawrence spying in the Hauran the winter before.

First of all it was necessary to cut off Deraa from Amman. Lawrence went himself from Umtaiye with two armoured cars and a hundred and fifty pounds of gun-cotton to the nearest point on the line, where there were two good bridges to destroy and easy going for the cars. Joyce came with him. While Joyce's car kept the neighbouring block-house busy, Lawrence's ran to the biggest bridge, whose guard-garrison of eight men made a first brave defence but then surrendered – as also did the block-house garrison. Joyce and Lawrence then hurriedly set about the bridge, destroying it scientifically so that the four arches were smashed but the skeleton left tottering. The Turks would first have the difficult task of destroying it completely before they could begin rebuilding.

The cars then bumped off, because a large body of Turks was seen coming up in the distance. Lawrence's car bumped too carelessly; at the first watercourse there was a crash and it stuck. They hurriedly inspected the damage and found that the front bracket of the near back-spring had broken; a hopeless break which only a workshop could mend. The driver, Rolls, was nearly in tears over this mishap, the first structural damage in a team of nine cars driven for eighteen months over the maddest country. But he realized that the fate of the whole party rested on him and said that there was just one hope. They might jack up the fallen end of the spring and wedge it, by balks upon the running-board,

into nearly its old position. With the help of ropes the thin angle-irons of the running-board might carry the additional weight.

There was in each car a length of timber to help the double car-tyres over muddy places; three blocks of this would do for the proper height. But there was no saw, so they used machine-gun bullets instead, and soon had their three blocks. The Turks heard the machine-gun firing and halted cautiously. Joyce's car also heard and came back to help; the repair was hurriedly made, only just in time. When they got back to Umtaiye they strengthened it with telegraph-wire and it lasted until they reached Damascus. The loss of this bridge would keep the Turks from reinforcing Deraa from Amman and also help Zeid and Jaafar with the Arab Army at Aba el Lissan, and Hornby at Shobek, for the Turks massing at Tafiieh were delayed until the line was mended behind them.

Meanwhile the Arab expedition moved to Tell Arar, four miles north of Deraa, where they were to cut the northern railway to Damascus. Lawrence and Joyce, hurrying to join them in the armoured cars, arrived late because of bad going over heavy plough-land. They watched the battle from a hill: Ruwalla horsemen dashing towards the line over the liquorice-grown bed of a watercourse, and a Ford car, with machine-guns, bouncing after. A Turkish guard-post opened fire, but Pisani's guns silenced it and the Ruwalla took it with only one man killed. Ten miles of railway were won in only an hour's fighting and the Egyptians, after a halt for breakfast, began steady demolition-work from south to north, while the Arab Army swarmed over the plain. Lawrence could hardly realize the good fortune. It was September the seventeenth, two days before Allenby could throw forward his full power. In two days the Turks might decide to change their dispositions to meet

this new danger from the Arabs at Deraa, but they could not do so before Allenby struck. Lawrence had cut the one railway that connected the Turks in Amman, Maan, Medina, Nazareth, Nablus, the Jordan valley, with their base in Damascus and with Aleppo, Constantinople, Germany.

The Egyptians used 'tulips,' which were thirty-ounce charges of gun-cotton planted beneath the centre of the central sleeper of each ten-yard section of the track. The sleepers were hollow steel and the explosion made them hump bud-like two feet in the air. The lift pulled the rails three inches up, the drag pulled them six inches together, and the chairs were inwardly warped. This threefold distortion put them beyond repair. And it was quick work; six hundred such charges could be laid and fired in two or three hours and would take the Turks a week to mend. While they were busy, eight Turkish aeroplanes flew out from Deraa and began dropping bombs. They did not seem to notice the Egyptians on the railway but came diving down with machine-gun fire among the Arabs. There was no overhead cover on the plain at all, so the only thing was to scatter and present the thinnest possible target, while Nuri Said's automatic guns rattled back at the aeroplanes and Pisani's mountain-guns fired shrapnel and made them fly too high to bomb accurately.

The question now was how to get at the Yarmuk railway-bridge which Lawrence had failed to blow up the year before. Its destruction would top off the cutting of the other two lines from Deraa. The enemy aeroplanes were, however, making movements impossible. There had been two British aeroplanes with the expedition, but the only useful one, a Bristol Fighter, had been damaged in an air-fight the day before and had flown back for repairs to Jerusalem; there remained only an antiquated and almost useless B.E.12 machine. But

Junor, the pilot, had heard at Azrak from the pilot of the returning Bristol Fighter that enemy aeroplanes were active at Deraa and most bravely decided to take his place. When things were at their worst at Tell Arar he suddenly sailed in and rattled away at the eight Turkish aeroplanes with his two guns. They scattered for a careful look and he flew westward, drawing them after him: he knew that the chance of an air-fight usually makes aeroplanes forget their ground-target. It was deliberate self-sacrifice on Junor's part, for his machine was utterly useless for air-fighting. Nuri Said hurriedly collected three hundred and fifty regulars and marched them in small parties across the rails. He was making for Mezerib, seven miles west from Deraa, the key to the Yarmuk bridge. The returning aeroplanes would probably not notice that his men were gone. Armed peasants were sent on after Nuri Said, and half an hour later Lawrence called up his body-guard, to follow himself.

As he did so, he heard a droning in the air and to his astonishment Junor appeared, still alive, though surrounded by three enemy aeroplanes, faster than his own, spitting bullets at him. He was twisting and side-slipping splendidly, firing back. But the fight could only end in one way. In a faint hope that he might get down alive Lawrence rushed with his men and another British officer, Young, to clear a landing-place by the railway. Junor was being driven lower; he threw out a message to say that his petrol was finished. The body-guard worked feverishly, rolling away boulders, and Lawrence put out a landing-signal. Junor dived: the machine took the ground beautifully but a flaw of wind then overturned it and he was thrown out. He was up in a moment with only a cut chin, and rescued his Lewis-gun and machine-gun and ammunition just before one of the Turkish aeroplanes dived and dropped

a bomb by the wreck. Five minutes later he was asking for another job. Joyce gave him a Ford car and he ran boldly down the hill until near Deraa and blew a gap in the rails there before the Turks saw him. They fired at him with artillery but he bumped off in the Ford, still unhurt.

Lawrence hurried forward to Mezerib with his body-guard, but an aeroplane saw them and began dropping bombs: one, two, three misses, the fourth fell right among them. Two camels fell, terribly wounded, but the riders escaped unhurt and scrambled up behind two of their friends. Another machine came by and dropped more bombs. A shock spun Lawrence's camel round and nearly knocked him out of the saddle with a numbing pain in his right arm. He felt that he was hard hit and tears came to his eyes with the pain and the disappointment of being put out of action so soon before the triumphant end. Blood was running down his arm. Perhaps, if he did not look at it, he might carry on as if he were unhurt. The aeroplane was machine-gunning them now and his camel swung round. He clutched at the pommel and realized that his damaged arm was there, still in working order. He had judged it blown off. He felt for the wound, and found a very small, very hot splinter of metal sticking into his arm. He realized how bad his nerves were. This was, by the way, the first time that he had been hit from the air, of all his twenty or more wounds.

Mezerib surrendered after a bombardment by Pisan's guns and twenty machine-guns. (Tallal had previously gone forward demanding a bloodless surrender – he knew the stationmaster – but the Turks had fired a volley at him and at Lawrence, who came with him, from point-blank range: they had crawled back painfully through a field of thistles, Tallal swearing.) The station was looted by hundreds of Hauran peasantry.

Men, women and children in a frenzy fought like dogs over every object; even doors and windows, door-frames and window-frames, steps of the stairs, were carried off. Others smashed and looted the wagons in the siding. Lawrence and Young cut the telegraph, the Palestine army's main link with home. They cut it slowly to draw out the indignation of the German-Turkish staff at Nazareth. The Turks' hopeless lack of initiative made their army a directed one, so that by destroying the telegraph Lawrence went far towards turning them into a leaderless mob. The points were then blown in and tulips planted all over the station track. Among the captures were two lorries crammed with delicacies for some German canteen. Nuri Said found an Arab prising open a tin of bottled asparagus and cried out: 'Pigs' bones!' The peasant spat in horror and threw them down. Nuri Said picked them up and later shared them with Lawrence, Joyce and Young. The trucks were splashed with petrol and set on fire and the blaze that evening acted as a beacon for hundreds and hundreds of Arab peasant rebels who came on camel, on horse, on foot, in great enthusiasm, hoping that this was the final release of their country.

Visitors were welcome. Lawrence's business was to let each one tell him all the news he wanted to tell; afterwards re-arranging it in his mind and getting a clear picture of the whole enemy situation. Even the magistrates of Deraa itself came offering to open the town, but Lawrence put them off, to their disappointment. Though he knew that the town controlled the local water-supply, the possession of which must force the railway-station to surrender too, he would not risk accepting the gift. If Allenby did not completely break the Turks, Deraa might be retaken and a merciless massacre of the Hauran peasants would follow.

The next step was to blow up Tell el Shehab bridge.

There had arrived the boy-chief of Tell el Shehab village, which crowned the cliff above the bridge: he described the position of the large Turkish guard at the bridge. Lawrence thought that he was probably lying, but he went off and soon returned with his friend the commander of the Turkish bridge-guard, an Armenian captain, who confirmed the story. The Armenian was anxious to betray his charge; he suggested an ambush in his own room at the village to which he would in turn call all his lieutenants, sergeants and corporals – hated Turks – to be trussed up by three or four waiting Arabs. The rest of the force would be ready then to rush the leaderless guard. Lawrence agreed and at eleven o'clock he and Nasir were close to the village with camel-men and the body-guard bringing bags of gelatine. Lawrence knew the bridge well since his attempt on it with Ali ibn el Hussein and Fahad from the other side of the ravine. It was pitch-dark and the damp air came up from the river, wetting their woollen coats. Waiting for the Armenian to come and fetch the trussers-up they could hear the occasional cries of the sentry challenging passers-by on the bridge far below, and the constant roar of the waterfall, and then the noise of a train, with the squealing of brakes as it stopped in the station close by the bridge. After awhile the boy-chief came up holding his brown cloak open to show his white shirt like a flag. He whispered that the plan had failed. The train in the ravine had been sent up with German and Turk reserves from Afuleh under a German colonel to rescue panic-stricken Deraa. They had arrested the Armenian captain for being absent from his post. There were dozens of machine-guns and dozens of sentries patrolling up and down.

Nuri Said offered to take the place by main force. Surprise and numbers were on the Arab side, but Lawrence was at his old game of reckoning the cost and as

usual found it too dear. They said good night to the chief, thanked him, and turned back. Lawrence, Nasir and Nuri Said sat with rifles ready on the cliff edge, waiting for their men to get back out of danger. Lawrence's rifle was a famous one, a British Lee-Enfield captured at the Dardanelles and given by Enver, the Turkish commander-in-chief, as a present to Feisal, with an inscription on a gold plate; Feisal had given it to Lawrence. It was a great temptation sitting there to fire a rocket pistol into the station and scare the Germans into all-night terror. Nasir, Nuri and Lawrence all had the same childish idea at the same moment, but managed to restrain each other from carrying it out. Instead, some of the body-guard were sent to blow up rails in the ravine a mile or two beyond the bridge, Tallal providing guides. The echoing explosions gave the Germans a bad night. Then the rest of the army moved from Mezerib towards Nisib on their way back to Umtaiye. Before leaving they lit a long time-fuse to a mine under the water-tower. When the Germans came forward from Tell el Shehab – they heard that Mezerib was empty – the mine exploded with a tremendous noise and they cautiously retired again.

Nisib was ten miles south of Deraa. Pisani's guns shelled the station at two thousand yards range and the machine-guns supported him. But the Turks would not surrender, returning a hot fire from the trenches. This did not matter much, for the real objective was not the station but a great bridge a few hundred yards to the north, protected by a Turkish post which Nuri Said now began to bombard. Lawrence's men were tired out, like their camels, and when he asked them to come forward with him against the bridge they refused. They knew that one bullet in the gelatine that they were carrying would blow them sky-high.

It was the first time that they had flinched. Lawrence

tried to get them forward by making jokes, but it was hopeless. At last he cast them off and standing on the crest with bullets cracking round him called by name the youngest and most timid of them all to come with him to the bridge. He shook like a man in a sick dream but obeyed quietly. They rode over the crest towards the bridge. Lawrence then sent the young Arab back to tell the men that he would hurt them worse than bullets if they did not join him. He intended to go forward to see whether the guard-post was holding out after the bombardment. While the body-guard hesitated, up came El Zaagi with Abdulla the Robber: they were men who feared nothing. Mad with fury that Lawrence had been betrayed, these two dashed at the shrinkers and chased them over the ridge-top, with no more harm than six bullet-grazes. The post was indeed abandoned, so Lawrence dismounted and signalled to Nuri Said to cease fire. He and his body-guard crept up on foot to the bridge and piling eight hundred pounds of explosive against the piers, which were about five feet thick and twenty-five feet high, blew it to pieces. This was Lawrence's last bridge, the seventy-ninth since he started and a most important one, for the Arab army was to wait close by at Umtaiye until Allenby's troops came up to join it.

The Turkish aeroplanes were a pest. Umtaiye was only twelve miles from their aerodrome near Deraa and they kept coming over and dropping bombs on the Arab camp. The irregulars would soon lose their nerve and go off home unless something was done; so Lawrence and Junor went off in two armoured cars to raid the aerodrome. They got quite close by silencing the cars and found three aeroplanes on the ground. One they shot to pieces; the two others escaping flew to Deraa and returned to chase the cars with bombs. The first dropped its four bombs all together from a height

and missed badly, but the other flew low, placing one bomb at a time with great care. Lawrence and Junor drove slowly on over rocky ground, quite defenceless. One bomb sent a shower of stones through the driving slit of Lawrence's car but only cut his knuckles. Another tore off a front tyre and nearly overturned them. But they returned safely to Umtaiye.

Two days later a news-aeroplane was due at Azrak, so Lawrence decided to go back in it to Palestine and beg Allenby to send along some Bristol Fighters. He rode towards Azrak with his body-guard, intending on the way to smash another bridge. But he noticed that his men were red-eyed and trembling and obeyed orders with hesitation: evidently El Zaagi and The Robber had mercilessly gone through the list of those who had flinched at Nisib. He decided that they were not in form that night, so sent the Egyptians and Gurkhas (on the first stage of their journey back to help Zeid at Aba el Lissan) to do the raid instead. He followed them in an armoured car and Junor came, too, in his Ford. Lawrence, who was guiding, lost the way in the darkness; his wits were wandering after five sleepless nights in succession. But the Egyptians fired their thirty tulips all right, while Lawrence and Junor overtook a train and machine-gunned it. Junor let fly a green shower of tracer-bullets which probably did little harm but made the Turks howl with terror.

At Azrak they found the aeroplane waiting with the first amazing news of Allenby's victory. He had burst through at every point and the Turkish Army was in rout. Lawrence sent the news to Feisal, advising him to proclaim the general revolt at last, and flew off to Palestine. An hour or two later he was with Allenby who was very calm in spite of the magnitude of his victory and was allowing the Turks no rest. He was making three new thrusts: with the New Zealanders to

Amman, with the Indians to Deraa, with the Australians to Kuneitra in the Hauran. The New Zealanders would stop at Amman but the other two divisions would later converge on Damascus. Allenby asked Lawrence to assist all three advances with his Arabs but not to push on to Damascus until the Indians and Australians were in line with him. Lawrence in return asked for aeroplanes, and was given them: two Bristol Fighters, with an enormous Handley-Page and a D.H.9 to carry petrol and spare parts.

Back with the Arabs the next day Lawrence told them that Nablus was taken and Afuleh and Haifa and Baisan. The news ran like fire through the camp. Tallal began boasting, the Ruwalla shouted for instant march on Damascus, even the still smarting body-guard cheered up. That day, the twenty-second of September, Lawrence was breakfasting near Umtaiye with the airmen: there were sausages frying. Suddenly a watcher called out: 'Aeroplane up.' The pilots of the Bristol Fighters jumped into their machines, and the pilot of the D.H.9 looked hard at Lawrence, silently asking him to come up with him to handle the machine-guns. Lawrence pretended not to understand. He had learned the theory of air-fighting all right, but it was knowledge not yet become instinctive action. No, he would not go up. The pilot looked reproachfully at him while the air-fight began without them. Five minutes later the Bristols were back, having driven down a two-seater and scattered three scout-aeroplanes. The sausages were still hot. They ate them and drank some tea and were starting on some grapes, a present from the Druse country, when again the watcher cried 'Aeroplane' and up the pilots jumped and soon brought it down in flames.

Later with Feisal (whom he had gone by air to fetch with his staff from Azrak) and Nuri, the Emir of the

Ruwalla, Lawrence went off north in Feisal's green Vauxhall to see the Handley-Page alight. Twenty miles from the landing-ground they met a single Arab tribesman running southward like the prophet Elijah with grey hair and grey beard flying in the wind and his clothes girded about his loins. He yelled out to the car, waving his bony arms, 'The biggest aeroplane in the world' and rushed on to spread his great news among the tents. They found the Handley-Page surrounded by Arabs who cried out, 'Indeed and at last they have sent us THE aeroplane, of which these others were foals.' Before night the news had spread all over the Hauran and across the Druse mountains and everyone knew by this token that the Arabs were on the winning side. The great machine unloaded a ton of petrol, oil and spare parts for the Bristol Fighters, and rations for the men; then sailed off for night-bombing at Deraa.

The task that Allenby had set the Arab army was to harass the Turkish Fourth Army until the New Zealanders forced it out of Amman, its headquarters, and afterwards to cut it up on its retreat north. Feisal's force now consisted of four thousand men, of whom three thousand were irregulars. But these irregulars were nearly all under the sovereignty of the Emir Nuri, whose word nobody dared disobey, so Feisal could count on them. The old man led a charge of Ruwalla horsemen in a further raid on the railway and under his eye the tribe showed unusual valour; armoured cars came along too and the line was now permanently broken between Amman and Deraa. It only remained to wait for the fugitives streaming up from Amman in flight from the New Zealanders.

A body of hostile cavalry was reported to be coming north towards them. The Emir Nuri with his Ruwalla orse and Tallal with his Hauran horse went to meet it.

Armoured cars joined them. But it was only a mob of fugitives looking for a short cut home, so hundreds of prisoners were taken and much transport. A panic spread down the line and troops miles away from the Arabs threw away all they had, even their rifles, making a mad rush towards supposed safety in Deraa.

Lawrence suggested at a midnight council that the whole Arab force should move up to Sheikh Saad, north of Deraa, astride the line of retreat of the main Turkish forces. The British staff-officer appointed by Joyce as senior military adviser for the expedition objected. He said that Allenby had set the Arabs as watchmen merely of the Fourth Army; they had seen its disorderly flight and their duty was over. They might now honourably fall back twenty miles out of the way to the east and there join forces with the Druses under their leader, Lawrence's foolish friend Nesib.

Lawrence would not hear of this. He was most anxious for the Arabs to be first in Damascus and to do their full share of the fighting. To thrust behind Deraa into Sheikh Saad would put more pressure on the Turks than any British unit was in a position to put. They could be prevented from making another stand this side of Damascus, and the capture of Damascus meant the end of the War in the East, and probably the end of the European War too. So for every reason the Arabs should go forward. The staff-officer would not be convinced. He argued and tried to drag Nuri Said into the debate. Finally he insisted that he was the senior military adviser and must reluctantly point out that as a regular officer he knew his business. It was not the first time that Lawrence had been slighted for not being a regular. He merely sighed, and said that he must sleep now, because he was getting up early to cross the line with his body-guard and the Bedouin, whatever the

regulars did. However, Nuri Said decided to come with Lawrence and so did Pisani, and so did the rest of the British officers. And Tallal and the Emir Nuri and old Auda were already pressing forward.

Tallal and Auda undertook attacks on Ezraa and Ghazale, towns on the Damascus railway. The Emir Nuri would sweep towards Deraa in search of escaping Turkish parties. Lawrence himself went to Sheikh Saad with his body-guard, arriving there at dawn on the twenty-seventh of September. There was nearly a serious accident here, for they were invited to guest at the tent of one of the Emir Nuri's blood-enemies. Fortunately, the man himself was absent, so Lawrence's party accepted: Nuri, when he arrived, would find himself temporary host of his enemy's family and have to obey the rules. It was a great relief. Throughout the campaign they had been bothered with these same blood-feuds, barely suspended by Feisal's authority. It was a constant strain keeping enemies apart, trying to keep the hostile clans in friendly rivalry on separate ventures, making them camp always with a neutral clan between, and avoiding any suspicion of favouritism.

Auda returned boasting, having taken Ghazale by storm and captured a train, guns and two hundred men. Tallal had taken Ezraa, held by none other than Abd el Kader, the mad Algerian. When Tallal came the townsmen joined him and Abd el Kader had to escape to Damascus. Tallal's horsemen were too heavy with booty to catch him. The Emir Nuri captured four hundred Turks with mules and machine-guns: these prisoners were farmed out to remote villages as labourers to earn their keep. The rest of the army now arrived under Nuri Said and the peasants came shyly up to look at it. Feisal's army had hitherto been only a legendary thing. When no Turks were about, the peasants had spoken in whispers the famous names of its leaders -

Tallal, Nasir, Nuri, Auda, 'Aurans'; whom now they saw in the flesh.

Lawrence and five or six others went up a hill for a look south to see if anything was moving. To their astonishment a company of regulars in uniform – Turks, Austrians, Germans – was coming slowly towards them with eight machine-guns mounted on pack-animals. They were marching up from Galilee towards Damascus after their defeat by Allenby, thinking themselves fifty miles from any war. Some of the Ruwalla nobles were at once sent to ambush them in a narrow lane: the officers showed fight and were instantly killed, the men threw down their arms and in five minutes had been searched and robbed and were being led off to the prisoners' camp in a cattle-pound. Next, Zaal and the Howeitat were sent against three or four other parties seen moving in the distance, and soon returned, each man leading a mule or a pack-horse. Zaal disdained to take such broken men prisoners. 'We gave them to the girls and boys of the village for servants,' he sneered.

The whole of the Hauran had now risen and in two days' time sixty thousand armed men would be waiting to cut up the Turkish retreat. A British aeroplane hovered over and dropped word that Bulgaria had surrendered. Evidently the whole war would soon be at an end as well as this Eastern campaign. The Germans were burning store-houses and aeroplanes at Deraa and another aeroplane dropped word that a Turkish column of four thousand men was retiring north from the town towards Sheikh Saad, and another column of two thousand from Mezerib. The smaller column seemed a safer size to attack, so the bigger, which later proved to be more like seven thousand strong, was let go by, with merely the Ruwalla horse and some Hauran peasants to harry it and cut off stragglers.

Tallal was anxious about the Mezerib Turks, because their path would lie through his own village of Tafas. He hurried there as fast as he could, determined to hold a ridge south of it. Lawrence galloped ahead of him, hoping to delay the Turks until the rest of the army came up. Unfortunately the camels and horses were tired out. On their way they met mounted Arabs herding a drove of Turkish prisoners stripped to the waist, beating them on with sticks. The Arabs shouted that these were the remnants of the police battalion at Deraa. Their record of monstrous cruelty towards the peasants Lawrence knew well and he made no appeal for mercy.

At Tafas he arrived too late. The Governor of Syria's own lancer regiment had already taken it and was burning the houses after massacring the inhabitants. Lawrence and the Arabs lay in ambush on a ridge to the north as the Turks marched out in good order with the lancers in front and rear, infantry in a central column, a flank-guard of machine-guns, guns and transport in the centre. When the head of the long column showed itself beyond the houses the Arabs opened fire with machine-guns. The Turks replied with field-guns, but as usual the shrapnel was badly ranged and burst far behind the ridge. Then up came Nuri Said and Pisani with mountain-guns, and Auda, and Tallal, nearly frantic with the news of the massacre of his people. The Arabs lined the northern ridge and opened rapid fire with mountain-guns, rifles and machine-guns. Tallal, Sheikh Abd el Aziz and Lawrence with their attendants slipped round behind the Turkish column, the last parties of which were just leaving the smoking village. There seemed to be no soul left alive in the ruins. But then from a heap of corpses a child tottered out, three or four years old, her dirty smock stained red with blood from a lance thrust where neck and shoulder joined.

She ran a few steps, then stood and cried in a voice that sounded very loud in the ghastly silence, 'Don't hit me, Baba.' Abd el Aziz choked out something: it was his village as well as Tallal's. He flung himself off his camel and stumbled to the child. His suddenness frightened her, for she threw up her arms and tried to scream, but instead dropped in a little heap; the blood rushed out again and she died.

They saw four more dead babies and scores of corpses, men and women obscenely mutilated. El Zaagi broke out in peals of hysterical laughter: Lawrence said, 'The best of you are those who bring me the most Turkish dead.' They rode after the Turks, killing stragglers and wounded without mercy. Tallal had seen all. He gave one moan, then rode to the upper ground and sat awhile on his mare, shivering and staring at the retreating Turks. Lawrence moved near to speak to him, but Auda restrained him with a hand on his reins.

Very slowly Tallal drew his headcloth about his face, then seemed to take hold of himself and galloped headlong, bending low and swaying in the saddle, right at the main body of the enemy. It was a long ride down a gentle slope and across a hollow. Both armies waited for him. Firing had stopped on both sides and the noise of his hooves sounded unnaturally loud as he rushed on. Only a few lengths from the enemy he sat up in the saddle and shouted his war-cry, 'Tallal, Tallal!' twice in a tremendous voice. Instantly the Turkish rifles and machine-guns crashed out and he and his mare fell riddled through and through among the lance-points.

Auda looked cold and grim. 'God give him mercy,' he said, 'we will take his price.' Then he slowly moved after the enemy. He took command of the Arabs, sending out parties of peasants this way and that and at last by a skilful turn drove the Turks into bad ground

and split their force into three parts. The pursuit continued. The smallest section, consisting chiefly of German and Austrian machine-gunners grouped round three motor-cars, fought magnificently. The Arabs were like devils; hatred and revenge so shook them that they could hardly hold their rifles straight to fire. At last this section was left behind while Lawrence and his men galloped after the other two which were fleeing in panic. By sunset all but a few were destroyed. For the first time in the war Lawrence gave the order: 'No prisoners.' The peasants flocked to join in the attack. At first only one man in six had a weapon, but gradually they armed themselves from the fallen Turks until at nightfall every man had a rifle and a captured horse.

Just one group of Arabs who had not heard of the horror of Tafas took prisoners the last two hundred men. Lawrence went up to inquire why their lives had been spared, not unwilling to leave them alive as witnesses of Tallal's price. But a man on the ground screamed out something to the Arabs and they turned to see who it was. It was one of their own men, his thigh shattered, left to die. But even so he had not been spared. In the manner of Tafas he had been further tormented with bayonets hammered through his shoulder and other leg, pinning him to the ground like a collector's specimen. He was still conscious. They asked him, 'Hassan, who did it?' For answer he looked towards the prisoners huddled together near him. The Arabs shot them down in a heap and they were all dead before Hassan too died.

The killing and capturing of the retreating Turks went on all night. Each village, as the fight rolled towards it, took up the work. The main body of seven thousand men had tried to halt at sunset, but the Ruwalla had forced them on in a stumbling scattered mob

through the cold and darkness. The Arabs, too, were scattered and nearly as uncertain and the confusion was indescribable. The only detachments that held together were the Germans. Lawrence for the first time felt proud of the enemy that had killed his two younger brothers. They went firmly ahead, proud and silent, steering like armoured ships through the rack of Turks and Arabs. When attacked they halted, took position, fired at the word of command. It was glorious. They were two thousand miles from home, without hope and without guides, footsore, starving, sleepless: yet on they went, their numbers slowly lessening.

The Ruwalla took Deraa in a mounted charge that night; the garrison had been holding up the Indians at Remthe. Lawrence rode to Deraa to take charge of things, with his body-guard and Nuri Said. He was riding his grand racing-camel, Baha, so called from the bleat that she had from a bullet wound in her throat. He gave her liberty to stretch herself out, drawing ahead of the tired body-guard, so that he arrived alone at Deraa in the full dawn. Nasir was already there arranging for a military governor and police. Lawrence helped him by putting guards over the pumps and engine-sheds and what remained of the looted repair-shops and stores. Then he explained to Nasir what course had to be taken if the Arabs were not to lose hold of what they had won. Nasir, who now for the first time heard that there would be difficulty in persuading the English to take the Arabs seriously, was bewildered. But he soon grasped the point.

General Barrow, commanding the Indians, was advancing now to attack the town, not knowing that it was already captured. Some of his men began firing on the Arabs and Lawrence rode out with El Zaagi to stop them. A party of Indian machine-gunners was proud to capture such finely-dressed prisoners, but Lawrence

explained himself to an officer and was allowed to hurry off to find General Barrow. His troops were already encircling the town and his aeroplanes bombed Nuri Said's men as they entered from the north. Barrow seemed annoyed that the Arabs had got there first. He told Lawrence that his orders were to take Deraa and he was going there anyhow, whoever was in possession. He asked Lawrence to ride beside him. But Baha's smell disturbed the horses, so Lawrence had to take the centre of the road while the General and his staff rode their bucking horses in the ditch. Barrow said that he must put sentries in Deraa to keep the populace in order. Lawrence explained gently that the Arabs had appointed a military governor. When they reached the wells the General said that his engineers must inspect the pumps. Lawrence answered that he would welcome their assistance, but that the Arabs had already lit the furnaces and hoped to begin watering his horses in an hour's time. Barrow snorted that Lawrence seemed to be at home; so he would only take charge of the railway station. Lawrence pointed to an engine moving out towards Mezerib and asked Barrow to instruct his sentries not to interfere with the proper working of the line by the Arabs.

Barrow had no orders as to the status of the Arabs and had come in thinking of them as a conquered people; Lawrence wondered how to prevent him from doing anything foolish to antagonize them. He had read a military article, written by Barrow years before, in which the General had insisted that Fear was the people's main incentive to action in war and peace; and knew what he was up against. Then Barrow remarked that he was short of forage and food-stuffs, and Lawrence, kindly offering to provide these, persuaded him that he was the guest of the Arabs. Barrow was sufficiently convinced to salute Nasir's little silk flag propped

on the balcony of the Government office, with a sentry beneath it. The Arabs thrilled with pleasure at the compliment and were ready to listen to Lawrence's instructions that these Indians must be given all hospitality as guests. Later, General Allenby's Chief Political Officer assured Barrow that Lawrence's attitude was politically right, so all was well. There had been no disturbances, though the Indians pilfered freely from the Arabs, and the Bedouin were horrified at the manner of the British officers towards their men. They had never seen such personal inequality before.

Thousands of prisoners had meanwhile been taken by the Arabs. Most were boarded out in the villages, some were handed over to the British, who counted them again as their own captures. Feisal drove up in his green car from Azrak the next day, September the twenty-ninth, with the armoured cars behind him. General Barrow, now watered and fed, was due to meet Chauvel, the general commanding the Australians, for a joint entry into Damascus. He told Lawrence to ask Feisal to take the right flank. That suited Lawrence, for there along the railway was Nasir still hanging on to the main Turkish retreat (the column seven thousand strong which the Ruwalla had harried on the night of the Tafas massacre), reducing its numbers by continuous attack night and day. He stayed another day at Deraa, having much to attend to, but his memories of the place were too horrible, and he camped outside the town with his body-guard.

He could not sleep that night, so before dawn he went off in the Rolls-Royce towards Damascus. The roads were blocked with the Indians' transport; he took a cut across country and along the railway. He overtook Barrow, who asked him where he was going to stop that night. 'At Damascus,' Lawrence answered, and Bar-

row's face fell. Barrow was advancing very cautiously, sending out scouts and cavalry-screens through friendly country already cleared of Turks by the Arabs. Lawrence's Rolls-Royce continued along the railway till he came on Nasir, the Emir Nuri, and Auda with the tribes, still fighting. The seven thousand Turks had melted to two in three days' ceaseless battle. Lawrence could see the survivors in ragged groups halting now and then to fire their mountain-guns. Nasir rode up to greet Lawrence on his liver-coloured Arab stallion (the splendid creature was still spirited after a hundred miles of running flight). With him were old Emir Nuri and about thirty of his servants. They asked whether help was coming at last. Lawrence told them that the Indians were just behind. If they could only check the enemy for just an hour. . . . Nasir saw a walled farm-house ahead guarding the track and he and Nuri galloped forward to hold it against the Turks.

Lawrence drove back to the Indian cavalry and told a surly old colonel what a gift the Arabs had waiting for him. The colonel hardly seemed grateful, but at last sent a squadron out across the plain. The Turks turned their little guns at it. One or two shells fell near and to Lawrence's disgust the colonel ordered a retirement. Lawrence and the staff-officer in the car with him dashed back and begged the colonel not to be afraid of the wretched little ten-pound shells, hardly more dangerous than rocket-pistols. But the old man would not budge, so the Rolls-Royce had to rush back farther until Lawrence found a general of Barrow's staff and got him to send some Middlesex Yeomanry and Royal Horse Artillery forward. That night the remaining Turks broke, abandoning their guns and transport, and went streaming off across the eastern hills into what they thought was empty land beyond. But Auda was

waiting there in ambush, and all that night, in his last battle, the old man killed and killed, plundered and captured until, when dawn came, he found that all was over. So passed the Turkish Fourth Army.

Chapter 11

THE war was over. Lawrence went on to Kiswe, where the Australians were waiting for Barrow to join them. He did not stop long, for Allenby had allowed him and Feisal a single night in which to restore order in Damascus before the British entry. The Ruwalla horse was sent in at dusk to find Ali Riza, the governor, and to ask him to take charge of things. Ali Riza who, as chairman of the committee of freedom, had long been prepared to form an Arab government when the Turks finally left, was away, put by the Turks in command of the army retreating from Galilee. But Shukri, his assistant, was there and with unexpected help, as will be related, set up the Arab flag on the Town Hall as the last Turkish and German troops marched out. It is said that the hindmost general saluted it ironically.

Four thousand Ruwalla tribesmen were sent in to help Shukri keep order. All that night huge explosions were heard from the town, and showers of flame shot up. Lawrence thought that Damascus was being destroyed. But dawn showed him the beautiful city still standing: it had only been the Germans blowing up the ammunition dumps and stores. A horseman galloped out with a bunch of yellow grapes, a token from Shukri, crying: 'Good news: Damascus salutes you.' Lawrence, who was in the Rolls-Royce, gave Nasir the tidings. Nasir's fifty battles since the Revolt began in Medina two and a half years back had earned him the right of first entry. So Lawrence gave him a fair start with the Emir Nuri while he stopped to wash and shave at

a wayside brook. Some Indian troopers again mistook him and his party for Turks and tried to take them prisoners. When delivered from arrest Lawrence drove on up the long central street to the Government buildings.

The way was packed with people crowded solid on either side of the car, at the windows, on the balconies and house-tops. Many were crying, some cheered faintly, a few bolder ones cried out greetings. But for the most part, there came little more than a whisper like a long sigh from the gate of the city to the city's heart. At the Town Hall there was greater liveliness. The steps and stairs were packed with a swaying mob yelling, embracing, dancing, singing. They recognized Lawrence and crushed back to let him pass.

In the antechamber he found Nasir and the Emir Nuri seated. On either side of these stood – Lawrence was dumb with amazement at the sight – his old enemy the Algerian Abd el Kader who had betrayed him on the Yarmuk raid, and Mohammed Said, the assassin, his brother. Mohammed Said leaped forward and said that he and his brother, grandsons of the famous Abd el Kader, Emir of Algiers, had, with Shukri, formed the government the previous afternoon and proclaimed Hussein 'Emperor of the Arabs' in the ears of the humbled Turks and Germans. Lawrence turned inquiringly to Shukri, an honest man beloved in Damascus and almost a martyr in the people's eyes for what he had suffered at Jemal's hands. Shukri told how these two alone of all Damascus had stood by the Turks until they saw them running. Then with their Algerian retainers they had burst in on Shukri's committee where it sat in secret and brutally assumed control.

Lawrence determined with Nasir's help to check their impudence at once. But a diversion interrupted him. The yelling crowd was parted as if by a battering ram;

men went flying right and left among ruined chairs and tables while a familiar voice roared them to silence. It was Auda, in a dog-fight with the chief of the Druses. Lawrence and Mohammed el Dheilan sprang forward and broke the two apart. They forced Auda back while somebody else hustled the Druse chief into a side room. Auda, with bleeding face and his long hair streaming over his eyes, was too blind with rage to know what was happening. They held him down in a gilt chair in the great pompous state-hall, where he shouted till his voice cracked. His body was twitching and jerking, his hands reached wildly for any weapon within reach. The Druse had hit him first and he swore to wipe out the insult in blood. Zaal and one or two more came in to help. It was an hour before they could calm Auda down and get him to promise to postpone his vengeance for three days.

Lawrence went out and had the Druse chief secretly and speedily removed from the city. When he returned Nasir and Abd el Kader had gone off. There remained Shukri. Lawrence took him out in the Rolls-Royce to show him off as acting-Governor to the delighted city. The streets were more crowded than ever. Damascus went mad with joy. The men tossed up their red felt hats, the women tore off their veils. Householders threw flowers, hangings, carpets into the road before the car. Their wives leaned out, screaming with laughter, through the harem-lattices, splashing Lawrence and Shukri with bath-dippers of scent. Dervishes ran before and behind, howling and cutting themselves with frenzy, while a measured chant rose from the men of the crowd: 'Feisal, Nasir, Shukri, Aurans,' rolling in waves round the city. Chauvel, like Barrow, had no instructions as to what to do with the captured city and was relieved when Lawrence told him that an Arab government was appointed. But Lawrence begged him

to keep his Australians out of Damascus that night, because there would be such a carnival as the city had not seen for six hundred years and Arab hospitality might pervert the troops' discipline. Chauvel agreed, and asked if it would be convenient to make a formal entry the next day. Lawrence said: 'Certainly.'

While they were discussing ceremonial antics there was enormously more important work waiting inside and outside the city for both of them. Lawrence felt ashamed to be spoiling Chauvel's entry in this rather low-down way, but the political importance of winning the game of grab justified everything. Now he hurried off to the Town Hall to find Abd el Kader and his brother, but they had not returned, and when he sent a messenger to their house he received only a curt reply that they were sleeping. So should Lawrence have been, but instead he was eating a snatch meal with the Emir Nuri, Shukri and others, seated on gold chairs at a gold table in the gaudy banquet-hall. He told the messenger that the Algerians must come at once or they would be fetched: the messenger ran off hurriedly.

The old Emir asked quietly what Lawrence meant to do. He answered that he would dismiss Abd el Kader and his brother. The Emir asked whether he would call in English troops. Lawrence answered that he might have to do so, but the trouble was that afterwards they might not go. The Emir thought a moment and said, 'You shall have the Ruwalla to do all you want to do, and at once.' He ran out to muster his tribe. The Algerians came to the Town Hall with their bodyguards, murder in their eyes, but on the way met the Ruwalla tribesmen massed under their Emir; and Nuri Said with his Arab regulars in the Square; and in the Town Hall itself Lawrence's reckless body-guard lounging in the antechamber. They saw that the game was up; but it was a stormy meeting.

Lawrence speaking as Feisal's deputy pronounced their government abolished. He named Shukri as acting Military Governor until Ali Riza's return. Nuri Said was to be Commandant of Troops, and he appointed also a Chief of Public Security and an Adjutant-General. Mohammed Said in a bitter reply denounced Lawrence as a Christian and an Englishman; he called on Nasir, whom he and his brother had been entertaining and who knew nothing of Abd el Kader's treacheries, to assert himself. Nasir did not understand this falling out of his friends: he could only sit and look miserable. Abd el Kader leaped up and cursed Lawrence, working himself up to a fanatic passion. Lawrence paid no attention at all. This maddened Abd el Kader even more. Suddenly he went for Lawrence with a drawn dagger.

Like a flash old Auda was on him, still boiling with fury from the morning's insult and longing for a fight. Lawrence he loved and trusted as much as he loathed the traitor Abd el Kader. It would have been heaven for the old man to have torn the Algerian limb from limb with his great hands. Again he was pulled away. Abd el Kader was frightened, and the Emir Nuri closed the debate in his short dry way by saying that the Ruwalla were at Lawrence's service, and no questions asked. The Algerians rose and angrily swept out of the hall. Lawrence was convinced that they should be seized and shot, but he did not want to set the Arabs a bad example of political murder on the first day of their government.

He set about helping Shukri and the rest to organize the government of the city and province. He knew that the change from war to peace was an ungracious one; rebels, especially successful rebels, were necessarily bad subjects and worse governors. Feisal's unhappy duty would be to rid himself of most of his war-friends and

replace them by the officials who had been most useful to the Turkish Government. These were the solid steady people who had been too unimaginative to rebel and who would work for an Arab government as solidly and steadily as they had for the Turks. Nasir did not realize this, but Nuri Said and the Emir Nuri knew it well.

Quickly they collected a staff and began to take the necessary administrative steps. A police force. The water-supply (for the city-conduit was foul with dead men and animals). The electric light supply; most important, for to have the street-lights working again would be the most obvious sign that peace had come at last – it was successfully working that night. Sanitation; the streets and squares were full of the strewn relics of the Turkish retreat, broken carts, baggage, dead animals, typhus and dysentery corpses. Nuri Said appointed scavengers to clear up and distributed his few doctors among the hospitals, promising drugs and stores next day if any were to be had. A fire-brigade; the local fire-engines had been smashed by the Germans and the storehouses were still on fire, but volunteers were sent to blow up houses around the fires to keep the flames from spreading farther. The prisons; warders and prisoners had vanished together, so Shukri proclaimed a general amnesty. Civil disturbance; they must gradually disarm the citizens or at least persuade them not to carry rifles in the street. Relief-work; the destitute had been half-starved for days, so the damaged food rescued from the burning storehouses was distributed among them.

The general food-supply; there were no food stocks in Damascus and starvation would follow in two days if steps were not taken at once. It would be easy to get temporary supplies from the near villages if confidence were restored, the roads safeguarded and the transport animals (carried off by the Turks) replaced by others

from the general pool of captures. The British refused to share out, so the Arab Army had to give the city all its own transport animals. The railway; for the future food supply. Pointsmen, drivers, firemen, shopmen, traffic-staff had to be found and re-engaged immediately. The telegraph-system; the lines had to be repaired and directors appointed. Finance; the Australians had looted millions of pounds in Turkish notes, the only currency in use, and reduced it to no value by throwing it about. One trooper had given a boy a five-hundred pound note for holding his horse for three minutes. What was left of the British gold from Akaba was used to stabilize the currency at a low rate of exchange; but new prices then had to be fixed and this meant setting up a printing press.

Then a newspaper was demanded, to restore public confidence. Then Chauvel demanded forage for his forty thousand horses. He had to be given it, for otherwise he would be compelled to seize what he needed by main force. The Arabs could expect little mercy from Chauvel and the fate of Syria's freedom depended on his being satisfied. Three Arabic-speaking British officers who had been on the Akaba expedition with Lawrence helped him and Shukri and the rest with all this hasty organization. Lawrence's aim had been to run up a façade rather than a whole well-fitted building, but so furiously well had the work of that evening been done that when he left Damascus three days later the Syrians had a government which endured for two years without foreign advice, in an occupied country wasted by war, and against the will of at least one of the occupying Allies.

Lawrence writes then:

'Later I was sitting alone in my room working and thinking out as firm a way as the turbulent memories of

the day allowed, when the muezzins began to send their call of last prayer through the moist night over the illuminations of the feasting city. One, with a ringing voice of special sweetness, cried into my window from a near mosque. I found myself involuntarily distinguishing his words: "God alone is great: I testify that there are no gods but God: and Mohammed is his Prophet. Come to prayer: come to security. God alone is great: there is no god – but God."

'At the close he dropped his voice two tones, almost to speaking level, and softly added: "And He is very good to us this day, O people of Damascus." The clamour hushed, as everyone seemed to obey the call to prayer on this their first night of perfect freedom.'

He went to sleep, for the first time for days, but was almost immediately aroused by news that Abd el Kader was making rebellion. He sent word across to Nuri Said, glad that the mad fellow was digging his own grave. Abd el Kader had summoned his retainers, told them that the members of the new government were merely the tools of the English and called on them to strike a blow for religion while there was yet time. The simple Algerians had taken his word that it was so and run to arms. They were joined by the Druses, who were angry that Lawrence had sharply refused to reward them for their services; they had joined the Revolt too late to be of any real use. Algerians and Druses together began to burst open shops and to riot.

Lawrence and Nuri Said waited until dawn, then moved men to the upper suburbs and swept the rioters towards the river-districts of the centre of the city. Here machine-guns kept a constant barrage of fire along the river-front, aimed merely at blank walls but impossible to pass. Mohammed Said was captured and gaoled; Abd el Kader fled back to his Yarmuk village. The

Druses were expelled from the city, leaving horses and rifles in the hands of the Damascus citizens enrolled for the emergency as civic guards. By noon everything was quiet and the street traffic became normal again with the pedlars hawking, as before, sweetmeats, iced drinks, flowers and little crimson Arab flags.

At midday an Australian doctor came to Lawrence, imploring him for the sake of humanity to take notice of the Turkish hospital. Lawrence ran over in his mind the three hospitals in Arab charge, the military, the civil, the missionary, and told him that they were as well cared for as they could be. The Arabs could not invent drugs and Chauvel could not let them have any of his. The doctor went on to describe a huge range of filthy buildings without a single medical officer or orderly, packed with dead and dying; mainly dysentery cases, but at least some typhoid; and it was to be hoped, no typhus or cholera.

Lawrence wondered if he could mean the Turkish barracks where the two Australian companies were stationed. He asked whether there were sentries at the gates. 'Yes, that's the place,' said the doctor, 'but it's full of Turkish sick.' Lawrence walked there at once and parleyed with the Australian guard. At last his English accent got him past the little lodge, and a garden filled with two hundred wretched prisoners in exhaustion and despair. He stood at the great door of the barrack and called up the dusty echoing corridors.

Nobody answered. The guard had told him that thousands of prisoners had yesterday gone from here to a camp beyond the city. Since then no one had come in or out. He walked over to a shuttered lobby and stepped in. There was a sickening stench and a heap of dead bodies laid out on the stone floor, some in uniform, some naked. A few were corpses of no more than a day or two old; some had been there for days. Beyond was a great

ward from which he thought he heard a groan. He walked down the room between the beds, lifting his white silk skirts off the filthy floor. It seemed that every bed held a dead man; but as he went forward there was a stir as several tried to raise their hands. Not one of them had strength to speak, but the dry whisper 'Pity, pity' came in unison.

Lawrence ran into the garden where the Australians had picketed their horses and asked for a working party. They could not help him. Kirkbride, the young English officer who had been with Lawrence since Tafilah and had been foremost in suppressing the Abd el Kader rebellion, came to help. He had heard that Turkish doctors were upstairs. He burst open a door and found seven men in nightgowns sitting on unmade beds in a great room, boiling toffee. Lawrence impressed on these Turks that the dead must be at once sorted from the living and a list of the numbers presented to him in half an hour's time. Kirkbride, a tall fellow with heavy boots and a ready revolver, was a suitable overseer of this duty.

Lawrence then found Ali Riza, now back again from the Turks and appointed Governor, asking him to detail one of the four Arab Army doctors to take charge of the place. When the doctor arrived the fifty fittest prisoners of the lodge were pressed to act as a labour party and set in the backyard to dig a common grave. It was cruelty to work men so tired and ill, but haste gave Lawrence no choice. The doctor reported fifty-six dead, two hundred dying, seven hundred not dangerously ill. A stretcher party was formed, but before the work was done two of their bodies were added to the heap of dead men in the pit. The Australians protested that it was no fit place for a grave; the smell might drive them from their garden. . . . Lawrence found quicklime to cover the bodies. Before the work was finished it was midnight, and Law-

rence went off to his hotel, leaving Kirkbride to finish the burying and close the pit.

Lawrence then slept – for four days he had only allowed himself three hours' sleep – and in the morning everything in Damascus seemed to have cleared up wonderfully. The tramcars were running, the shops open, grain and vegetables and fruit were coming in well from outside. The streets were being watered to lay the terrible dust, though no surface treatment would remedy the damage of three years' heavy lorry traffic. Lawrence was particularly glad to see numbers of British troops sightseeing unarmed in the city. The telegraph was restored with Palestine and Beyrout. He was sorry to hear that the Arabs had seized Beyrout the night before, for as long ago as the Wejh operations he had warned them, when they took Damascus, to leave Beyrout and the Lebanon to the French, but to take the port of Tripoli, fifty miles north, instead. Still, he was glad to think that they felt themselves grown-up enough to disobey him.

Even the hospital was better. The fifty prisoners, now called 'orderlies,' had cleaned up the litter and rubbish. Others had gone through the wards, lifting and washing each patient. One ward had been cleared of beds, brushed out and sprinkled with disinfectant, and the less serious cases were about to be transferred here for their ward to be cleaned in turn. At this rate three days would have seen the place in fairly good order.

Lawrence was arranging other improvements when an Army Medical Corps major strode up and asked him shortly whether he spoke English. 'Yes,' said Lawrence. The major looked with disgust at his skirts and sandals and asked: 'You're in charge?' 'In a way I am,' Lawrence answered. 'Scandalous, disgraceful, outrageous, ought to be shot . . .' the major bellowed. At this sudden attack Lawrence, whose nerves were very ragged, began to laugh hysterically; he had been so proud of

himself for having bettered what was apparently past hope. The major had not seen the charnel-house of the day before, nor smelt it, nor helped in the burying of the putrefying corpses. He smacked Lawrence in the face and stalked off.

When Lawrence returned to the hotel he saw large crowds round a familiar grey Rolls-Royce: he ran in and found Allenby. Allenby welcomed him and approved the steps that he had taken for setting up Arab governments at Deraa and Damascus. He confirmed Ali Riza's appointment as his military governor and regulated the spheres of interest for Feisal and Chauvel. He agreed to take over the barracks-hospital and the railway. In ten minutes all difficulties had slipped away: Allenby's confidence and decision and kindliness were like a pleasant dream.

Then Feisal's train arrived from Deraa and the rolling cheers as he came riding up could be heard louder and louder through the windows. He was coming to call on Allenby, and Lawrence was happy to be the interpreter between his two masters at their first meeting. Allenby gave Lawrence, for Feisal, a telegram just received from the British Government 'recognizing to the Arabs their status as belligerents.' But nobody knew what it meant in English, let alone in Arabic, so Feisal, smiling but still with tears in his eyes from his welcome by the crowd, put it aside to satisfy the ambition of a year – he thanked Allenby for the trust which had helped his Revolt to victory.

The interview lasted only a few minutes and when Feisal had gone Lawrence made Allenby the first and last request that he had ever made for himself – leave to go away. For awhile Allenby would not give it, but Lawrence pointed out how much easier the change from war to peace conditions would be for the Arabs if his influence were removed. Allenby understood and gave his

permission and then Lawrence at once realized how sorry he was to be going.

He took leave of his Arab friends. Among those others who came to say good-bye was Chauvel, who thanked Lawrence warmly for all he had done for him. He went off then in a Rolls-Royce. For more than a year after there were groups of his friends hanging about the aerodromes in hope of his return. It rather annoyed the Air Force officers when they landed from a flight that each time a small mob came pressing about the machine, to draw back always disappointed, crying: 'No Aurans!'

Chapter 12

HE returned to England, arriving in London, after four years' absence, on Armistice Day, November 11th, 1918. Feisal arrived a few weeks later and Lawrence, after first escorting him round England, accompanied him to Paris for the Peace Conference. Lawrence had been appointed by the British Foreign Office as a member of the British Delegation, and he now used the same extraordinary energy that had gone towards winning the war in the Desert for winning the war in the Council Chamber. But he knew well that it was a losing one.

The French had made things difficult for a start by refusing to recognize Feisal as the ruler of Damascus and of the other Syrian cities that they wanted for themselves. And Feisal's position was not at all a secure one. His only right to take part in the Peace Conference was as representing the 'ally' Sherif Hussein, his father, whose claim to call himself King of the Hejaz (the Holy Province and the Red Sea coast as far as Akaba) was alone recognized. All official business had to be transacted in Hussein's name, though actually no Hejaz business came before the Peace Conference. All discussion was limited to Syria and Mesopotamia, about which Hussein's right to treat was not admitted by the French. If Hussein and Feisal had been in agreement it would have been easier, but the ambitious narrow-minded old man was most jealous of his son. He wanted to rule a great religious Empire consisting of all the Arabic-speaking parts of the old Turkish Empire, and to make Mecca his capital. While the War lasted it was advisable not to oppose him

too strongly, since unity was necessary in the Arab movement; but when the Armistice came Lawrence set about putting him quietly in his place.

He took Lloyd George into his confidence, and explained to him simply what the problem was. Arab independence had begun in the Desert; as was to be expected, for the Desert is the starting-off point of all great Arab movements. But as soon as it reached the settled countries of Syria and Mesopotamia it had to be stabilized there; the Desert has always made sudden magnificent efforts that in the end tail off into nothing. He wanted Damascus as the settled home of this new Arab independence and he wanted Feisal as the first ruler of the new Syrian state with Damascus as his capital. The French, in exact accordance with the terms of the Sykes-Picot Treaty, might be satisfied with having Beyrout and the Lebanon and the north Syrian coast for their own, and with the privilege of assisting the Damascus State with what advice its administrators needed.

Mesopotamia would form another Arab State, or perhaps two, even, and eventually some generations hence when communications by road, rail and air had drawn together the more civilized Arab provinces, there might be a United States of Arabia. Lawrence advised that nothing should now be done to promote early confederation; but that, particularly, nothing should be done to hinder it. The Desert should be left alone to look after itself in the old way without interference from the settled lands of Arabia, or from the rest of the world.

Lloyd George might have agreed to this, but unfortunately the Sykes-Picot Treaty had put Mosul into the sphere of French influence. This did not distress Lawrence, but it threatened ruin to the military occupation of Mesopotamia which the Imperial Government, Bagdad having been won at such cost, intended to turn into a British administered province. So when the case came

up before the Council of Ten – present, Clemenceau and Pichon (France), Lloyd George (England), Montagu (Indian Government), Sonnino (Italy) and others – the French were allowed to take the same equivocal attitude towards Syria as the British were taking towards Mesopotamia. Lawrence was present as Feisal's interpreter at this most eventful meeting and spoke in Arabic, French and English. An amusing incident was Pichon's speech quoting St. Louis and France's claims on Syria during the Crusades. Feisal, a successor of Saladin, replied, 'But pardon me, M. Pichon, which of us won the Crusades?'

The various contradictory pledges which Lawrence had first been shown by the Emir Nuri were then discussed, and finally, after months of intrigue, Feisal and Clemenceau appear to have come to a secret working agreement. Feisal was, with French help, to rule the greater part of inland Syria, from Damascus; the French took Beyrout and the Syrian coast. The Jews were given a home in Palestine, under British protection. But the British kept Mesopotamia and discouraged all agitation there towards Arab independence. Nothing of this agreement, if it was an agreement, was made public during the life of the Peace Conference: but Feisal returned to Syria and the working arrangement began to show itself.

Lawrence was not at all satisfied. In England, at his first coming, he had refused to accept his British decorations. He explained personally to King George that the part he had played in the Arab Revolt was dishonourable to himself and to his country and government. He had, by order, fed the Arabs with false hopes and would now be obliged if he might be quietly relieved of the obligation to accept honours for succeeding in his fraud. He said respectfully as a subject, but firmly as an individual, that he intended to fight by straight means or

crooked until His Majesty's ministers had conceded to the Arabs a fair settlement of their claims. King George, though unwilling to believe that Ministers of the Crown were capable of double-dealing, respected Lawrence's scruples, permitting him to forgo his decorations. Lawrence expressed his gratitude, and thereupon also returned his foreign decorations to their donors with an account of the circumstances.

Lord Stamfordham, King George's Private Secretary, to whom I wrote for permission to print this paragraph, has been good enough to get the King's own recollections of the interview: 'His Majesty does not remember that Colonel Lawrence's statement was what you have recorded: but that, in asking permission to decline the proffered decorations, Colonel Lawrence explained in a few words that he had made certain promises to King Feisal: that these promises had not been fulfilled, and consequently, it was quite possible that he might find himself fighting against the British Forces, in which case it would be obviously impossible and wrong to be wearing British decorations. The King has no recollection of Colonel Lawrence's saying that the part he had played in the Arab Revolt was dishonourable to himself and to his Country and Government.'

At Paris, Lawrence had several rows with politicians and soldiers. The most sensational was in the hall of the Hotel Majestic, the headquarters of the British delegation. A major-general began treating him as an interfering young fellow who had no business to be poking his nose into matters that did not concern him. Lawrence retorted warmly. The general barked out, 'Don't dare to speak to me in that tone. You're not a professional soldier.' This stirred Lawrence. 'No,' said he, 'perhaps I'm not; but if you had a division and I had a division, I know which of us would be taken prisoner.'

He met Marshal Foch at Paris. It is related that Foch

remarked in a friendly way to Lawrence, 'I suppose now that there will soon be war in Syria between my country and your Arabs? Will you be leading their armies?' 'No,' Lawrence answered, 'unless you promise to lead the French armies in person. Then I should enjoy it.' The old Marshal wagged his finger at Lawrence. 'My young friend, if you think that I am going to sacrifice the reputation that I have so carefully compiled on the Western Front by fighting you on your own ground and under conditions imposed by yourself, you are very much mistaken.'

One more story (out of its place but recalled by this discussion of international affairs):

When Lawrence was working up from Akaba into Syria he once took a mobile hospital with him on a raid. All the stretcher-camels were, for economy of transport, loaded up with dynamite. The Royal Army Medical Corps Headquarters in Palestine got to hear of this and telegraphed expecting that the Arab Army would in future observe the Geneva Convention which insists that the transport devoted to fighting shall be kept distinct from that devoted to medical work. Lawrence on his next raid therefore left both hospital *and doctor* behind. The Medical Headquarters again protested, and Lawrence replied that transport could not be wasted on non-combatants. This enraged the Surgeon-General, who tried to catch Lawrence by wiring a peremptory request to know how Lawrence proposed, in the absence of his medical officer, to dispose of his wounded. Lawrence then replied tersely, 'Will shoot all cases too hurt to ride off.' This closed the argument.

He returned to Cairo during the tail-end of the Peace Conference to collect his diaries and photographs of the war-period and on his way by Handley-Page was in a bad crash at Rome. Both the pilots were killed and Lawrence had three ribs and a collar-bone broken. In

July 1919 he was demobilized and at the conclusion of the Peace Conference returned to London and lived there until November 1919, when he was elected to a seven-year research fellowship at All Souls College, Oxford. 1920 he again spent in London.

Meanwhile things were developing politically. After Clemenceau retired, the French Government's attitude to Syria became stiffer, and the working agreement that had apparently existed was replaced by a veiled state of war. This soon gave an excuse for open hostilities, and Feisal, not himself resisting, was turned out of Damascus. He withdrew to Palestine and thence to Italy and England, where he pleaded with the British Government for help. Nothing could be done for him and he returned to Mecca. Here he lived for some while until he received an invitation, through his father, from influential elements in Bagdad to visit Mesopotamia as their nominee for the now vacant throne of that country, now known as Irak. He obtained assurances from the British Government that his acceptance of the throne would be welcome to it; and was duly crowned in Bagdad with the assistance of Sir Percy Cox, the British High Commissioner.

It had seemed after Feisal's expulsion from Damascus that Lawrence's worst fears were realized, that having duped the Arabs with false hopes he had been unable even to win them a small degree of independence. But he did not give up hope. Finally, in February 1921, the crisis in Mesopotamia became so acute that Middle Eastern affairs were transferred to the sphere of the Colonial Office and the appointment was made of Mr. Winston Churchill as Colonial Minister. He sent for Lawrence and offered him the post of adviser to himself, with the promise of a fair deal if he would help to put things straight in the East. Lawrence consented on one condition, that the war-time pledges given to the Arabs

should at last be honoured. His 'straight means or crooked' are plainly given in the following letter which he wrote to me in reply to certain queries of mine as to his motives and intentions during this very obscure period:

'Events in Mecca had changed much between June 1919, when I found the Coalition Ministry very reluctant to take a liberal line in the Middle East, and March 1921, when Mr. Winston Churchill took over. The slump had come in the City. The Press, with help from many quarters, including mine, was attacking the expense of our war-time commitments in Asia. Lord Curzon's lack of suppleness and subtlety had inflamed a situation already made difficult by revolt in Mesopotamia, bad feeling in Palestine, disorder in Egypt and the continuing break with Nationalist Turkey. So the Cabinet was half persuaded to make a clean cut of our Middle East responsibilities; to evacuate Mesopotamia, "Milnerize Egypt," and perhaps give Palestine to a third party. Mr. Churchill was determined to find ways and means of avoiding so complete a reversal of the traditional British attitude. I was at one with him in this attitude: indeed I fancy I went beyond him in my desire to see as many "brown" dominions in the British Empire as there are "white." It will be a sorry day when our estate stops growing.

'The War Office (under Sir Henry Wilson) was a strong advocate of Mesopotamian withdrawal, since the minimum cost of military occupation was twenty million pounds a year. Winston Churchill persuaded Sir Hugh Trenchard, the Air Chief of Staff, to undertake military responsibility there for less than a quarter that cost. The Royal Air Force was to be used instead of troops and the Senior Air Officer would command all forces in Irak. This was a new departure in Air history:

but Sir Hugh Trenchard was confident in the quality of the men and officers under his command.

'But this policy would only be practicable if it were joined with a liberal measure of Arab self-government controlled by a treaty between Irak and Great Britain, instead of a Mandate. The Cabinet agreed after an eventful discussion and the new policy brought peace.

'British and native casualties in the five years since the treaty was made with Irak have only been a few tens, whereas before the treaty they had run to thousands. The Arab Government in Irak, while not wholly free from the diseases of childhood, is steadily improving in competence and self-confidence. There is a progressive reduction in the British personnel there. The country has financial independence in sight. Our aim is its early admission to the responsibility of membership of the League of Nations. Our hope is that it will continue its treaty relations with Great Britain in return for the manifest advantages of intimate connection with so large a firm as the British Empire.

'I told Lloyd George at Paris that the centre of Arab Independence will eventually be Bagdad, not Damascus, since the future of Mesopotamia is great and the possible development of Syria is small. Syria now has 5,000,000 inhabitants, Irak only 3,000,000. Syria will only have 7,000,000 when Irak has 40,000,000. But I envisaged Damascus as the capital of an Arab State for perhaps twenty years. When the French took it after two years, we had to transfer the focus of Arab nationalism at once to Bagdad; which was difficult, since during the war and armistice period British local policy had been sternly repressive of all nationalist feeling.

'I take to myself credit for some of Mr. Churchill's pacification of the Middle East, for while he was carrying it out he had the help of such knowledge and energy as I possess. His was the imagination and courage to

take a fresh departure and enough skill and knowledge of political procedure to put his political revolution into operation in the Middle East, and in London, peacefully. When it was in working order, in March 1922, I felt that I had gained every point I wanted. The Arabs had their chance and it was up to them, if they were good enough, to make their own mistakes and profit by them. My object with the Arabs was always to make them stand on their own feet. The period of leading-strings could now come to an end. That's why I was at last able to abandon politics and enlist. My job was done, as I wrote to Winston Churchill at the time, when leaving an employer who had been for me so considerate as sometimes to seem more like a senior partner than a master. The work I did constructively for him in 1921 and 1922 seems to me, in retrospect, the best I ever did. It somewhat redresses, to my mind, the immoral and unwarrantable risks I took with others' lives and happiness in 1917-1918.

'Of course Irak was the main point, since there could not be more than one centre of Arab national feeling; or rather need not be: and it was fit that it should be in the British and not in the French area. But during those years we also decided to stop the subsidies to the Arabian chiefs and put a ring-wall around Arabia, a country which must be reserved as an area of Arabic individualism. So long as our fleet keeps its coasts, Arabia should be at leisure to fight out its own complex and fatal destiny.

'Incidentally, of course, we sealed the doom of King Hussein. I offered him a treaty in the summer of 1921 which would have saved him the Hejaz had he renounced his pretensions to hegemony over all other Arabic areas: but he clung to his self-assumed title of "King of the Arabic Countries." So Ibn Saud of Nejd outed him and rules in Hejaz. Ibn Saud is not a system

but a despot, ruling by virtue of a dogma. Therefore I approve of him, as I would approve of anything in Arabia which was individualistic, unorganized, unsystematic.

'Mr. Churchill took a moderate line in Palestine to obtain peace while the Zionist experiment is tried. And in Transjordan he kept our promises to the Arab Revolt and assisted the home-rulers to form a buffer-principality, under the nominal presidency of Feisal's brother Abdulla, between Palestine and the Desert.

'So as I say, I got all I wanted (for other people) – the Churchill solution exceeded my one-time hopes – and quitted the game. Whether the Arab national spirit is permanent and dour enough to make itself into a modern state in Irak I don't know. I think it may, at least. We were in honour bound to give it a sporting chance. Its success would involve the people of Syria in a similar experiment. Arabia will always, I hope, stand out of the movements of the settled parts, as will Palestine too if the Zionists make good. Their problem is the problem of the third generation. Zionist success would enormously reinforce the material development of Arab Syria and Irak.

'I want you to make it quite clear in your book, if you use all this letter, how from 1916 onwards and especially in Paris I worked against the idea of an Arab Confederation being formed politically before it had become a reality commercially, economically and geographically by the slow pressure of many generations; how I worked to give the Arabs a chance to set up their provincial governments whether in Syria or in Irak; and how in my opinion Winston Churchill's settlement has honourably fulfilled our war-obligations and my hopes.'

'The FLORIN BOOKS are
magnificent

They are the right size for all times,
and the right price for these times'

C. B. COCHRAN



A LIST OF TITLES

FLORIN BOOKS

2s. net each

JONATHAN CAPE 30 BEDFORD SQUARE
LONDON

ANONYMOUS

EX-WIFE. A Novel

No. 1

This surprising book contains the observations of a young woman on marriage, divorce, and the new freedom of her sex.

BAILEY, H. C.

THE LONELY QUEEN. A Novel

No. 37

'... a convincing and life-like picture of Elizabeth from the little child playing with her dolls to the woman who at last realizes that whatever may have been her triumph as a Sovereign, she has failed to achieve a woman's highest ambition. The book is evidence not merely of a knowledge of the bare history of the period but of a power of expression which enables the reader to follow the girl, the woman and the queen through her lonely existence. . . . Under Mr. Bailey's capable pen the dry bones of history are revived.'

THE GOD OF CLAY

No. 49

Napoleon is the hero of this story. Not the Emperor, the master of half the world, but the artillery lieutenant of the old regime. Meet him first a ragged, despised subaltern, and leave him First Consul of France maturing his plans for the conquest of England. The strange wooing and the stranger wedding of Josephine are told. Through all it is the man and not the conqueror with whom the story is concerned. Josephine is in some sense the heroine of the book, but she is not the only woman to sway the fortunes of *The God of Clay*.

BARR, Dennis

A DOCK BRIEF. A Novel

No. 2

This fascinating mixture of the law, crime, the sea, and political intrigue might be described loosely as 'a detective story,' but such a description would do it less than justice. The author binds his scenes with a thread of detective romance that never frays until the last page is reached.

BATES, H. E.

CATHERINE FOSTER. A Novel

No. 3

'Mr. Bates is very much alive to natural phenomena . . . he can suggest slight, significant things that give reality, and he can be happy in conjunctions of nature and mood. His Catherine is a remarkable study.' *Manchester Guardian*

BIRKENHEAD, Edited by the Late Earl of

RALPH RASHLEIGH

No. 38

'*The Adventures of Ralph Rashleigh* relates the life-history of a man transported to New South Wales for burglary; the book in its present form has been re-written from a well-authenticated manuscript, and supplies a coherent and lively narrative of an astounding career. Rashleigh endured such hardships as a modern reader can scarcely credit. . . . It is not a pretty story; but for excitement it would be hard to beat this sadistic chronicle.' *The Sunday Times*

BLAKER, Richard

THE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS. A Novel *No. 25*

An unusual study of English family life, depicting a man, who though living in his own family circle, is estranged from all its members, wife, daughters and son. As the story develops there is shown an improvement in the family relations, and the climax is in keeping with the man's fearless attitude and his ability to realise the full logic of his philosophy.

BROMFIELD, Louis

EARLY AUTUMN. A Novel *No. 26*

Early Autumn is the tale of the struggle between life and death in a New England family, old and decayed, but of a name and tradition once distinguished in the history of America. The story of a people who live in the past, cherishing tradition and property and respectability above all else in the world.

THE STRANGE CASE OF MISS ANNIE SPRAGG *No. 50*

Ostensibly the entire action of the novel takes place in a single night in Fiesole. Within the whole, however, a number of minor stories are interwoven: stories in which the characters in the main plot explain themselves by living their lives. They are stories in which love, religion, the supernatural, rich Americans, poor English and temperamental Italians all have a part in making this powerful and enthralling novel. The scenes both in Italy and America are drawn with a sure hand, and the publishers believe that they are fully justified in describing this book as the best that Louis Bromfield has written.

BRONTË, Emily

WUTHERING HEIGHTS. A Novel *No. 13*

'It is a very great book. You may read this grim story of lost and thwarted human creatures on a moor at any age and come under its sway.' *From the Introduction by* ROSE MACAULAY

BROWN, Alec

GREEN LANE OR MURDER AT MOAT FARM No. 27

A Novel. 'An original, thoughtful, penetrating and rather terrible study of a vice not confined to rural areas . . . the vice of gossip, of ill-nature, of suspicion. It is true that the action embraces physical violence as well as spiritual corruption: there are a sufficiently nasty murder, a sufficiently convincing suicide, and an execution. But for all that the drama is played on the world of soul.' GERALD GOULD in *The Observer*

BURNETT, W. R.

LITTLE CAESAR. A Novel No. 14

'A well-told tale of the Chicago underworld . . . told with the greatest rapidity and dramatic punch, and the characterization is excellent.' *Morning Post*

BUTLER, Samuel

EREWHON OR OVER THE RANGE No. 4

'Occasionally, very occasionally, a bit of genuine satire secures for itself more than a passing nod of recognition. . . . *Erewhon* is such a satire . . . the best of its kind since *Gulliver's Travels*.'

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

THE WAY OF ALL FLESH No. 28

'It drives one almost to despair of English literature when one sees so extraordinary a study of English life as Butler's posthumous *Way of all Flesh* making so little impression. Really, the English do not deserve to have great men.' GEORGE BERNARD SHAW.

CANFIELD, Dorothy

HER SON'S WIFE. A Novel No. 15

'Mrs. Canfield shows us, at considerable length, and yet with no lapse into dullness, a mother struggling against the selfishness of her son and the almost imbecile self-indulgence of her daughter-in-law.' *Observer*

'A beautiful piece of intricate work.' *Illustrated London News*

COLLINS, Wilkie

THE MOONSTONE No. 39

The Moonstone was stolen from the forehead of an Indian God and, after many strange vicissitudes, came into the hands of an English girl. The idol's priests had sworn vengeance upon anyone possessing the gem, and they followed it to England. It is a story of love and jealousy set in a background of Oriental mystery.

Wilkie Collins was the greatest master of the detective novel, and *The Moonstone* is his masterpiece.

DAVIES, W. H.

THE ADVENTURES OF JOHNNY WALKER, TRAMP

No. 5

Johnny Walker should be read straight off as a story of adventure. It is the relation of true experiences, and all its characters have or have had a real existence.

DE SELINCOURT, Hugh

THE CRICKET MATCH

No. 16

'I think this the best story about cricket or any other game that has ever been written.' SIR J. M. BARRIE

DUNSTERVILLE, Major-General L. C.

STALKY'S ADVENTURES

No. 40

'The most cheerful book of its kind is that of General Dunsterville, *Stalky's Adventures*. General Dunsterville being the original of Kipling's "Stalky", it is not surprising to find here evidence of a gay, resourceful, dare-devil character who is almost as good company in his book as he must be in the flesh.' *The Evening Standard*

ERTZ, Susan

MADAME CLAIRE. A Novel

No. 41

'Miss Ertz uses skill, humour and deep insight into human nature.' *The Daily Mail*

'The rare and unaffected simplicity of the author's style shows real mastery of her art.' *The Daily Express*

'Not the least enchanting of Miss Ertz's many gifts as a novelist is her recognition of the fact that relationship of man and woman is not a musical-box with one tune, but an instrument of immeasurable range.' *The Daily News*

FALKNER, J. Meade

MOONFLEET

No. 67

A stirring tale of adventure in the eighteenth century. Moonfleet, a Dorset village by the sea, is the chief scene of this exciting story, in which smugglers, hidden caves, shipwrecks, and a missing diamond play their part.

When the book first appeared the *Spectator* wrote 'In *Moonfleet* Mr. Falkner has given us what in the present writer's opinion is the best tale of fantastic adventure since Stevenson's pen was prematurely laid aside.'

FLAUBERT, Gustave

MADAME BOVARY. A Novel

No. 29

'... It remains perpetually the novel of all novels which the criticism of fiction cannot overlook; as soon as ever we speak of the principles of the art we must be prepared to engage with Flaubert. There is no such book as his *Bovary*; for it is a novel in which the subject stands firm and clear, without the least shade of ambiguity to break the line which bounds it.' PERCY LUBBOCK in *The Craft of Fiction*

GRAVES, Robert

LAWRENCE AND THE ARABS

No. 60

A full and intimate account of Lawrence's life and adventures. The author, a personal friend of Lawrence, had his permission to write this biography as a discouragement to possible misleading and inaccurate ones. He had also the advice and assistance of many of those who were with Lawrence during the Arab campaign.

'In a work of exceptional clarity and quite absorbing interest it outlines the whole marvellous business in a manner which could not have been bettered.' *Sunday Times*

HALL, Radclyffe

ADAM'S BREED. A Novel

No. 42

Adam's Breed, the strangely moving story of the life and death of an Italian waiter, is the novel which won the Femina Vie Heureuse Prize for 1926, the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for 1926 and also the Eichelberger Gold Medal, and which before the appearance of *The Well of Loneliness* showed Miss Hall to be an author of power and sympathy.

THE UNLIT LAMP

No. 51

This is the earlier 'problem' novel which made the literary reputation of the author of *The Well of Loneliness*.

'A brilliant study, handled with ruthless sincerity.' *Liverpool Courier*

'Strong and quiet—a very moving picture of a character refreshingly fine.' *Observer*

'A novel of uncommon power and fidelity to life.' *Daily Telegraph*

HEMINGWAY, Ernest

A FAREWELL TO ARMS. A Novel

No. 30

'*A Farewell to Arms* is more than a realistic war novel. It is a notable addition to modern fiction, showing how poignancy and horror can be heightened by leaving out instead of heaping on detail. It is a masterpiece of imaginative omissions, and the ending is quite unforgettable in its pathos.' *The Daily Telegraph*

HORN, Alfred Aloysius

TRADER HORN

No. 6

The book from which the film was taken

'This is a gorgeous book, more full of sheer stingo than any you are likely to come across in a day's march among the bookshops of wherever you may be.' *From the Introduction by* JOHN GALSWORTHY. Edited by ETHELREDA LEWIS

TRADER HORN IN MADAGASCAR

No. 31

'The new Horn book is as fascinating as either of its predecessors. The book is not merely the record of mild doings off the East Coast of Africa "in the Earlies". It is also a vigorous indictment of the Mahomedan slave trade which provides the inmates of harems and their keepers.' *The Morning Post*

'You must buy it and keep it, for whenever and however often you dip into him, Aloysius Horn will hold you as surely as the Ancient Mariner gripped the wedding guest by the lapel of his coat.' DR. J. M. BULLOCH

HURST, Fannie

LUMMOX. A Novel

No. 7

The Saga of Bertha, maid-of-all-work. A tale of stark realism and frank revelation that lays bare a human heart. With character and drama on every page, *Lummo*x is a book that will live.

BACK STREET

No. 66

This is the story of a girl living in the poor quarter of an American town in the 'nineties. Ray Schmidt was immensely attractive, and, left to run wild by her father, was regarded as irretrievably 'lost' by her step-mother. But although Ray was ready to go out with any man, and listened to their proposals without offence, she did so because of the generosity of her nature, and because the experience was so common to her that it made little impression. She herself remained care-free and whole-hearted until she met Walter Saxel. Her generosity and kindness to a worthless step-sister spoilt her chances of happiness; how her life was passed in the back streets of Walter's life is Ray's life-story and the substance of this book.

LEWIS, Sinclair

BABBITT. A Novel

No. 17

'A fascinating book. A novel which is as remarkable an achievement in town painting as Arnold Bennett's early renderings of the "Five Towns".' *Daily News*.

FREE AIR. A Novel

No. 43

'*Free Air* is very readable; buoyant with vitality and high spirits; it contains a motor-tour of two thousand miles, adventures, crashes, the whole of the earlier part presenting itself to the eye as an exciting film-picture. Later it becomes involved in the marriage between the daughter of a wealthy Brooklyn banker, and the motor mechanic who had been their good angel in the perils of the motor-tour; idealism and sentimentalism replace incident. *Free Air* is an early work of Mr. Sinclair Lewis, and has a spring-like quality of exuberance.' *The Spectator*.

THE JOB

No. 63

The Job is one of the novels of Mr. Lewis's earlier period, written and published in America before *Main Street* and *Babbitt*. It tells the story of Una Golden, who goes to New York to see the world, and sees it as a worker of the great army of girls who go back and forth on the Elevated every day.

'A strangely penetrating and human story.' *Spectator*

'It contains all those qualities which made *Babbitt* a best seller on both sides of the Atlantic.' *Observer*

LINKLATER, Eric

POET'S PUB. A Novel

No. 18

'Mr. Linklater is really the greatest fun. Even at his absurdest moments he is genuinely witty, so witty, indeed, that one can forgive him anything, even the dolorous barman. . . . The story, of course, is one long series of improbabilities, but that does not matter in the least. The book is first-rate entertainment.' RALPH STRAUS in the *Sunday Times*

LOOS, Anita

GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES

No. 52

The expressive term, 'a gold digger', describes the writer of this diary. Here we have her in all her glory, in an amusing, astonishingly frank diary that takes her from New York to London, Paris, Vienna and Munich, in quest of an education in the foreign colleges known as Ritz Hotels. Diplomats, princes, society, big business men - she plays them all, especially men, men, men. Tiaras, state secrets, titles and Poiret models all fall into her pretty little net.

MACDONALD, James Ramsay
WANDERINGS AND EXCURSIONS

No. 8

Mr. Ramsay MacDonald has been a wide traveller and reader, and has an uncommon power of bringing an individual eye – the eye of the artist – to bear upon whatever he sees.

MAUROIS, André
COLONEL BRAMBLE

No. 32

The story, told by the French interpreter Aurelle, describes the doings of the Headquarters Mess of a Scottish Division in the Great War. The General himself, the staff, the doctor, the padre and above all, Private Brommit, who is the English army in one, are living human beings we all recognize and their conversation and reactions to the trials and tribulations of War are admirably observed and studied.

MAYO, Katherine
MOTHER INDIA

No. 19

'It is certainly the most fascinating, the most depressing, and at the same time the most important and truthful book that has been written about India for a good deal more than a generation.' *New Statesman*

SLAVES OF THE GODS

No. 53

In this volume the author of *Mother India* follows through her appeal for the release of India's degraded souls. *Slaves of the Gods* portrays in fiction form exactly what it means, worked out in flesh and blood, to be in Hindu India a child-wife, a Temple prostitute, a Suttee, a child-widow, an Untouchable or a Sacred Cow.

Dramatic and forceful, incredible almost, as these twelve records appear, yet each one is taken from real life and each has been carefully verified.

MITCHISON, Naomi
THE CONQUERED. A Novel

No. 9

'With *The Conquered* Mrs. Mitchison establishes herself as the best historical novelist now writing.' *New Statesman*

MORTON, J. B. ('Beachcomber' of the *Daily Express*)

THE ADVENTURES OF MR. THAKE

No. 59

A selection from 'Beachcomber's' two previous volumes *Mr. Thake* and *Mr. Thake Again*. When the first of these appeared *The Spectator* wrote:

'But Oswald Thake, that great man, that outstanding figure of our age, reads even better in a book than in a daily paper.' The figure of Thake expands and blossoms as we read, 'wisibly swelling before our wery eyes', taking on a new life, a new rich humour. . . . And how convey any idea of Thake on his travels - his innocent preoccupation with the conversation of fellow travellers, and his complete failure to get anything more out of Venice than he does out of Kensington or Wimbledon? For all this it is necessary to read the book. Even Thake's most faithful readers will discover him here for the first time; and will be left wondering - as we do - why on earth he wasn't made into a book years ago!

NICHOLS, Beverley

CRAZY PAVEMENTS. A Novel

No. 10

'Mr. Beverley Nichols has given us a clever satirical picture of the wickedness that lurks in Mayfair! An amazingly original entertainment, teeming with epigrammatical brilliancy and not a little, too, of the pathos of youth's inevitable disillusionment.'

Bookman

ARE THEY THE SAME AT HOME?

No. 44

'Mr. Beverley Nichols has carried a form of witty impudence to the furthest limit of good manners, and yet succeeded in keeping on the windy side of taste. The papers contained in this collection of his brilliances are something between interviews and character sketches and they include impressions of some sixty-one personages of repute. . . . Mr. Nichols has the wit to penetrate the armour of, and the impudence to reveal, exactly what he discovers below the surface.' *The Daily Telegraph*

EVENSONG

No. 62

The story of a great singer. 'With *Evensong*', said Mr. Gerald Gould in the *Observer*, 'Mr. Beverley Nichols has taken a bold stride forward into the company of considerable novelists.'

Mr. J. B. Priestley wrote in the *Evening Standard* - 'A brilliant novel. His heroine is colossal. Her egoism, her tantrums, her idiocies, her odd meannesses and extravagancies, her art - they are all there, and Mr. Nichols has exhibited his monster with the most admirable skill, now turning her this way, now that, for our delight.'

NICHOLS, Beverley

FOR ADULTS ONLY

No. 64

'A collection of the lightest and most amusing of this author's sketches. His subjects range from botany . . . to bridge, and from first nights to photography. Throughout they are told in form of conversations between a parent and a perfectly horrible and lifelike child.' *News-Chronicle*

'Beverley Nichols, who can be more sweetly acid than almost any writer, has seen the satirical possibilities of testing our adult wisdom and folly by the touchstone of a child's clear logic. In his *Child's Guides* to knowledge of many kinds . . . he has invented a new and deadly form of satire.' *Everyman*

'A spirited and witty piece of sophistication.' *John o' London's Weekly*

WOMEN AND CHILDREN LAST

No. 69

In this book, written five years after *Twenty-Five*, and one year before *Down the Garden Path*, Mr. Nichols transfers his gay and impudent attention from the particular to the general. Women, rather than any individual woman, form the butt of his wit, which is as keen as ever. Few books can have contained so many charming taunts, delivered with a grace that softens their sting, though driving the barb deeper.

Several short stories are included in this volume, which contains, in addition, a highly controversial foreword by the author.

NILES, Blair

CONDEMNED TO DEVIL'S ISLAND

No. 20

'Mrs. Niles' book is of absorbing interest. The daily lives of these unfortunate men, their vices (concerning which she is very frank), their dreams of escape, all these are set down in a manner which holds the reader's attention to the end.' *Daily Herald*

O'BRIEN, E. J.

MODERN ENGLISH SHORT STORIES

No. 11

This volume is a collection designed to present a panorama of the best work published by contemporary English writers of short stories.

O'BRIEN, E. J.

ENGLISH SHORT STORIES OF TO-DAY

No. 61

A new collection of representative English short stories and a companion volume to *Modern English Short Stories*, which has been and is in great demand as a *Florin Book*. The authors in the new volume include: Mary Arden, Josef Bard, Hector Bolitho, John Collier, A. J. Cronin, David Garnett, Louis Golding, Oliver Gossman, Norah Hoult, Eiluned Lewis, Eric Linklater, H. A. Manhood, Naomi Mitchison, Edward Sackville-West, Malachi Whitaker, Antonia White, Orlo Williams, and Romer Wilson.

O'FLAHERTY, Liam

THE INFORMER. A Novel

No. 33

'*The Informer* must be accounted a little masterpiece of its kind . . . his portrait of the brutish informer is so marvellously vivid, and his whole narrative, with its slowly increasing atmosphere of terror, so perfectly unfolded that the book must be ranked very high indeed. . . . *The Informer* is easily its author's best work. It is a quite unforgettable story.' *The Sunday Times*

PARROTT, Ursula

STRANGERS MAY KISS. A Novel

No. 21

'*Strangers May Kiss* has wit, style, wisdom, and a certain hard kind of beauty: the beauty of a fine thing gone wrong. It is about love, of course; but there is underneath the story an inner emotional reality which held me to the end.' *Sunday Referee*

PRICHARD, Katharine Susannah

HAXBY'S CIRCUS. A Novel

No. 34

'Often as circus life has been described, Miss Katharine Susannah Prichard must be given high marks for her vivid, sympathetic picture of a travelling troupe in Australia. The setting lends it pleasant novelty, the people have just that flavour of difference from English people which makes them interesting in themselves.' *The Spectator*

ROBERTSON, E. Arnot

CULLUM. A Novel

No. 22

'*Cullum* is a moving and ironical first novel, the story of a girl's passion for a brilliant, plausible, hopelessly amoral young man . . . at its highest in the sceneries and the heroine's love passages, at its wittiest in the anatomies of Cullum, the fatal lack of cohesion between his heart and his head.' *New Statesman and Nation*

ROBERTSON, E. Arnot

FOUR FRIGHTENED PEOPLE

No. 54

Here is a rich, queer, deliberately cold-blooded book that breaks most of the accepted rules of fiction – a violent romance told in humorous undertones, carefully unromantic – a record of swift, fierce action by detached and intelligent people. Throughout this account of an appalling journey in one of the Unfederated Malay States there runs a streak of light-hearted ruthlessness, which handles the sanctity of human life, religion, sex, and many of our Western prejudices, in a spirit that is more Malayan than English. This book is emphatically not for the sentimental. Its author's attitude is one of peculiar, unsparing honesty towards many aspects of life.

THREE CAME UNARMED. A Novel

No. 45

'The three who came unarmed are the three children, two boys and a girl, of a Norwegian mother and an English missionary who has died of drink on some vague island of the Malayan archipelago. They have grown up as savages, creatures of instinct, beautiful in body and untutored in mind . . . after their father's death they are suddenly precipitated into English provincial society . . . here is a rich opportunity for comedy and also for satire. Miss Arnot Robertson avails herself of her opportunity and has some very stinging things to say, also some very stinging caricatures to draw, but she never falls into the error of making her satire too blatant, and she is tolerant enough to realize that no character is wholly unsympathetic.' MISS V. SACKVILLE-WEST in a Broadcast Talk.

STARKE, Barbara

TOUCH AND GO

No. 68

With an Introduction by Alec Waugh.

This is the scrupulously honest narrative of a girl who hiked alone across the United States and back. It is a sensitive picture of countryside and city, prairie, mountain, river and forest, but – infinitely more interesting – it is the first unfictionized commentary on the morality of the 'open road' as experienced by a woman. Asking no favours, and inhibited by no conventional taboos, she held her course among the endlessly variegated casuals who tried to help her or hurt her, reform her or head her for perdition. With the same clear eye through which she watched others she watched herself, and her judgments on her own behaviour are just as frank. The people she met were legion, their motives, viewpoints and morals as diversified as their looks. Commercial travellers, college professors, farmers, rum runners, cowboys, lorry drivers, jailbirds, evangelists, telegraph linesmen, dope fiends, undertakers.

YOUNG, E. H.

THE VICAR'S DAUGHTER. A Novel

No. 24

'This is a comedy of errors – and the comedy is kept up to the end with what can only be called smug satisfaction, every turn of it being savoured luxuriously . . . Miss Young is to be thanked for a novel which, without violating probability, finds rich comedy in the deepest affection of the human heart.'

Manchester Guardian

WILLIAM. A Novel

No. 36

'This is an unusually good novel . . . a charming and lasting tribute to a suburban generation that is passing, and it is a comforting book, too. For what a pleasure it is to pick up a novel which posits and affirms human values, instead of pursuing the general quest of the unseizable reality of the mythical "me"!'

The Manchester Guardian

MISS MOLE

No. 58

'After reading *Miss Mole* I realize how grave was my omission to read the previous works of Miss E. H. Young. It is one which I intend to rectify as speedily as possible. For this new novel of hers is a book of such wit as comes to one but rarely. Miss Mole is, in fact, a darling, whom we should all like to know. Her creation justifies for her author the highest recognition.'

Punch

YOUSSEUPOFF, Prince

RASPUTIN. HIS MALIGNANT INFLUENCE AND HIS ASSASSINATION

No. 65

This is the only authentic account of Rasputin's death. Prince Youssouppoff tells how he gained Rasputin's confidence and prepared and baited the trap, of Rasputin's incredible struggle for life; and of what followed. This terrible drama throws fresh light on Russian history and Russian character.

to the
to the
to the
to the
to the
to the

to the
to the
to the
to the
to the
to the

to the
to the
to the
to the
to the
to the

to the
to the
to the
to the
to the
to the

M.D. 563

SME 338

LAWRENCE AND THE ARABS

Robert GRAVES

SME 338

