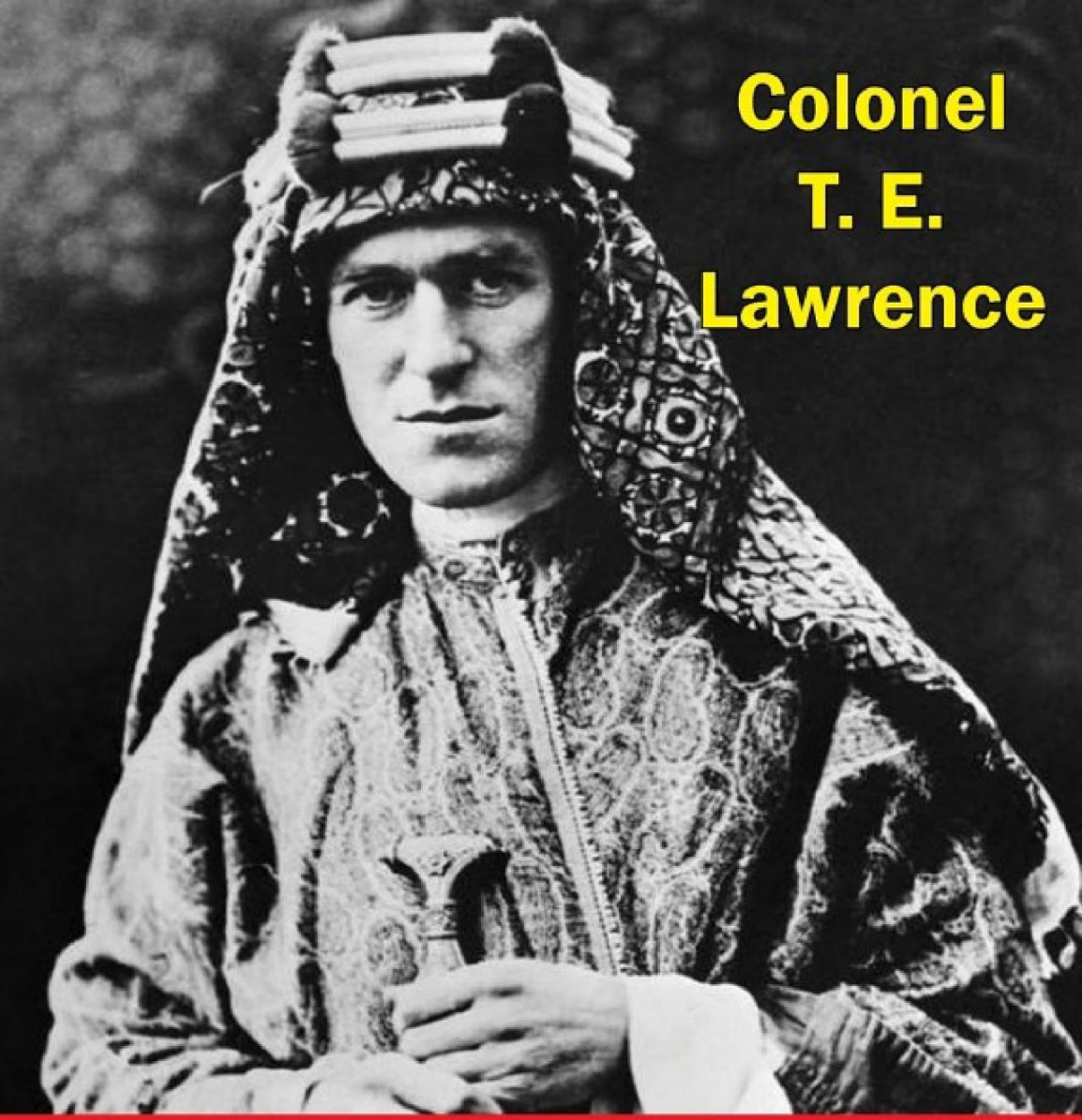

Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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DEDICATION

To S.A.

I loved you, so I drew these tides of men into my hands
  and wrote my will across the sky in stars
To earn you Freedom, the seven-pillared worthy house,
  that your eyes might be shining for me
                When we came.

Death seemed my servant on the road, till we were near
  and saw you waiting:
When you smiled, and in sorrowful envy he outran me
  and took you apart:
                Into his quietness.

Love, the way-weary, groped to your body, our brief wage
  ours for the moment
Before earth's soft hand explored your shape, and the blind
  worms grew fat upon
                Your substance.

Men prayed me that I set our work, the inviolate house,
  as a memory of you.
But for fit monument I shattered it, unfinished: and now
The little things creep out to patch themselves hovels
  in the marred shadow
                Of your gift.

Preface

Mr Geoffrey Dawson persuaded All Souls College to give me leisure, in 1919-1920, to write about the Arab Revolt. Sir Herbert Baker let me live and work in his Westminster houses.

The book so written passed in 1921 into proof; where it was fortunate in the friends who criticized it. Particularly it owes its thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Shaw for countless suggestions of great value and diversity: and for all the present semicolons.

It does not pretend to be impartial. I was fighting for my hand, upon my own midden. Please take it as a personal narrative piece out of memory. I could not make proper notes: indeed it would have been a breach of my duty to the Arabs if I had picked such flowers while they fought. My superior officers, Wilson, Joyce, Dawnay, Newcombe and Davenport could each tell a like tale. The same is true of Stirling, Young, Lloyd and Maynard: of Buxton and Winterton: of Ross, Stent and Siddons: of Peake, Homby, Scott-Higgins and Garland: of Wordie, Bennett and MacIndoe: of Bassett, Scott, Goslett, Wood and Gray: of Hinde, Spence and Bright: of Brodie and Pascoe, Gilman and Grisenthwaite, Greenhill, Dowsett and Wade: of Henderson, Leeson, Makins and Nunan.

And there were many other leaders or lonely fighters to whom this self-regardant picture is not fair. It is still less fair, of course,

like all war-stories, to the un-named rank and file: who miss their share of credit, as they must do, until they can write the despatches.

T. E. S.

Cranwell, 15.8.26

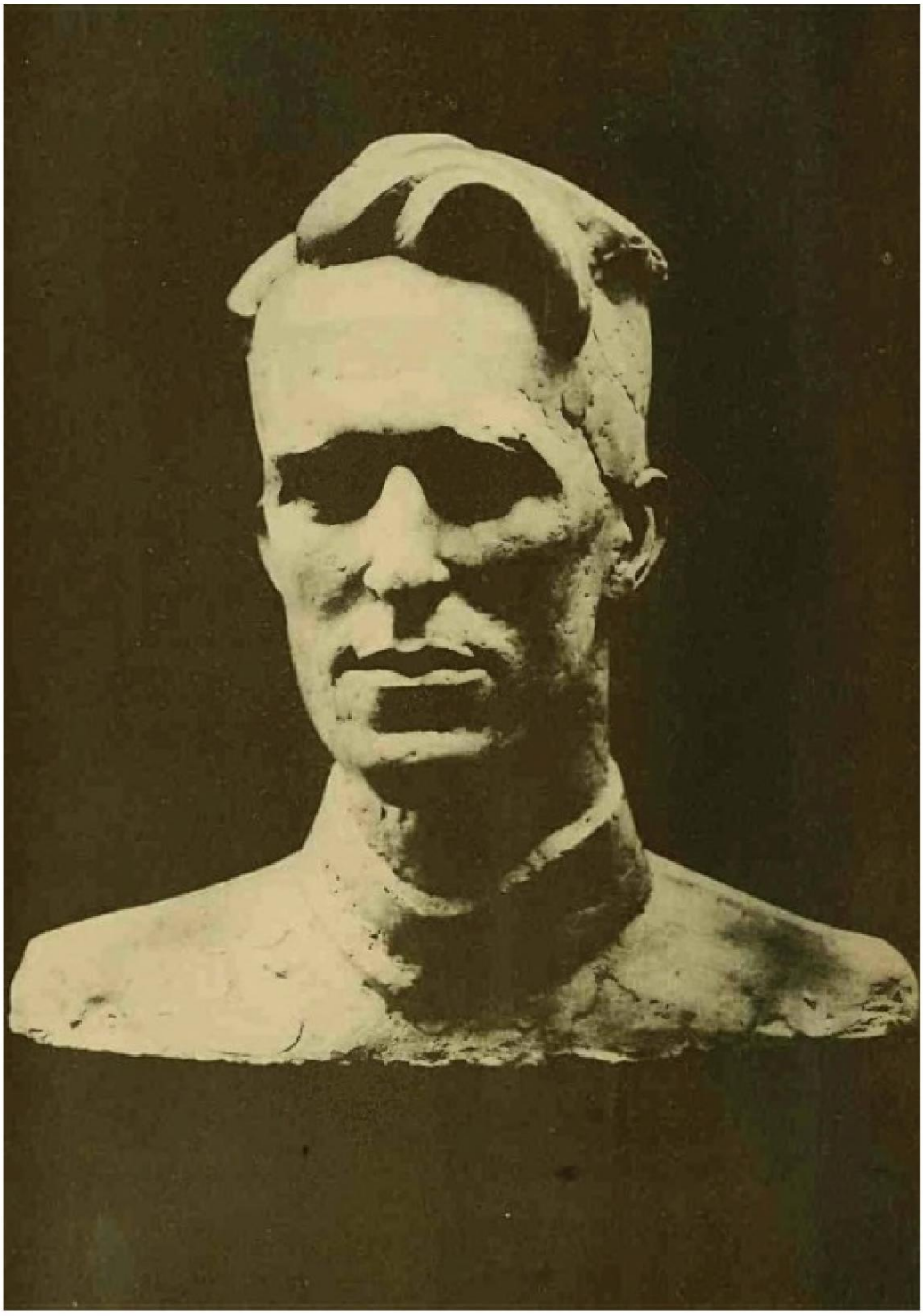
Illustrations

IT seemed to me that every portrait drawing of a stranger-sitter partook somewhat of the judgement of God. If I could get the named people of this book drawn, it would be their appeal to a higher court against my summary descriptions. So I took pains to bring objects and artists together. ‘Took pains’, for my people were in Asia and Africa, besides Europe. I could gather but few of them, and get to work only some of the artists I respect. Importunity and the shoals of a shallow purse were my arguments.

If anybody likes any of these illustrations, he owes thanks to Kennington, who apart from his creative work, took over the duty of art-editor and for five years oversaw each proof of every block. Some of the more difficult colour subjects had to be proofed repeatedly (up to seventeen times) and there were twenty-three printings on the worst one. Fortunately I was away in the country, beyond helping him, for I could not have done the job so well. Kennington, the printers (both of the text and plates) and I have been partners.[1]

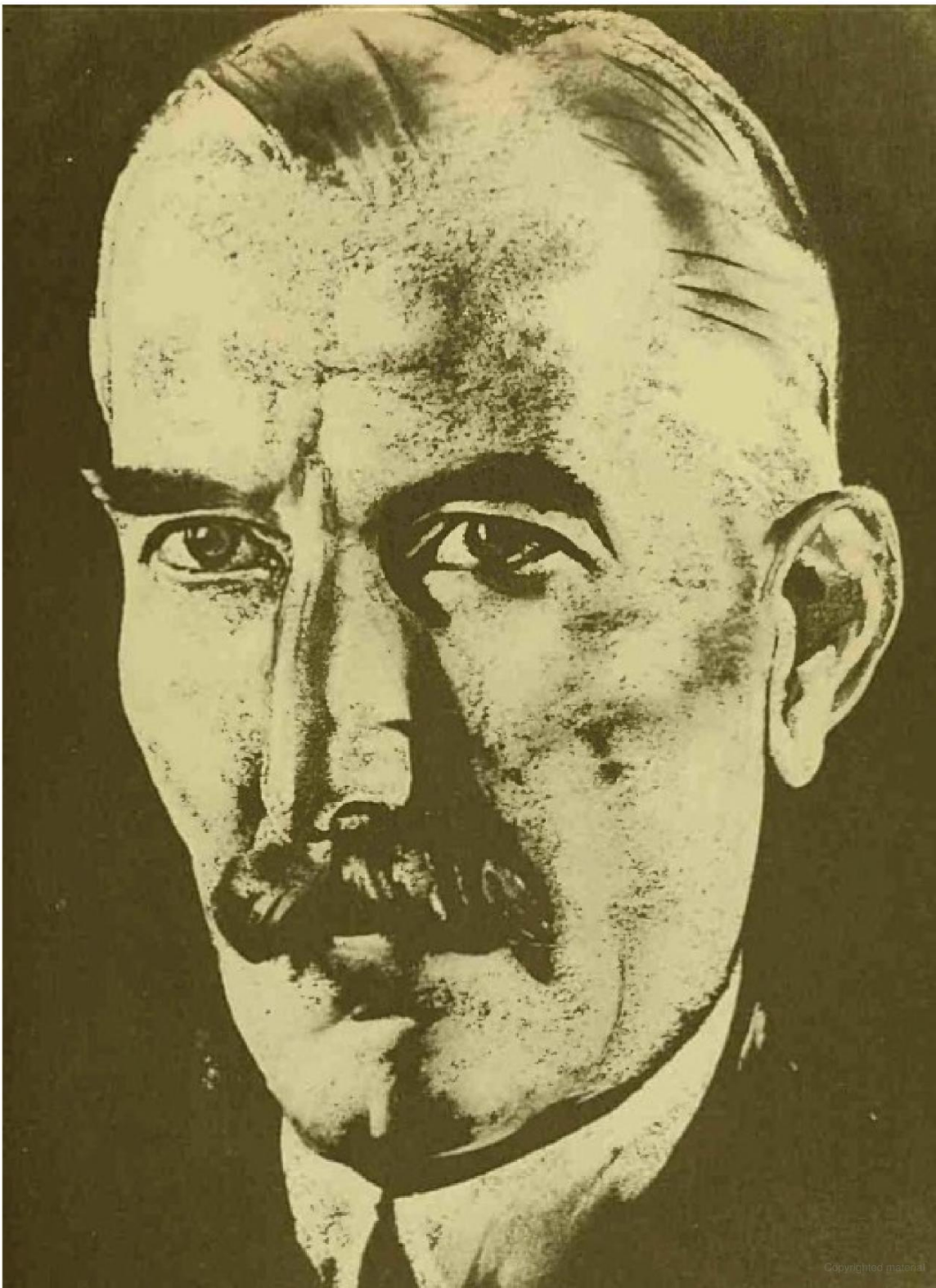
Author—plaster—Kennington
Feysal—oils—John
McMahon—pencil—Roberts
Storrs—charcoal—Sargent
Wilson—pastel—Kennington
Emir Abdulla—pastel—Kennington
Jidda — street-scene—photograph—
Tafas—pastel—Kennington
Mohammed el Sheheri—pastel—Kennington
Boyle—pastel—Kennington
Wingate—chalk—Roberts
Clayton—pen and wash—W. Nicholson
Author—oils—John
Newcombe—pencil—Roberts
Jaafar—pastel—Kennington
Nawaf Shaalan—pastel—Kennington
Ali ibn el Hussein—pastel—Kennington
Shakir—pastel—Kennington
Auda abu Tayi—pastel—Kennington
Mukheymer—pastel—Kennington
Alayan—pastel—Kennington
Mahmas—pastel—Kennington
Serj—pastel—Kennington
A Forced Landing—line—Kennington
Camel March—pen and wash—Roberts
Allenby—pastel—Kennington
Wind—line—Kennington
Abd el Rahman—pastel—Kennington
Saad el Sikeini—pastel—Kennington
G. Dawnay—pencil—Lamb
Lloyd—oils—Roberts

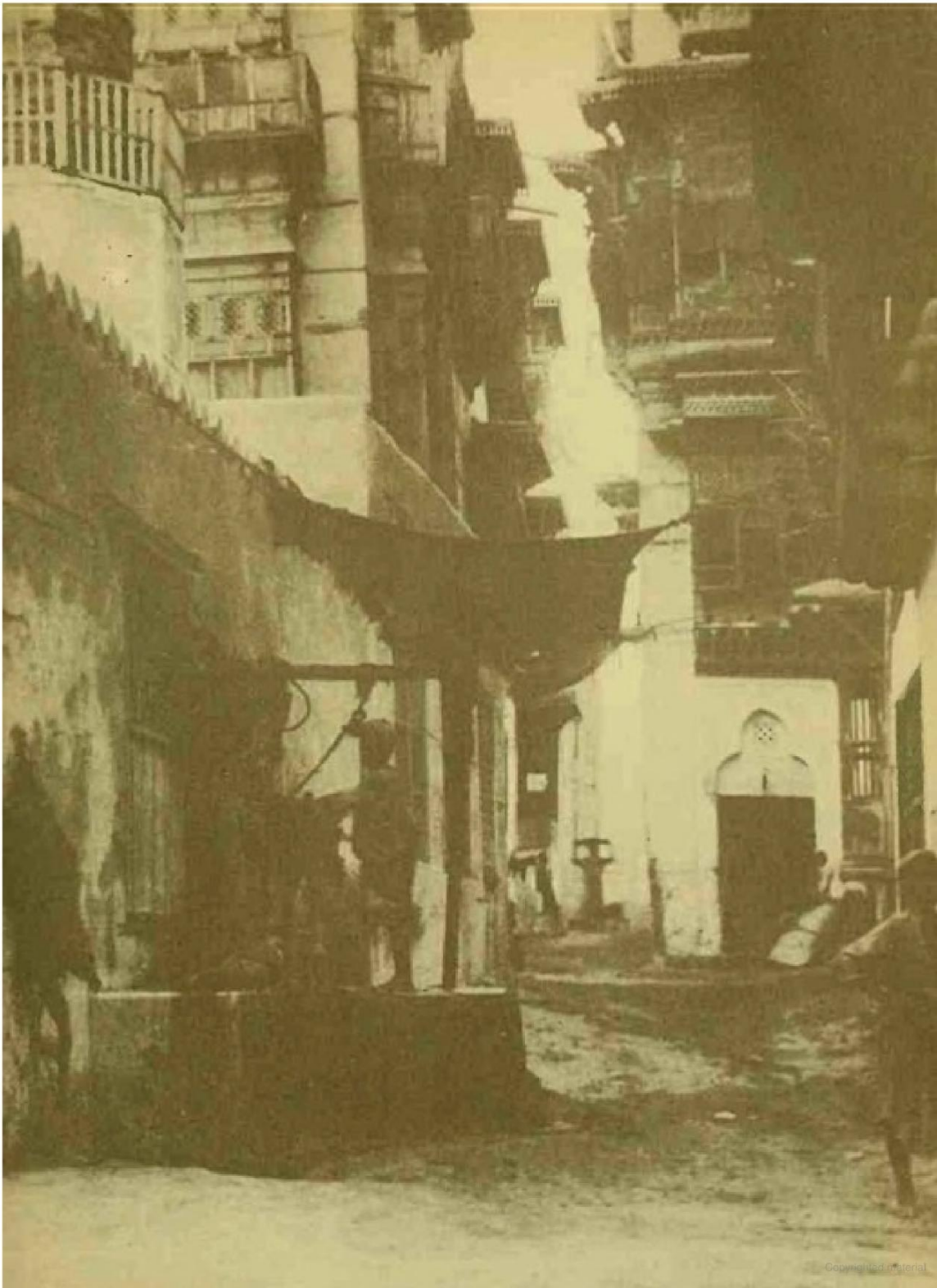
Matar—pastel—Kennington
A Miscarriage—line—Kennington
Hussein Mohammed—pastel—Kennington
Hemeid abu Jabir—pastel—Kennington
Kindergarten—line—Kennington
El Zaagi—pastel—Kennington
Ghalib—pastel—Kennington
Hogarth—charcoal—John
A. Dawnay—chalk—Rothenstein
Young—chalk—R. M. Young
A Literary Method—line—Kennington
Bartholomew—chalk—Colin Gill
Buxton—pencil—Roberts
Joyce—pencil—Dobson
Winterton—pencil—Roberts
Junor—pencil—G. Spencer
Author—pencil—John
Bombing in Wadi Fara—oils—Carline
Entering Damascus—photograph—
Storrs—pastel—Kennington
Feisal—bronze—Mestrovic
Author—pastel—Kennington
Caesar—line—Kennington

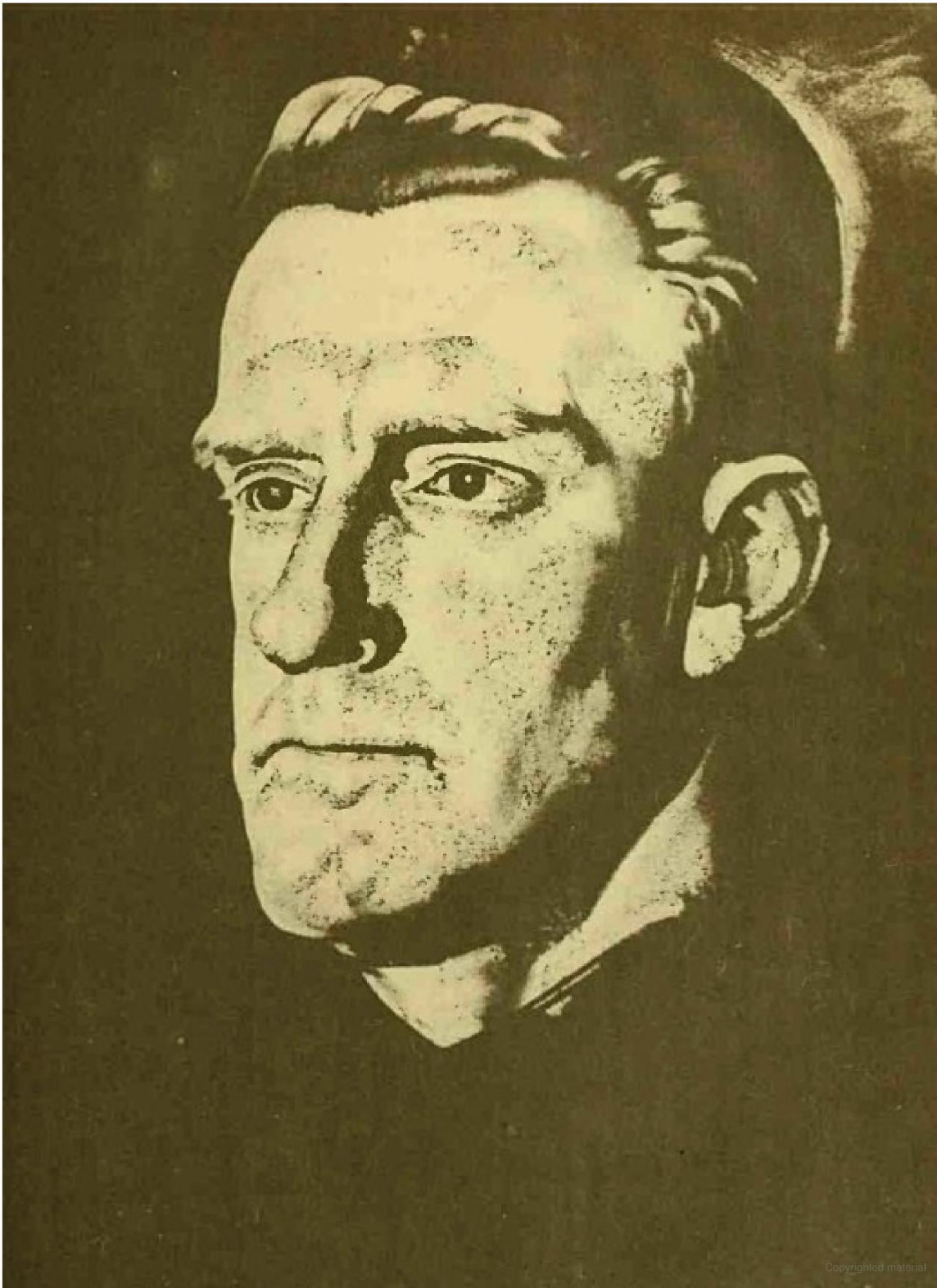


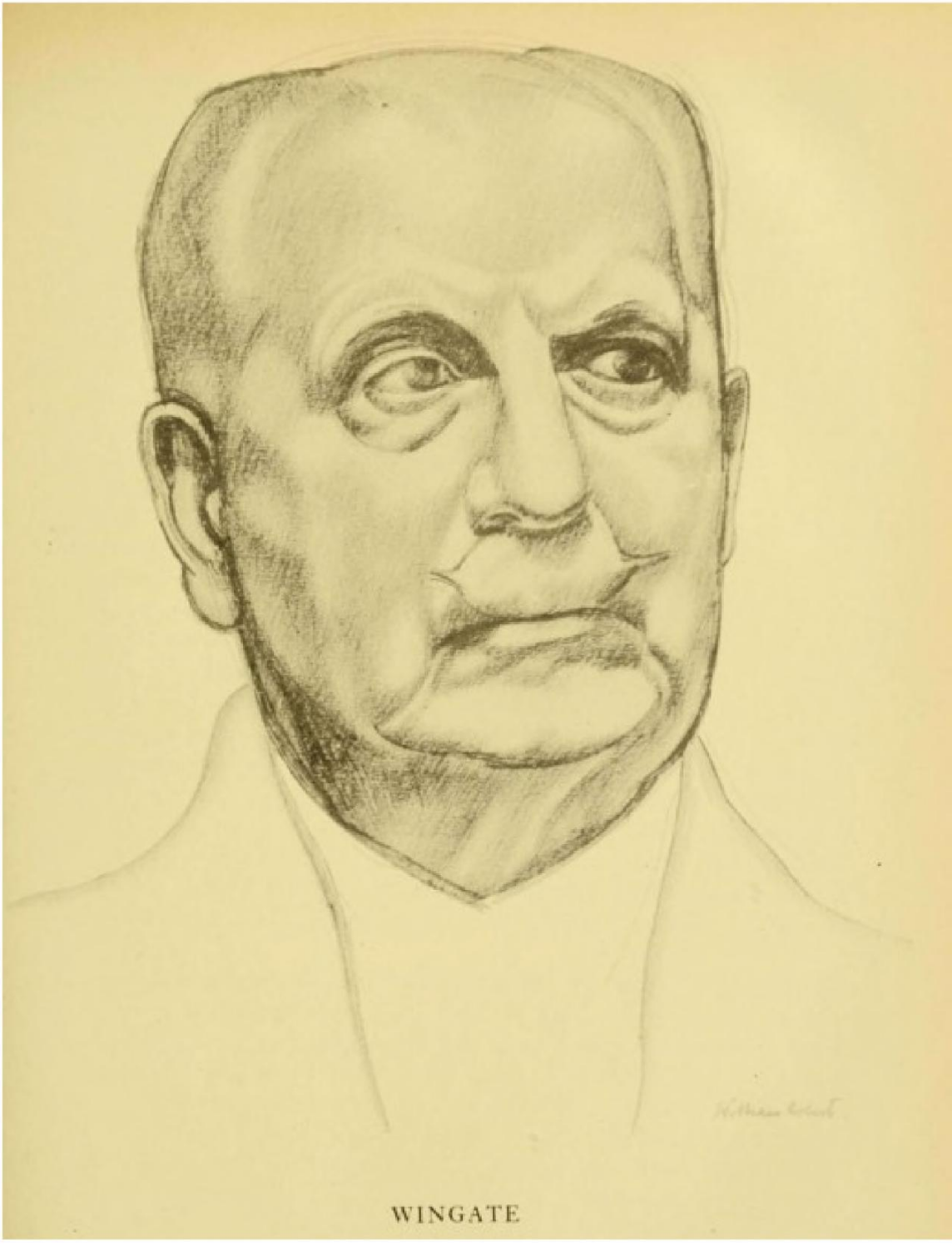
McMAHON

STORRS

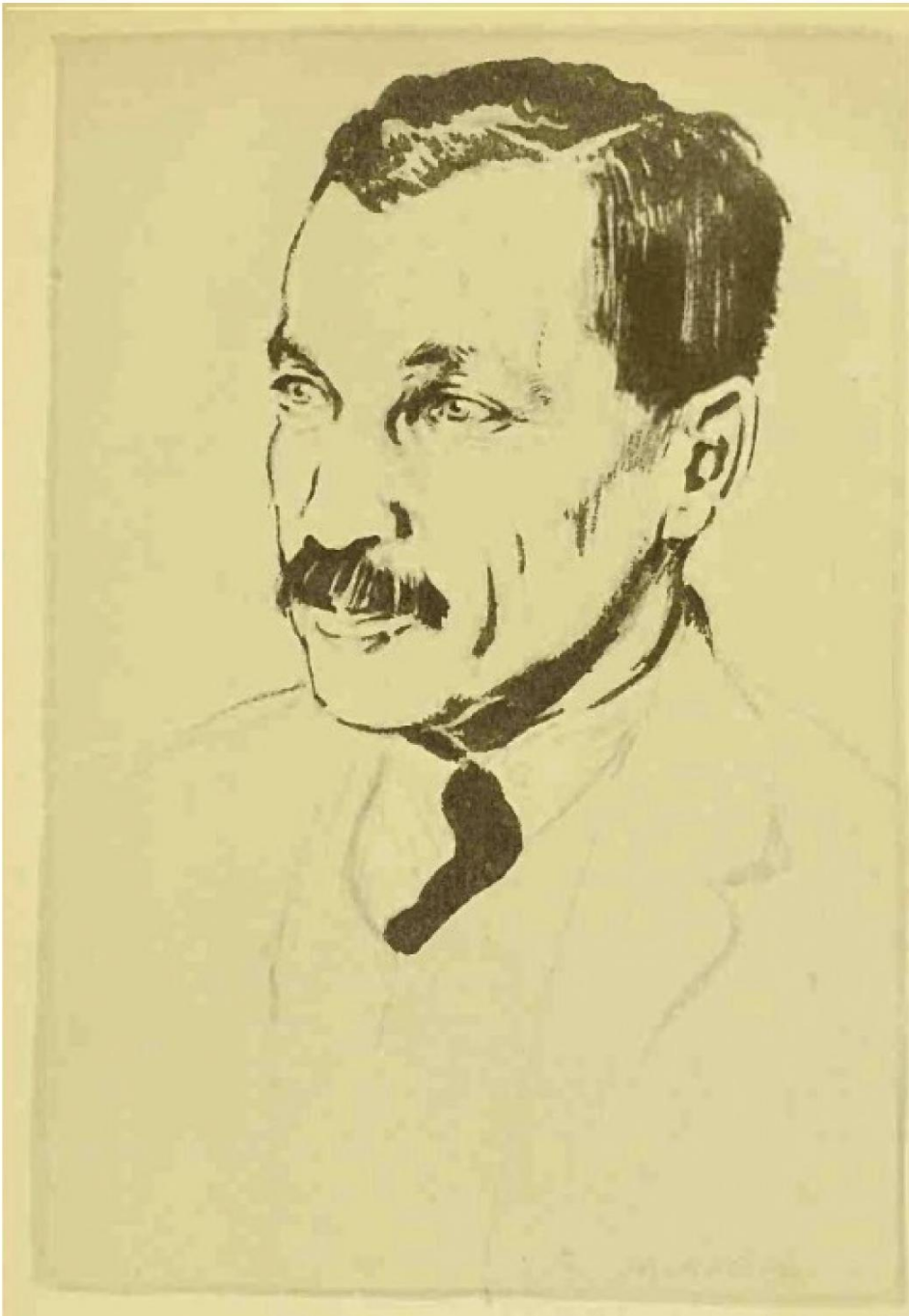






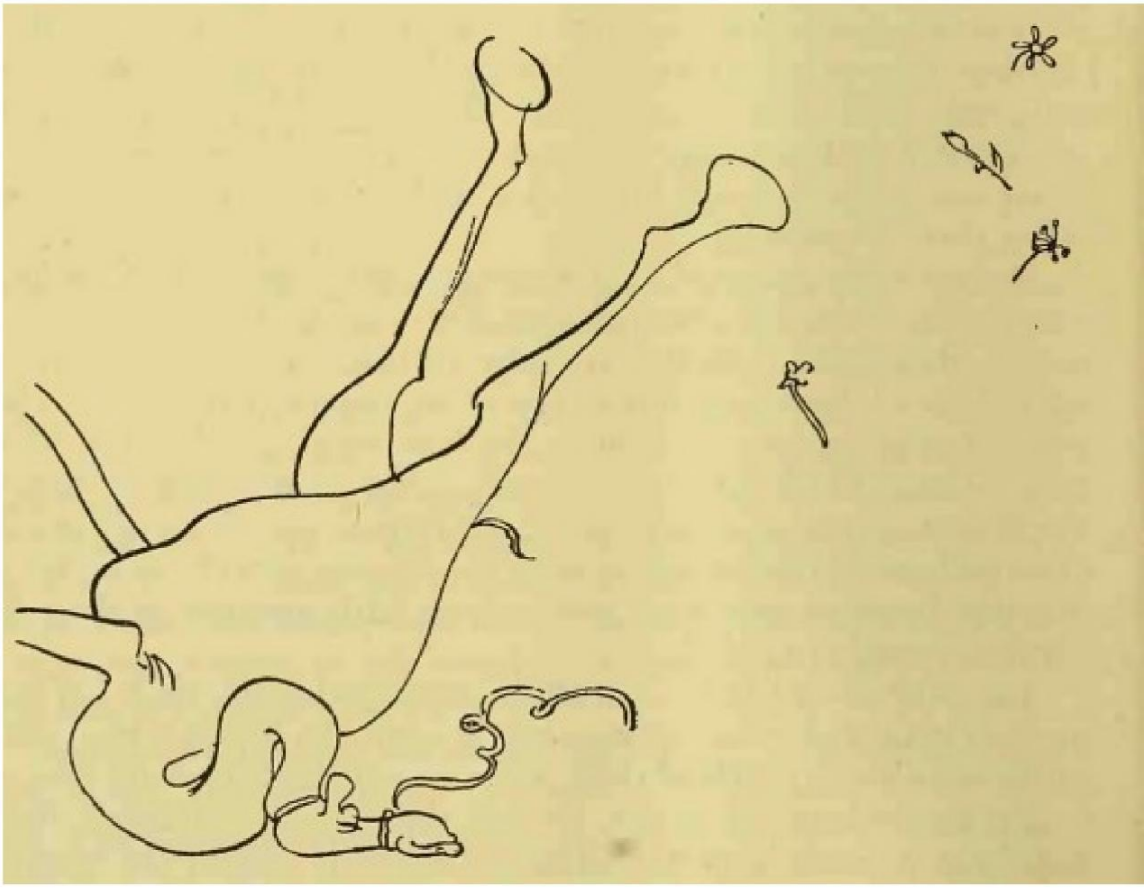


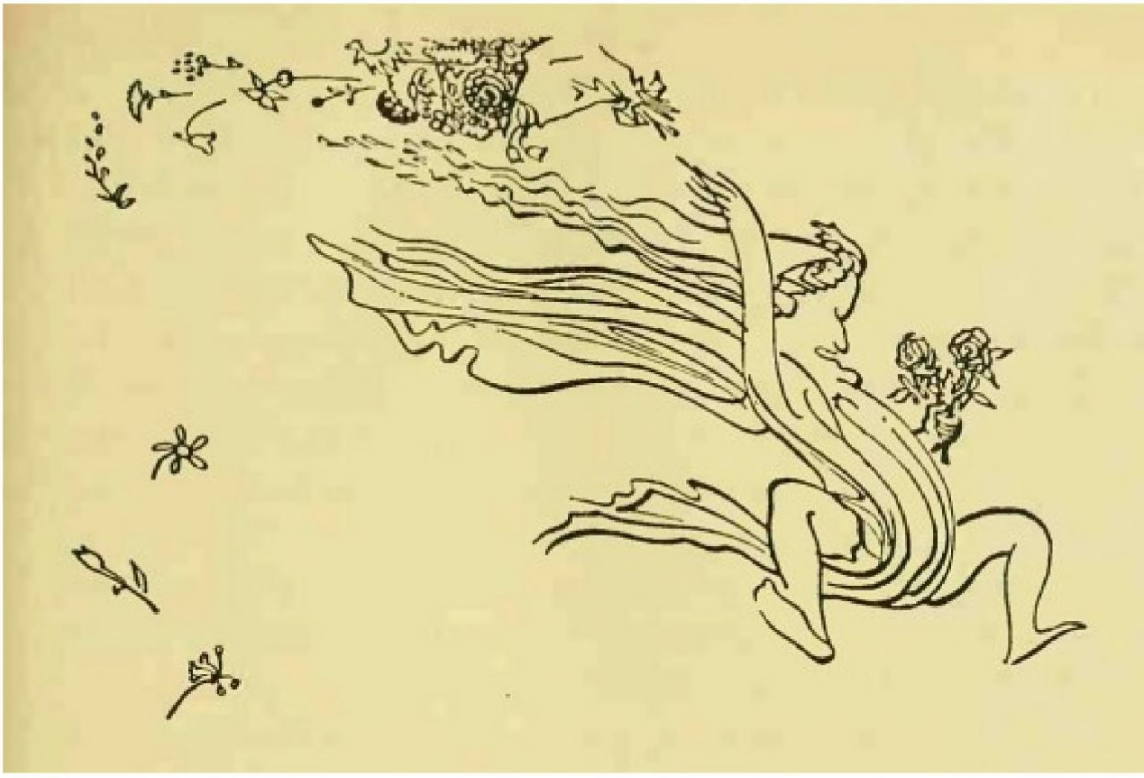
WINGATE

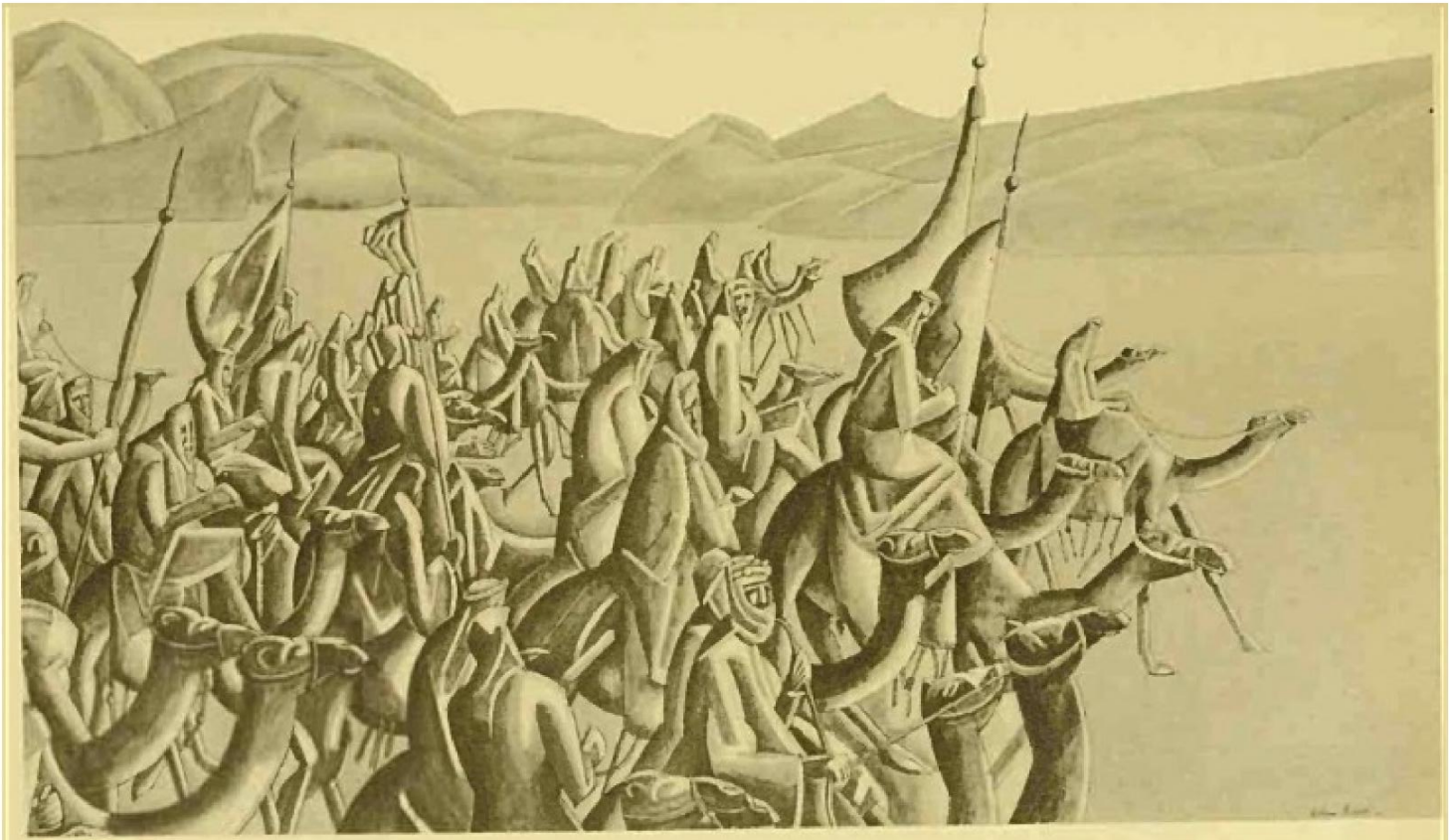


CLAYTON

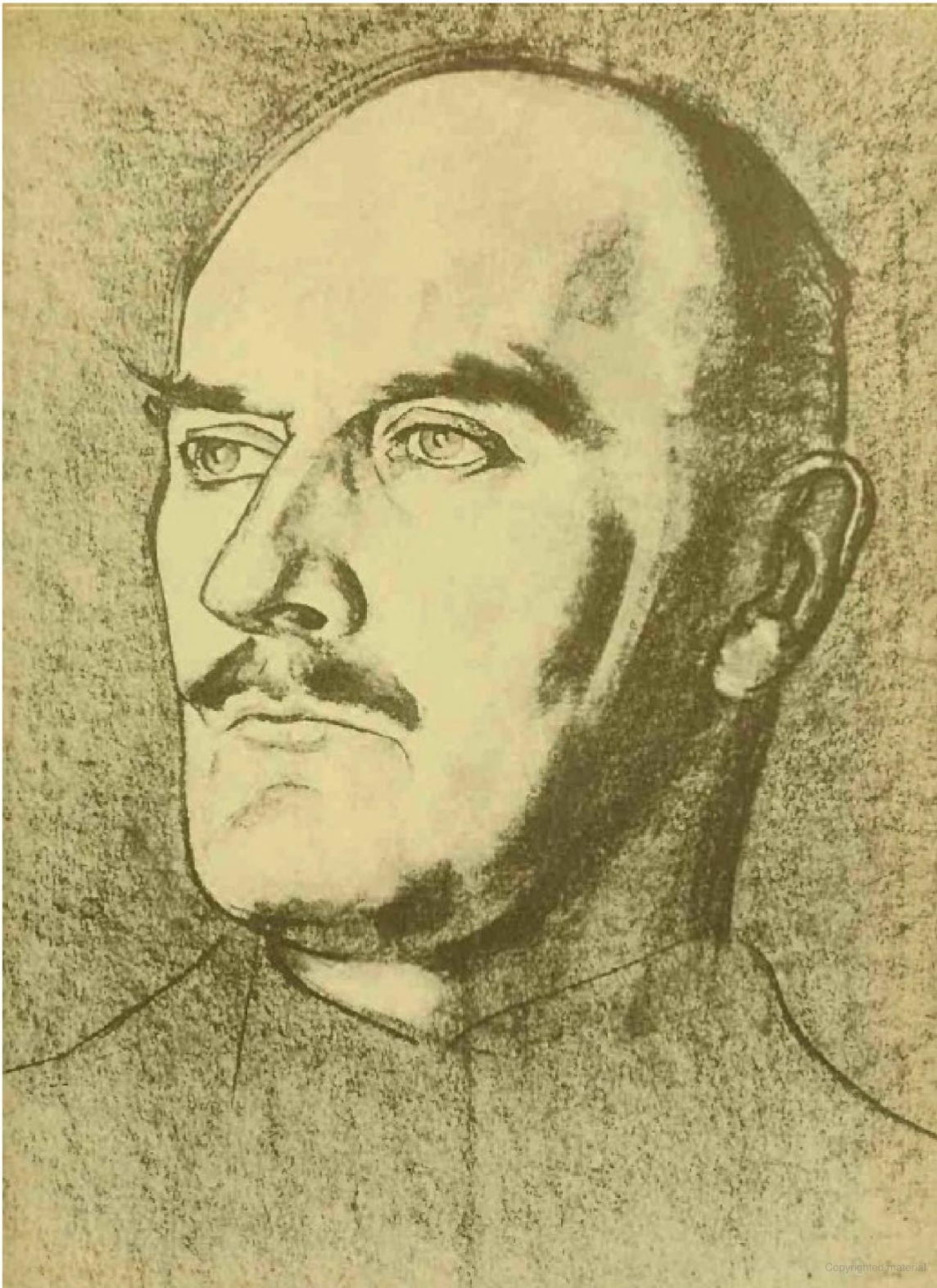
NEWCOMBE



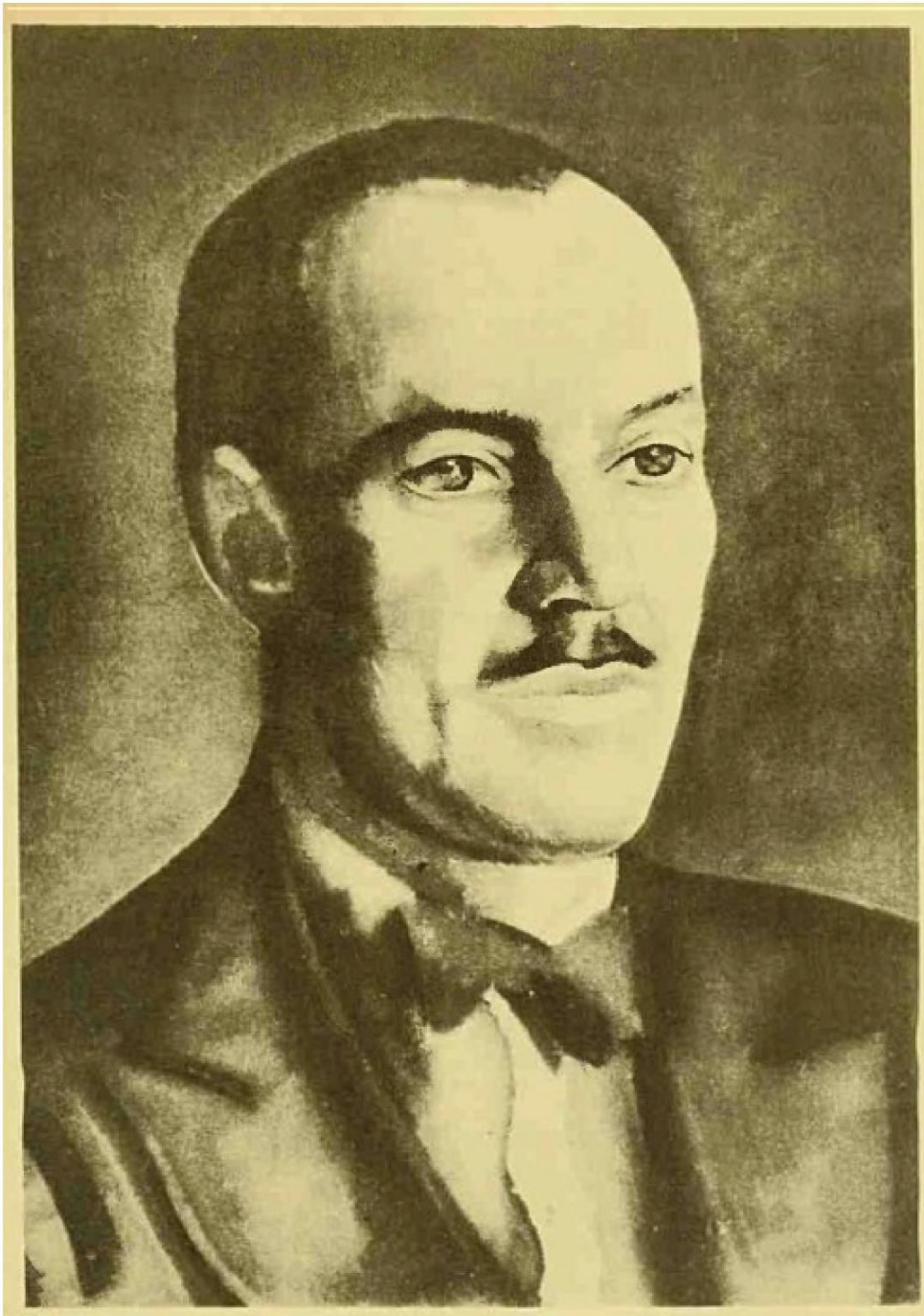




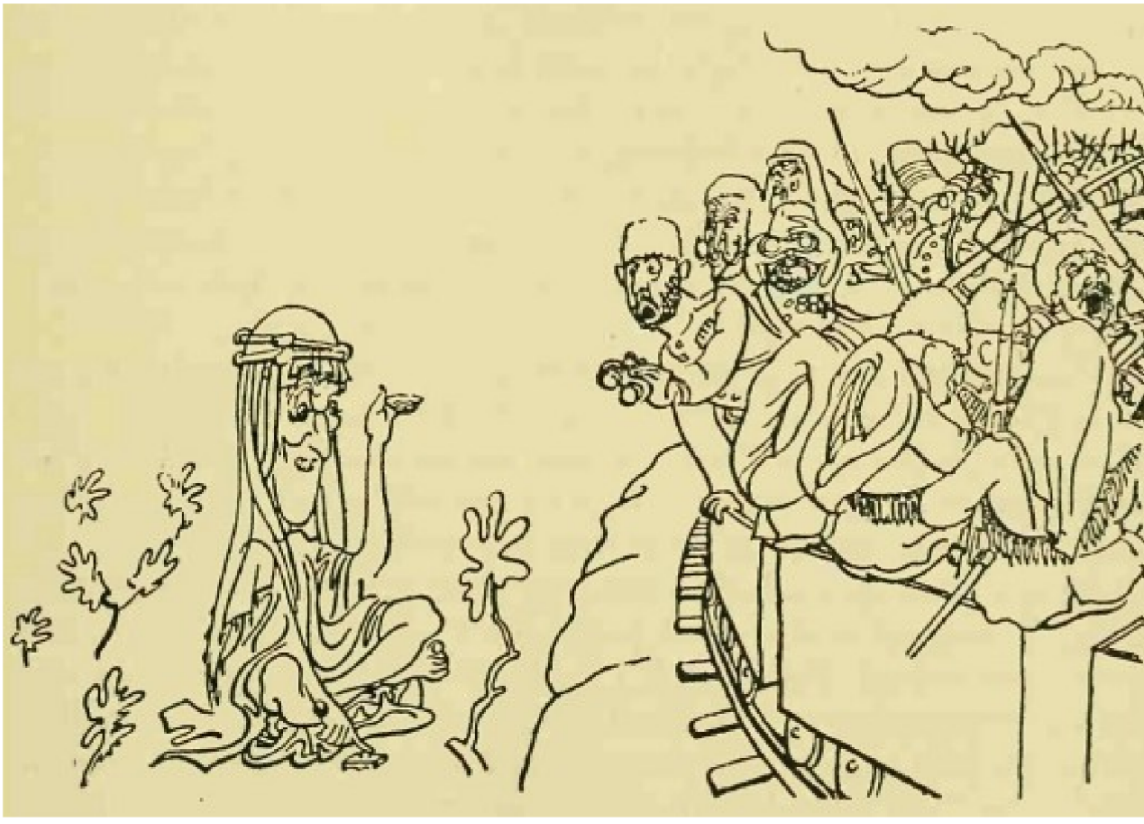
CAMEL MARCH

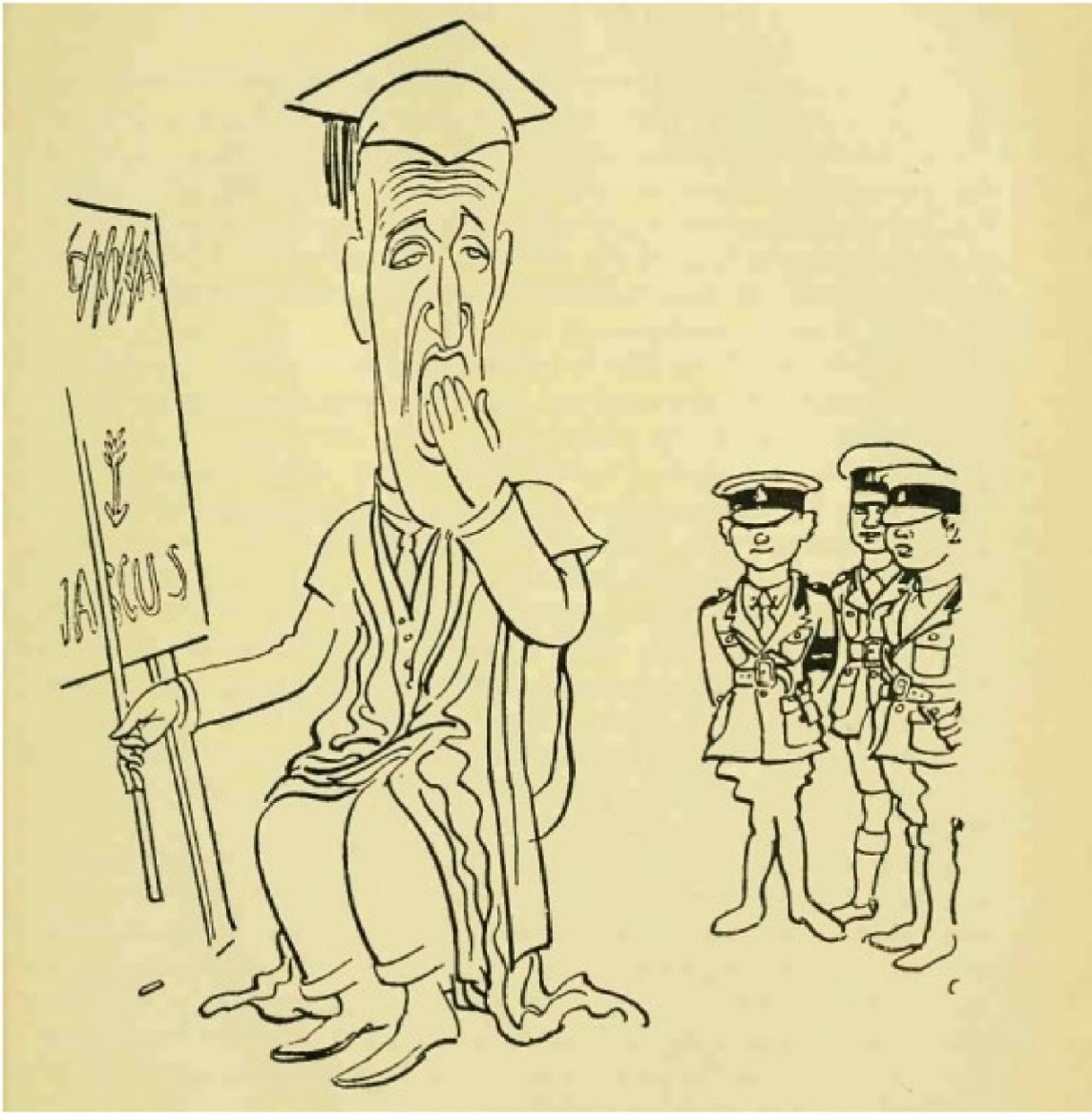


G. DAWNAY



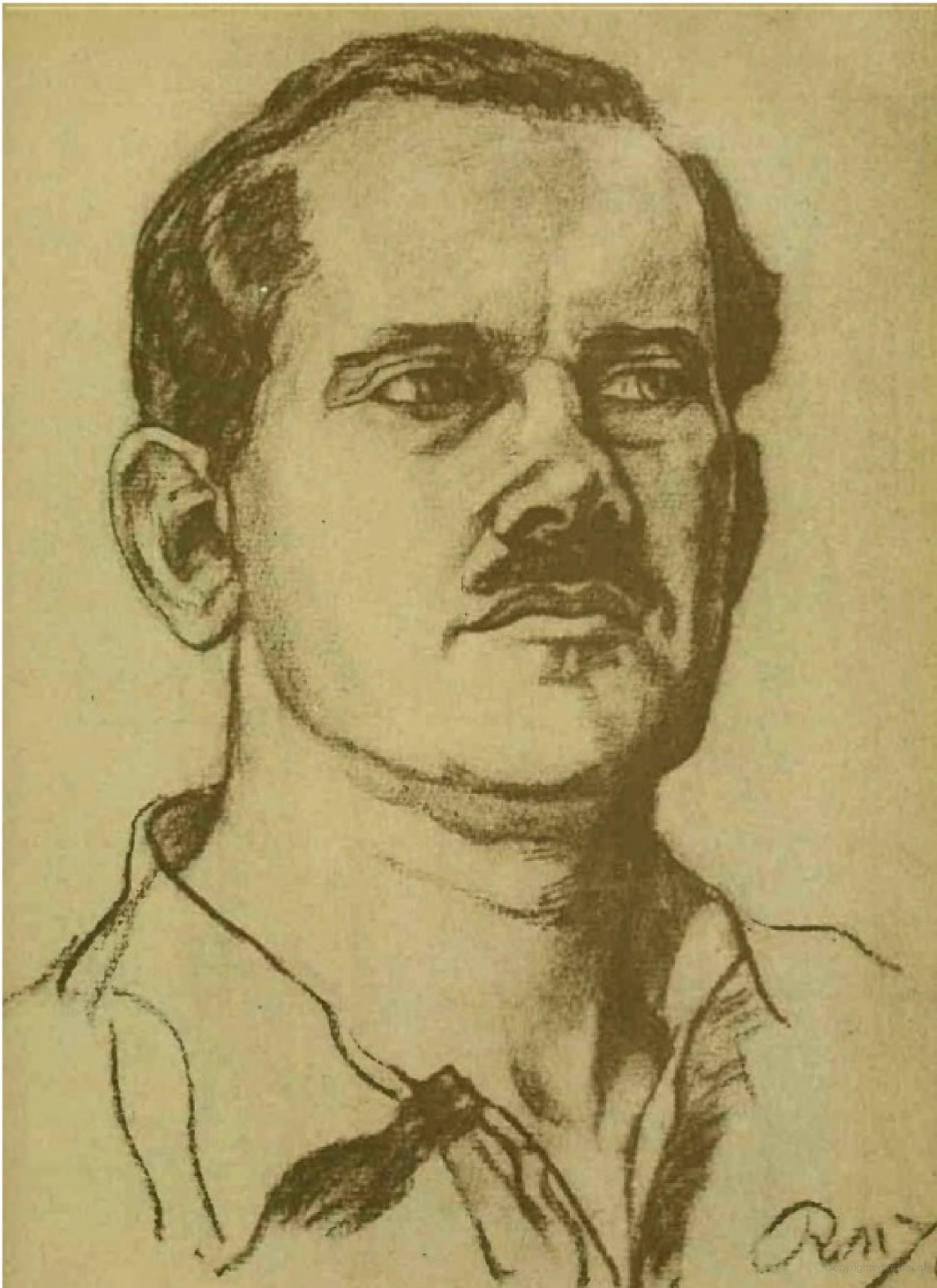
LLOYD

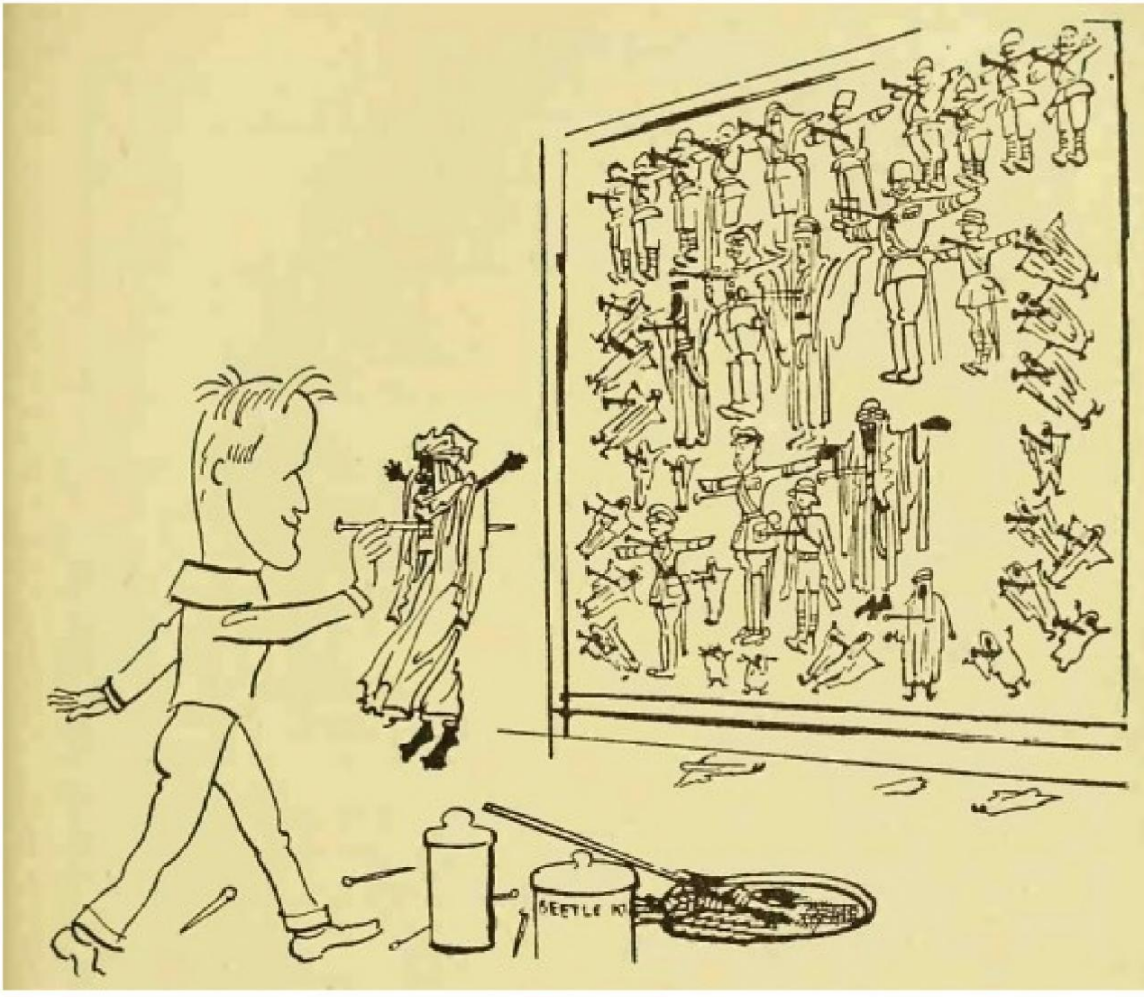


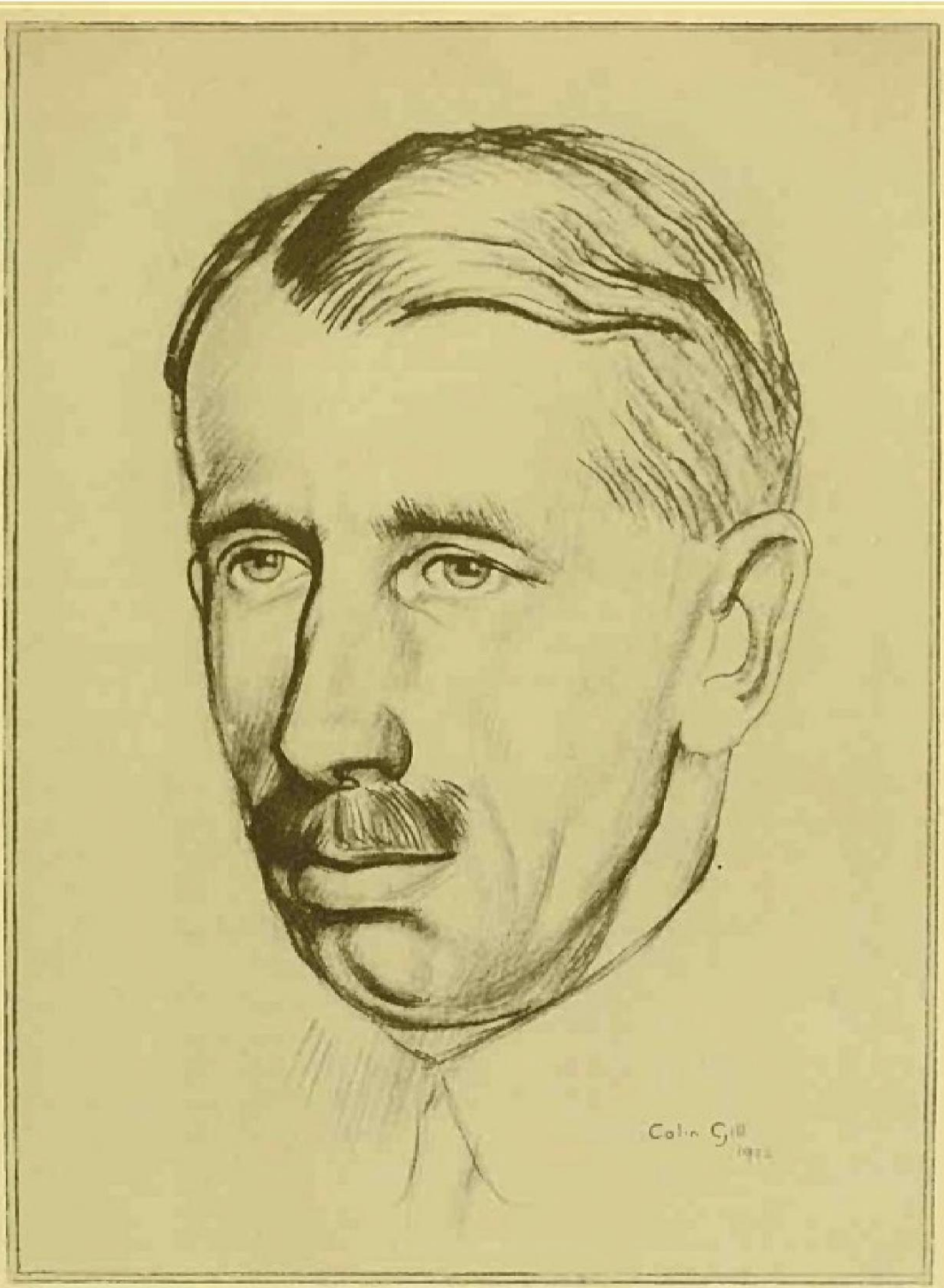


HOGARTH

A. DAWNAY

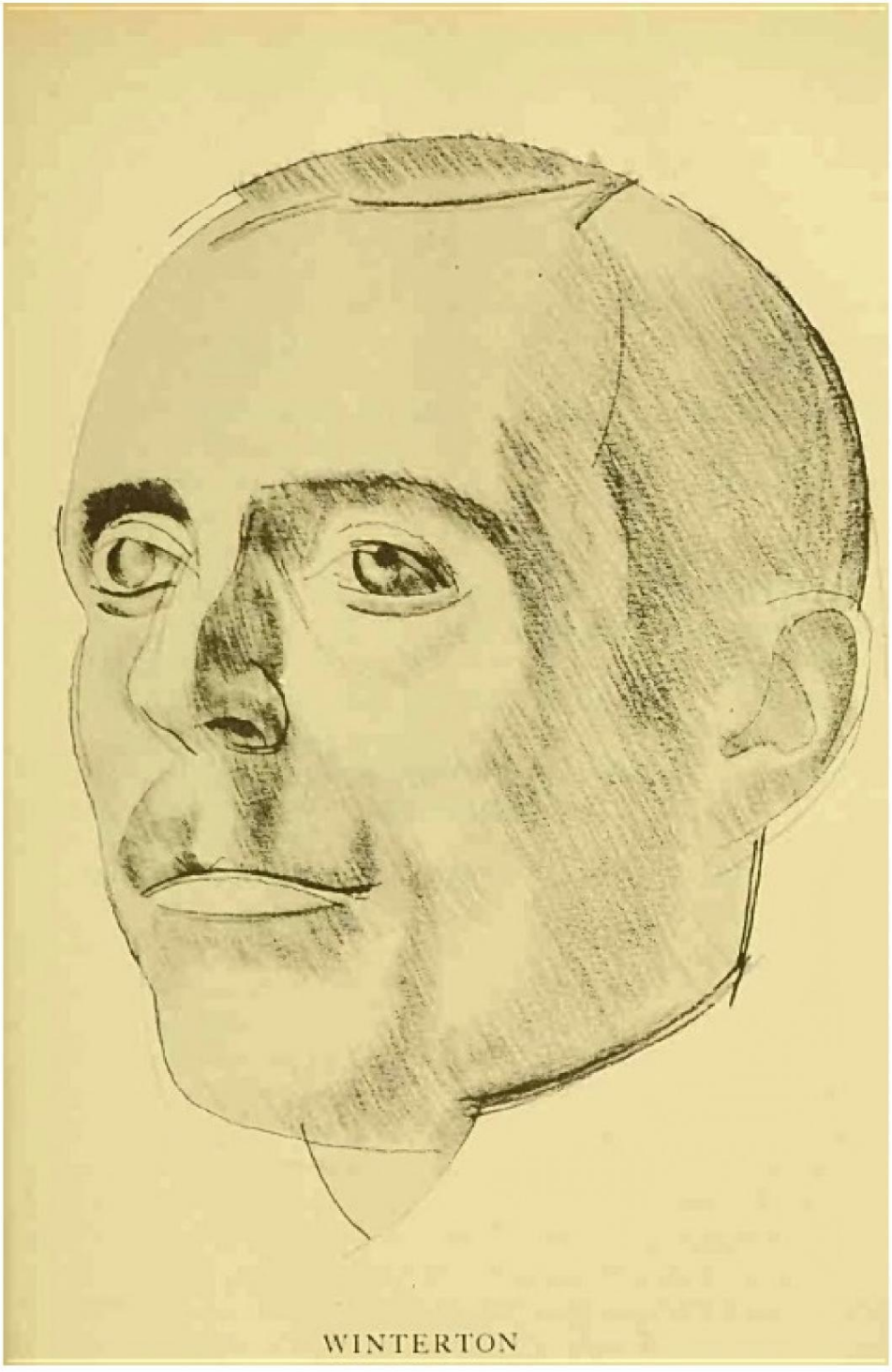






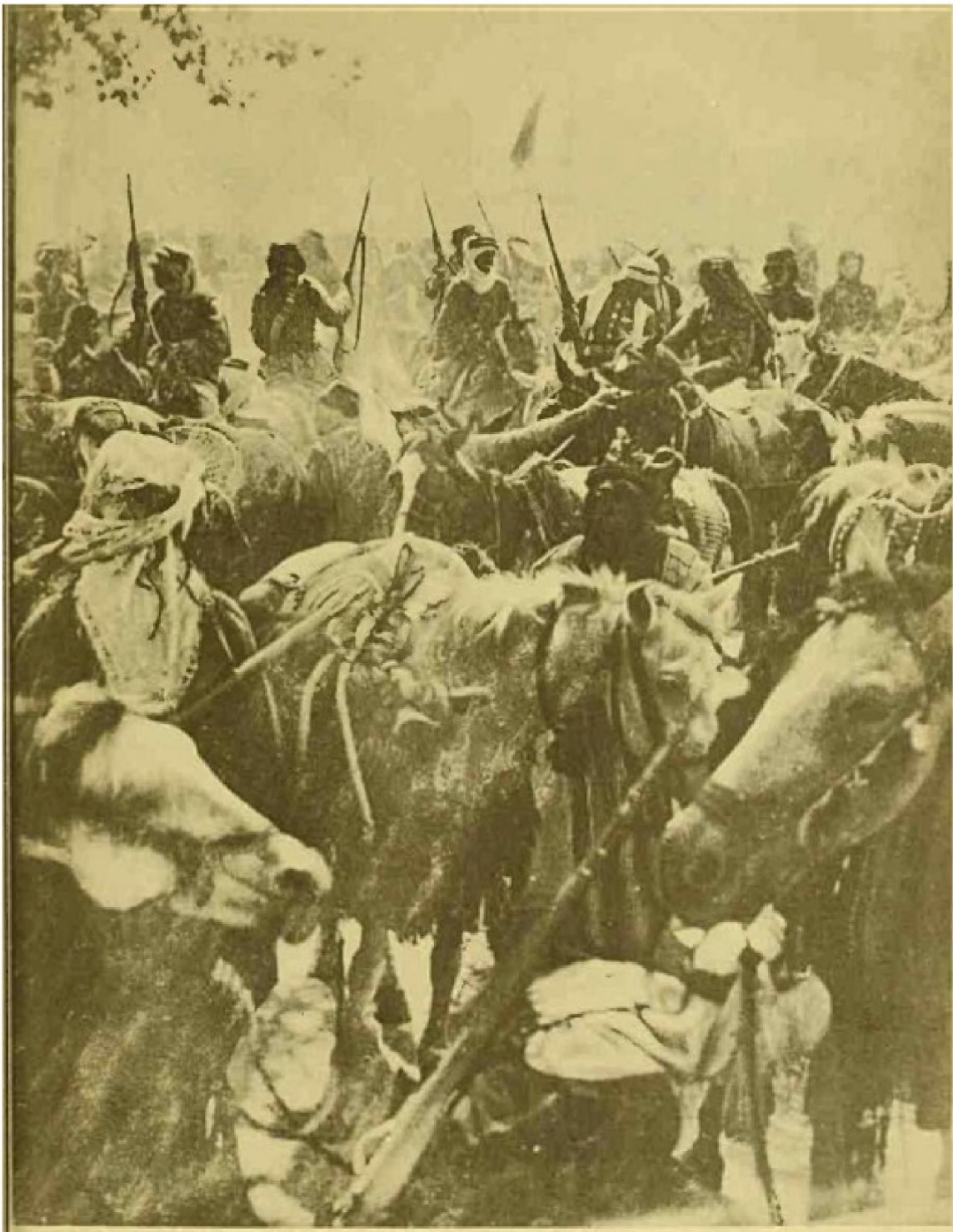
BUXTON

JOYCE

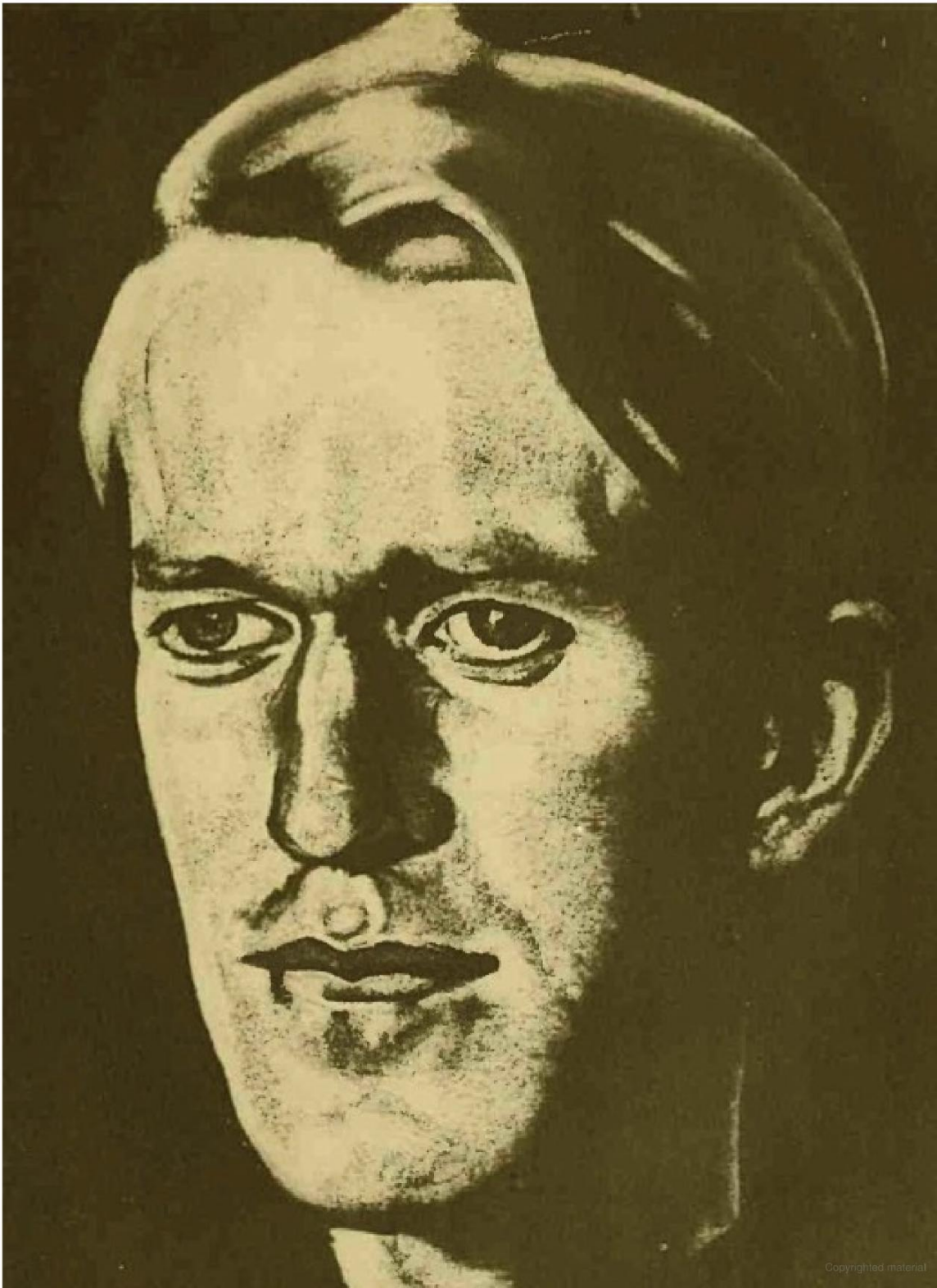


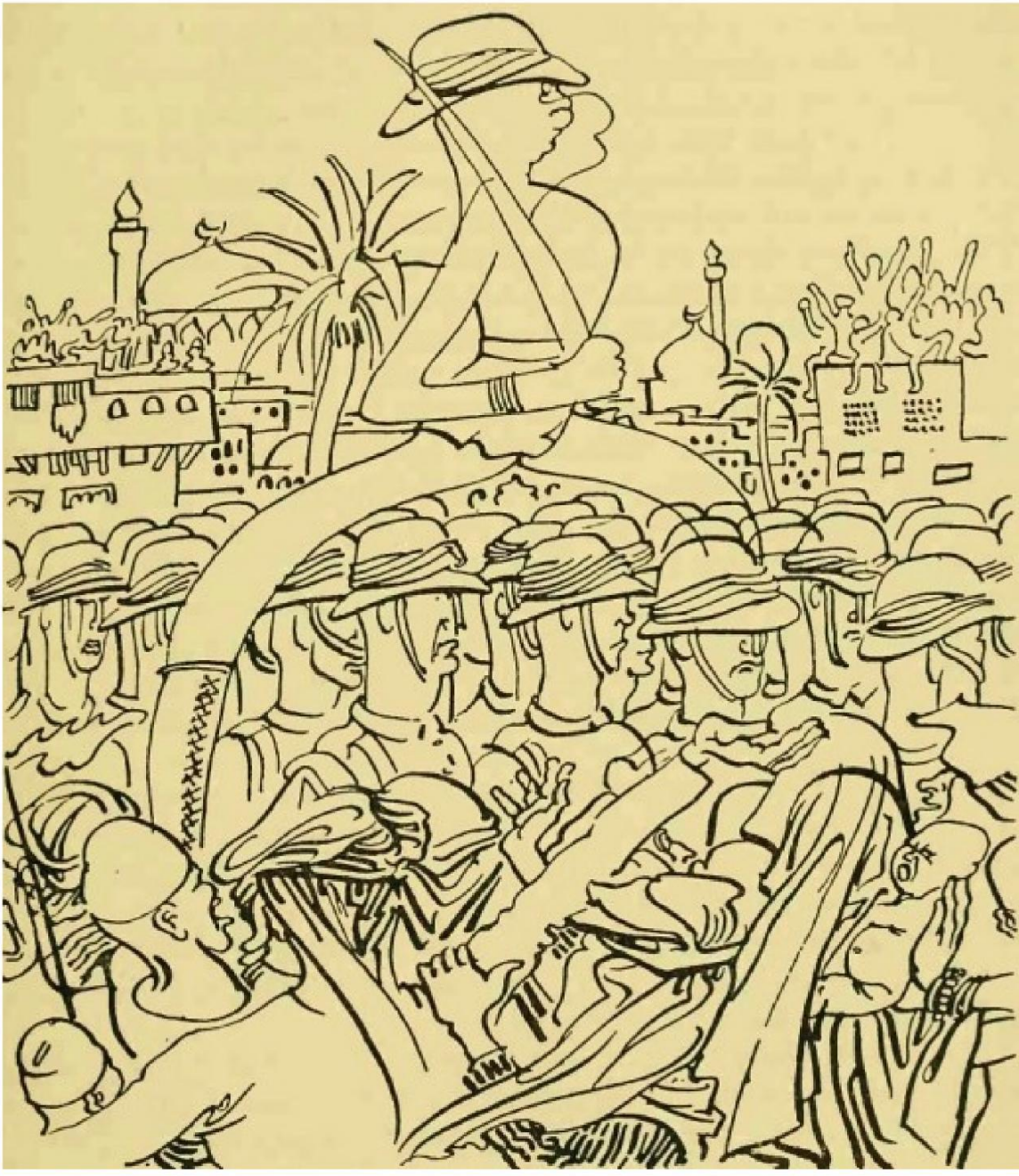
WINTERTON

TURK TROOPS BOMBED IN WADI FARA

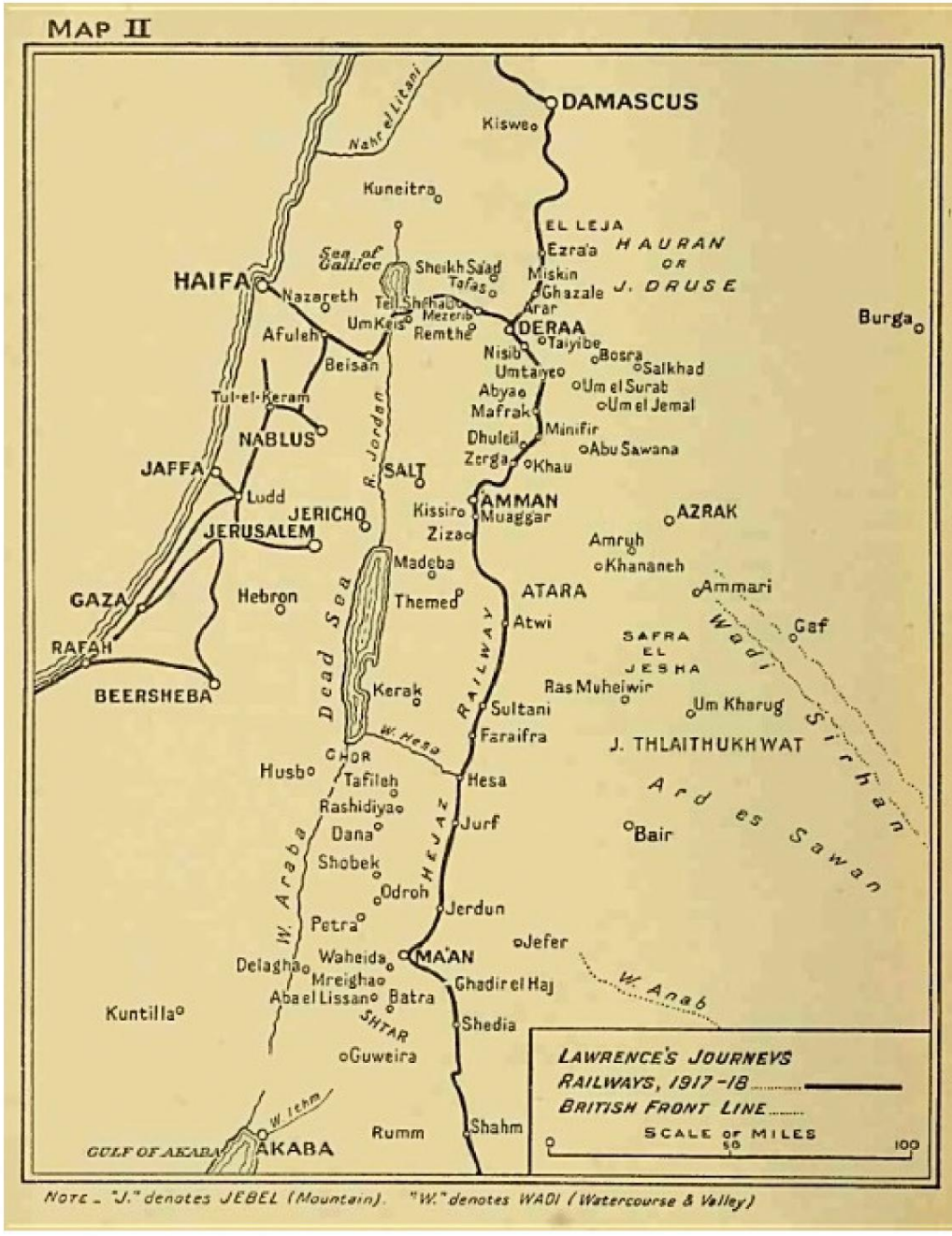


ENTERING DAMASCUS



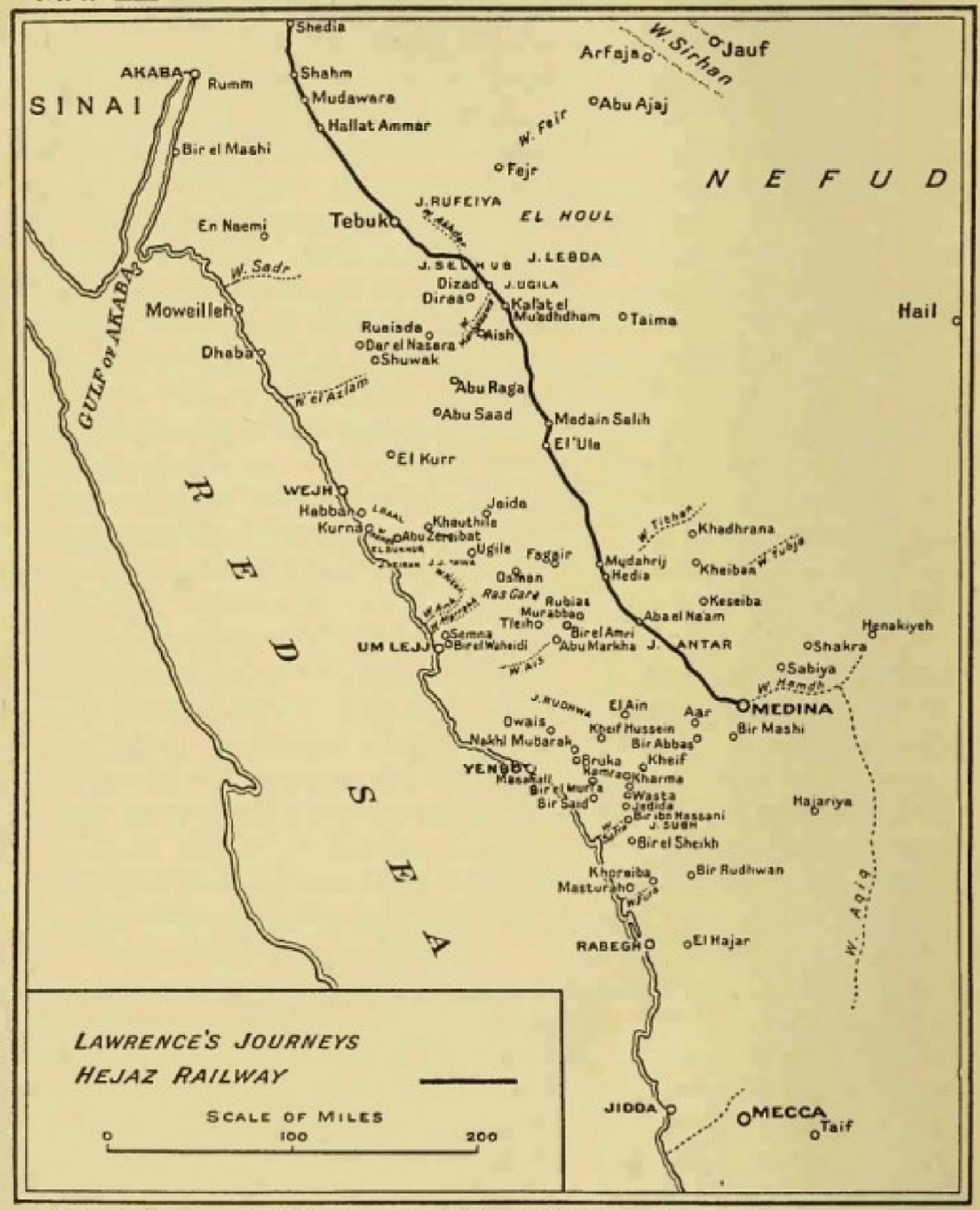


MAPS



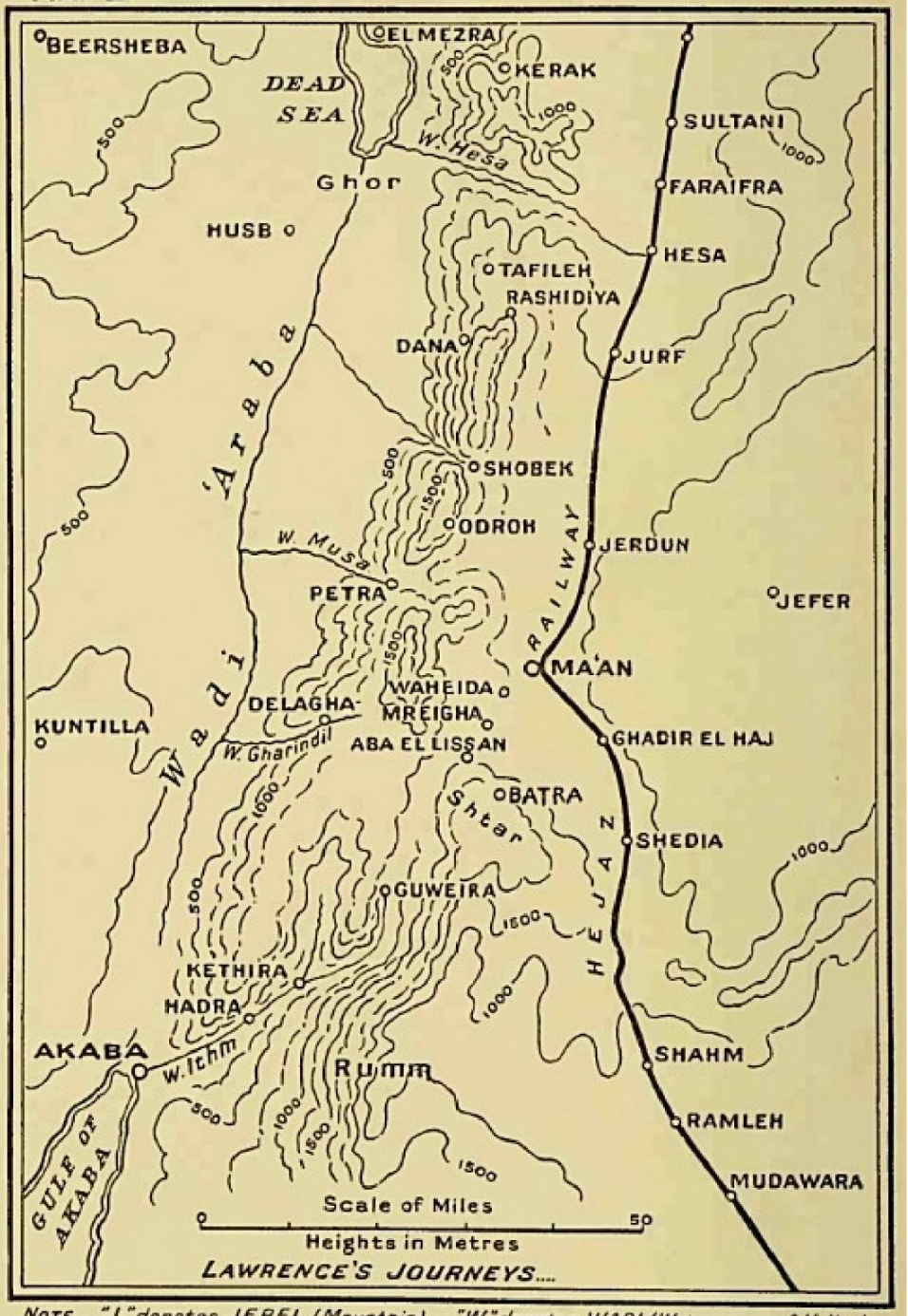
Note - "J." denotes JEBEL (Mountain). "W." denotes WADI (Watercourse & Valley)

MAP III



Note _ "J." denotes JEBEL (Mountain) "W." denotes WADI (Watercourse & Valley)

MAP IV



NOTE - "J." denotes JEBEL (Mountain) "W." denotes WADI (Watercourse & Valley)

PREFACE by A. E. Lawrence

THE seven pillars of wisdom are first mentioned in the Bible, in the Book of Proverbs (ix. i).

'Wisdom hath builded a house: she hath hewn out her seven pillars'.

The title was originally applied by the author to a book of his about seven cities. He decided not to publish this early book because he considered it immature, but he transferred the title as a memento.

A four-page leaflet entitled SOME NOTES ON THE WRITING OF THE SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM BY T. E. SHAW was issued by my brother to those who bought or were presented with copies of the 1926 edition. It contains the following information:

MANUSCRIPTS

Text I

I WROTE Books 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 10 in Paris between February and June of 1919. The Introduction was written between Paris and Egypt on my way out to Cairo by Handley-Page in July and August 1919. Afterwards in England I wrote Book 1: and then lost all but the Introduction and drafts of Books 9 and 10 at Reading Station, while changing trains. This was about Christmas, 1919.

Text I, if completed, would have been about 250,000 words, a little less than the privately printed Seven Pillars as subscribers received it. My war-time notes, on which it was largely constructed, were destroyed as each section was finished. Only three people read much of it, before I lost it.

Text II

A month or so later I began, in London, to scribble out what I remembered of the first text. The original Introduction was of course still available. The other ten Books I completed in less than three months, by doing many thousand words at a time, in long sittings. Thus Book VI was written entire between sunrise and sunrise. Naturally the style was careless: and so Text II (though it introduced few new episodes) came to over 400,000 words. I corrected it at intervals throughout 1920, checking it with the files of the Arab Bulletin, and with two diaries and some of my surviving field-notes. Though hopelessly bad as a text, it became substantially complete and accurate. All but one page of this text was burned by me in 1922.

Text III

With Text II available on the table, Text III was begun in London, and worked on there, in Jeddah, and in Amman during 1921, and again in London till February 1922. It was composed with great care. This manuscript still exists. It is nearly 330,000 words long.

PRIVATELY PRINTED TEXTS

Oxford 1922

THOUGH the story, as completed in Text III, appeared to me still diffuse and unsatisfactory, yet for security's sake it was set up and printed textually, in sheets, at Oxford in the first quarter of 1922, by care of the Oxford Times staff. Since eight copies were required, and the book was very large, printing was preferred to typewriting. Five copies (bound in book form, for the convenience of those former members of the Hejaz Expeditionary Force who undertook to read it critically for me) have not yet (April 1927) been destroyed.

Subscribers' Text 1. xii. 26

This text, as issued to subscribers in December 1926 and January 1927, was a recension of the Oxford sheets of 1922. They were condensed (the single canon of change being literary) during 1923 and 1924 (Royal Tank Corps) and 1925 and 1926 (Royal Air Force) in my spare evenings. Beginners in literature are inclined to fumble with a handful of adjectives round the outline of what they want to describe: but by 1924 I had learnt my first lessons in writing, and was often able to combine two or three of my 1921 phrases into one.

There were four exceptions to the rule of condensation:

i) An incident, of less than a page, was cut out because two seniors of our party thought it unpleasantly unnecessary.

ii) Two characters of Englishmen were modified: one into nothing, because the worm no longer seemed worth treading on:

the other into plain praise, because what I had innocently written as complaint was read ambiguously by an authority well able to judge.

iii) One chapter of the Introduction was omitted. My best critic told me it was much inferior to the rest.

iv) Book VIII, intended as a ‘flat’, to interpose between the comparative excitements of Book VII and the final advance on Damascus, was shortened of an abortive reconnaissance, some 10,000 words long. Several of those who read the Oxford text complained of the inordinate boredom of the ‘flat’, and upon reflection I agreed with them that it was perhaps too successful.

By thus excising 3 per cent and condensing the rest of the Oxford text a total reduction of 15 per cent was achieved, and the length of the subscribers’ text brought down to some 280,000 words. It is swifter and more pungent than the Oxford text; and it would have been improved yet more if I had had leisure to carry the process of revision further.

The Seven Pillars was so printed and assembled that nobody but myself knew how many copies were produced. I propose to keep this knowledge to myself. Newspaper statements of 107 copies can be easily disproved, for there were more than 107 subscribers: and in addition I gave away, not perhaps as many copies as I owed, but as many as my bankers could afford, to those who had shared with me in the Arab effort, or in the actual production of the volume.

PUBLISHED TEXTS

New York Text

A PROOF of the subscribers' text was sent to New York, and reprinted there by the George Doran Publishing Company. This was necessary to ensure U.S.A. copyright of the Seven Pillars. Ten copies are offered for sale, at a price high enough to prevent their ever being sold.

No further issue of the Seven Pillars will be made in my lifetime.

Revolt in the Desert

This abridgement of the Seven Pillars contains about 130,000 words. It was made by myself in 1926, with the minimum of necessary adjustment (perhaps three new paragraphs in all) to preserve sense and continuity. Parts of it appeared serially in the Daily Telegraph in December 1926. The whole was published in England by Jonathan Cape, and in U.S.A. by Doran in March 1927.

T. E. SHAW

To bring the information up to date, I add that the remaining copies of the Oxford printed Text of 1922 are still in existence, but will not be made public for at least ten years, and then only in a limited edition. Revolt in the Desert will not be printed again, at least during the remainder of the legal term of copyright.

The text of the present edition is identical with that of the thirty-guinea edition of 1926, except for the following omissions and alterations. The omissions are necessary to save hurting the

feelings of persons still living; they come on pages 61, 62, and 321 where gaps of the same length are left in the present text. The 1926 edition contains no Chapter XI; the chapters have now been renumbered to remove this anomaly. On p. 293 (line 4) the phrase ‘halts to breath’ has been changed to ‘halts to breathe’ in agreement with the corresponding passage in the Oxford Text of 1922, ‘we let the camels breathe a little’. On p. 389 (line 10) the word ‘Humber’ has been printed in italics instead of Roman type, to make the sense clearer; in 1926 the names of some other ships were similarly italicized. .

The spelling of Arabic names varies greatly in all editions, and I have made no alterations. It should be explained that only three vowels are recognized in Arabic, and that some of the consonants have no equivalents in English. The general practice of orientalists in recent years has been to adopt one of the various sets of conventional signs for the letters and vowel marks of the Arabic alphabet, transliterating Mohamed as Muhammad, muezzin as mu’edhdhin, and Koran as Qur’an or Kur’án. This method is useful to those who know what it means, but this book follows the old fashion of writing the best phonetic approximations according to ordinary English spelling. The same place-name will be found spelt in several different ways, not only because the sound of many Arabic words can legitimately be represented in English in a variety of ways, but also because the natives of a district often differ as to the pronunciation of any place-name which has not already become famous or fixed by literary usage. (For example a locality near Akaba is called Abu Lissan, Aba el Lissan or Abu

Lissai.) A reference by the author to his views on this matter occurs on page 664. I reprint here a series of questions by the publisher and answers by the author concerning the printing of *Revolt in the Desert.*

Q.—I attach a list of queries raised by F. who is reading the proofs. He finds these very clean, but full of inconsistencies in the spelling of proper names, a point which reviewers often take up. Will you annotate it in the margin, so that I can get the proofs straightened?

A.—Annotated: not very helpfully perhaps. Arabic names won't go into English, exactly, for their consonants are not the same as ours, and their vowels, like ours, vary from district to district. There are some 'scientific systems' of transliteration, helpful to people who know enough Arabic not to need helping, but a wash-out for the world. I spell my names anyhow, to show what rot the system are.

Q.—Slip 1. Jeddah and Jidda used impartially throughout. Intentional?

A.—Rather!

Q.—Slip 16. Bir Waheid*a*, was Bir Waheid*i*.

A.—Why not? All one place.

Q.—Slip 20. Nuri, Emir of the Ruwalla, belongs to the 'chief family of the Rualla.' On Slip 33 'Rualla horse,' and Slip 38,

‘killed one Rueili.’ In all later slips ‘Rualla.’

A.—Should have also used Ruwala and Ruala.

Q.—Slip 28. The Bisaita is also spelt Biseita.

A.—Good.

Q.—Slip 47. Jedha, the she camel, was Jedhah on Slip 40.

A.— She was a splendid beast.

Q.—Slip 53. ‘Meleager, the immoral poet.’ I have put ‘immortal’ poet, but the author may mean immoral after all.

A.— Immorality I know. Immortality I cannot judge. As you please: Meleager will not sue us for libel.

Q.—Slip 65. Author is addressed ‘Ya Auruns,’ but on Slip 56 was ‘Aurans.’

A.— Also Lurens and Runs: not to mention ‘Shaw.’ More to follow, if time permits.

Q.—Slip 78. Sherif Abd el Mayin of Slip 68 becomes el Main, el Mayein, el Muein, el Mayin, and el Muyein.

A.— Good egg. I call this really ingenious.

In the face of such replies to the publisher's well-intentioned questions, further expostulation was clearly impossible.

All the illustrations in this edition, with three exceptions, appeared in the 1926 edition (in which most of them are reproduced in colour). Every portrait of the 1926 edition is

included here and three new portraits have been added—an oil painting of the author by John, a bronze head of him by Kennington, and a bronze bust of the Emir Feisal by Mestrovic. The maps have been drawn for this edition by Mr. E. O. McIntosh; they are based in the main on those of 1926.

A. W. LAWRENCE

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

The story which follows was first written out in Paris during the Peace Conference, from notes jotted daily on the march, strengthened by some reports sent to my chiefs in Cairo. Afterwards, in the autumn of 1919, this first draft and some of the notes were lost. It seemed to me historically needful to reproduce the tale, as perhaps no one but myself in Feisal's army had thought of writing down at the time what we felt, what we hoped, what we tried. So it was built again with heavy repugnance in London in the winter of 1919-20 from memory and my surviving notes. The record of events was not dulled in me and perhaps few actual mistakes crept in—except in details of dates or numbers—but the outlines and significance of things had lost edge in the haze of new interests.

Dates and places are correct, so far as my notes preserved them: but the personal names are not. Since the adventure some of those who worked with me have buried themselves in the shallow grave of public duty. Free use has been made of their names. Others still possess themselves, and here keep their secrecy. Sometimes one man carried various names. This may hide individuality and make the book a scatter of featureless puppets, rather than a group of living people: but once good is told of a man, and again evil, and some would not thank me for either blame or praise.

This isolated picture throwing the main light upon myself is

unfair to my British colleagues. Especially I am most sorry that I have not told what the non-commissioned of us did. They were but wonderful, especially when it is taken into account that they had not the motive, the imaginative vision of the end, which sustained officers. Unfortunately my concern was limited to this end, and the book is just a designed procession of Arab freedom from Mecca to Damascus. It is intended to rationalize the campaign, that everyone may see how natural the success was and how inevitable, how little dependent on direction or brain, how much less on the outside assistance of the few British. It was an Arab war waged and led by Arabs for an Arab aim in Arabia.

My proper share was a minor one, but because of a fluent pen, a free speech, and a certain adroitess of brain, I took upon myself, as I describe it, a mock primacy. In reality I never had any office among the Arabs: was never in charge of the British mission with them. Wilson, Joyce, Newcombe, Dawnay and Davenport were all over my head. I flattered myself that I was too young, not that they had more heart or mind in the work, I did my best. Wilson, Newcombe, Dawnay, Davenport, Buxton, Marshall, Stirling, Young, Maynard, Ross, Scott, Winterton, Lloyd, Wordie, Siddons, Goslett, Stent Henderson, Spence, Gilman, Garland, Brodie, Makins, Nunan, Leeson, Hornby, Peake, Scott-Higgins, Ramsay, Wood, Hinde, Bright, MacIndoe, Greenhill, Grisenthwaite, Dowsett, Bennett, Wade, Gray, Pascoe and the others also did their best.

It would be impertinent in me to praise them. When I wish to say ill of one outside our number, I do it: though there is less of this than was in my diary, since the passage of time seems to have bleached out men's stains. When I wish to praise outsiders, I do it: bur our family affairs are our own. We did what we set out to do, and have the satisfaction of that knowledge. The others have liberty some day to put on record their story, one parallel to mine but not mentioning more of me than I of them, for each of us did his job by himself and as he pleased, hardly seeing his friends.

In these pages the history is not of the Arab movement, but of me in it. It is a narrative of daily life, mean happenings, little people. Here are no lessons for the world, no disclosures to shock peoples. It is filled with trivial things, partly that no one mistake for history the bones from which some day a man may make history, and partly for the pleasure it gave me to recall the fellowship of the revolt. We were fond together, because of the sweep of the open places, the taste of wide winds, the sunlight, and the hopes in which we worked. The moral freshness of the world-to-be intoxicated us. We were wrought up in ideas inexpressible and vaporous, but to be fought for. We lived many lives in those whirling campaigns, never sparing ourselves: yet when we achieved and the new world dawned, the old men came out again and took our victory to re-make in the likeness of the former world they knew. Youth could win, but had not learned to keep: and was pitiably weak against age. We stammered that we had worked for a new heaven and a new earth, and they thanked us kindly and made

their peace.

All men dream: but nor equally, Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dream with open eyes, to make it possible. This I did. I meant to make a new nation, to restore! a lost influence, to give twenty millions of Semites the foundations on which to build an inspired dream-palace of their national thoughts. So high an aim called out the inherent nobility of their minds, and made them play a generous part in events: but when we won, it was charged against me that the British petrol royalties in Mesopotamia were become dubious, and French Colonial policy ruined in the Levant.

I am afraid that I hope so. We pay for these things too much in honour and in innocent lives. I went up the Tigris with one hundred Devon Territorials, young, clean, delightful fellows, full of the power of happiness and of making women and children glad. By them one saw vividly how great it was to be their kin, and English. And we were casting them by thousands into the fire to the worst of deaths, not to win the war but that the corn and rice and oil of Mesopotamia might be ours. The only need was to defeat our enemies (Turkey among them), and this was at last done in the wisdom of Allenby with less than four hundred killed, by turning to our uses the hands of the oppressed in Turkey. I am proudest of my thirty fights in that I did not have any of our own blood shed. All our subject provinces to me were not worth one

dead Englishman.

We were three years over this effort and I have had to hold back many things which may not yet be said. Even so, parts of this book will be new to nearly all who see it, and many will look for familiar things and not find them. Once I reported fully to my chiefs, but learnt that they were rewarding me on my own evidence. This was not as it should be. Honours may be necessary in a professional army, as so many emphatic mentions in despatches, and by enlisting we had put ourselves, willingly or not, in the position of regular soldiers.

For my work on the Arab front I had determined to accept nothing. The Cabinet raised the Arabs to fight for us by definite promises of self-government afterwards. Arabs believe in persons, not in institutions. They saw in me a free agent of the British Government, and demanded from me an endorsement of its written promises. So I had to join the conspiracy, and, for what my word was worth, assured the men of their reward. In our two years' partnership under fire they grew accustomed to believing me and to think my Government, like myself, sincere. In this hope they performed some fine things, but, of course, instead of being proud of what we did together, I was bitterly ashamed.

It was evident from the beginning that if we won the war these promises would be dead paper, and had I been an honest adviser of the Arabs I would have advised them to go home and not risk their lives fighting for such stuff: but I salved myself with the hope that,

by leading these Arabs madly in the final victory I would establish them, with arms in their hands, in a position so assured (if not dominant) that expediency would counsel to the Great Powers a fair settlement of their claims. In other words, I presumed (seeing no other leader with the will and power) that I would survive the campaigns, and be able to defeat not merely the Turks on the battlefield, but my own country and its allies in the council-chamber. It was an immodest presumption: it is not yet: clear if I succeeded: but it is clear that I had no shadow of leave to engage the Arabs, unknowing, in such hazard. I risked the fraud, on my conviction that Arab help was necessary to our cheap and speedy victory in the East, and that better we win and break our word than lose.

The dismissal of Sir Henry McMahon confirmed my belief in our essential insincerity: but I could not so explain myself to General Wingate while the war lasted, since I was nominally under his orders, and he did not seem sensible of how false his own standing was. The only thing remaining was to refuse rewards for being a successful trickster and, to prevent this unpleasantness arising, I began in my reports to conceal the true stories of things, and to persuade the few Arabs who knew to an equal reticence. In this book also, for the last time, I mean to be my own judge of what to say.

INTRODUCTION. — Foundations of Revolt — CHAPTERS I TO VII

Some Englishmen, of whom Kitchener was chief, believed that a rebellion of Arabs against Turks would enable England, while fighting Germany, simultaneously to defeat her ally Turkey.

Their knowledge of the nature and power and country of the Arabic-speaking peoples made them think that the issue of such a rebellion would be happy: and indicated its character and method.

So they allowed it to begin, having obtained for it formal assurances of help from the British Government. yet none the less the rebellion of the Sherif of Mecca came to most as a surprise, and found the allies unready. It aroused mixed feelings and made strong friends and strong enemies, amid whose clashing jealousies its affairs began to miscarry.

CHAPTER 1

Some of the evil of my tale may have been inherent in our circumstances. For years we lived anyhow with one another in the naked desert, under the indifferent heaven. By day the hot sun fermented us; and we were dizzied by the beating wind. At night we were stained by dew, and shamed into pettiness by the innumerable silences of stars. We were a self-centred army without parade or gesture, devoted to freedom, the second of man's creeds,

a purpose so ravenous that it devoured all our strength, a hope so transcendent that our earlier ambitions faded in its glare.

As time went by our need to fight for the ideal increased to an unquestioning possession, riding with spur and rein over our doubts. Willy-nilly it became a faith. We had sold ourselves into its slavery, manacled ourselves together in its chain-gang, bowed ourselves to serve its holiness with all our good and ill content. The mentality of ordinary human slaves is terrible—they have lost the world—and we had surrendered, not body alone, but soul to the overmastering greed of victory. By our own act we were drained of morality, of volition, of responsibility, like dead leaves in the wind.

The everlasting battle stripped from us care of our own lives or of others'. We had ropes about our necks, and on our heads prices which showed that the enemy intended hideous tortures for us if we were caught. Each day some of us passed; and the living knew themselves just sentient puppets on God's stage: indeed, our taskmaster was merciless, merciless, so long as our bruised feet could stagger forward on the road. The weak envied those tired enough to die; for success looked so remote, and failure a near and certain, if sharp, release from toil. We lived always in the stretch or sag of nerves, either on the crest or in the trough of waves of feeling. This impotency was bitter to us, and made us live only for the seen horizon, reckless what spite we inflicted or endured, since physical sensation showed itself meanly transient. Gusts of cruelty, perversions, lusts ran lightly over the surface without troubling us;

for the moral laws which had seemed to hedge about these silly accidents must be yet fainter words. We had learned that there were pangs too sharp, griefs too deep, ecstasies too high for our finite selves to register. When emotion reached this pitch the mind choked; and memory went white till the circumstances were humdrum once more.

Such exaltation of thought, while it let adrift the spirit, and gave it licence in strange airs, lost it the old patient rule over the body. The body was too coarse to feel the utmost of our sorrows and of our joys. Therefore, we abandoned it as rubbish: we left it below us to march forward, a breathing simulacrum, on its own unaided level, subject to influences from which in normal times our instincts would have shrunk. The men were young and sturdy; and hot flesh and blood unconsciously claimed a right in them and tormented their bellies with strange longings. Our privations and dangers fanned this virile heat, in a climate as racking as can be conceived. We had no shut places to be alone in, no thick clothes to hide our nature. Man in all things lived candidly with man.

The Arab was by nature continent; and the use of universal marriage had nearly abolished irregular courses in his tribes. The public women of the rare settlements we encountered in our months of wandering would have been nothing to our numbers, even had their raddled meat been palatable to a man of healthy parts. In horror of such sordid commerce our youths began indifferently to slake one another’s few needs in their own clean

bodies—a cold convenience that, by comparison, seemed sexless and even pure. Later, some began to justify this sterile process, and swore that friends quivering together in the yielding sand with intimate hot limbs in supreme embrace, found there hidden in the darkness a sensual co-efficient of the mental passion which was welding our souls and spirits in one flaming effort. Several, thirsting to punish appetites they could not wholly prevent, took a savage pride in degrading the body, and offered themselves fiercely in any habit which promised physical pain or filth.

I was sent to these Arabs as a stranger, unable to think their thoughts or subscribe their beliefs, but charged by duty to lead them forward and to develop to the highest any movement of theirs profitable to England in her war. If I could not assume their character, I could at least conceal my own, and pass among them without evident friction, neither a discord nor a critic but an unnoticed influence. Since I was their fellow, I will not be their apologist or advocate. Today in my old garments, I could play the bystander, obedient to the sensibilities of our theatre . . . but it is more honest to record that these ideas and actions then passed naturally. What now looks wanton or sadic seemed in the field inevitable, or just unimportant routine.

Blood was always on our hands: we were licensed to it. Wounding and killing seemed ephemeral pains, so very brief and sore was life with us. With the sorrow of living so great, the sorrow of punishment had to be pitiless. We lived for the day and

died for it. When there was reason and desire to punish we wrote our lesson with gun or whip immediately in the sullen flesh of the sufferer, and the case was beyond appeal. The desert did not afford the refined slow penalties of courts and gaols.

Of course our rewards and pleasures were as suddenly sweeping as our troubles; but, to me in particular, they bulked less large. Bedouin ways were hard even for those brought up to them, and for strangers terrible: a death in life. When the march or labour ended I had no energy to record sensation, nor while it lasted any leisure to see the spiritual loveliness which sometimes came upon us by the way. In my notes, the cruel rather than the beautiful found place. We no doubt enjoyed more the rare moments of peace and forgetfulness; but I remember more the agony, the terrors, and the mistakes. Our life is not summed up in what I have written (there are things not to be repeated in cold blood for very shame); but what I have written was in and of our life. Pray God that men reading the story will not, for love of the glamour of strangeness, go out to prostitute themselves and their talents in serving another race.

A man who gives himself to be a possession of aliens leads a Yahoo life, having bartered his soul to a brute-master. He is not of them. He may stand against them, persuade himself of a mission, batter and twist them into something which they, of their own accord, would not have been. Then he is exploiting his old environment to press them out of theirs. Or, after my model, he

may imitate them so well that they spuriously imitate him back again. Then he is giving away his own environment: pretending to theirs; and pretences are hollow, worthless things. In neither case does he do a thing of himself, nor a thing so clean as to be his own (without thought of conversion), letting them take what action or reaction they please from the silent example.

In my case, the effort for these years to live in the dress of Arabs, and to imitate their mental foundation, quitted me of my English self, and let me look at the West and its conventions with new eyes: they destroyed it all for me. At the same time I could not sincerely take on the Arab skin: it was an affectation only. Easily was a man made an infidel, but hardly might he be converted to another faith. I had dropped one form and not taken on the other, and was become like Mohammed's coffin in our legend, with a resultant feeling of intense loneliness in life, and a contempt, not for other men, but for all they do. Such detachment came at times to a man exhausted by prolonged physical effort and isolation. His body plodded on mechanically, while his reasonable mind left him, and from without looked down critically on him, wondering what that futile lumber did and why. Sometimes these selves would converse in the void; and then madness was very near, as I believe it would be near the man who could see things through the veils at once of two customs, two educations, two environments.

CHAPTER 2

A first difficulty of the Arab movement was to say who the Arabs were. Being a manufactured people, their name had been changing in sense slowly year by year. Once it meant an Arabian. There was a country called Arabia; but this was nothing to the point. There was a language called Arabic; and in it lay the test. It was the current tongue of Syria and Palestine, of Mesopotamia, and of the great peninsula called Arabia on the map. Before the Moslem conquest, these areas were inhabited by diverse peoples, speaking languages of the Arabic family. We called them Semitic, but (as with most scientific terms) incorrectly. However, Arabic, Assyrian, Babylonian, Phoenician, Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac were related tongues; and indications of common influences in the past, or even of a common origin, were strengthened by our knowledge that the appearances and customs of the present Arabic-speaking peoples of Asia, while as varied as a field—full of poppies, had an equal and essential likeness. We might with perfect propriety call them cousins—and cousins certainly, if sadly, aware of their own relationship.

The Arabic-speaking areas of Asia in this sense were a rough parallelogram. The northern side ran from Alexandretta, on the Mediterranean, across Mesopotamia eastward to the Tigris. The south side was the edge of the Indian Ocean, from Aden to Muscat. On the west it was bounded by the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal,

and the Red Sea to Aden. On the east by the Tigris, and the Persian Gulf to Muscat. This square of land, as large as India, formed the homeland of our Semites, in which no foreign race had kept a permanent footing, though Egyptians, Hittites, Philistines, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Turks and Franks had variously tried. All had in the end been broken, and their scattered elements drowned in the strong characteristics of the Semitic race. Semites had sometimes pushed outside this area, and themselves been drowned in the outer world. Egypt, Algiers, Morocco, Malta, Sicily, Spain, Cilicia and France absorbed and obliterated Semitic colonies. Only in Tripoli of Africa, and in the everlasting miracle of Jewry, had distant Semites kept some of their identity and force.

The origin of these peoples was an academic question; but for the understanding of their revolt their present social and political differences were important, and could only be grasped by looking at their geography. This continent of theirs fell into certain great regions, whose gross physical diversities imposed varying habits on the dwellers in them. On the west the parallelogram was framed, from Alexandretta to Aden, by a mountain belt, called (in the north) Syria, and thence progressively southward called Palestine, Midian, Hejaz, and lastly Yemen. It had an average height of perhaps three thousand feet, with peaks of ten to twelve thousand feet. It faced west, was well watered with rain and cloud from the sea, and in general was fully peopled.

Another range of inhabited hills, facing the Indian Ocean, was

the south edge of the parallelogram. The eastern frontier was at first an alluvial plain called Mesopotamia, but south of Basra a level littoral, called Kuweit, and Hasa, to Gattar. Much of this plain was peopled. These inhabited hills and plains framed a gulf of thirsty desert, in whose heart was an archipelago of watered and populous oases called Kasim and Aridh. In this group of oases lay the true centre of Arabia, the preserve of its native spirit, and its most conscious individuality. The desert lapped it round and kept it pure of contact.

The desert which performed this great function around the oases, and so made the character of Arabia, varied in nature. South of the oases it appeared to be a pathless sea of sand, stretching nearly to the populous escarpment of the Indian Ocean shore, shutting it out from Arabian history, and from all influence on Arabian morals and politics. Hadhramaut, as they called this southern coast, formed part of the history of the Dutch Indies; and its thought swayed Java rather than Arabia. To the west of the oases, between them and the Hejaz hills, was the Nejd desert, an area of gravel and lava, with little sand in it. To the east of these oases, between them and Kuweit, spread a similar expanse of gravel, but with some great stretches of soft sand, making the road difficult. To the north of the oases lay a belt of sand, and then an immense gravel and lava plain, filling up everything between the eastern edge of Syria and the banks of the Euphrates where Mesopotamia began. The practicability of this northern desert for men and motor-cars enabled the Arab revolt to win its ready

success.

The hills of the west and the plains of the east were the parts of Arabia always most populous and active. In particular on the west, the mountains of Syria and Palestine, of Hejaz and Yemen, entered time and again into the current of our European life. Ethically, these fertile healthy hills were in Europe, not in Asia, just as the Arabs looked always to the Mediterranean, not to the Indian Ocean, for their cultural sympathies, for their enterprises, and particularly for their expansions, since the migration problem was the greatest and most complex force in Arabia, and general to it, however it might vary in the different Arabic districts.

In the north (Syria) the birth rate was low in the cities and the death rate high, because of the insanitary conditions and the hectic life led by the majority. Consequently the surplus peasantry found openings in the towns, and were there swallowed up. In the Lebanon, where sanitation had been improved, a greater exodus of youth took place to America each year, threatening (for the first time since Greek days) to change the outlook of an entire district.

In Yemen the solution was different. There was no foreign trade, and no massed industries to accumulate population in unhealthy places. The towns were just market towns, as clean and simple as ordinary villages. Therefore the population slowly increased; the scale of living was brought down very low; and a congestion of numbers was generally felt. They could not emigrate overseas; for the Sudan was even worse country than Arabia, and

the few tribes which did venture across were compelled to modify their manner of life and their Semitic culture profoundly, in order to exist. They could not move northward along the hills; for these were barred by the holy town of Mecca and its port Jidda: an alien belt, continually reinforced by strangers from India and Java and Bokhara and Africa, very strong in vitality, violently hostile to the Semitic consciousness, and maintained despite economics and geography and climate by the artificial factor of a world-religion. The congestion of Yemen, therefore, becoming extreme, found its only relief in the east, by forcing the weaker aggregations of its border down and down the slopes of the hills along the Widian, the half-waste district of the great water-bearing valleys of Bisha, Dawasir, Ranya and Taraba, which ran out towards the deserts of Nejd. These weaker clans had continually to exchange good springs and fertile palms for poorer springs and scantier palms, till at last they reached an area where a proper agricultural life became impossible. They then began to eke out their precarious husbandry by breeding sheep and camels, and in time came to depend more and more on these herds for their living.

Finally, under a last impulse from the straining population behind them, the border people (now almost wholly pastoral), were flung out of the furthest crazy oasis into the untrodden wilderness as nomads. This process, to be watched today with individual families and tribes to whose marches an exact name and date might be put, must have been going on since the first day of full settlement of Yemen. The Widian below Mecca and Taif are

crowded with the memories and place-names of half a hundred tribes which have gone from there, and may be found today in Nejd, in Jebel Sham-mar, in the Hamad, even on the frontiers of Syria and Mesopotamia. There was the source of migration, the factory of nomads, the springing of the gulf-stream of desert wanderers.

For the people of the desert were as little static as the people of the hills. The economic life of the desert was based on the supply of camels, which were best bred on the rigorous upland pastures with their strong nutritive thorns. By this industry the Bedouins lived; and it in turn moulded their life, apportioned the tribal areas, and kept the clans revolving through their rote of spring, summer and winter pasturages, as the herds cropped the scanty growths of each in turn. The camel markets in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt determined the population which the deserts could support, and regulated strictly their standard of living. So the desert likewise overpeopled itself upon occasion; and then there were heavings and thrustings of the crowded tribes as they elbowed themselves by natural courses towards the light. They might not go south towards the inhospitable sand or sea. They could not turn west; for there the steep hills of Hejaz were thickly lined by mountain peoples taking full advantage of their defensiveness. Sometimes they went towards the central oases of Aridh and Kasim, and, if the tribes looking for new homes were strong and vigorous, might succeed in occupying parts of them. If, however, the desert had not this strength, its peoples were pushed gradually north, up between

Medina of the Hejaz and Kasim of Nejd, till they found themselves at the fork of two roads. They could strike eastward, by Wadi Rumh or Jebel Shammar, to follow eventually the Batn to Shamiya, where they would become riverine Arabs of the Lower Euphrates; or they could climb, by slow degrees, the ladder of western oases—Henakiya, Kheibar, Teima, Jauf, and the Sirhan—till fate saw them nearing Jebel Druse, in Syria, or watering their herds about Tadmor of the northern desert, on their way to Aleppo or Assyria.

Nor then did the pressure cease: the inexorable trend northward continued. The tribes found themselves driven to the very edge of cultivation in Syria or Mesopotamia. Opportunity and their bellies persuaded them of the advantages of possessing goats, and then of possessing sheep; and lastly they began to sow, if only a little barley for their animals. They were now no longer Bedouin, and began to suffer like the villagers from the ravages of the nomads behind. Insensibly, they made common cause with the peasants already on the soil, and found out that they, too, were peasantry. So we see clans, born in the highlands of Yemen, thrust by stronger clans into the desert, where, unwillingly, they became nomad to keep themselves alive. We see them wandering, every year moving a little further north or a little further east as chance has sent them down one or other of the well-roads of the wilderness, till finally this pressure drives them from the desert again into the sown, with the like unwillingness of their first shrinking experiment in nomad life. This was the circulation which kept vigour in the Semitic

body. There were few, if indeed there was a single northern Semite, whose ancestors had not at some dark age passed through the desert. The mark of nomadism, that most deep and biting social discipline, was on each of them in his degree.

CHAPTER 3

If tribesman and townsman in Arabic-speaking Asia were not different races, but just men in different social and economic stages, a family resemblance might be expected in the working of their minds, and so it was only reasonable that common elements should appear in the product of all these peoples. In the very outset, at the first meeting with them, was found a universal clearness or hardness of belief, almost mathematical in its limitation, and repellent in its unsympathetic form. Semites had no half-tones in their register of vision. They were a people of primary colours, or rather of black and white, who saw the world always in contour. They were a dogmatic people, despising doubt, our modern crown of thorns. They did not understand our metaphysical difficulties, our introspective questionings. They knew only truth and untruth, belief and unbelief, without our hesitating retinue of finer shades.

This people was black and white, not only in vision, but by inmost furnishing: black and white not merely in clarity, but in apposition. Their thoughts were at ease only in extremes. They inhabited superlatives by choice. Sometimes inconsistents seemed to possess them at once in joint sway; but they never compromised: they pursued the logic of several incompatible opinions to absurd ends, without perceiving the incongruity. With cool head and tranquil judgement, imperturbably unconscious of

the flight, they oscillated from asymptote to asymptote.*

They were a limited, narrow-minded people, whose inert intellects lay fallow in incurious resignation. Their imaginations were vivid, but not creative. There was so little Arab art in Asia that they could almost be said to have had no art, though their classes were liberal patrons, and had encouraged whatever talents in architecture, or ceramics, or other handicraft their neighbours and helots displayed. Nor did they handle great industries: they had no organizations of mind or body. They invented no systems of philosophy, no complex mythologies. They steered their course between the idols of the tribe and of the cave. The least morbid of peoples, they had accepted the gift of life unquestioningly, as axiomatic. To them it was a thing inevitable, entailed on man, a usufruct, beyond control. Suicide was a thing impossible, and death no grief.

They were a people of spasms, of upheavals, of ideas, the race of the individual genius. Their movements were the more shocking by contrast with the quietude of every day, their great men greater by contrast with the humanity of their mob. Their convictions were by instinct, their activities intuitional. Their largest manufacture was of creeds: almost they were monopolists of revealed religions. Three of these efforts had endured among them: two of the three had also borne export (in modified forms) to non-Semitic peoples. Christianity, translated into the diverse spirits of Greek and Latin and Teutonic tongues, had conquered Europe and America. Islam

in various transformations was subjecting Africa and parts of Asia. These were Semitic successes. Their failures they kept to themselves. The fringes of their deserts were strewn with broken faiths.

It was significant that this wrack of fallen religions lay about the meeting of the desert and the sown. It pointed to the generation of all these creeds. They were assertions, not arguments; so they required a prophet to set them forth. The Arabs said there had been forty thousand prophets: we had record of at least some hundreds. None of them had been of the wilderness; but their lives were after a pattern. Their birth set them in crowded places. An unintelligible passionate yearning drove them out into the desert. There they lived a greater or lesser time in meditation and physical abandonment; and thence they returned with their imagined message articulate, to preach it to their old, and now doubting, associates. The founders of the three great creeds fulfilled this cycle: their possible coincidence was proved a law by the parallel life-histories of the myriad others, the unfortunate who failed, whom we might judge of no less true profession, but for whom time and disillusion had not heaped up dry souls ready to be set on fire. To the thinkers of the town the impulse into Nitria had ever been irresistible, not probably that they found God dwelling there, but that in its solitude they heard more certainly the living word they brought with them.

The common base of all the Semitic creeds, winners or losers,

was the ever present idea of world-worthlessness. Their profound reaction from matter led them to preach bareness, renunciation, poverty; and the atmosphere of this invention stifled the minds of the desert pitilessly. A first knowledge of their sense of the purity of rarefaction was given me in early years, when we had ridden far out over the rolling plains of North Syria to a ruin of the Roman period which the Arabs believed was made by a prince of the border as a desert-palace for his queen. The clay of its building was said to have been kneaded for greater richness, not with water, but with the precious essential oils of flowers. My guides, sniffing the air like dogs, led me from crumbling room to room, saying, 'This is jessamine, this violet, this rose'.

But at last Dahoum drew me: 'Come and smell the very sweetest scent of all', and we went into the main lodging, to the gaping window sockets of its eastern face, and there drank with open mouths of the effortless, empty, eddyless wind of the desert, throbbing past. That slow breath had been born somewhere beyond the distant Euphrates and had dragged its way across many days and nights of dead grass, to its first obstacle, the man-made walls of our broken palace. About them it seemed to fret and linger, murmuring in baby-speech. 'This,' they told me, 'is the best: it has no taste.' My Arabs were turning their backs on perfumes and luxuries to choose the things in which mankind had had no share or part.

The Beduin of the desert, born and grown up in it, had

embraced with all his soul this nakedness too harsh for volunteers, for the reason, felt but inarticulate, that there he found himself indubitably free. He lost material ties, comforts, all superfluities and other complications to achieve a personal liberty which haunted starvation and death. He saw no virtue in poverty herself: he enjoyed the little vices and luxuries—coffee, fresh water, women—which he could still preserve. In his life he had air and winds, sun and light, open spaces and a great emptiness. There was no human effort, no fecundity in Nature: just the heaven above and the unspotted earth beneath. There unconsciously he came near God. God was to him not anthropomorphic, not tangible, not moral nor ethical, not concerned with the world or with him, not natural: but the being αχρωματοσ, ασχηματιστοσ, αναφησ [colourless, formless, intangible – PP], thus qualified not by divestiture but by investiture, a comprehending Being, the egg of all activity, with nature and matter just a glass reflecting Him.

The Beduin could not look for God within him: he was too sure that he was within God. He could not conceive anything which was or was not God, Who alone was great; yet there was a homeliness, an everyday-ness of this climatic Arab God, who was their eating and their fighting and their lusting, the commonest of their thoughts, their familiar resource and companion, in a way impossible to those whose God is so wistfully veiled from them by despair of their carnal unworthiness of Him and by the decorum of formal worship. Arabs felt no incongruity in bringing God into the weaknesses and appetites of their least creditable causes. He was

the most familiar of their words; and indeed we lost much eloquence when making Him the shortest and ugliest of our monosyllables.

This creed of the desert seemed inexpressible in words, and indeed in thought. It was easily felt as an influence, and those who went into the desert long enough to forget its open spaces and its emptiness were inevitably thrust upon God as the only refuge and rhythm of being. The Bedawi might be a nominal Sunni, or a nominal Wahabi, or anything else in the Semitic compass, and he would take it very lightly, a little in the manner of the watchmen at Zion's gate who drank beer and laughed in Zion because they were Zionists. Each individual nomad had his revealed religion, not oral or traditional or expressed, but instinctive in himself; and so we got all the Semitic creeds with (in character and essence) a stress on the emptiness of the world and the fullness of God; and according to the power and opportunity of the believer was the expression of them.

The desert dweller could not take credit for his belief. He had never been either evangelist or proselyte. He arrived at this intense condensation of himself in God by shutting his eyes to the world, and to all the complex possibilities latent in him which only contact with wealth and temptations could bring forth. He attained a sure trust and a powerful trust, but of how narrow a field! His sterile experience robbed him of compassion and perverted his human kindness to the image of the waste in which he hid.

Accordingly he hurt himself, not merely to be free, but to please himself. There followed a delight in pain, a cruelty which was more to him than goods. The desert Arab found no joy like the joy of voluntarily holding back. He found luxury in abnegation, renunciation, self-restraint. He made nakedness of the mind as sensuous as nakedness of the body. He saved his own soul, perhaps, and without danger, but in a hard selfishness. His desert was made a spiritual ice-house, in which was preserved intact but unimproved for all ages a vision of the unity of God. To it sometimes the seekers from the outer world could escape for a season and look thence in detachment at the nature of the generation they would convert.

This faith of the desert was impossible in the towns. It was at once too strange, too simple, too impalpable for export and common use. The idea, the ground-belief of all Semitic creeds was waiting there, but it had to be diluted to be made comprehensible to us. The scream of a bat was too shrill for many ears: the desert spirit escaped through our coarser texture. The prophets returned from the desert with their glimpse of God, and through their stained medium (as through a dark glass) showed something of the majesty and brilliance whose full vision would blind, deafen, silence us, serve us as it had served the Beduin, setting him uncouth, a man apart.

The disciples, in the endeavour to strip themselves and their neighbours of all things according to the Master’s word, stumbled

over human weaknesses and failed. To live, the villager or townsman must fill himself each day with the pleasures of acquisition and accumulation, and by rebound off circumstance become the grossest and most material of men. The shining contempt of life which led others into the barest asceticism drove him to despair. He squandered himself heedlessly, as a spendthrift: ran through his inheritance of flesh in hasty longing for the end. The Jew in the Metropole at Brighton, the miser, the worshipper of Adonis, the lecher in the stews of Damascus were alike signs of the Semitic capacity for enjoyment, and expressions of the same nerve which gave us at the other pole the self-denial of the Essenes, or the early Christians, or the first Khalifas, finding the way to heaven fairest for the poor in spirit. The Semite hovered between lust and self-denial.

Arabs could be swung on an idea as on a cord; for the unpledged allegiance of their minds made them obedient servants. None of them would escape the bond till success had come, and with it responsibility and duty and engagements. Then the idea was gone and the work ended—in ruins. Without a creed they could be taken to the four corners of the world (but not to heaven) by being shown the riches of earth and the pleasures of it; but if on the road, led in this fashion, they met the prophet of an idea, who had nowhere to lay his head and who depended for his food on charity or birds, then they would all leave their wealth for his inspiration. They were incorrigibly children of the idea, feckless and colour-blind, to whom body and spirit were for ever and inevitably

opposed. Their mind was strange and dark, full of depressions and exaltations, lacking in rule, but with more of ardour and more fertile in belief than any other in the world. They were a people of starts, for whom the abstract was the strongest motive, the process of infinite courage and variety, and the end nothing. They were as unstable as water, and like water would perhaps finally prevail. Since the dawn of life, in successive waves they had been dashing themselves against the coasts of flesh. Each wave was broken, but, like the sea, wore away ever so little of the granite on which it failed, and some day, ages yet, might roll unchecked over the place where the material world had been, and God would move upon the face of those waters. One such wave (and not the least) I raised and rolled before the breath of an idea, till it reached its crest, and toppled over and fell at Damascus. The wash of that wave, thrown back by the resistance of vested things, will provide the matter of the following wave, when in fullness of time the sea shall be raised once more.

CHAPTER 4

The first great rush round the Mediterranean had shown the world the power of an excited Arab for a short spell of intense physical activity; but when the effort burned out the lack of endurance and routine in the Semitic mind became as evident. The provinces they had overrun they neglected, out of sheer distaste of system, and had to seek the help of their conquered subjects, or of more vigorous foreigners, to administer their ill-knit and inchoate empires. So, early in the Middle Ages, the Turks found a footing in the Arab States, first as servants, then as helpers, and then as a parasite growth which choked the life out of the old body politic. The last phase was of enmity, when the Hulagus or Timurs sated their blood lust, burning and destroying everything which irked them with a pretension of superiority.

Arab civilizations had been of an abstract nature, moral and intellectual rather than applied; and their lack of public spirit made their excellent private qualities futile. They were fortunate in their epoch: Europe had fallen barbarous; and the memory of Greek and Latin learning was fading from men's minds. By contrast the imitative exercise of the Arabs seemed cultured, their mental activity progressive, their state prosperous. They had performed real service in preserving something of a classical past for a mediaeval future.

With the coming of the Turks this happiness became a dream.

By stages the Semites of Asia passed under their yoke, and found it a slow death. Their goods were stripped from them; and their spirits shrivelled in the numbing breath of a military Government. Turkish rule was gendarme rule, and Turkish political theory as crude as its practice. The Turks taught the Arabs that the interests of a sect were higher than those of patriotism: that the petty concerns of the province were more than nationality. They led them by subtle dissensions to distrust one another. Even the Arabic language was banished from courts and offices, from the Government service, and from superior schools. Arabs might only serve the State by sacrifice of their racial characteristics. These measures were not accepted quietly. Semitic tenacity showed itself in the many rebellions of Syria, Mesopotamia and Arabia against the grosser forms of Turkish penetration; and resistance was also made to the more insidious attempts at absorption. The Arabs would not give up their rich and flexible tongue for crude Turkish: instead, they filled Turkish with Arabic words, and held to the treasures of their own literature.

They lost their geographical sense, and their racial and political and historical memories; but they clung the more tightly to their language, and erected it almost into a fatherland of its own. The first duty of every Moslem was to study the Koran, the sacred book of Islam, and incidentally the greatest Arab literary monument. The knowledge that this religion was his own, and that only he was perfectly qualified to understand and practise it, gave every Arab a standard by which to judge the banal achievements of the Turk.

Then came the Turkish revolution, the fall of Abdul Hamid, and the supremacy of the Young Turks. The horizon momentarily broadened for the Arabs. The Young-Turk movement was a revolt against the hierarchic conception of Islam and the pan-Islamic theories of the old Sultan, who had aspired, by making himself spiritual director of the Moslem world, to be also (beyond appeal) its director in temporal affairs. These young politicians rebelled and threw him into prison, under the impulse of constitutional theories of a sovereign state. So, at a time when Western Europe was just beginning to climb out of nationality into internationality, and to rumble with wars far removed from problems of race, Western Asia began to climb out of Catholicism into nationalist politics, and to dream of wars for self-government and self-sovereignty, instead of for faith or dogma. This tendency had broken out first and most strongly in the Near East, in the little Balkan States, and had sustained them through an almost unparalleled martyrdom to their goal of separation from Turkey. Later there had been nationalist movements in Egypt, in India, in Persia, and finally in Constantinople, where they were fortified and made pointed by the new American ideas in education: ideas which, when released in the old high Oriental atmosphere, made an explosive mixture. The American schools, teaching by the method of inquiry, encouraged scientific detachment and free exchange of views. Quite without intention they taught revolution, since it was impossible for an individual to be modern in Turkey and at the same time loyal, if he had been born of one of the subject races—Greeks, Arabs, Kurds, Armenians or Albanians—over whom the

Turks were so long helped to keep dominion.

The Young Turks, in the confidence of their first success, were carried away by the logic of their principles, and as protest against Pan-Islam preached Ottoman brotherhood. The gullible subject races—far more numerous than the Turks themselves—believed that they were called upon to co-operate in building a new East. Rushing to die task (full of Herbert Spencer and Alexander Hamilton) they laid down platforms of sweeping ideas, and hailed the Turks as partners. The Turks, terrified at the forces they had let loose, drew the fires as suddenly as they had stoked them. Turkey made Turkish for the Turks—*Yeni-Turan*—became the cry. Later on, this policy would turn them towards the rescue of their irredenti—the Turkish populations subject to Russia in Central Asia; but, first of all, they must purge their Empire of such irritating subject races as resisted the ruling stamp. The Arabs, the largest alien component of Turkey, must first be dealt with. Accordingly the Arab deputies were scattered, the Arab societies forbidden, the Arab notables proscribed. Arabic manifestations and the Arabic language were suppressed by Enver Pasha more sternly than by Abdul Hamid before him.

However, the Arabs had tasted freedom: they could not change their ideas as quickly as their conduct; and the staffer spirits among them were not easily to be put down. They read the Turkish papers, putting ‘Arab’ for ‘Turk’ in the patriotic exhortations. Suppression charged them with unhealthy violence. Deprived of constitutional

outlets they became revolutionary. The Arab societies went underground, and changed from liberal clubs into conspiracies. The Akhua, the Arab mother society, was publicly dissolved. It was replaced in Mesopotamia by the dangerous Ahad, a very secret brotherhood, limited almost entirely to Arab officers in the Turkish Army, who swore to acquire the military knowledge of their masters, and to turn it against them, in the service of the Arab people, when the moment of rebellion came.

It was a large society, with a sure base in the wild part of Southern Irak, where Sayid Taleb, the young John Wilkes of the Arab movement, held the power in his unprincipled fingers. To it belonged seven out of every ten Mesopotamian-born officers; and their counsel was so well kept that members of it held high command in Turkey to the last. When the crash came, and Allenby rode across Armageddon and Turkey fell, one vice-president of the society was commanding the broken fragments of the Palestine armies on the retreat, and another was directing the Turkish forces across-Jordan in the Amman area. Yet later, after the armistice, great places in the Turkish service were still held by men ready to turn on their masters at a word from their Arab leaders. To most of them the word was never given; for those societies were pro-Arab only, willing to fight for nothing but Arab independence; and they could see no advantage in supporting the Allies rather than the Turks, since they did not believe our assurances that we would leave them free. Indeed, many of them preferred an Arabia united by Turkey in miserable subjection, to an Arabia divided up and

slothful under the easier control of several European powers in spheres of influence.

Greater than the Ahad was the Fetah, the society of freedom in Syria. The landowners, the writers, the doctors, the great public servants linked themselves in this society with a common oath, passwords, signs, a press and a central treasury, to ruin the Turkish Empire. With the noisy facility of the Syrian—an ape-like people having much of the Japanese quickness, but shallow—they speedily built up a formidable organization. They looked outside for help, and expected freedom to come by entreaty, not by sacrifice. They corresponded with Egypt, with the Ahad (whose members, with true Mesopotamian dourness, rather despised them), with the Sherif of Mecca, and with Great Britain: everywhere seeking the ally to serve their turn. They also were deadly secret; and the Government, though it suspected their existence, could find no credible evidence of their leaders or membership. It had to hold its hand until it could strike with evidence enough to satisfy the English and French diplomats who acted as modern public opinion in Turkey. The war in 1914 withdrew these agents, and left the Turkish Government free to strike.

Mobilization put all power into the hands of those members—Enver, Talaat and Jemal—who were at once the most ruthless, the most logical, and the most ambitious of the Young Turks. They set themselves to stamp out all non-Turkish currents in the State,

especially Arab and Armenian nationalism. For the first step they found a specious and convenient weapon in the secret papers of a French Consul in Syria, who left behind him in his Consulate copies of correspondence (about Arab freedom) which had passed between him and an Arab club, not connected with the Fetah but made up of the more talkative and less formidable *intelligenzia* of the Syrian coast. The Turks, of course, were delighted; for 'colonial' aggression in North Africa had given the French a black reputation in the Arabic-speaking Moslem world; and it served Jemal well to show his co-religionists that these Arab nationalists were infidel enough to prefer France to Turkey.

In Syria, of course, his disclosures had little novelty; but the members of the society were known and respected, if somewhat academic, persons; and their arrest and condemnation, and the crop of deportations, exiles, and executions to which their trial led, moved the country to its depths, and taught the Arabs of the Fetah that if they did not profit by their lesson, the fate of the Armenians would be upon them. The Armenians had been well armed and organized; but their leaders had failed them. They had been disarmed and destroyed piecemeal, the men by massacre, the women and children by being driven and overdriven along the wintry roads into the desert, naked and hungry, the common prey of any passer-by, until death took them. The Young Turks had killed the Armenians, not because they were Christians, but because they were Armenians; and for the same reason they herded Arab Moslems and Arab Christians into the same prison, and

hanged them together on the same scaffold. Jemal Pasha united all classes, conditions and creeds in Syria, under pressure of a common misery and peril, and so made a concerted revolt possible.

The Turks suspected the Arab officers and soldiers in the Army, and hoped to use against them the scattering tactics which had served against the Armenians. At first transport difficulties stood in their way; and there came a dangerous concentration of Arab divisions (nearly one third of the original Turkish Army was Arabic speaking) in North Syria early in 1915. They broke these up when possible, marching them off to Europe, to the Dardanelles, to the Caucasus, or the Canal—anywhere, so long as they were put quickly into the firing-line, or withdrawn far from the sight and help of their compatriots. A Holy War was proclaimed to give the ‘Union and Progress’ banner something of the traditional sanctity of the Caliph’s battle-order in the eyes of the old clerical elements; and the Sherif of Mecca was invited—or rather ordered—to echo the cry.

CHAPTER 5

The position of the Sherif of Mecca had long been anomalous. The title of ‘Sherif implied descent from the prophet Mohammed through his daughter Fatima, and Hassan, her elder son. Authentic Sherifs were inscribed on the family tree—an immense roll preserved at Mecca, in custody of the Emir of Mecca, the elected Sherif of Sherifs, supposed to be the senior and noblest of all. The prophet’s family had held temporal rule in Mecca for the last nine hundred years, and counted some two thousand persons.

The old Ottoman Governments regarded this clan of manticratic peers with a mixture of reverence and distrust. Since they were too strong to be destroyed, the Sultan salved his dignity by solemnly confirming their Emir in place. This empty approval acquired dignity by lapse of time, until the new holder began to feel that it added a final seal to his election. At last the Turks found that they needed the Hejaz under their unquestioned sway as part of the stage furniture for their new pan-Islamic notion. The fortuitous opening of the Suez Canal enabled them to garrison the Holy Cities. They projected the Hejaz Railway, and increased Turkish influence among the tribes by money, intrigue, and armed expeditions.

As the Sultan grew stronger there he ventured to assert himself more and more alongside the Sherif, even in Mecca itself, and upon occasion ventured to depose a Sherif too magnificent for his

views, and to appoint a successor from a rival family of the clan in hopes of winning the usual advantages from dissension. Finally, Abdul Hamid took away some of the family to Constantinople into honourable captivity. Amongst these was Hussein ibn Ali, the future ruler, who was held a prisoner for nearly eighteen years. He took the opportunity to provide his sons—Ali, Abdulla, Feisal, and Zeid—with the modern education and experience which afterwards enabled them to lead the Arab armies to success.

When Abdul Hamid fell, the less wily Young Turks reversed his policy and sent back Sherif Hussein to Mecca as Emir. He at once set to work unobtrusively to restore the power of the Emirate, and strengthened himself on the old basis, keeping the while close and friendly touch with Constantinople through his sons Abdulla, vice-chairman of the Turkish House, and Feisal, member for Jidda. They kept him informed of political opinion in the capital until war broke out, when they returned in haste to Mecca.

The outbreak of war made trouble in the Hejaz. The pilgrimage ceased, and with it the revenues and business of the Holy Cities. There was reason to fear that the Indian food-ships would cease to come (since the Sherif became technically an enemy subject); and as the province produced almost no food of its own, it would be precariously dependent on the goodwill of the Turks, who might starve it by closing the Hejaz Railway. Hussein had never been entirely at the Turks' mercy before; and at this unhappy moment they particularly needed his adherence to their 'Jehad', the Holy

War of all Moslems against Christianity.

To become popularly effective this must be endorsed by Mecca; and if endorsed it might plunge the East in blood. Hussein was honourable, shrewd, obstinate and deeply pious. He felt that the Holy War was doctrinally incompatible with an aggressive war, and absurd with a Christian ally: Germany. So he refused the Turkish demand, and made at the same time a dignified appeal to the Allies not to starve his province for what was in no way his people's fault. The Turks in reply at once instituted a partial blockade of the Hejaz by controlling the traffic on the pilgrim railway. The British left his coast open to specially-regulated food vessels.

The Turkish demand was, however, not the only one which the Sherif received. In January 1915, Yisin, head of the Mesopotamian officers, Ali Riza, head of the Damascus officers, and Abd el Ghani el Areisi, for the Syrian civilians, sent down to him a concrete proposal for a military mutiny in Syria against the Turks. The oppressed people of Mesopotamia and Syria, the committees of the Ahad and the Fetah, were calling out to him as the Father of the Arabs, the Moslem of Moslems, their greatest prince, their oldest notable, to save them from the sinister designs of Talaat and Jemal.

Hussein, as politician, as prince, as moslem, as modernist, and as nationalist, was forced to listen to their appeal. He sent Feisal, his third son, to Damascus, to discuss their projects as his

representative, and to make a report. He sent Ali, his eldest son, to Medina, with orders to raise quietly, on any excuse he pleased, troops from villagers and tribesmen of the Hejaz, and to hold them ready for action if Feisal called. Abdulla, his politic second son, was to sound the British by letter, to learn what would be their attitude towards a possible Arab revolt against Turkey.

Feisal reported in January 1915, that local conditions were good, but that the general war was not going well for their hopes. In Damascus were three divisions of Arab troops ready for rebellion. In Aleppo two other divisions, riddled with Arab nationalism, were sure to join in if the others began. There was only one Turkish division this side of the Taurus, so that it was certain that the rebels would get possession of Syria at the first effort. On the other hand, public opinion was less ready for extreme measures, and the military class quite sure that Germany would win the war and win it soon. If, however, the Allies landed their Australian Expedition (preparing in Egypt) at Alexandretta, and so covered the Syrian flank, then it would be wise and safe to risk a final German victory and the need to make a previous separate peace with the Turks.

Delay followed, as the Allies went to the Dardanelles, and not to Alexandretta. Feisal went after them to get first-hand knowledge of Gallipoli conditions, since a breakdown of Turkey would be the Arab signal. Then followed stagnation through the months of the Dardanelles campaign. In that slaughter-house the remaining

Ottoman first-line army was destroyed. The disaster to Turkey of the accumulated losses was so great that Feisal came back to Syria, judging it a possible moment in which to strike, but found that meanwhile the local situation had become unfavourable.

His Syrian supporters were under arrest or in hiding, and their friends being hanged in scores on political charges. He found the well-disposed Arab divisions either exiled to distant fronts, or broken up in drafts and distributed among Turkish units. The Arab peasantry were in the grip of Turkish military service, and Syria prostrate before the merciless Jemal Pasha. His assets had disappeared. He wrote to his father counselling further delay, till England should be ready and Turkey in extremities. Unfortunately, England was in a deplorable condition. Her forces were falling back shattered from the Dardanelles. The slow-drawn agony of Kut was in its last stage; and the Senussi rising, coincident with the entry of Bulgaria, threatened her on new flanks.

Feisal's position was hazardous in the extreme. He was at the mercy of the members of the secret society, whose president he had been before the war. He had to live as the guest of Jemal Pasha, in Damascus, rubbing up his military knowledge; for his brother Ali was raising the troops in Hejaz on the pretext that he and Feisal would lead them against the Suez Canal to help the Turks. So Feisal, as a good Ottoman and officer in the Turkish service, had to live at headquarters, and endure acquiescingly the insults and indignities heaped upon his race by the bully Jemal in

his cups.

Jemal would send for Feisal and take him to the hanging of his Syrian friends. These victims of justice dared not show that they knew Feisal's real hopes, any more than he dared show his mind by word or look, since disclosure would have condemned his family and perhaps their race to the same fate. Only once did he burst out that these executions would cost Jemal all that he was trying to avoid; and it took the intercessions of his Constantinople friends, chief men in Turkey, to save him from the price of these rash words.

Feisal's correspondence with his father was an adventure in itself. They communicated by means of old retainers of the family, men above suspicion, who went up and down the Hejaz Railway, carrying letters in sword-hilts, in cakes, sewn between the soles of sandals, or in invisible writings on the wrappers of harmless packages. In all of them Feisal reported unfavourable things, and begged his father to postpone action till a wiser time.

Hussein, however, was not a whit cast down by Emir Feisal's discouragements. The Young Turks in his eyes were so many godless transgressors of their creed and their human duty—traitors to the spirit of the time, and to the higher interests of Islam. Though an old man of sixty-five, he was cheerfully determined to wage war against them, relying upon justice to cover the cost. Hussein trusted so much in God that he let his military sense lie fallow, and thought Hejaz able to fight it out with Turkey on a fair

field. So he sent Abd el Kader el Abdu to Feisal with a letter that all was now ready for inspection by him in Medina before the troops started for the front Feisal informed Jemal, and asked leave to go down, but, to his dismay, Jemal replied that Enver Pasha, the Generalissimo, was on his way to the province, and that they would visit Medina together and inspect them. Feisal had planned to raise his father's crimson banner as soon as he arrived in Medina, and so to take the Turks unawares; and here he was going to be saddled with two uninvited guests to whom, by the Arab law of hospitality, he could do no harm, and who would probably delay his action so long that the whole secret of the revolt would be in jeopardy!

In the end matters passed off well, though the irony of the review was terrible. Enver, Jemal and Feisal watched the troops wheeling and turning in the dusty plain outside the city gate, rushing up and down in mimic camel-battle, or spurring their horses in the javelin game after immemorial Arab fashion. 'And are all these volunteers for the Holy War?' asked Enver at last, turning to Feisal. 'Yes,' said Feisal. 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 Sherif Ali ibn el Hussein, of Modhig, drew him aside whispering, 'My Lord, shall we kill them now?' and Feisal said, 'No, they are our guests.'

The sheikhs protested further; for they believed that so they could finish off the war in two blows. They were determined to

force Feisal's hand; and he had to go among them, just out of earshot but in full view, and plead for the lives of the Turkish dictators, who had murdered his best friends on the scaffold. In the end he had to make excuses, take the party back quickly to Medina, picket the banqueting hall with his own slaves, and escort Enver and Jemal back to Damascus to save them from death on the way. He explained this laboured courtesy by the plea that it was the Arab manner to devote everything to guests; but Enver and Jemal being deeply suspicious of what they had seen, imposed a strict blockade of the Hejaz, and ordered large Turkish reinforcements thither. They wanted to detain Feisal in Damascus; but telegrams came from Medina claiming his immediate return to prevent disorder, and, reluctantly, Jemal let him go on condition that his suite remained behind as hostages.

Feisal found Medina full of Turkish troops, with the staff and headquarters of the Twelfth Army Corps under Fakhri Pasha, the courageous old butcher who had bloodily 'purified' Zeitun and Urfa of Armenians. Clearly the Turks had taken warning, and Feisal's hope of a surprise rush, winning success almost without a shot, had become impossible. However, it was too late for prudence. From Damascus four days later his suite took horse and rode out east into the desert to take refuge with Nuri Shaalan, the Beduin chieftain; and the same day Feisal showed his hand. When he raised the Arab flag, the pan-Islamic supra-national State, for which Abdul Hamid had massacred and worked and died, and the German hope of the co-operation of Islam in the world-plans of the

Kaiser, passed into the realm of dreams. By the mere fact of his rebellion the Sherif had closed these two fantastic chapters of history.

Rebellion was the gravest step which political men could take, and the success or failure of the Arab revolt was a gamble too hazardous for prophecy. Yet, for once, fortune favoured the bold player, and the Arab epic tossed up its stormy road from birth through weakness, pain and doubt, to red victory. It was the just end to an adventure which had dared so much, but after the victory there came a slow time of disillusion, and then a night in which the fighting men found that all their hopes had failed them. Now, at last, may there have come to them the white peace of the end, in the knowledge that they achieved a deathless thing, a lucent inspiration to the children of their race.

CHAPTER 6

I had been many years going up and down the Semitic East before the war, learning the manners of the villagers and tribesmen and citizens of Syria and Mesopotamia. My poverty had constrained me to mix with the humbler classes, those seldom met by European travellers, and thus my experiences gave me an unusual angle of view, which enabled me to understand and think for the ignorant many as well as for the more enlightened whose rare opinions mattered, not so much for the day, as for the morrow. In addition, I had seen something of the political forces working in the minds of the Middle East, and especially had noted everywhere sure signs of the decay of imperial Turkey.

Turkey was dying of overstrain, of the attempt, with diminished resources, to hold, on traditional terms, the whole Empire bequeathed to it. The sword had been the virtue of the children of Othman, and swords had passed out of fashion nowadays, in favour of deadlier and more scientific weapons. Life was growing too complicated for this child-like people, whose strength had lain in simplicity, and patience, and in their capacity for sacrifice. They were the slowest of the races of Western Asia, little fitted to adapt themselves to new sciences of government and life, still less to invent any new arts for themselves. Their administration had become perforce an affair of files and telegrams, of high finance, eugenics, calculations. Inevitably the old governors, who had

governed by force of hand or force of character, illiterate, direct, personal, had to pass away. The rule was transferred to new men, with agility and suppleness to stoop to machinery. The shallow and half-polished committee of the Young Turks were descendants of Greeks, Albanians, Circassians, Bulgars, Armenians, Jews—anything but Seljuks or Ottomans. The commons ceased to feel in tune with their governors, whose culture was Levantine, and whose political theory was French. Turkey was decaying; and only the knife might keep health in her.

Loving the old ways steadily, the Anatolian remained a beast of burden in his village and an uncomplaining soldier abroad, while the subject races of the Empire, who formed nearly seven-tenths of its total population, grew daily in strength and knowledge; for their lack of tradition and responsibility, as well as their lighter and quicker minds, disposed them to accept new ideas. The former natural awe and supremacy of the Turkish name began to fade in the face of wider comparison. This changing balance of Turkey and the subject provinces involved growing garrisons if the old ground was to be retained. Tripoli, Albania, Thrace, Yemen, Hejaz, Syria, Mesopotamia, Kurdistan, Armenia, were all outgoing accounts, burdens on the peasants of Anatolia, yearly devouring a larger draft. The burden fell heaviest on the poor villages, and each year made these poor villages yet more poor.

The conscripts took their fate unquestioning: resignedly, after the custom of Turkish peasantry. They were like sheep, neutrals

without vice or virtue. Left alone, they did nothing, or perhaps sat dully on the ground. Ordered to be kind, and without haste they were as good friends and as generous enemies as might be found. Ordered to outrage their fathers or disembowel their mothers, they did it as calmly as they did nothing, or did well. There was about them a hopeless, fever-wasted lack of initiative, which made them the most biddable, most enduring, and least spirited soldiers in the world.

Such men were natural victims of their showy-vicious Levantine officers, to be driven to death or thrown away by neglect without reckoning. Indeed, we found them just kept chopping-blocks of their commanders' viler passions. So cheap did they rate them, that in connection with them they used none of the ordinary precautions. Medical examination of some batches of Turkish prisoners found nearly half of them with unnaturally acquired venereal disease. Pox and its like were not understood in the country; and the infection ran from one to another through the battalion, where the conscripts served for six or seven years, till at the end of their period the survivors, if they came from decent homes, were ashamed to return, and drifted either into the gendarmerie service, or, as broken men, into casual labour about the towns; and so the birth-rate fell. The Turkish peasantry in Anatolia were dying of their military service.

We could see that a new factor was needed in the East, some power or race which would outweigh the Turks in numbers, in

output, and in mental activity. No encouragement was given us by history to think that these qualities could be supplied ready-made from Europe. The efforts of European Powers to keep a footing in the Asiatic Levant had been uniformly disastrous, and we disliked no Western people enough to inveigle them into further attempts. Our successor and solution must be local; and fortunately the standard of efficiency required was local also. The competition would be with Turkey; and Turkey was rotten.

Some of us judged that there was latent power enough and to spare in the Arabic peoples (the greatest component of the old Turkish Empire), a prolific Semitic agglomeration, great in religious thought, reasonably industrious, mercantile, politic, yet solvent rather than dominant in character. They had served a term of five hundred years under the Turkish harrow, and had begun to dream of liberty; so when at last England fell out with Turkey, and war was let loose in the East and West at once, we who believed we held an indication of the future set out to bend England's efforts towards fostering the new Arabic world in hither Asia.

We were not many; and nearly all of us rallied round Clayton, the chief of Intelligence, civil and military, in Egypt. Clayton made the perfect leader for such a band of wild men as we were. He was calm, detached, clear-sighted, of unconscious courage in assuming responsibility. He gave an open run to his subordinates. His own views were general, like his knowledge; and he worked by influence rather than by loud direction. It was not easy to descry

his influence. He was like water, or permeating oil, creeping silently and insistently through everything. It was not possible to say where Clayton was and was not, and how much really belonged to him. He never visibly led; but his ideas were abreast of those who did: he impressed men by his sobriety, and by a certain quiet and stately moderation of hope. In practical matters he was loose, irregular, untidy, a man with whom independent men could bear.

The first of us was Ronald Storrs, Oriental Secretary of the Residency, the most brilliant Englishman in the Near East, and subtly efficient, despite his diversion of energy in love of music and letters, of sculpture, painting, of whatever was beautiful in the world's fruit. None the less, Storrs sowed what we reaped, and was always first, and the great man among us. His shadow would have covered our work and British policy in the East like a cloak, had he been able to deny himself the world, and to prepare his mind and body with the sternness of an athlete for a great fight.

George Lloyd entered our number. He gave us confidence, and with his knowledge of money, proved a sure guide through the subways of trade and politics, and a prophet upon the future arteries of the Middle East. We would not have done so much so soon without his partnership; but he was a restless soul, avid rather to taste than to exhaust. To him many things were needful; and so he would not stay very long with us. He did not see how much we liked him.

Then there was the imaginative advocate of unconvincing world-movements, Mark Sykes: also a bundle of prejudices, intuitions, half-sciences. His ideas were of the outside; and he lacked patience to test his materials before choosing his style of building. He would take an aspect of the truth, detach it from its circumstances, inflate it, twist and model it, until its old likeness and its new unlikeness together drew a laugh; and laughs were his triumphs. His instincts lay in parody: by choice he was A caricaturist rather than an artist, even in statesmanship. He saw the odd in everything, and missed the even. He would sketch out in a few dashes a new world, *all* out of scale, but vivid as a vision of some sides of the thing we hoped. His help did us good and harm. For this his last week in Paris tried to atone. He had returned from a period of political duty in Syria, after his awful realization of the true shape of his dreams, to say gallantly, 'I was wrong: here is the truth'. His former friends would not see his new earnestness, and thought him fickle and in error; and very soon he died. It was a tragedy of tragedies, for the Arab sake.

Not a wild man, but *Mentor* to all of us was Hogarth, our father confessor and adviser, who brought us the parallels and lessons of history, and moderation, and courage. To the outsiders he was peacemaker (I was all claws and teeth, and had a devil), and made us favoured and listened to, for his weighty judgement. He had a delicate sense of value, and would present clearly to us the forces hidden behind the lousy rags and festering skins which we knew as Arabs. Hogarth was our referee, and our untiring historian, who

gave us his great knowledge and careful wisdom even in the smallest things, because he believed in what we were making. Behind him stood Cornwallis, a man rude to look upon, but apparently forged from one of those incredible metals with a melting-point of thousands of degrees. So he could remain for months hotter than other men's white-heat, and yet look cold and hard. Behind him again were others, Newcombe, Parker, Herbert, Graves, all of the creed, and labouring stoutly after their fashion.

We called ourselves 'Intrusive' as a band; for we meant to break into the accepted halls of English foreign policy, and build a new people in the East, despite the rails laid down for us by our ancestors. Therefore from our hybrid intelligence office in Cairo (a jangling place which for its incessant bells and bustle and running to and fro, was likened by Aubrey Herbert to an oriental railway station) we began to work upon all chiefs, far and near. Sir Henry McMahon, High Commissioner in Egypt, was, of course, our first effort; and his shrewd insight and tried, experienced mind understood our design at once and judged it good. Others, like Wemyss, Neil Malcolm, Wingate, supported us in their pleasure at seeing the war turned constructive. Their advocacy confirmed in Lord Kitchener the favourable impression he had derived years before when Sherif Abdulla appealed to him in Egypt; and so McMahon at last achieved our foundation stone, the understanding with the Sherif of Mecca.

But before this we had had hopes of Mesopotamia. The

beginning of the Arab Independence Movement had been there, under the vigorous but unscrupulous impulse of Seyid Taleb, and later of Yasin el Hashimi and the military league. Aziz el Masri, Enver's rival, who was living, much indebted to us, in Egypt, was an idol of the Arab officers. He was approached by Lord Kitchener in the first days of the war, with the hope of winning the Turkish Mesopotamian forces to our side. Unfortunately Britain was bursting then with confidence in an easy and early victory: the smashing of Turkey was called a promenade. So the Indian Government was adverse to any pledges to the Arab nationalists which might limit their ambitions to make the intended Mesopotamian colony play the self-sacrificing role of a Burma for the general good. It broke off negotiations, rejected Aziz, and interned Sayid Taleb, who had placed himself in our hands.

By brute force it marched then into Basra. The enemy troops in Irak were nearly all Arabs in the unenviable predicament of having to fight on behalf of their secular oppressors against a people long envisaged as liberators, but who obstinately refused to play the part. As may be imagined, they fought very badly. Our forces won battle after battle till we came to think an Indian army better than a Turkish army. There followed our rash advance to Ctesiphon, where we met native Turkish troops whose full heart was in the game, and were abruptly checked. We fell back, dazed; and the long misery of Kut began.

Meanwhile, our Government had repented, and, for reasons not

unconnected with the fall of Erzerum, sent me to Mesopotamia to see what could be done by indirect means to relieve the beleaguered garrison. The local British had the strongest objection to my coming; and two Generals of them were good enough to explain to me that my mission (which they did not really know) was dishonourable to a soldier (which I was not). As a matter of fact it was too late for action, with Kut just dying; and in consequence I did nothing of what it was in my mind and power to do.

The conditions were ideal for an Arab movement. The people of Nejef and Kerbela, far in the rear of Halil Pasha's army, were in revolt against him. The surviving Arabs in Hali's army were, on his own confession, openly disloyal to Turkey. The tribes of the Hai and Euphrates would have turned our way had they seen signs of grace in the British. Had we published the promises made to the Sherif, or even the proclamation afterwards posted in captured Bagdad, and followed it up, enough local fighting men would have joined us to harry the Turkish line of communication between Bagdad and Kut. A few weeks of that, and the enemy would either have been forced to raise the siege and retire, or have themselves suffered investment, outside Kut, nearly as stringent as the investment of Townshend within it. Time to develop such a scheme could easily have been gained. Had the British headquarters in Mesopotamia obtained from the War Office eight more aeroplanes to increase the daily carriage of food to the garrison of Kut, Townshend's resistance might have been

indefinitely prolonged. His defence was Turkishly impregnable; and only blunders within and without forced surrender upon him.

However, as this was not the way of the directing parties there, I returned at once to Egypt; and till the end of the war the British in Mesopotamia remained substantially an alien force invading enemy territory, with the local people passively neutral or sullenly against them, and in consequence had not the freedom of movement and elasticity of Allenby in Syria, who entered the country as a friend, with the local people actively on his side. The factors of numbers, climate and communications favoured us in Mesopotamia more than in Syria; and our higher command was, after the beginning, no less efficient and experienced. But their casualty lists compared with Allenby's, their wood-chopping tactics compared with his rapier-play, showed how formidably an adverse political situation was able to cramp a purely military operation.

CHAPTER 7

Our check in Mesopotamia was a disappointment to us; but McMahon continued his negotiations with Mecca, and finally brought them to success despite the evacuation of Gallipoli, the surrender of Kut, and the generally unfortunate aspect of the war at the moment. Few people, even of those who knew all the negotiations, had really believed that the Sherif would fight; consequently his eventual rebellion and opening of his coast to our ships and help took us and them by surprise.

We found our difficulties then only beginning. The credit of the new factor was to McMahon and Clayton: professional jealousies immediately raised their heads. Sir Archibald Murray, the General in Egypt, wanted, naturally enough, no competitors and no competing campaigns in his sphere. He disliked the civil power, which had so long kept the peace between himself and General Maxwell. He could not be entrusted with the Arabian affair; for neither he nor his staff had the ethnological competence needed to deal with so curious a problem. On the other hand, he could make the spectacle of the High Commission running a private war sufficiently ridiculous. His was a very nervous mind, fanciful and essentially competitive.

He found help in his Chief of Staff, General Lynden Bell, a red soldier, with an instinctive shuddering away from politicians, and a

conscientiously assumed heartiness.

Two of the General Staff officers followed their leaders full cry; and so the unfortunate McMahon found himself deprived of Army help and reduced to waging his war in Arabia with the assistance of his Foreign Office Attaché's.

Some appeared to resent a war which allowed outsiders to thrust into their business. Also their training in suppression, by which alone the daily trivialities of diplomacy were made to look like man's work, had so sunk into them that when the more important thing arrived, they made it trivial. Their feebleness of tone, and niggling dishonesties to one another, angered the military to disgust; and were bad for us, too, since they patently let down the High Commissioner, whose boots the G—s were not good enough to clean.

Wingate, who had complete confidence in his own grasp of the situation in the Middle East, foresaw credit and great profit for the country in the Arab development; but as criticism slowly beat up against McMahon he dissociated himself from him, and London began to hint that better use might be made by an experienced hand of so subtle and involved a skein.

However it was, things in the Hejaz went from bad to worse. No proper liaison was provided for the Arab forces in the field, no military information was given the Sherifs, no tactical advice or strategy was suggested, no attempt made to find out the local

conditions and adapt existing Allied resources in material to suit their needs. The French Military Mission (which Clayton's prudence had suggested be sent to Hejaz to soothe our very suspicious allies by taking them behind the scenes and giving them a purpose there), was permitted to carry on an elaborate intrigue against Sherif Hussein in his towns of Jidda and Mecca, and to propose to him and to the British authorities measures that must have ruined his cause in the eyes of all Moslems. Wingate, now in military control of our cooperation with the Sherif, was induced to land some foreign troops at Rabegh, half-way between Medina and Mecca, for the defence of Mecca and to hold up the further advance of the reinvigorated Turks from Medina. McMahon, in the multitude of counsellors, became confused, and gave a handle to Murray to cry out against his inconsistencies. The Arab Revolt became discredited; and Staff Officers in Egypt gleefully prophesied to us its near failure and the stretching of Sherif Hussein's neck on a Turkish scaffold.

My private position was not easy. As Staff Captain under Clayton in Sir Archibald Murray's Intelligence Section, I was charged with the 'distribution' of the Turkish Army and the preparation of maps. By natural inclination I had added to them the invention of the Arab Bulletin, a secret weekly record of Middle-Eastern politics; and of necessity Clayton came more and more to need me in the military wing of the Arab Bureau, the tiny intelligence and war staff for foreign affairs, which he was now organizing for McMahon. Eventually Clayton was driven out of

the General Staff; and Colonel Holdich, Murray's intelligence officer at Ismailia, took his place in command of us. His first intention was to retain my services; and, since he clearly did not need me, I interpreted this, not without some friendly evidence, as a method of keeping me away from the Arab affair. I decided that I must escape at once, if ever. A straight request was refused; so I took to stratagems. I became, on the telephone (G.H.Q. were at Ismailia, and I in Cairo) quite intolerable to the Staff on the Canal. I took every opportunity to rub into them their comparative ignorance and inefficiency in the department of intelligence (not difficult!) and irritated them yet further by literary airs, correcting Shavian split infinitives and tautologies in their reports.

In a few days they were bubbling over on my account, and at last determined to endure me no longer. I took this strategic opportunity to ask for ten days' leave, saying that Storrs was going down to Jidda on business with the Grand Sherif, and that I would like a holiday and joyride in the Red Sea with him. They did not love Storrs, and were glad to get rid of me for the moment. So they agreed at once, and began to prepare against my return some official shelf for me. Needless to say, I had no intention of giving them such a chance; for, while very ready to hire my body out on petty service, I hesitated to throw my mind frivolously away. So I went to Clayton and confessed my affairs; and he arranged for the Residency to make telegraphic application to the Foreign Office for my transfer to the Arab Bureau. The Foreign Office would treat directly with the War Office; and the Egypt command would not

hear of it, till all was ended.

Storrs and I then marched off together, happily. In the East they swore that by three sides was the decent way across a square; and my trick to escape was in this sense oriental. But I justified myself by my confidence in the final success of the Arab Revolt if properly advised. I had been a mover in its beginning; my hopes lay in it. The fatalistic subordination of a professional soldier (intrigue being unknown in the British army) would have made a proper officer sit down and watch his plan of campaign wrecked by men who thought nothing of it, and to whose spirit it made no appeal. *Non nobis, domine*.

BOOK I. The Discovery of Feisal — CHAPTERS VIII TO XVI

I had believed these misfortunes of the revolt to be due mainly to faulty leadership, or rather to the lack of leadership, Arab and English. So I went down to Arabia to see and consider its great men. The first, the Sherif of Mecca, we knew to be aged. I found Abdulla too clever, Ali too clean, Zeid too cool.

Then I rode up-country to Feisal, and found in him the leader with the necessary fire, and yet with reason to give effect to our science. His tribesmen seemed sufficient instrument, and his hills to provide natural advantage. So I returned pleased and confident to Egypt, and told my chiefs how Mecca was defended not by the obstacle of Rabegh, but by the flank-threat of Feisal in Jebel Subh.

CHAPTER 8

Waiting off Suez was the *Lama*, a small converted liner; and in her we left immediately. Such short voyages on warships were delicious interludes for us passengers. On this occasion, however, there was some embarrassment. Our mixed party seemed to disturb the ship's company in their own element. The juniors had turned out of their berths to give us night space, and by day we filled their living rooms with irregular talk. Storrs' intolerant brain seldom stooped to company. But today he was more abrupt than usual. He turned twice around the decks, sniffed, 'No one worth talking to', and sat down in one of the two comfortable armchairs, to begin a

discussion of Debussy with Aziz el Masri (in the other). Aziz, the Arab-Circassian ex-colonel in the Turkish Army, now general in the Sherifian Army, was on his way to discuss with the Emir of Mecca the equipment and standing of the Arab regulars he was forming at Rabegh. A few minutes later they had left Debussy, and were depreciating Wagner: Aziz in fluent German, and Storrs in German, French and Arabic. The ship's officers found the whole conversation unnecessary.

We had the accustomed calm run to Jidda, in the delightful Red Sea climate, never too hot while the ship was moving. By day we lay in shadow; and for great part of the glorious nights we would tramp up and down the wet decks under the stars in the steaming breath of the southern wind. But when at last we anchored in the outer harbour, off the white town hung between the blazing sky and its reflection in the mirage which swept and rolled over the wide lagoon, then the heat of Arabia came out like a drawn sword and struck us speechless. It was midday; and the noon sun in the East, like moonlight, put to sleep the colours. There were only lights and shadows, the white houses and black gaps of streets: in front, the pallid lustre of the haze shimmering upon the inner harbour: behind, the dazzle of league after league of featureless sand, running up to an edge of low hills, faintly suggested in the far away mist of heat.

Just north of Jidda was a second group of black-white buildings, moving up and down like pistons in the mirage, as the ship rolled

at anchor and the intermittent wind shifted the heat waves in the air. It looked and felt horrible. We began to regret that the inaccessibility which made the Hejaz militarily a safe theatre of revolt involved bad climate and un-wholesomeness.

However, Colonel Wilson, British representative with the new Arab state, had sent his launch to meet us; and we had to go ashore to learn the reality of the men levitating in that mirage. Half an hour later Ruhi, Consular Oriental assistant, was grinning a delighted welcome to his old patron Storrs (Ruhi the ingenious, more like a mandrake than a man), while the newly-appointed Syrian police and harbour officers, with a scratch guard of honour, lined the Customs Wharf in salutation of Aziz el Masri. Sherif Abdulla, the second son of the old man of Mecca, was reported just arriving in the town. He it was we had to meet; so our coming was auspiciously timed.

We walked past the white masonry of the still-building water gate, and through the oppressive alley of the food market on our way to the Consulate. In the air, from the men to the dates and back to the meat, squadrons of flies like particles of dust danced up and down the sunshafts which stabbed into the darkest corners of the booths through torn places in the wood and sackcloth awnings overhead. The atmosphere was like a bath. The scarlet leathers of the armchair on the *Lama's* deck had dyed Storrs' white tunic and trousers as bright as themselves in their damp contact of the last four days, and now the sweat running in his clothes began to shine

like varnish through the stain. I was so fascinated watching him that I never noticed the deepened brown of my khaki drill wherever it touched my body. He was wondering if the walk to the Consulate was long enough to wet me a decent, solid, harmonious colour; and I was wondering if all he ever sat on would grow scarlet as himself.

We reached the Consulate too soon for either hope; and there in a shaded room with an open lattice behind him sat Wilson, prepared to welcome the sea breeze, which had lagged these last few days. He received us stiffly, being of the honest, downright Englishmen, to whom Storrs was suspect, if only for his artistic sense: while his contact with me in Cairo had been a short difference of opinion as to whether native clothes were an indignity for us. I had called them uncomfortable merely. To him they were wrong. Wilson, however, despite his personal feelings, was all for the game. He had made preparations for the coming interview with Abdulla, and was ready to afford every help he could. Besides, we were his guests; and the splendid hospitality of the East was near his spirit.

Abdulla, on a white mare, came to us softly with a bevy of richly-armed slaves on foot about him, through the silent respectful salutes of the town. He was flushed with his success at Taif, and happy. I was seeing him for the first time, while Storrs was an old friend, and on the best of terms; yet, before long, as they spoke together, I began to suspect him of a constant cheerfulness. His

eyes had a confirmed twinkle; and though only thirty-five, he was putting on flesh. It might be due to too much laughter. Life seemed very merry for Abdulla. He was short, strong, fair-skinned, with a carefully trimmed brown beard, masking his round smooth face and short lips. In manner he was open, or affected openness, and was charming on acquaintance. He stood not on ceremony, but jested with all comers in most easy fashion: yet, when we fell into serious talk, the veil of humour seemed to fade away. He then chose his words, and argued shrewdly. Of course, he was in discussion with Storrs, who demanded a high standard from his opponent.

The Arabs thought Abdulla a far-seeing statesman and an astute politician. Astute he certainly was, but not greatly enough to convince us always of his sincerity. His ambition was patent. Rumour made him the brain of his father and of the Arab revolt; but he seemed too easy for that. His object was, of course, the winning of Arab independence and the building up of Arab nations, but he meant to keep the direction of the new states in the family. So he watched us, and played through us to the British gallery.

On our part, I was playing for effect, watching, criticizing him. The Sherifs rebellion had been unsatisfactory for the last few months (standing still, which, with an irregular war, was the prelude to disaster), and my suspicion was that its lack was leadership: not intellect, nor judgement, nor political wisdom, but

the flame of enthusiasm that would set the desert on fire. My visit was mainly to find the yet unknown master-spirit of the affair, and measure his capacity to carry the revolt to the goal I had conceived for it. As our conversation continued, I became more and more sure that Abdulla was too balanced, too cool, too humorous to be a prophet: especially the armed prophet who, if history be true, succeeded in revolutions. His value would come perhaps in the peace after success. During the physical struggle, when singleness of eye and magnetism, devotion and self-sacrifice were needed, Abdulla would be a tool too complex for a simple purpose, though he could not be ignored, even now.

We talked to him first about the state of Jidda, to put him at ease by discussing at this first of our interviews the unnecessary subject of the Sherif's administration. He replied that the war was yet too much with them for civil government. They had inherited the Turkish system in the towns, and were continuing it on a more modest scale. The Turkish Government was often not unkind to strong men, who obtained considerable licence on terms. Consequently, some of the licensees in Hejaz regretted the coming of a native ruler. Particularly in Mecca and Jidda public opinion was against an Arab state. The mass of citizens were foreigners—Egyptians, Indians, Javanese, Africans, and others—quite unable to sympathize with the Arab aspirations, especially as voiced by Beduin; for the Beduin lived on what he could exact from the stranger on his roads, or in his valleys; and he and the townsman bore each other a perpetual grudge.

The Beduins were the only fighting men the Sherif had got; and on their help the revolt depended. He was arming them freely, paying many of them for their service in his forces, feeding their families while they were from home, and hiring from them their transport camels to maintain his armies in the field. Accordingly, the country was prosperous, while the towns went short.

Another grievance in the towns was in the matter of law. The Turkish civil code had been abolished, and a return made to the old religious law, the undiluted Koranic procedure of the Arab Kadi. Abdulla explained to us, with a giggle, that when there was time they would discover in the Koran such opinions and judgements as were required to make it suitable for modern commercial operations, like banking and exchange. Meanwhile, of course, what townsmen lost by the abolition of the civil law, the Beduins gained. Sherif Hussein had silently sanctioned the restoration of the old tribal order. Beduins at odds with one another pleaded their own cases before the tribal lawman, an office hereditary in one most-respected family, and recognized by the payment of a goat per household as yearly due. Judgement was based on custom, by quoting from a great body of remembered precedent. It was delivered publicly without fee. In cases between men of different tribes, the lawman was selected by mutual consent, or recourse was had to the lawman of a third tribe. If the case were contentious and difficult, the judge was supported by a jury of four—two nominated by plaintiff from the ranks of defendant's family, and two by defendant from plaintiff's family. Decisions were always

unanimous.

We contemplated the vision Abdulla drew for us, with sad thoughts of the Garden of Eden and all that Eve, now lying in her tomb just outside the wall, had lost for average humanity; and then Storrs brought me into the discussion by asking Abdulla to give us his views on the state of the campaign for my benefit, and for communication to headquarters in Egypt. Abdulla at once grew serious, and said that he wanted to urge upon the British their immediate and very personal concern in the matter, which he tabulated so:—

By our neglect to cut the Hejaz Railway, the Turks had been able to collect transport and supplies for the reinforcement of Medina.

Feisal had been driven back from the town; and the enemy was preparing a mobile column of all arms for an advance on Rabegh.

The Arabs in the hills across their road were by our neglect too weak in supplies, machine guns and artillery to defend them long.

Hussein Mabeirig, chief of the Masruh Harb, had joined the Turks. If the Medina column advanced, the Harb would join it.

It would only remain for his father to put himself at the head of his own people of Mecca, and to die fighting before the Holy City.

At this moment the telephone rang: the Grand Sherif wanted to speak to Abdulla. He was told of the point our conversation had reached, and at once confirmed that he would so act in the extremity. The Turks would enter Mecca over his dead body. The telephone rang off; and Abdulla, smiling a little, asked, to prevent such a disaster, that a British brigade, if possible of Moslem troops, be kept at Suez, with transport to rush it to Rabegh as soon as the Turks debouched from Medina in their attack. What did we think of the proposal?

I replied; first, historically, that Sherif Hussein had asked us not to cut the Hejaz line, since he would need it for his victorious advance into Syria; second, practically, that the dynamite we sent down for demolitions had been returned by him with a note that it was too dangerous for Arab use; third, specifically, that we had had no demands for equipment from Feisal.

With regard to the brigade for Rabegh, it was a complicated question. Shipping was precious; and we could not hold empty transports indefinitely at Suez. We had no Moslem units in our Army. A British brigade was a cumbersome affair, and would take long to embark and disembark. The Rabegh position was large. A brigade would hardly hold it and would be quite unable to detach a force to prevent a Turkish column slipping past it inland. The most they could do would be to defend the beach, under a ship’s guns and the ship could do that as well without the troops.

Abdulla replied that ships were insufficient morally, as the

Dardanelles fighting had destroyed the old legend of the British Navy and its omnipotence. No Turks could slip past Rabegh; for it was the only water supply in the district, and they must water at its wells. The earmarking of a brigade and transports need be only temporary; for he was taking his victorious Taif troops up the eastern road from Mecca to Medina. As soon as he was in position, he would give orders to Ali and Feisal, who would close in from the south and west, and their combined forces would deliver a grand attack, in which Medina would, please God, be taken. Meanwhile, Aziz el Masri was moulding the volunteers from Mesopotamia and Syria into battalions at Rabegh. When we had added the Arab prisoners of war from India and Egypt, there would be enough to take over the duties momentarily allotted to the British brigade.

I said that I would represent his views to Egypt, but that the British were reluctant to spare troops from the vital defence of Egypt (though he was not to imagine that the Canal was in any danger from the Turks) and, still more, to send Christians to defend the people of the Holy City against their enemies; as some Moslems in India, who considered the Turkish Government had an imprescriptable right to the Haramein, would misrepresent our motives and action. I thought that I might perhaps urge his opinions more powerfully if I was able to report on the Rabegh question in the light of my own knowledge of the position and local feeling. I would also like to see Feisal, and talk over with him his needs and the prospects of a prolonged defence of his hills by

the tribesmen if we strengthened them materially. I would like to ride from Rabegh up the Sultani road towards Medina as far as Feisal's camp.

Storrs then came in and supported me with all his might, urging the vital importance of full and early information from a trained observer for the British Commander-in-Chief in Egypt, and showing that his sending down me, his best qualified and most indispensable staff officer, proved the serious consideration being given to Arabian affairs by Sir Archibald Murray. Abdulla went to the telephone and tried to get his father's consent to my going up country. The Sherif viewed the proposal with grave distrust. Abdulla argued the point, made some advantage, and transferred the mouthpiece to Storrs, who turned all his diplomacy on the old man. Storrs in *full* blast was a delight to listen to in the mere matter of Arabic speech, and also a lesson to every Englishman alive of how to deal with suspicious or unwilling Orientals. It was nearly impossible to resist him for more than a few minutes, and in this case also he had his way. The Sherif asked again for Abdulla, and authorized him to write to Ali, and suggest that if he thought fit, and if conditions were normal, I might be allowed to proceed to Feisal in Jebel Subh; and Abdulla, under Storrs' influence, transformed this guarded message into direct written instructions to Ali to mount me as well and as quickly as possible, and convey me, by sure hand, to Feisal's camp. This being all I wanted, and half what Storrs wanted, we adjourned for lunch.

CHAPTER 9

Jeddah had pleased us, on our way to the Consulate: so after lunch, when it was a little cooler, or at least when the sun was not so high, we wandered out to see the sights under the guidance of Young, Wilson's assistant, a man who found good in many old things, but little good in things now being made.

It was indeed a remarkable town. The streets were alleys, wood roofed in the main bazaar, but elsewhere open to the sky in the little gap between the tops of the lofty white-walled houses. These were built four or five stories high, of coral rag tied with square beams and decorated by wide bow-windows running from ground to roof in grey wooden panels. There was no glass in Jidda, but a profusion of good lattices, and some very delicate shallow chiselling on the panels of window casings. The doors were heavy two-leaved slabs of teak-wood, deeply carved, often with wickets in them; and they had rich hinges and ring-knockers of hammered iron. There was much moulded or cut plastering, and on the older houses fine stone heads and jambs to the windows looking on the inner courts.

The style of architecture was like crazy Elizabethan half-timber work, in the elaborate Cheshire fashion, but gone gimcrack to an incredible degree. House-fronts were fretted, pierced and pargetted till they looked as though cut out of cardboard for a romantic stage-setting. Every storey jutted, every window leaned one way or

other; often the very walls sloped. It was like a dead city, so clean underfoot, and so quiet. Its winding, even streets were floored with damp sand solidified by time and as silent to the tread as any carpet. The lattices and wall-returns deadened all reverberation of voice. There were no carts, nor any streets wide enough for carts, no shod animals, no bustle anywhere. Everything was hushed, strained, even furtive. The doors of houses shut softly as we passed. There were no loud dogs, no crying children: indeed, except in the bazaar, still half asleep, there were few wayfarers of any kind; and the rare people we did meet, all thin, and as it were wasted by disease, with scarred, hairless faces and screwed-up eyes, slipped past us quickly and cautiously, not looking at us. Their skimp, white robes, shaven polls with little skull-caps, red cotton shoulder-shawls, and bare feet were so same as to be almost a uniform.

The atmosphere was oppressive, deadly. There seemed no life in it. It was not burning hot, but held a moisture and sense of great age and exhaustion such as seemed to belong to no other place: not a passion of smells like Smyrna, Naples or Marseilles, but a feeling of long use, of the exhalations of many people, of continued bath-heat and sweat. One would say that for years Jidda had not been swept through by a firm breeze: that its streets kept their air from year's end to year's end, from the day they were built for so long as the houses should endure. There was nothing in the bazaars to buy.

In the evening the telephone rang; and the Sherif called Storrs to the instrument. He asked if we would not like to listen to his band. Storrs, in astonishment, asked ‘What band?’ and congratulated his holiness on having advanced so far towards urbanity. The Sherif explained that the headquarters of the Hejaz Command under the Turks had had a brass band, which played each night to the Governor General; and when the Governor General was captured by Abdulla at Taif his band was captured with him. The other prisoners were sent to Egypt for internment; but the band was excepted. It was held in Mecca to give music to the victors. Sherif Hussein laid his receiver on the table of his reception hall, and we, called solemnly one by one to the telephone, heard the band in the Palace at Mecca forty-five miles away. Storrs expressed the general gratification; and the Sherif, increasing his bounty replied that the band should be sent down by forced march to Jidda, to play in our courtyard also, ‘And,’ said he, ‘you may then do me the pleasure of ringing me up from your end, that I may share your satisfaction.’

Next day Storrs visited Abdulla in his tent out by Eve’s Tomb; and together they inspected the hospital, the barracks, the town offices, and partook of the hospitality of the Mayor and the Governor. In the intervals of duty they talked about money, and the Sherif s tide, and his relations with the other Princes of Arabia, and the general course of the war: all the commonplaces that should pass between envoys of two Governments. It was tedious, and for the most part I held myself excused, as after a conversation in the

morning I had made up my mind that Abdulla was not the necessary leader. We had asked him to sketch the genesis of the Arab movement: and his reply illuminated his character. He had begun by a long description of Talaat, the first Turk to speak to him with concern of the restlessness of Hejaz. He wanted it properly subdued, and military service, as elsewhere in the Empire, introduced.

Abdulla, to forestall him, had made a plan of peaceful insurrection for Hejaz, and, after sounding Kitchener without profit, had dated it provisionally for 1915. He had meant to call out the tribes during the feast, and lay hold of the pilgrims. They would have included many of the chief men of Turkey besides leading Moslems of Egypt, India, Java, Eritrea, and Algiers. With these thousands of hostages in his hands he had expected to win the notice of the Great Powers concerned. He thought they would bring pressure on the Porte to secure the release of their nationals. The Porte, powerless to deal with Hejaz militarily, would either have made concessions to the Sherif or have confessed its powerlessness to the foreign States. In the latter event, Abdulla would have approached them direct, ready to meet their demands in return for a guarantee of immunity from Turkey. I did not like his scheme, and was glad when he said with almost a sneer that Feisal in fear had begged his father not to follow it. This sounded good for Feisal, towards whom my hopes of a great leader were now slowly turning.

In the evening Abdulla came to dine with Colonel Wilson. We received him in the courtyard on the house steps. Behind him were his brilliant household servants and slaves, and behind them a pale crew of bearded, emaciated men with woe-begone faces, wearing tatters of military uniform, and carrying tarnished brass instruments of music. Abdulla waved his hand towards them and crowed with delight, 'My Band'. We sat them on benches in the forecourt, and Wilson sent them cigarettes, while we went up to the dining room, where the shuttered balcony was opened right out, hungrily, for a sea breeze. As we sat down, the band, under the guns and swords of Abdulla's retainers, began, each instrument apart, to play heartbroken Turkish airs. Our ears ached with noise; but Abdulla beamed.

Curious the party was. Abdulla himself, Vice-President *in partibus* of the Turkish Chamber and now Foreign Minister of the rebel Arab State; Wilson, Governor of the Red Sea Province of the Sudan, and His Majesty's Minister with the Sherif of Mecca; Storrs, Oriental Secretary successively to Gorst, Kitchener and McMahon in Cairo; Young, Cochrane, and myself, hangers-on of the staff; Sayed Ali, a general in the Egyptian Army, commander of the detachment sent over by the Sirdar to help the first efforts of the Arabs; Aziz el Masri, now Chief of Staff of the Arab regular army, but in old days Enver's rival, leader of the Turkish and Senussi forces against the Italians, chief conspirator of the Arab officers in the Turkish army against the Committee of Union and Progress, a man condemned to death by the Turks for obeying the

Treaty of Lausanne, and saved by *The Times* and Lord Kitchener.

We got tired of Turkish music, and asked for German. Aziz stepped out on the balcony and called down to the bandsmen in Turkish to play us something foreign. They struck shakily into ‘Deutschland uber Alles’ just as the Sherif came to his telephone in Mecca to listen to the music of our feast. We asked for more German music; and they played ‘Eine feste Burg’. Then in the midst they died away into flabby discords of drums. The parchment had stretched in the damp air of Jidda. They cried for fire; and Wilson’s servants and Abdulla’s bodyguard brought them piles of straw and packing cases. They warmed the drums, turning them round and round before the blaze, and then broke into what they said was the Hymn of Hate, though no one could recognize a European progression in it all. Sayed Ali turned to Abdulla and said, ‘It is a death march’. Abdulla’s eyes widened; but Storrs who spoke in quickly to the rescue turned the moment to laughter; and we sent out rewards with the leavings of the feast to the sorrowful musicians, who could take no pleasure in our praises, but begged to be sent home. Next morning I left Jidda by ship for Rabegh.

CHAPTER 10

Moored in Rabegh lay the *Northbrook*, an Indian Marine ship. On board was Colonel Parker, our liaison officer with Sherif Ali, to whom he sent my letter from Abdulla, giving Ali the father's 'orders' to send me at once up to Feisal. Ali was staggered at their tenour, but could not help himself; for his only telegraph to Mecca was by the ship's wireless, and he was ashamed to send personal remonstrances through us. So he made the best of it, and prepared for me his own splendid riding-camel, saddled with his own saddle, and hung with luxurious housings and cushions of Nejd leather-work pieced and inlaid in various colours, with plaited fringes and nets embroidered with metal tissues. As a trustworthy man he chose out Tafas el Raashid, a Hawazim Harb tribesman, with his son, to guide me to Feisal's camp.

He did all this with the better grace for the countenance of Nuri Said, the Baghdadi staff officer, whom I had befriended once in Cairo when he was ill. Nuri was now second in command of the regular force which Aziz el Masri was raising and training here. Another friend at court was Faisel Ghusein, a secretary. He was a Sulut Sheikh from the Hauran, and a former official of the Turkish Government, who had escaped across Armenia during the war, and had eventually reached Miss Gertrude Bell in Basra. She had sent *him* on to me with a warm recommendation.

To Ali himself I took a great fancy. He was of middle height,

thin, and looking already more than his thirty-seven years. He stooped a little. His skin was sallow, his eyes large and deep and brown, his nose thin and rather hooked, his mouth sad and drooping. He had a spare black beard and very delicate hands. His manner was dignified and admirable, but direct; and he struck me as a pleasant gentleman, conscientious, without great force of character, nervous, and rather tired. His physical weakness (he was consumptive) made him subject to quick fits of shaking passion, preceded and followed by long moods of infirm obstinacy. He was bookish, learned in law and religion, and pious almost to fanaticism. He was too conscious of his high heritage to be ambitious; and his nature was too clean to see or suspect interested motives in those about him. Consequently he was much the prey of any constant companion, and too sensitive to advice for a great leader, though his purity of intention and conduct gained him the love of those who came into direct contact with him. If Feisal should turn out to be no prophet, the revolt would make shift well enough with Ali for its head. I thought him more definitely Arab than Abdulla, or than Zeid, his young half-brother, who was helping him at Rabegh, and came down with Ali and Nuri and Aziz to the palm-groves to see me start. Zeid was a shy, white, beardless lad of perhaps nineteen, calm and flippant, no zealot for the revolt. Indeed, his mother was Turkish; and he had been brought up in the harem, so that he could hardly feel great sympathy with an Arab revival; but he did his best this day to be pleasant, and surpassed AM, perhaps because his feelings were not much outraged at the departure of a Christian into the Holy

Province under the auspices of the Emir of Mecca. Zeid, of course, was even less than Abdulla the born leader of my quest. Yet I liked him, and could see that he would be a decided man when he had found himself.

Ali would not let me start till after sunset, lest any of his followers see me leave the camp. He kept my journey a secret even from his slaves, and gave me an Arab cloak and head-cloth to wrap round myself and my uniform, that I might present a proper silhouette in the dark upon my camel. I had no food with me; so he instructed Tafas to get something to eat at Bir el Sheikh, the first settlement, some sixty miles out, and charged him most stringently to keep me from questioning and curiosity on the way, and to avoid all camps and encounters. The Masruh Harb, who inhabited Rabegh and district, paid only lip-service to the Sherif. Their real allegiance was to Hussein Mabeirig, the ambitious sheikh of the clan, who was jealous of the Emir of Mecca and had fallen out with him. He was now a fugitive, living in the hills to the East, and was known to be in touch with the Turks. His people were not notably pro-Turkish, but owed him obedience. If he had heard of my departure he might well have ordered a band of them to stop me on my way through his district.

Tafas was a Hazimi, of the Beni Salem branch of Harb, and so not on good terms with the Masruh. This inclined him towards me; and when he had once accepted the charge of escorting me to Feisal, we could trust him. The fidelity of road-companions was

most dear to Arab tribesmen. The guide had to answer to a sentimental public with his life for that of his fellow. One Harbi, who promised to take Huber to Medina and broke his word and killed him on the road near Rabegh, when he found out that he was a Christian, was ostracized by public opinion, and, in spite of the religious prejudices in his favour, had ever since lived miserably alone in the hills, cut off from friendly intercourse, and refused permission to marry any daughter of the tribe. So we could depend upon the good will of Tafas and his son, Abdulla; and Ali endeavoured by detailed instructions to ensure that their performance should be as good as their intention.

We marched through the palm-groves which lay like a girdle about the scattered houses of Rabegh village, and then out under the stars along the Tehama, the sandy and featureless strip of desert bordering the western coast of Arabia between sea-beach and littoral hills, for hundreds of monotonous miles. In day-time this low plain was insufferably hot, and its waterless character made it a forbidding road; yet it was inevitable, since the more fruitful hills were too rugged to afford passage north and south for loaded animals.

The cool of the night was pleasant after the day of checks and discussions which had so dragged at Rabegh. Tafas led on without speaking, and the camels went silently over the soft flat sand. My thoughts as we went were how this was the pilgrim road, down which, for uncounted generations, the people of the north had

come to visit the Holy City, bearing with them gifts of faith for the shrine; and it seemed that the Arab revolt might be in a sense a return pilgrimage, to take back to the north, to Syria, an ideal for an ideal, a belief in liberty for their past belief in a revelation.

We endured for some hours, without variety except at times when the camels plunged and strained a little and the saddles creaked: indications that the soft plain had merged into beds of drift-sand, dotted with tiny scrub, and therefore uneven going, since the plants collected little mounds about their roots, and the eddies of the sea-winds scooped hollows in the intervening spaces. Camels appeared not sure-footed in the dark, and the starlit sand carried little shadow, so that hummocks and holes were difficult to see. Before midnight we halted, and I rolled myself tighter in my cloak, and chose A. hollow of my own size and shape, and slept well in it till nearly dawn.

As soon as he felt the air growing chill with the coming change, Tafas got up, and two minutes later we were swinging forward again. An hour after it grew bright, as we climbed a low neck of lava drowned nearly to the top with blown sand. This joined a small flow near the shore to the main Hejaz lava-field, whose western edge ran up upon our right hand, and caused the coast road to lie where it did. The neck was stony, but brief: on each side the blue lava humped itself into low shoulders, from which, so Tafas said, it was possible to see ships sailing on the sea. Pilgrims had built cairns here by the road. Sometimes they were individual piles,

of just three stones set up one above the other: sometimes they were common heaps, to which any disposed passer-by might add his stone—not reasonably nor with known motive, but because others did, and perhaps they knew.

Beyond the ridge the path descended into a broad open place, the Masturah, or plain by which Wadi Fura flowed into the sea. Seaming its surface with innumerable interwoven channels of loose stone, a few inches deep, were the beds of the flood water, on those rare occasions when there was rain in the Tareif and the courses raged like rivers to the sea. The delta here was about six miles wide. Down some part of it water flowed for an hour or two, or even for a day or two, every so many years. Underground there was plenty of moisture, protected by the overlying sand from the sun-heat; and thorn trees and loose scrub profited by it and flourished. Some of the trunks were a foot through: their height might be twenty feet. The trees and bushes stood somewhat apart, in clusters, their lower branches cropped by the hungry camels. So they looked cared for, and had a premeditated air, which felt strange in the wilderness, more especially as the Tehama hitherto had been a sober bareness.

Two hours up-stream, so Tafas told me, was the throat where Wadi Fura issued from the last granite hills, and there had been built a little village, Khoreiba, of running water channels and wells and palm-groves, inhabited by a small population of freedmen engaged in date husbandry. This was important. We had not

hardy and strong, were not taught to pace fair and softly and swiftly, like these rich mounts of the Arabian princes.

Yet her accomplishments were today largely wasted, since they were reserved for riders who had the knack and asked for them, and not for me, who expected to be carried, and had no sense of how to ride. It was easy to sit on a camel's back without falling off, but very difficult to understand and get the best out of her so as to do long journeys without fatiguing either rider or beast. Tafas gave me hints as we went: indeed, it was one of the few subjects on which he would speak. His orders to preserve me from contact with the world seemed to have closed even his mouth. A pity, for his dialect interested me.

Quite close to the north bank of the Masturah, we found the well. Beside it were some decayed stone walls which had been a hut, and opposite it some little shelters of branches and palm-leaves, under which a few Beduin were sitting. We did not greet them. Instead, Tafas turned across to the ruinous walls, and dismounted; and I sat in their shade while he and Abdulla watered the animals, and drew a drink for themselves and for me. The well was old, and broad, with a good stone steyning, and a strong coping round the top. It was about twenty feet deep; and for the convenience of travellers without ropes, like ourselves, a square chimney had been contrived in the masonry, with foot and hand holds in the corners, so that a man might descend to the water, and fill his goat-skin.

[1] **This note by the author refers particularly to the privately printed subscribers' edition of 1926; this contained a total of 125 illustrations and the majority of them, apart from tail-pieces reproduced in the text, were in colour. (See Preface page 16)**

[2]**Dr. Russell Naughton, *The Farman Brothers* (CTIE, 2002, available from: http://www.ctie.monash.edu.au/hargrave/farman.html, accessed online 1 March 2007).**

[3]**Jones, *The War in the Air*, 161.**

[4]**"Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2," *Wikepedia.com* (Wikipedia Foundation, Inc., 2007, available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Aircraft_Factory_BE.2, accessed online 2 March 2007).**

[5]**Jones, *The War in the Air*, 179.**

[6]**Cameron Riley, *Australian Flying Corps 1914-1919* (2001, available from: http://www.australianflyingcorps.org/2002_1999/afc_aircraft_martinsyde.htm, accessed online 18 March 2007).**

[7]**"Fokker E.III," *Wikipedia.com* (Wikimedia Foundation Inc., 2007, available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fokker_E.III, accessed online 4 March 2007).**

[8]**Penrose, 87.**

[9]**Baker, A., 139.**

[10]**"Royal Aircraft Factory S.E.5a," *Wikipedia.com* (Wikimedia Foundation Inc., 2007, available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Aircraft_Factory_S.E.5a, accessed online 14 March 2007).**

[11] **Pirie-Gordon, 112.**

[12]**Funderburk, 87.**

[13]**Ibid., 97.**