

EPISODE X.IN HARNESS AGAIN .

Very different was the Cairo of ~~1925~~ my arrivals of 1915 and 1935 from that of today in 1951. The past ten years especially have made immense differences in at least the outward ways of town life. Egypt has now her full Independence, — and indeed Independence and Freedom are treasures beyond price for the welfare of the National Soul. In 1935 there was still a British High Commissioner at the Residency, and it was from there that all real authority still emanated. In the streets efficient British Police were still to be seen and in all Administrative positions the British influence was still predominant. All that has now utterly gone.

Egypt now is indeed Independent and even if still inexperienced in the ways of Governemnt, it is understandable that a true patriot should prefer to have his country ruled even inexpertly, by people of his own race rather than ruled expertly by rulers who, however efficient, well intentioned, and just, are yet of a race basically so different in many every day ways of thinking as to cause a constant sense of frustration and loss of self respect in those they govern. This however must presuppose a majority of true patriots in the country gaining her Independence with a true urge to achieve eventually the betterment of their land and their fellowmen. National freedom is not just a kind of sanction for inertia, nor is it the licence for a limited few to live in selfish leasure to the detriment of a majority to whom neither voice is permitted nor guidance extended. Is it possible to say that the great mass of Egyptian people now is freer, more happy, and with higher hopes for the future? Unless this is true, it is a question indeed if the Independence of the nation means freedom or any of those lovely things of energy and idealism which that word denotes. Indeed the Occupation is "gone with the wind". It remains for Egypt's leaders to show whether that wind has left behind merely a great drift of meaningless dust or whether when the dust storm of the wind has settled, a new, constructive and inspiring future, is to be seen; a future in which as a young

but eager nation she will be full of that now essential urge to take a share ~~in~~ the betterment of all mankind. It needs high courage of spirit, and great honesty of leadership to achieve this. May these great gifts be granted by Providence so that the withdrawal of the British, made not without great and willing sacrifice, and the coming into authority of Egypt achieved not without gallant zeal and inspiration, mutually ^{may} reach a noble achievement accomplishment in adding something real to the world's constructive goodwill.

My re-introduction to the Cairene scene was full of interest for me and the thought of three months at rest in this once familiar setting was most welcome. My host was kindness itself. However fate willed otherwise. Within three weeks only, an unexpected official summons obliged Claude B. to return to duty, - and myself to be left somewhat "stranded" in Cairo! I had meanwhile however contacted a number of old friends at Air Headquarters, and just at this critical moment an offer was made to me which guided my destiny into quite unexpected directions. I was asked to accept a special appointment from Air Headquarters Staff.

The Italian war in Abyssinia was becoming increasingly threatening to the world peace, and I was informed that as at the moment it so happened that personnel at A.H.Q. with political experience ~~of~~ the Middle East, were scarce, I would be very welcome on A.H.Q. political staff. I knew that my medical category, - still officially 90% disability, - would prevent my passing any medical examination. I did not however put this aspect forward, but at once expressed my willingness to accept the appointment if I could be permitted to remain

on a "civilian" volunteer basis, with some kind of equivalent official status on the Staff. It was decided to offer me a job as Liaison Officer, in a category which would not necessitate my wearing uniform, or require my passing a medical board. To this I agreed. I thereupon left the Cairo Hotel into which I had by then ~~had~~ moved from Zamalek, and set myself up in a flat in _____ to which my new position on Headquarter's Staff entitled me. I thus became, - rather to my bewilderment at so sudden a turn of events, a full Staff Officer and with my name soon duly inscribed as such in the Official Directory of the British Forces in Egypt.

I was happy to find myself working in close touch with officers wellknown to me from old times. The Head of my Department ~~was~~ ^{was} in fact Spackman, by then a Wing Commander, who had been one of my most trusted and efficient subordinates in long past days when I had been Commanding a Flight in Iraq. Spackman, - since then became an Air Marshal, - had that graciousness of temperament which made easy and congenial the reversal of position by which I now found myself his subordinate.

The following letters give some description of subsequent events.

Letter to M.E.J. from Turf Club, Cairo, dated 20th February 1936.

"This letter I am sending by ordinary sea route, to insure against its being opened or tampered with on its way through Italy, as is liable to happen to letters going by airmail. You will be wanting to know about the item of news which I sent you by telegram recently. I sent you that telegram because what had just happened had brought me a feeling of encouragement.

When our late King died, I, like most people, felt deeply moved. Besides the reverence one felt instinctively for his character I could not help feeling a personal link also.

I have been spoken to with great kindness by King George; and also by Queen Mary. I also came into close touch, though more formally with King George at St. James' Palace.

Then with our present King (Edward VIII) I seem to have had a series of curious links for many years, starting with the occasion when we collided with one another in our respective punts on the river at Oxford, when we were both "undergrads". Later I saw him here in Egypt, and later again he used to come into our Mess in Italy where I was in command of a Flight with which he was on familiar terms. Then latterly there came about the curious series of chances which brought us into such close contact in our plans for unemployed people in Kennington. It was, though always so entirely informal, - probably for that very reason, - a strangely close link. We have often talked in a way I could never have done in any formal setting, and especially I shall remember the day our Prince spent with me at Sutton Courtenay. He had recently returned from a tour of the distressed areas in the North, and after lunch he took me aside and we walked up and down discussing unemployment. He spoke with great earnestness, and with extraordinary sympathy and understanding; and sometimes on his face there was a look of real personal suffering, as though he himself had been sharing with these people all the grievousness of their distress. At that time he gave me permission to write to him personally upon any matter which I considered of importance. Only once had I availed myself of this concession; and then when the King, His Father died, the memory of this occasion came back to me. I felt I wanted to write again. So I wrote my letter, briefly and quite personally and sent the closed envelope to his private secretary to be delivered as a private letter to His Majesty. Having done this, I felt somewhat concerned lest the incident should be misinterpreted and considered impertinent. Then a telegram reached me here direct from Buckingham Palace, signed not by any secretary, but by His Majesty himself. It was not at all a formal message, but just a personal message of gratitude for my letter such as any good friend might send. It seems to me an exceptionally gracious action that so great a King, at a time of personal stress and with so many overwhelming public duties, should yet find time to send a personal telegram of thanks to an old friend who is merely one of the least important of his subjects. You will understand, my dear Mother, how gracious a memory this will be for me".

Letter to M.E.J. from Headquarters Middle East, Cairo,
3rd of March 1936.

"I have had a letter from you this week and another from Aunt Edie, both by the same mail, quite a nice budget of home news. I am writing this letter from my office in H.Q. having just returned from my first tour. I have been away

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only four days, but it was most interesting. I met a number of people I had not seen for ages including Group Captain Insull V.C. who was with me at Netheravon at the beginning of the 1914 war; and another Senior Officer (Gardener) who used to be my observer at Ismailia in 1915. I have visited several places already that used to be very familiar to me in the old days, and it makes one feel rather as though in a dream to be so suddenly in these wellknown surroundings of long ago. I have been receiving much kindness. I am off again on tour tomorrow, and shall be making the acquaintance of numerous more people, including our Navy at Alexandria. My "opposite number" on the Naval Staff at Ismailia whom I visited recently, is a Commander I used to know quitewell when I was Liaison Officer with H.M. Sloops in the Persian Gulf. Thank you, for so cleverly sending a letter to greet me on my birthday. My thoughts were with you, as usual, on that day. In the evening, as a "birthday treat" I was taken out by an old pal to dine at "Jimmies Restaurant" as it is locally called (officially the St. James' Restaurant). It is just now the restaurant of Cairo and we had an excellent dinner.

I think I am doing right in taking on this work here. It seems right that I should try to do something for my country again, if they are able to find a place for me. We hope that present world difficulties will soon pass, but I think you, as well as I, will feel glad that I have had my services accepted at this time of crisis.

Nevertheless, dearest Mother, my service to you will always be ready whenever you really wish it. At the moment however, I think we have made the right decision. Thank you for your encouragement, and for your wise letters. Please give my love to all."

These are extracts from letters from my mother

Sunday March 15 1936

8 Montacute Gdns,
Tunbridge Wells,
Kent.

"Yes, my darling, I think it is very right that you should take on this work, if you feel up to it. ... And I am very glad they have accepted your services. Its a pity not to make use of your ability, especially in the interest and good of your country; If only its not too much for you my darling old Huck, for already you have given a great deal for your country.

Letter to M.E.J. From the Government Rest House, Sollum,
Western Desert, 30th March 1936.

" Here I am at the destination of that journey, at the start of which I wrote to you from Alexandria. I am seated now at the broad open windows of a room in a Government Rest House, in which at the present time, I have my quarters. It is a solidly constructed building, set upon an eminence, built half way up a rocky hill-side, bordering Sollum Bay. The outlook is fine and spacious. First I look upon the wide verandah of this building, then there is a level terrace, bordered by a low but solid wall, and beyond that the outlook is across a deeply blue, lagoon-like Bay. This Bay is bordered by a broad sweep of sandy soil, and in the background the cliffs rise to a plateau, extending back into the far distance. The sandy shore, and the cliffs, and the plateau are all in varied tones of yellow and

brown, contrasting strikingly with the vivid blue of the sea. There are just a few little white Arab houses near the sea shore, and on the summit of the cliffs, the old Turkish ex-barracks can be seen. It is so familiar and yet so strange to find myself in this desert setting again; the long familiar spaciousness, the hazy glimmer of the sun upon the sand, the curious forlorn yet free note of the wind as it rises in full force at midday, — and then its gentle sighing and stirring amongst the camel thorn, as evening falls. Very vast and overwhelming these lonely places seem at times, and yet very friendly too. It is difficult to explain, but I think dear Mother you will understand.

This rest house is reasonably comfortable, and — a bit reminiscent of the old Dak Bungolows in India, — and I have been staying here with an Army Officer who is engaged upon the same work as myself. To get to Sollum is a longish journey. First nine hours in a slow military train on a railway, much of which is newly constructed and very jolty. Then one reaches the large British Military position at Marsa Matrouh. The remaining 150 miles or so, one has to do by motor transport over a desert track.

31st March 1936.

"At 5.30 a.m. this morning, we were up and away. With two cars of the Egyptian Frontier Patrol, Captain Kennett and I proceeded for some 70 miles into the interior along the Italian frontier. There is barbed wire all the way, and one passes close to a number of forts. In some places, Italian territory extends out some distance on the Egyptian side of the barbed wire defences set up by the Italians, and in this area the frontier is only marked by little cairns of stones. Now and then we encountered Italians on patrol duty, and we eyed one another through field glasses. If one strays into Italian ground one is liable to attack and capture, so one has to be cautious. In two days time I set off on another patrol right out to see Siwa Oases, and soon after that returned to Marsa Matruh and then Alexandria. I look forward to news of you and your visit to our cousin Alice."

In April 1936 a somewhat disconcerting episode occurred through my contracting scarlet fever. There had been a small epidemic of this complaint in Navy Quarters at Alexandria, but it did not seem likely to involve myself. My liaison duties did however include frequent visits to our fleet and at this particular time I had attended Naval Conferences on shore and another on H.M.S. "BARHAM" (later sadly to be sunk off the Egyptian Coast during the war). I had therefore contacted many officers senior and junior. It so happened that the "Star of Cairo" was also again in Port, so I went on Board to visit my old friends. I had for two days been feeling unwell, but on the day following this I woke to realise that something was definitely wrong with me. The medical officer when summoned to my hotel forthwith diagnosed scarlet fever!

Off I was sent to the isolation wing of the Anglo-Swiss Hospital; but that was not all, for everyone of those with whom I had made contact during the immediately previous days had to be warned. There was a considerable stir created, but it can be happily related that none of my contacts developed the disease, to my no small relief of mind!

As for me, I spent an uncomfortable spell in Hospital; but my convalescent period was cheered by association with a fellow victim, young Alec Gregory-Hood of the Grenadier Guards, nephew of Lord Willington, the one-time Vice-Roy of India. We were taken ill almost simultaneously, and recovered simultaneously. We then mutually decided to spend the period of convalescent leave granted to us, by together visiting the Island of Cyprus.

On Tuesday May 12th, we embarked at Alexandria on board the S.S. "FOUADIEH". Just before embarking we were guests for lunch with the Admiral of the Port and Lady Wells, who gave us a cheerful "send-off". After a call at Port-Said, we disembarked at Famagusta. There we bought locally a small two-seater car. In this we motored all round the island in leisurely manner, staying a night or so at any place that pleased us. This included a visit to Sir Richmond Palmer, the Governor, at Government House, Nicosia. He took us to the races at Larnaca; and on another occasion we all lunched with Rupert Gunnis. The latter had a charming house full of lovely furniture, and an interesting collection of antiquities and icons, he himself being an authority in such matters especially on the antiquities and the history of Cyprus about which he has written an excellent book. At a distressing thing happened, for a small signed photo of the Prince of Wales, which I always had with me was somehow stolen from my room. The Police Chief of Cyprus himself took up the matter; but sad to say the photo was never traced.

On Saturday the 23rd of May, having sold our little car again almost without loss, we re-embarked on the S.S. "FOUADIEH" from Limassol.

The skipper was a good friend of ours and as the special "De Luxe" suite was unoccupied, he allowed us to use it without extra charge! This suite comprised a large double cabin and bathroom and a small private deck. So ~~the~~ ~~rest~~ ~~of~~ our voyage was very pleasant and as we proceeded via Famagusta we had a

period of three days in which to appreciate it.

On arrival back at Alex. our leave together ended, and I returned to G.H.Q. in Cairo. However, soon I was back in Alexandria again for my duties with the fleet made my visits there frequent, and though with a good deal of work yet very pleasant; ~~for~~ the Navy fellows are always most congenial to work with, -- and as hosts they are almost too charmingly hospitable!

After being well entertained in both the gun room and ward room it was sometimes necessary to summon considerable effort to readjust oneself to the sober setting of some immediately subsequent conference at which even Admirals and Senior Captains might be among those assembled! I have particularly happy memories of "BARHAM", "QUEEN ELIZABETH", "VALIANT", and the Aircraft carrier "GLORIOUS", both from the standpoint of work and companionable recreation. My "opposite number" for Liaison in this setting was usually Lt.Cmdr. Cliphant, a most efficient and helpful associate to work with. On shore also I had many friends especially at Mustapha Barracks amongst the officers of the Grenadier Guards, and there I frequently lunched or dined with John Ford, Alec Gregory-Hood,^{or} Pat Hanbury as my hosts. Sometimes we would attend the Polo at the Sporting Club, sometimes go to a cinema and sometimes there were parties at the Union Bar and so on; all most pleasant and companionable. Group Captain Lloyd who had been in France with me early in 1915, and his charming wife, were also kindly hospitable at their attractive villa.

In Cairo too, work and "play" were agreeably combined at that period, and there too I found myself amongst many friendly

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people, in particular David Hanbury-Tracy, brother of my old pal John. Besides his duties as an officer of the "Brigade" stationed at Kasr-el-Nil Barracks, David H.-T. had a studio in a most picturesque old Arab "Palace" in the Arab quarter up near the Citadel, where he painted excellent pictures. In neighbouring studios were Sanad Basta and Tadros, two Egyptian painters of fine talent and congenial disposition. We had most congenial parties in this background. In our Embassy I had friendly links including Heber-Percy and Digby Hamilton the A.D.Cs. There were Embassy lunches and cocktail parties; and one dinner I especially remember when my Air Officer Commanding was also a guest, and I sat opposite Ahmed Maher Pasha. The latter, some years in the past, had been implicated in the assassination of General Lee Stack, the Sirdar. A few years later, during the war, Ahmed Maher then Premier, himself died at the hands of an Egyptian assassin, just as did his confrere Nokrachi Pasha who was similarly assassinated while Premier, and who had similarly been implicated in the murder of the Sirdar. What a strange turn of fate! My very old pal George Paul of the 11th Hussars who had been with me in Cairo in 1919, was again here with his regiment, so that I again often went out to their Mess, then at Hilmieh; in the Tank Corps I had many friends, among them young Lt. Pettingell son of that Pettingell who was with me in Q Force in Istanbul in 1919; and Geoffrey Wincott of my London days came out from England to stay for a while at my flat. Those ^{too} were agreeable times agreeable to remember. Many of those companions died in the war, — amongst them my particular friend David H.-T.; but dear old John his brother survives. John is likely to be my guest here in Cairo next month, February 1951, and I look forward greatly to seeing him again. He and David were good pals.

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I now include here some extracts from John's letters to me from Thibet. The letters were forwarded to me rather mysteriously from the India Office, by the Marquess of Zetland. I greatly appreciate the kindly thought that John had retained for me during his arduous explorations, and much appreciate the privilege of his letters to me. John had been a stalwart supporter of mine in my schemes for assisting unemployed men in former years.

Kadan Gompa
Kum
E. Tibet.
Nov. 13th 1935.

Dear old Jimmy,

How's the boy? Lost me fountain pen weeks ago, damn it, so hope this pencil-scrrawl will be legible time it reaches you. I am writing to your club, as I havn't the foggiest notion where your abode is these days. This letter will go via Lhasa, for Englishmen, even old lags like us, are popular with this government at the moment, as there is a 'rapprochement' going on between India and Tibet, to the discomfiture of China and Russia. It is incredible the number of wars that have gone on between Tibet and China in the last three decades that one has never heard of, about five altogether I think. Since reaching this country at the end of May we have been breaking fresh ground all the time, with the exception of a day or two here and there where we crossed somebody else's route, and our maps should be popular with the Indian Survey; we are working all the time with range finder, compass, and clinometer, heights with Watkins's aneroid and mercurial thermometer, and checking our position about every 20 miles by theodolite star observations for latitude and time, using the position time method in calculation. The range finder especially we have found invaluable, for plane tabling is practically impossible in this deeply gorged country, and compass route traversing is liable to such big errors. For a couple of months I did have to work with only compass and watch, when my companion, Ronald Kaulback, and I separated to do different parts of the country, and I must confess it grew a bit wearisome checking one's speed and counting one's paces day after day. However I had a cheery time on my own and discovered several new passes which was rather pleasing. Extraordinarily chaste leds we have been, Jimmy, you'd be surprised, we've one 'drunk', I've forgotten what for, I think we just felt like it; I remember Rom Kaulback, who gets extraordinary Russian at times, played weird Cossack songs on his balalaika, and then passed out noisily into the courtyard of the caravanserai below, to the dismay of some sleeping yak-drivers. His brother Bill claims the proud record of being the only European to have been carried to bed by four lamas! Among other things I am having rather fun collecting turquoises for my wife; a bit of a gamble, as they are apt to die and go green, as perhaps you know. We are now following up the Solwein river

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to its source, which has been our chief object all along; we had to cross the main China Road to reach it, and that was fun, for we stopped in a large caravanserai for a week, bringing the map up to date, developing photos etc, also buying many things. We are now wearing Tibetan dress, our own clothes being rather worn, and up here can ride instead of marching, so we have bought ourselves some fine saddlery, complete with bells, and make a fine feudal show on the road these days. I have grown a beard, Jimmy, of truly noble proportions, and now have it plaited in three places, with turquoises attached; it remains to be seen if my wife appreciates it, but I have been promised a champagne dinner in England if I appeared with one, so I don't intend to miss that. Some might call this a lonely life, I suppose, but there is always so much to do with the surveying, collecting insects, specimens of rock, small animals, flowers etc, and it is all work after my heart, that only now and then one thinks a party would be very welcome. I am very glad now that I left the Sudan, I should never have made a success of it. I wonder how your trip to the Black Sea went off, must have been interesting I should think; hope you didn't fall to the allures of those Turkish maidens; but no, not our Jimmy I think, he leaves the women along. Talking of things Turkish they have yak-curds in this country which is even better than "yagout", with the addition of a spot of golden syrup it is our staple form of pudding out here. I have heard that up on the Central Plateau they have an excellent drink made of fermented mare's milk, tastes like champagne they say, and I am anxious to try it; the Tibetan version of "arak" is only a shade, but a very slight shade, better than date -arak, and personally I cannot stomach it. We shall come out eventually via Ladakh and Kashmir; we originally meant to return down the Subansiri River in Assam, which would have meant that we could have carried on working practically till we reached Shillong; going by Ladakh however we shall have about a fortnight's march through already known country. The reason for our change of plan was that we had heard Kingdon Ward was in this part of the country and returning south to India; we knew that the exploration of the Subansiri had long been his heart's desire, and further it was the only route south from where he was at the time, the only other ways being through Abor country, where he would almost certainly have got bumped off, or through Bhutan which is forbidden territory. The mystery to us is how he ever got to this part of Tibet from the Naga Hills on the Burmese Assam border, where we knew for a fact he was in March; he must have done about 4 or 5 month's march in a sort of semi circle through the bloody awful jungles of Upper Burma and the Mishmi country in northern Assam, during the rains when the leeches are at their worst and the whole country is like a Turkish bath. If he did that it is a staggering feat for a man well over 50. However he is an enthusiastic orchid hunter, and that may account for it. I must bid ye salaam now Jimmy, fare thee well, and I shall look forward to a gathering round the wassail-bowl with you some time in the future. If you do any more work among the chaps in Kennington, give them all my best.

Way - hay
 John. H.T.

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Nahashō Biru
Kam
T. Tibet

March 10th 1936

Dear Jimmy,

I hope all goes well with you and that you are living as chaste a life as we are here ! We have been having all kinds of entertainments in this rather remote place, for two traders have turned up from Ladakh, and they have with them a gramophone and a "Bioscope"; the films for the "Bioscope" are five French ones of about 1910 vintage, and they gave us huge enjoyment; the traders give nightly performances to the locals at ~~1~~ per hour. They also had some "Gold Flake" cigarettes, so we have had the first good smoke for nearly a year. Also the Tibetan New Year festival took place last week and there was a devil dance in the temple, a fine show. Our work goes on much as usual, I think the map ought to be quite decent when we've finished; we haven't done much collecting the last few months, but winter is breaking up now, and we should soon be picking up more specimens. We had a cheery Christmas, and cracked into our last bottle of rum, while our servants produced a very solid sort of Tibetan cake, made of barley flour and butter. We are still mapping the Salween river, and when we have found the source will continue in a roughly N.W direction across the central plateau, then turning down home to Ladakh and Kashmir. We live chiefly on yak-meat and turnips and I think both of us will be glad of some European food when we reach India. I have grown a really fine bread by now, Jimmy, but whether my spouse will approve or not remains to be seen; on state occasions, such as when we visit a provincial governor, I sport two turquoises plaited into it; the local people having never seen this fasion before, it being my own invention, they think it must denote something very important indeed, which is a good impression to create in an essentially fendal country. I think, and I hope, that with any luck the Survey people of India should be pleased with our small efforts here, they are anxious to know about the area beyond their borders, but one of course debarred from sending an official survey column, the Tibetan government being suspicious filk.

Yours Ever.
John H.T.

Tongpan
S.E. Tibet

Sept. 18th 1936

My dear Jimmy,

Please excuse the odd bit of bumf on which I write, but we are getting rather short. We are treading our way homewards these days and if all goes well should reach India about the end of November. I fully expect I shall post this myself in Sadiya, in Assam, for we are unlikely now to meet anybody goint south before us. When you get this epistle do send me a line to the Bachelors Club, telling me in what quarter of the world you are, so that perhaps we may once more imbibe together

a glass of cheer, or even two. We are still in the valley of the Salween, but getting down again into the S.E. corner of Tibet, to where the river has previously been surveyed. Hereabouts we have found it a most elusive river, for though as depicted on the conjectural maps it appears to provide an obvious route, yet actually it runs in a tremendous gorge, often 4,000 ft deep, with the result that all the main routes merely cross it, and do not run along it, while it is only occasionally that one can find a path of any sort running, close to the river for more than a day or two. This week I have been doing a bit of wandering on my own, while my friend Ron Kaulback is at our temporary base working out some calculations. I must say we are looking forward to a taste of the fleshpots these days; a chicken under 5 years of age would be a delicacy, as also would food cooked in something other than rancid butter. However in the last month we have fared quite luxuriously, for down here at this attitude of 8,000 ft we have found grapes and wild peaches growing, and at this place I even had a drink of something remotely resembling wine; on the other hand meat and butter have been hard to obtain, the cattle owing places being five thousand feet higher. I wonder what you have been doing of late, and whether you have taken up unemployed work again; in any case I shall look forward to hearing your news. You know, Jimmy, apart from my family there are awfully few people I particularly wish to see when I get back; you included I can only think of about half a dozen fellows. Didn't you find that when you were in Arabia? I mean what a number of entirely unnecessary acquaintances one makes, and how few are the people who matter to one. I sometimes wonder if we shan't find civilisation a trifle irksome after this life; especially the people with the fabulous chatter that goes on, and the way one has to rub shoulders with scum generally. I'm sure I shall object at first to the publicity of eating in a restaurant, also to scrambling to catch a bus. But there will be compensations. In a few days' time we shall be leaving the Salween for good. And at the end of October shall start for Assam through the Mishmi Hills a grim bit of country and a wickedly bad path, but its only 16 days treck. It's a curious fact that there's not even a passable mule track crossing the Indian frontier into Tibet from the Darjeeling-Lhasa road eastwards until you get to Bhamao on the eastern border of Burma. East of Sikkim there's Bhutan, the Miri Hills, and Aborland, all independent and inhabited by thugs, then come the Mishmi Hills, and then the Nung country of northernmost Burma, though which we came last year. If the Indian government only had the sense to make a decent track up through the Mishmi Hills an enormous amount of trade would flow down into India from Eastern Tibet and Western China, which needs an outlet but is at present badly hampered by having to go right round by Lhasa. But governments are often foolishly economical, and the Indian government no less than others. Looking forward to seeing you again; Jimmy we'll have a binge.

Yours Aye
John H.T.

There now follow two notes from John Glubb Pasha, my old friend of the early days in Iraq, when we shared a queer little mud-brick house in Diwaniyah, and toured the water-ways of the Middle Euphrates and roamed the deserts; John giving me my first introduction to many famous Tribal leaders. Glubb's first letter is dated 24th February 1936, but I also here add a much later letter of his dated 15.7.1948 ____ The 2nd letter shows a trace of that growing disillusion which ~~we~~ we the older established Arabists are now being faced with as a distressing fact. John has done marvellously consistent and constructive work in his part of the world, since many years. To his own Arab soldiers of the Jordan Army he remains a hero, but to certain political mischief makers of the Middle East he is of course a thorn in the flesh, and they do all they can to distort facts about him and his work, fortunately without any important success.

Ammen.
Trans- Jordan
24.2. 1936.

I hope you will forgive the long delay in answering your letters, and not construe it to mean any coldness in welcoming you to these parts. The fact is that I have just been on a long tour in the desert, and, although your letter followed me out there I had no means of posting a reply. I was very sorry that you had to cancel your trip, and hope that you will get another chance to visit us. If you do, please give me as much warning as possible, because as you see, I am liable to be away for several weeks on end, and letters get held up. What have ~~bee~~ you been doing for the last 10 years? Lots of water has passed under the bridge since our Diwaniyah days, hasn't it? I am getting quite grey headed, and begin to feel middle aged and discuss where one can live when one retires! This isn't a bad little country to vegetate in, but its pure vegetation - and quite nice, while it lasts. Best of luck and hoping to hear again.

Yours
John Glubb.

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AMMAN
Trans-Jordan

15. 7. 48.

Thank you very much for your letter of 8th May. Yes I met Casey several times in the Middle East, and liked him very much. Please remember me to him if you get the chance. The Arab situation is, as you say, disappointing. We do not realize how long it takes a nation to grow up, perhaps 100 or 200 years. The installation of full British democracy in a nation still in a rather infantile condition politically, produces exasperating and even tragic results.

Thank you again for your letter.

Best of luck.

Yours.

John Glubb.

Letter to M.E.J.. from H.Q. M.E. Cairo, dated 10th 100

of October 1936.

" I have been back nearly a week and am busy again with local routine. I have been paying calls and having official interviews, but have had a bit of leisure as well including an afternoon shopping with my charming Turkish lady, and an evening out to dine in the Mess of the Scots Guards. They are quartered in the Kasr El Nil Barracks by the Nile. The Mess rooms are rather striking; I believe they were once part of one of the old palaces. The apartments are lofty and rather pompously gilded, but interesting in appearance. We dined on a wide-roofed terrace by the Nile; and when the Regimental Pipes were played at the

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end of dinner, they gave an appropriately romantic touch to the general atmosphere, ~~which was~~ not perhaps exactly Scottish ~~as a whole!~~

On Monday next I dine out at Mead with Tomlyn Bey and his nice wife, both of whom are officials at the Ministry of Interior.

My Palestine tour was full of interest. I flew first to Jerusalem. It is a longish flight, and it was a very bumpy day, and I regret to have to admit that I felt exceedingly air sick, which was very disgraceful of me. I was at Jerusalem at the King David Hotel on the day of the arrival of the General Staff and First Regiments of the new reinforcements of Palestine, a historic and interesting occasion. From Jerusalem I went to Haifa, visiting Nablus also. I had my own official car, but travelled as one of the general convoy, under the protection of armoured cars. It was an immense convoy, including lorries and civilian motor buses crowded with women and children. The road passed through one of the most rebel infested areas, but all went well. At one place a large lorry overturned but no one was hurt. I was rather impressed at the way our escorting aeroplanes at once detected the accident and came swooping down very low watching the hill-side carefully to prevent our being sniped during the time we were halted.

Haifa I found looking much as I last saw it years ago and I stayed at the Windsor Hotel yet again. Then I returned to Jerusalem and spent some days there during which various shooting and bombing incidents took place in the streets including the senseless killing in the main streets near the King David Hotel of two young Christian lads and two elderly men.

The King David Hotel has now become G.H.Q. of the Army and Air Force, and the Army and R.A.F. Flags fly from it side by side. From Jerusalem, I went to Jaffa and Tel-Aviv. Tel-Aviv I was interested to see, a strange contrast to other Palestinian towns, entirely European in plan and appearance.

I now obtained permission for my car to travel alone independently of convoys, for the greater convenience of my work. I had with me however a cheery young lance-corporal to act as my armed "bodyguard", and the driver and I myself were of course also armed. Next day I visited Gaza where I stayed several days, living in the little fortified camp of the R.A.F. 8th and Eighth Hussars. The District Commissioner at Gaza, I used to know in Iraq and he was very helpful to me. Bombs burst in the little town each night while I was there, but there was less sabotage and land mining of the roads.

I went on patrol with the Eight Hussars and that was instructive; on one occasion I was also asked to accompany the D.C. with a military demolition party to blow up rebel property in a certain Arab village. It was an interesting though not a pleasant experience. The culprits deserved these measures of

reprisal on account of previous ruthless violence on their part, but it can never be a pleasant task to have to eject families forcibly from their homes and then to demolish their homes before their eyes. We had with us of course an adequate escort of armoured cars and troops. First the village was entered, and troops with machine guns took up position. Then the Mayor and leading men were summoned. An informal "Court" was held in a palm grove, and the men reprimanded for their ill deeds and their punishment explained. We had orders to blow up three substantial buildings in or near the village. The first house selected proved to have a sick man in it, so it was decided to spare it. Another had to be selected instead however, no easy task, with weeping women and agitated men, each producing seemingly excellent reasons why their own house ought to be spared. We gave the owners of the selected houses permission to remove all their furniture and personal goods; then explosives were carried in; then a vast crash, a column of smoke and flames, pitiful wailing of the watching womenfolk, and then no more houses. It was a grim business, and we all left the scene gloomy and depressed, and not feeling at all comfortable about that sort of war. However, these Arabs had shown no mercy at all in their attacks upon neighbouring Jewish settlers and that made us feel a bit more justified. There was a curious outcome amongst the Eight Hussars who collected a considerable subscription to pay to the families of the people whose homes they had blown up. That night there were extra bombs thrown about in Gaza, but without much damage. A small military post nearby however was quite heavily attacked by the Arabs of the neighbourhood. The Hussars have had a strenuous time during recent weeks and have not only been sniped but have had a number of their cars blown up by land mines.

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*Note:

It was at about this time that I wrote for my Chief at A.H.Q. a confidential Memo. This referred to the increasing number of reports I was hearing of British Military harshness towards the Arabs. In particular it became my duty to report on a conversation I had had with certain British Civil and Military Police, in which they bragged, correctly or not, of the drastic and illegal method they were using to subdue districts and extort confessions. They also alleged the summary shooting of young Arab lads, without trial. In this connection, the book written by Miss Frances Newton is of interest. In her chapters on those times she speaks with much distress and no little courage of similar incidents known to her. Although a Christian gentlewoman, widely ^{respected} and beloved, and renowned for good works, who had been created a Dame of Justice of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, her courage brought upon her ruthless official anger, and she was banished from her home and from Palestine. One wonders if that was really either a necessary or wise official action. The real mistake of this Lady was perhaps that like other uninitiated, unofficial people, she believed that official policies are guided by "facts" of Right & Wrong, and not by the "make beliefs" of Expediency.

One day in Gaza village when I had left my car for a moment in front of the house of the D.C., an Arab walked up to my driver who happened to be a Jew, attached to our M.T. for special duty and told him calmly that if he had not been standing besides a British soldier (my Lance-Corporal) he would have shot him at sight. So you see Palestine is not a very peaceful sort of place to tour around in just now.

Last time I had seen Gaza, it was during one of the big attacks we made upon the Turks in the 1914 war. Strange to see it again like this still so warlike and unrestful.

My final port of call was Al-Arish, just withing Egypt. I stayed a couple of days there as I had frontier matters to discuss with the Acting Governor of Sinai (the Governor himself being on leave). I had never been inside the little town before though of course it was a familiar landmark to me in war days, and when we drove back the Turks, my aeroplane, as you know, was the first to land on the Aerodrome, a couple of miles outside El-Arish itself. I found it a quaint clean little Arab town, with

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friendly people, and pleasant shady palm groves. I was the guest of the Acting Governor, and much enjoyed my visit there. Thence I returned by train to Cairo and here I am. Thank you for your cheerful letter. I am glad you are seeing cousin Alice sometimes. She is a dear person, only so very dug-in to her individual way of life, without for a moment suspecting that she is often selfish of other people's needs and distresses. My love to you all."

To M.E.J. from Turf Club Cairo, 12th September 1936.

"Since my tour in Palestine I have been on another five days tour, and on Friday next I set off once again for Jerusalem, so you see I am never still for very long, and particularly my visits to Palestine have been frequent. My last visit there was again not without incident. The evening before I arrived two airmen had been assassinated by Arabs while they were walking peacefully in the garden of Getsemany. During my first night at Jerusalem, the Mayor of Hebron was murdered in his house and there was sniping of troops, police, etc. On the night of the Saturday (I arrived on a Friday) there was a dance given at my Hotel, the King David. At about 10.30 p.m. I had gone up to my bedroom for a while and was looking out of my window. Suddenly a fusillade of shots rang out in the Hotel grounds and I saw figures scurrying amongst the trees. I went downstairs again. I found the Hotel Officials somewhat agitated but not the British Officers and their wives who continued ~~the~~ dancing or sitting on the terrace just as though nothing unusual had happened. It seems that what had actually taken place was that some police on duty in the hotel grounds had seen an Arab aiming a rifle over the wall at the figures of the dancers who could be plainly seen in the ballroom. The police fired at the Arab, who then slid off the wall and disappeared. No casualties occurred.

On Sunday afternoon, I was summoned by the Group Captain to his flat. He said he had a "rather tiresome" job which he wanted me to undertake. Very soon two cars arrived, the first for myself and a certain local individual who was under threat of assassination and who was to be placed in my care; and the second car containing an armed escort for our protection. I was also given an armed bodyguard to travel with me in my car. Thus prepared, we set off along the road leading past the Dead Sea and over the Transjordan Frontier to Amman. This road, though quite a good one, is through rather wild and lonely country, very suitable for an ambush and cars have frequently been attacked there, and bridges blown up. We went as fast as possible and no incident occurred, in fact the journey was quite boring for we saw not a sign of any hostile person, and we were not even sniped. At Amman the climate is delightful, and I had two refreshing days living in the Officers' Mess of the R.A.F. I was taken one afternoon to Zerka, where the Officers of the Transjordan Frontier Force have had a delightful swimming pool constructed by damming

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a little river in a valley. There are trees and grass all around, and I had a pleasant couple of hours bathing and sun basking. I tried later to get into touch with my old friend John Glubb, but unfortunately he was (as always) on tour in the desert. I was very sorry to miss him.

My unfortunate car companion, the fellow under threat of assassination, I managed satisfactorily to dispose of. He was eventually despatched elsewhere by aeroplane. He seemed almost in a state of collapse from sheer fright before he left.

On the return from Amman to Jerusalem, I did not think it necessary to retain my second car load of armed guardians, but only took one extra armed escort with me in my car. All went well again and we all arrived back in Jerusalem none the worse for the small adventure.

15th September 1936. to continue my narrative, I stayed a few more days in Jerusalem after my return. I could not see much of the town as most of it is in no man's land as far as Europeans are concerned. At 7.00 o'clock in the evening comes "curfew", and no one is then allowed in the streets without a "curfew pass"; but even if one has a pass as I had, one cannot go more than a short distance without grave risk. I made the acquaintance however of an interesting and pleasant fellow, Prince Ferdinand of Lichtenstein who had arrived in Jerusalem by air, and one evening we wandered out to the only restaurant which is still allowed to remain open in the evening, and we also did a little exploring together.

Lichtenstein's father is the ruling Prince of a little semi independent state, rather similar to Luxembourg. I have been invited to go and stay there some day, but I don't suppose it will ever happen though Ferdinand of Lichtenstein is a very companionable fellow of about my own age who has travelled a great deal. He is related in some way with the wellknown Austrian family of Windish-Gratz, a young lady of which family, you may remember, I used some times to go around with in London. I also had long discussions with the American Jewish representative of the New York Times. He was interesting enough to talk to but one realised one had to be on one's guard and he was much too self assertive a person for my taste.

I returned to Egypt by train by contrast with my outward journey which was in a Service aircraft. Our train was preceeded by a trolley to look out for sabotage of the line, and altogether the atmosphere was distinctly warlike. From Kantara I went on to Port-Said then back to Ismailia before eventually returning for a few days to Cairo. My next tour took me to Alexandria where I lunched with an old Iraqi friend of mine Tahsin Kadri, then by air to Port-Said and so by train to Cairo again.

I am writing this in my office. Here in Cairo I am kept fairly busy having as you know, been left in charge of this Dept.

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I have to keep in personal touch with the Senior Officials of the Ministry of Interior and the Governorate, and with Civil Officials in other towns and districts which I visit, such as the Governor of the Western Desert, and so on. I also keep in touch with Army Headquarters and while the Fleet was at Alex., as Liaison Officer, from time to time I had to visit the Flagship (Queen Elizabeth) and various other ships. Now that the Fleet is gone, I only occasionally visit Navy House at Port-Said. I have certain financial responsibilities, and a good many foreigners to deal with. So you see my duties are fairly various. It keeps me well occupied, and I am glad to say that I so far have been able to maintain good terms with almost all my official contacts and find my work most interesting. Apparently my job is to continue for some time yet. I had a Medical Board again recently. I am still kept in my former category of 90% disability; however they are not proposing to interfere with me in this voluntary work of mine. It is a rather peculiar situation. Lately I have been coming a good deal into personal touch with the A.O.C. in C., and he always treats me considerably and pleasantly which is encouraging.

I met my young cousin Malcolm recently at Almaza on his way to his duties in Burma. He seemed very cheery and we had a companionable lunch together."

At about this time the Coup d'Etat of Bakr Sidky took place in Iraq and my old friend General Nouri Pasha es Said ~~arrived~~ then Prime Minister of Iraq, arrived in Egypt as an exiled refugee. Having known him through his days of ever increasing authority it was strange and rather sad to see him so desolate and disregarded through his change of fortune. It always astonishes me how diplomatic quarters seem able to adjust their friendliness with such finesse in proportion to a person's usefulness and prosperity. At this time Nouri Pasha came frequently to my flat and rather pathetically he thanked me for continuing to treat him with consideration. Actually it was I who, by a carefully chosen route of approach through a friend of mine, managed to arrange for Nouri Pasha to be received for a talk by one of the secretaries of our Embassy.

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H.H.

News of the assassination of General Jaafar Pasha El Askari reached Cairo at this time. I discussed this news with my A.O.C. who then instructed me to write as follows to General Nouri Pasha es Said.

H.Q.M.E., Cairo

7th of November 1936.

Dear General Nouri Pasha es Said

A message has reached this Headquarters today from Air Marshal Sir Charles Burnett in which he asks that his very deep regret should be expressed to you at the tragic death of General Jaafar el Askari.

This message I have been instructed to convey to you immediately.

In doing so, may I please associate myself also most sincerely in the very deep regret which this grievous event, I know, has aroused in the minds of all of us who have been so long associated with Iraq.

Believe me, Sir, Yours very sincerely,

H.H.J.

To M.E.J., from H.Q.M.E. Cairo, 30th of December 1936.

"I seem to have let the time run by since I last wrote to you, but you will have had my cable of greeting at Xmas, and I expect you have been very busy preparing for my sister Molly's arrival with her family so that time will have been passing quickly for you.

I expect you duly received my letter telling you of my tour to Siwa, and you will also have had the news of the extension of my appointment. I have just had a note from Dick Thornton saying he will be in Cairo in a few days time staying at Shepheards. I shall enjoy talking to him of "the old folks at home".

My Xmas day was reasonably pleasant here. The morning was passed in the usual manner of an Xmas morning in a "Service" setting. First all the Officers of H.Q. Staff called on the

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Sergts Mess of H.Q. Staff. Then the Officers and Sergeants together went to call on the corporals' Mess. Finally we all assembled in the luncheon hall of the airmen's Mess, where as the custom is, the Officers and Sergeants waited upon the Corporals and airmen during their Xmas dinner. Later I went to lunch with Bowman and Stackman at their flat in Gezira when we had an excellent Xmas luncheon complete with crackers, turkey and a fiery Xmas pudding. At 6.30 p.m. I went to a cocktail party, and in the evening to a family Xmas dinner with Sqdn. Ldr. Smiley and his wife and children, which was a congenial ending for the day.

Here all is now fairly quiet, but with the uncertainties in Palestine one never knows how long the quiet will last.

The abdication of our King in England has of course been a saddening affair; and yet with an inspiring aspect also. He made his mistake, if mistake it can be called, but with courage took the course which he considered right in adjusting his position after it. It is self evident that a man who by his every action, through long and difficult years, has shown himself high minded, brave and self-sacrificing, would not suddenly commit any sort of action of mere vulgar stupidity. He can only have acted after the most careful consideration.

It is an interesting point that the pompous pebble-throwing of high dignitaries of Church and State was never publicly carried out until after the King had already definitely abdicated.

Had King Edward been willing to satisfy himself with a quietly illicit relationship, and if Prime Minister Baldwin had not been afraid of the King's energetic broad mindedness, I doubt very much whether any pious utterances of Church and State would ever have been heard by the public. It is now, when the King has endeavoured at vast self-sacrifice to set right as far as possible his mistake in conduct (if one even admits that it was in the special circumstances a mistake) by the ordinary actions of a gentleman, that the thunders of distorted religion break out King Edward's whole life has been an example of practical Christianity, and he deserves better of Church Dignitaries than mean innuendoes and cheap attacks. A Man whom even the Archbishop might agree was greater than themselves once said "Judge not that ye be not judged". This seems to have been realised by numerous lesser leaders of Religion, whose letters and Church utterances show a sense of justice and restraint in dignified contrast to the ungracious haste of those who have rushed in where indeed angels might fear to tread.

If anyone asks you what I think about all that has happened, just say that it is a subject ~~which~~ neither I nor anyone else should venture to make aggressive statements upon unless we first are able to know the real facts behind it all.

I have just had a letter from Daphne Grenfell, in which she says that she with Lady Lilian and Iris are about to do a voyage in the Mediterranean, and that they hope to include Cairo in their tour. It will be fun if they turn up.

I have had a note from H.E. Sheikh Hafez Wahbah, King Ibn Secoud's Ambassador in London, saying he is visiting Cairo soon and hopes to see me. That too will be interesting."

In February 1937 there came for me a happy period when Lady Lilian Grenfell with Daphne and Iris arrived in Egypt. They came, rather pluckily, on a small vessel carrying only two or three passengers besides themselves. Their port of arrival was Alexandria, and thither I went to meet them. I had with me some members of my staff, in particular the excellent Hamza Eff., whose skill in dealing with the disembarkation arrangements was a great help. Lady Lilian was her usual gracious self, Daphne and her sister as gay and dapper as ever, and both full of thrill at this their first visit to Egypt. In Cairo my dear visitors settled first at the Victoria Hotel, and then moved to Bodmin's House, the wellknown Pension run by the stately Miss Bodmin. The Pension still exists, but now in Zamalek and unlike its old self because Miss Bodmin is no more here, though the building still retains her name. We all had happy jaunts together sometimes including Ida Flower (Lady L's cousin), or Nicky Rathbone my pleasant young friend of the Scots Guards. A picknick on camels was a special event, starting from Mena House, and I took an adventurous looking snapshot, which I enlarged, mounted, and entitled romantically "Lady L.G. and Party crossing the Western Desert, February 1937". We have all kept copies of this memento.

At our Embassy; of course, the Grenfells were welcome guests; and Russel Pasha and his wife, (who may one ventures to ~~think~~

suspect have a partiality for "the nobility") found in them a congenial link of acquaintanceship.

After a fortnight poor Lady L. developed a mysterious fever which luckily however did not last long. To recuperate she and her daughters went to Helouan where I frequently visited them. In due course the doctors came to the decision that the patient had suffered a mild form of scarletina, a mild version of Scarlet Fever; none of the rest of the party caught it much to Lady L's relief of mind.

My diary of those days is almost indecipherable now, but I can read that on Thursday, February 25th, Daphne, Iris and I dined together at the Continental Hotel and attended the Cabaret.

Alas all good times come to an end. At Cairo station, I saw my dear friends off on their way to Jerusalem. I had written to Air Commodore Buss, and he gave them a kindly welcome to the Holy Land, and they wrote telling of interesting experiences, before at last they embarked again for England.

The possibility now rose that after various extensions, my appointment would now come to a close. The following letters were written with this possibility in mind.

H.Q.M.E. Cairo

19th of January 1937.

To Sqdn/Ldr. Foster, D.F.C. (now Air Marshal Sir R.M. Foster), Air Headquarters in Iraq.

"My dear Pussy,

Many thanks for all the assistance you gave me during my visit to Iraq. Your help was invaluable and your hospitality delightful.

You will have heard that the A.O.C. has definitely suggested my taking on a job in Iraq when I leave Egypt. What do you think about this?

Of course it appeals to me very much. It would be best, from my point of view, that I should take on any work, if it is offered to me, on the same basis as I am working upon here, i.e. as a retired bloke on a special appointment.

I visualise possible complications if I tried to take it on in any other way as that might involve an official medical examination.

With my warmest thanks again,

Yours ever

H.H.J.

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H.Q.M.E. Cairo

10th of February 1937.

To Group Captain K.C. Buss, O.B.E.
Headquarters British Forces in Palestine & Transjordan.

Dear Group Captain,

Herewith a copy of a summary of the small tour which Willetts and I did together. It was a very pleasant way of concluding my tour of duty in this part of the world.

This past year, that I have spent under your command, has been an exceedingly interesting and very happy one and I should like, if I may, to thank you again for the advice and consideration which you have extended to me while I have been endeavouring to carry out certain work, not previously well defined, and needing a certain amount of weariness and tact, in which your readily given advice has been a comfortable and encouraging stand-by.

With every good wish to yourself, both in Palestine, and in your future work, believe me,

Very sincerely yours,

H.H.J.

H.Q.M.E. Cairo

13th of February 1937.

To Sir A.W. Keown-Boyd, K.B.E., C.M.G.,
Director General, European Department,
Ministry of Interior, Cairo.

Dear Sir Alexander,

Up to yesterday, I had imagined that my period of duty in this particular part of the Middle East had drawn to its close. My rather continuous touring of recent weeks in Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan has unfortunately prevented me paying my usual calls in Cairo, and so it had been my intention, before going on elsewhere, to write to express to you my cordial thanks for the consideration which you have been so kind as to allow us in this office during the last year.

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As a matter of fact, I have just received a telegram from the Air Ministry that I should again extend my period of duty here in Cairo, so that I shall be hoping, after all, to see you personally again in the course of my work.

Nevertheless I should like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to you now just the same, and I assure you that the courtesy and kindly assistance which has been extended to me by yourself, by Hamilton, by Mrs. Tomlyn, and all those in your Department, has been very fully appreciated.

With my very warm good wishes, believe me,

Sincerely yours,

H.H.J.

In February 1937, my old friend Sheikh Hafiz Wahba, Saudi Arabian Minister and then Ambassador in London, wrote to say he would be visiting the Hedjaz, and inviting me to meet him in Jeddah. It had long been his wish that I should meet H.M. King Abdul Aziz Ibn Seoud, and this visit would provide the opportunity. The invitation was that I should proceed to Hedjaz, not officially, but as the personal guest of the King. As I was then holding my appointment at A.H.Q., I had of course to submit this proposition for Official Service approval. This was obtained and my Commander-in-Chief was so good as to allow me special air facilities as far as Port-Sudan to make easier my journey.

The following letters and diary are a record of this visit.