

EPISODE XXI.

Australia, England; and work for the Arab Refugees

As a link between the past "Episodes" and the "Epilogue" with which I am about to conclude them the following few extracts from various papers and notes will be a sufficient further record of my one and half years in Australia and my first visit to England after fourteen years abroad;- and also upon some aspects of efforts on behalf of Arab refugees in Palestine:-

WITH THE S.S. "MISR" - EGYPT TO AUSTRALIA VIA SOUTH AFRICA

MARCH 10th 1947 - APRIL 21st 1947

On the 10th March, 1947 I embarked at Port Said in the s.s. "Misr", taking with me friendly memories of my twelve years continuous sojourn in the various countries of the Middle East, centered on the congenial surroundings of my Cairo setting - that great city of sunshine and strange contrasts which I first came to know in December, 1915. My final remembrance of Egypt is the kindly courtesy of H.E. Fouad Sherin Pasha, Governor of the Suez Canal Zone, who extended to us the facility of his official launch to convey my Mother and myself from the landing stage to our ship at her anchorage in the harbour, and allowed us the most helpful guidance of the Senior Officer of the Egyptian port control to see us safely on board. This final considerate thoughtfulness of His Excellency made a typical conclusion to add to my store of pleasant memories of Egypt's hospitality, in which my warm thanks are due to many people of very contrasting position, from the very highest to the most modest in status.

And so I found myself on board the s.s. "Misr". The s.s. "Misr" (which being translated from the Arabic means the s.s. "Egypt"), originally built as a cargo ship, and then used as a British troopship, was now to become the first vessel under the Egyptian flag to carry passengers to Australia, and indeed the first passenger ship, I think, to go direct from Egypt to South Africa and Australia since the War. Her accommodation was still, for emergency reasons, scarcely altered from that of a troopship, but we were nevertheless in a vessel of no little historical interest especially in these days of Egypt's newly achieved independence. Moreover she was almost dramatically interesting from the amazing number and variety of her human freight. In all, more than twenty-five nationalities were represented on board, very varied in background, in age, and customs, yet all linked closely in the stirring fact that almost all were venturing forth into a new world and a new life. Walking around not without difficulty, for the ship though a compact and sturdy vessel, is only of seven thousand tons, and on board there were altogether almost a thousand persons one could observe in the expressions of many as they gazed seawards all the range of human hopes, all the tangled and moving memories of the past, memories of affection, memories of distress, memories of the grim war years in Europe.

In many faces there was still loneliness and tragedy, but in all there seemed to flicker forth a stirring expression in which hope was dominant, hope of freedom, of independent enterprise, and of friendships to come. There was the gallant old German lady over eighty years of age, quite alone on board. Her memories are of ruthless eviction from her home by the Nazis, of a dear one's death after lonely flight from their country... but.. and her old face lit up with happiness as she said it.. "My dear niece in New Zealand has written to say she wants me." There were the three Italian brothers, the eldest scarcely eighteen, the youngest only twelve. At the close of the war in Italy the eldest was a Partisan fighting the Germans, and saw youthful companions of his captured and mercilessly shot. Their Mother died, they lost their home.... but now a relative in Australia has sent for them. They possessed little but the clothes they wore, and a little gold necklace of their Mother's, and they spoke no language but Italian, but in their eyes there was hope. There was the young Polish ex-soldier who had seen the martyrdom of Warsaw; there was the handsome Slovak lady whose estates were grasped by Hitler on his arrival in Prague; there was the pleasant Swiss youth, with serious eyes but a delightful smile, on his way to an island north of Australia, to endeavour to reorganise family property, devastated in the fighting against the Japanese. All these, and many others spoke eagerly of the future and its high hopes. At Mombasa the inhabitants, British, African and Arab, welcomed with kindness and some astonishment, our very cosmopolitan company as it trooped ashore for a change of scene; and at Durban, a delightful modern city, except for the short-sightedness of its too rigid "colour bar", there joined us also the South African football team, a fine and cheerful set of youthful fellows, almost all till recently in the fighting forces of the Services and all evidently brimming with determination to win further laurels for their country; and there were ~~like~~ with us in addition some dozen young Australian sailors, being repatriated home after various patriotic duties and adventures in far seas, and tolerating with good cheer and composure certain disconcerting aspects of their journey homewards. A stirring episode of the voyage was the celebration of their Independence Day by the many Greeks on board, and this was carried out with a blend of dignity and gaiety, pleasant to see. What a wonderful mission for this little Egyptian ship, bearing so many human souls to new enterprises. The task has not been easy; for on a new venture some mistakes must be expected and such mistakes, if made, cannot but have an important aspect. The tropic heat of the earlier weeks of the voyage was very severe,... and the vessel was not built for the tropics. There were many hundreds of persons on board with very varying standards of life... and the ship is small and her decks not spacious. Passengers mostly were not rich, and the costs were high. Nevertheless in all main essentials we came through well, and we passengers in this long voyage came to regard with friendship and sincere esteem the Captain, Officers and crew of our vessel. During the voyage, though for a time the multi-lingual speech and contrasting outlook of the community on board made any organized sport or pass-time difficult to arrange, yet in due course mutual understanding was to some extent established, and there were cheerful dances on deck, a concert or two, and a party for children.

There were other less happy times when the weather was not kind. Sea-sickness then brought most people to a common level of the especial sort of misery which that dismal complaint produces, not at all improved by the alarm and agitation of the inexperienced, and their small ability to deal expertly with the less aesthetic aspects of their malady. The long weeks at sea were also not without their graver aspects.... for instance the restlessness of certain sections who became hostile to one another was a development to be watched with care and tact; and there was at least one case of a passenger, driven by who knows what lonely distress, who became so mentally disturbed as to need special treatment; and one remembers too the pathos of the gentle-eyed little lady, journeying alone from Greece, who having somehow contrived to bring her cat; ; an unusually amiable and intelligent cat.. on board, lived in perpetual dread of possible separation at the end of the voyage. A final most happy episode however was our arrival at Freemantle and our first glimpse of Australia, both there, and also in the nearby city of Perth, surprisingly old-world and calm of aspect. It was particularly pleasant to note the kindly, natural, friendliness of treatment accorded to the new-comers, so evidently foreign, from our ship. In particular this was noteable in the case of our darker-skinned shipmates from amongst the s.s. "Misr's" officers and crew, who seemed at first a little assertively on their guard after their less cordial welcome at Durban, but who rapidly resumed their normal pleasant warmth of manner, as they thawed in the rays of Australian good-will. From Freemantle I telephoned to my sister at her husband's estate near Melbourne, some 1,700miles away. To get through took only 15-minutes, the cost for 6-minutes was only twelve shillings, and this memorable talk, the first I had had with my sister for many years, was clear as tho she were in the next street. Impressive telephonic efficiency. Then came the last lap of our voyage, across the Bight of Australia. The Bight lived fully up to it's boisterous reputation and the s.s. "Misr" battled her way through the great toppling waves of a full gale; her passengers, pensive, her decks awash, and her somewhat over populated cabins and sleeping quarters in all the disarray of sliding suit-cases, tumbled kit and broken crockery. Nevertheless even sea-sickness was no longer so depressive, for Melbourne and the end of the journey were now close at hand; and during these days of such tumultuous tossing, a special word of thanks is due to our Sudanese and Berberine stewards, whose good-cheer and willing service brought stimulation even to the most despondent of the sea-sick passengers. Thus then did we at last arrive at Melbourne, and amidst poignant scenes of reunion, some weeping as they met, some laughing, some with tensely silent hand clasps, others in exuberant embraces, and watched sympathetically but with some embarrassment by Australian on-lookers, our cosmopolitan multitude reached the end of their voyage after six long weeks at sea.

Then now comes a letter to Husny Pasha, at Abdin Palace:-

"Melbourne Club,

June, 30th, 1947.

We very greatly appreciated His Majesty's gracious message sent at a time when the Doctors seemed able to give no hope of my Mother's recovery. We are thankful indeed for this merciful improvement now. You will realise however that I have been through a long period of grave anxiety.

Our voyage which took more than six weeks was very interesting. We were able to get several days on shore in comfortable hotels both at Mombasa and at Durban, and this gave us intervals of rest.

The estate of my brother-in-law, Donald Mackinnon and my sister, at Marida Yallock is a lovely place. The house is an old family home built about 100 years ago. It is a rambling house, built in "Colonial" style. The gardens immediately around it are pleasant, and very English looking. Situated partly on a slope, and with high trees on one side, the gardens look out across a valley through which runs our little "private" river, and beyond it are the fertile rolling pasture lands, extending into the far distance, and with our fine herds of cattle grazing everywhere. On the other side of the house is a small lake, pleasant for swimming in the summer - though it is much too cold to swim there now during the present winter season which I am finding very chilly indeed after Egypt's continuous lovely sunshine. However inside the house there are always log fires blazing in all the fire-places, and that cheers one up. We have here in the country also an amazing abundance of cream, milk, butter, eggs, vegetables, meat and other good foods. What a contrast to the terrible scarcity which exists everywhere in Europe. As a matter of fact a large amount of food is being sent from Australia to England, both by the Government and by many private persons. The Australian people are an interesting study I find. In general there seems a very true democratic spirit amongst them, and there seems promise of great future progress. It is a very striking thing to notice that out in the countryside there is no poverty at all - everyone, including all the workers on the big estates like my sister's, are well housed, well fed and well clothed.

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Even in the big cities there is very little poverty compared with the big cities of the "older world". The shops, both in villages and towns are well stocked with articles of good quality, showing that the population has a high standard of living, and though some articles are still rationed, all prices seem surprisingly moderate. Our social contacts at Marida Yallock are limited by distance, but nevertheless there is a good deal of exchange of hospitality in the "country house" style. Often one goes out to lunch or dinner at neighbouring estates 30 or 40 miles away. Many of these country houses are handsome residences - but after our former ways especially in Egypt, Kenya etc. it is however surprising when quite often in some stately home, one's elegantly dressed hostess and one's host in faultless evening dress, themselves do the service at table and perhaps after dinner disappear discreetly with one or two guests to "wash up" dishes in the kitchen premises. Though there are sufficient workers for the land it is now almost impossible to get domestic staff for the house, either in town or country. My sister so far is lucky in this respect, but even so her domestic staff is greatly reduced compared with the old days. This attitude here of social equality between workers and employers though a little startling to a newcomer, actually seems to work well. It obviously has excellent possibilities for the future, unless the Communist element, which even here is trying to insinuate itself from abroad, should succeed in disrupting the excellent democratic basis upon which the present good progress in Australia is founded. Of course in spite of the theory of social equality, in practice this is not always exactly adhered to. The big land-owners such as my brother-in-law and his relatives, are still in fact a surprisingly exclusive circle. For purpose of work etc., they mix on terms of equality with their workers and estate hands, but in their private social relationships they do in fact remain conservative in personal outlook. However this does not interfere with their democratic principles in matters of importance. For instance the Government has decided that all big landlords must hand over very large sections of their lands for the use of servicemen returning from the war. Almost without exception the big land-owners are co-operating in this scheme most willingly. My brother-in-law has been complimented by the Australian Government for his prompt response in this matter. You will see from my address that I am spending a few days in Melbourne. I have been motored here from Marida Yallock about 150 miles away, and am staying at the Melbourne Club, of which I have had the privilege of being made an honorary member. This is the "Club Mohamed Aly" of Melbourne, and has all the prestige and correct atmosphere of any old established club of important status. Here there are still no signs of changing times and the levellings of democracy.

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It is pleasant and interesting here and there are many distinguished persons amongst the members, including Dick Casey, whom His Majesty and yourself will remember as Minister of State in Cairo. He is a very old friend of my brother-in-law. The town of Melbourne is a pleasant place - well laid out with good shops, theatres, good cinemas and many gardens, including one of the best laid out botanical gardens in the World. There is also a University, and my elder nephew is an undergraduate there prior to going to Oxford next year. There is also an excellent National Gallery of pictures. Incidentally my brother-in-law's Uncle, (Rupert Bunny) who has just died, was considered one of Australia's most famous artists, and had a high reputation also in Paris and London. Many country families have town homes in Melbourne, but the Mackinnon town house has recently been sold and is now to be the Consulate General of the United States Government. Recently I have been staying some days at Langi Willi, an estate some 170 miles from Marida Yallock and the home of the brother of my sister's husband. That also is a fine spacious property, but is an interesting contrast, being sheep land instead of cattle land. The house is large and rather more modern than Marida Yallock and in the style of an English country mansion. There is an interesting historic point connected with it, for Henry Kingsley the author of the earliest novel about Australia, and brother of the more famous Charles Kingsley, was for a time a farm worker there in the very early days of this estate. My hostess also told me the thrilling story of how in 1939, when there occurred one of the greatest bush fires in the history of Australia, when hundreds of miles of country went up in flames, she and the women of the estate for two days and two nights fought the flames back from the house itself, while all the men of the district were out fighting back the even greater fire which was advancing across the open country. All the children of the district were gathered by a lake near the house, and as a last resort, the women and children were instructed to jump into the water. Luckily, however, the wind changed and the house - and their lives - was saved. Other homes however were destroyed, and there was terrible loss of life and of cattle and sheep. These fires are a real danger in Australia every summer, but of course there are elaborate precautions against them, which much lessen risks. Other of the less attractive sides of life in Australia that I have so far noted are that although we have a Labor Government, we also have many strikes and stoppages of work, and our public services such as the Railways are far from being either comfortable or really efficient. A good deal of this is however due to after-war conditions I think, and will improve later. Australians themselves in my own experience in their own country are a very kindly people, but their good qualities are perhaps solid rather than imaginative and of course with the defects as well as the advantages which such qualities imply. Lack of imagination may lead to actions which have the harshness of misunderstanding, especially when dealing with other nations or outside circumstances.

Note:

In contrast with the general kindness which seems one of the most attractive qualities of the Australians towards their fellow men they seem often to show a curious callousness towards animals. This they readily admit themselves. To a newcomer it is evident for instance in the primitive and cruel traps, set even in the lovely gardens of most amiable people, to ensnare those charming small creatures - the opossums. It is true they are numerous, but they do not deserve so cruel a fate. Not so long ago there was also the senseless and almost complete extermination of the uniquely lovable and harmless - Koala Bears, of which only a few have survived through all too tardy Government intervention.

I shall not forget my first initiation into the "dehorning" of Bullocks. These lovely unsuspecting creatures are driven from a corral down a narrow corridor which seems to lead to freedom; then suddenly a heavy clamp descends upon the neck leaving the head protruding. Large scissor like weapons are then used to cut off the horns; after which the stumps are plastered with disinfectant boiling tar; and at the same moment very often the animal is branded with the owner's mark. I had never supposed that a Bullock could scream. Under this treatment their screaming could be heard far off. For comparison imagine a large tooth in the human mouth being cut off by a sharp pair of scissors so close to the gum that flesh also comes away. This pain greatly magnified is what these beasts endure so that at a later stage they may the more easily be packed into cattle trucks on their way to become beef for human appetities.

Hare and Rabbit coursing is also an unlovely pastime apt to be indulged in without much interference.

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However, that is a state of affairs which can and must change; and I do feel deeply impressed with the Australian national character here, and I feel that this great Continent is likely to have an impressive and powerful future in it's relationship with world affairs. It will I think interest you to know that I am very often asked about Egypt, and especially about His Majesty. There have been enquiries as to whether His Majesty would consider visiting Australia, in view of his interest in horses and in farming.

My own plans now are that when I have rested after the anxieties of recent months, and when I am sure of the health and welfare of my dear Mother, then I shall do a tour of Australia, taking in as much as I can of this vast and varied area. I am quite sure however, that whatever I may see and do, and however interested I may be, that nothing will ever alter my affectionate regard for Egypt. It is my hope now as always that I may retain the privilege of considering Egypt as a home where the welcome of friends still awaits me."

Note

I was greatly impressed by the Australian love of flowers; great masses and banks of them, often very beautifully arranged, in almost every home, hotel, restaurant, and even in shops and offices.

It is true that flowers in Australia are inexpensive, plentiful and sumptuous, but the love of them is a noble national sentiment.

Less attractive, to newcomers anyhow, is the early hour of the evening meal, and the early closing (6 p.m.), and extreme discomfort of the bars! That sort of cosy "country pub", of such pleasant fame in England, does not seem to exist!

In Memoriam Mary James - A Tribute.

On September 5th at Marida Yallock, the home of her daughter, Mrs Donald Mackimmon, in Victoria, Australia, the death took place of Mrs Mary Edith James, at the age of 83 years. Mary James was a lady of marked personality and the passing of years had touched her but graciously. Though never of robust physique, she had great beauty in her younger days, and she maintained to the last her grace her alertness, and that particular personal dignity which was hers. She had great loyalty of affection, which brought her the lasting loyalty of her friends in return.

A loving and beloved Mother, she visited each of her three children in her latter years, in Egypt, in Central Africa and then in Australia. She had moreover travelled widely, and Australia was the fifth continent in which she had resided.

Family History

Mrs James was born of an old family of Lancashire and North Country Hindles, squires and landed gentry on a modest scale, with recorded family properties named Bradley Hall, Woodfold Park, Higher Croft, and others in the Rishton and Harwood districts. The elder sons in the direct line, always named Christopher, often took Holy Orders. The present Christopher Hindle holds a distinguished appointment in the Bodlean Library at Oxford.

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Mary James had interesting family links in the literary and artistic world as well as in the world of public affairs, including a grandfather Samuel Templeton, who was an R.A., and an intimate friend of the artist Goya, after whom he named one of his own children, and an uncle, Sir Edmund Henderson, who, as Commissioner of Police had the duty of protecting the security of London's public during during the grave disturbances early in the reign of Queen Victoria. Mary's sister-in-law, the late Edith Coulson James, was a writer and authority upon Italian Art. Among Mary James' cousins were Lord and Lady Gorell the former a notable author, and at one period Under Secretary of State for Air.

As a young girl in Peru where her father was the designer of the famous Andes Railway she had adventures in revolutions and earthquakes.

Married Life - Mary Hindle, as she then was, married Henry Roshier James, of Trevabyn, whom she met at a Christ Church ball at Oxford. Though unrelated, Mary and Henry James were both cousins of the Roshiers of Knowle, Higham, formerly of the nearby property of Gads Hill which later was owned by the famous Charles Dickens. The families of Roshier and Dickens were on close terms of friendship.

With her husband Mary James spent many years in India, where he was Principal of the Presidency College, Calcutta, and for a time Acting Director of Public Instruction, Bengal. Henry James, a professor of Philosophy and Literature, was the author of a number of books, the best known being "Education and Statesmanship in India", "Our Hellenic Heritage," a translation of Boethius' "Consolation of Philosophy," and "Mary Wollstonecraft." Despite her shyness of disposition, Mrs James became a gracious hostess to many notable persons in India.

Her Travels - In India she made an adventurous tour with her husband to Pindari Glacier in the Himalayan Mountains. After her husband's retirement, they lived for some years in the South of France, and travelled through many European countries. Her husband's death in 1931 was a bereavement from which she never fully recovered; though she received much consolation in the home of her brother-in-law Lionel James and his wife Ethel, he also a scholar of distinction and she from a family of artistic talent, the Clabburns.

Of latter years Mary James lived with her elder son in Cairo, who, after serving with the R.F.C. and R.A.F. throughout the first World War, has for many years been in close association with Middle Eastern affairs, and latterly held a position as Liaison Officer Middle East, an appointment which involved contacts with many Arab leaders and statesmen, whom Mrs James also frequently met.

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She received much individual courtesy from Egyptian personalities, in particular from H.R.H. Prince Mohamed Aly, Heir to the throne of Egypt, who in past years has been a visitor to Melbourne. H.M. King Farouk himself extended to Mrs James many kindly indications of esteem, as did also H.E. Sheikh Hafiz Wahba the Saudi Arabian Minister, and General Nuri Pasha, while Premier of Iraq.

Mrs James' younger son, District Commissioner in Uganda, was her host for a considerable period. She travelled by air to Uganda and during her stay there she toured with her son into outlying areas even closely approaching a herd of wild elephants as a "birthday treat" at the time of her 79th birthday.

In April last, Mary James reached Australia, after a six weeks' voyage. She was overjoyed to see her daughter and her son-in-law and to have her grandchildren around her; and to find herself not far from the old home of her beloved younger sister, wife of the Rev. Frederick Lewin, late Vicar of Portarlington, both of whom died some years ago.

Her last illness was in this setting of family life, surrounded by people dear to her. She died alert-minded, and unafraid to the last, and with impressive confidence and faith. After her many journeyings, Mary James is now at rest. She is at peace in a lovely garden on a hill-top in the family burial place of the Mackinnons of Marida Yallock. She has with her always the unchangeable love of all those she loved so faithfully and well.

Quiet and retiring by nature, Mary James had, like so many English women, followed her menfolk to their work in many parts of the British Empire, giving them always the inspiration of her care and sympathy.

Now this English mother rests at last, far from her own homeland, yet having brought to her grandchildren the example of her quiet courage, and having forged yet another link of gentle strength in the many links of priceless value between the Old Country and the great assembly of British Dominions."

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My Mother's death was followed by my own grave illness. There were aspects of particular tragedy which throughout that time, upon which it would be neither helpful nor wise to dwell.

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I myself when sufficiently recovered toured by automobile in slow stages from Melbourne to Sydney, through the extremely beautiful, and often semi-tropical, scenery. I was thrilled to get my first sight of wild kangeroos. In Sydney I was, by Richard Casey's kind introduction, made an Honorary member of the famous Union Club. There I lived for a while, and then at the Hotel Australia that vast building of World wide repute. My window looked out upon an attractive glimpse of Sydney's impressive bridge over the harbour "our bridge" as it is commonly called locally. My visit to Sydney was made particularly congenial by the generous kindness of Jose D's friendship, and the ready hospitality of the many interesting people to whom she introduced me. Later came a period when I lived for some months at a small hotel in Terang, whence I toured the Victorian State with pleasant acquaintances including members of the local citizens Fire Brigade and Musical Society, th both of which I had the privilege to be made an Honorary member. I also renewed some flying practise in a small Tiger Moth belonging to an Australian friend of mine. Perhaps my most thrilling moment was when, as a member of the Fire Brigade, I took part in fighting what seemed to me an enormous bush fire but which by local estimates was I believe quite a moderate affair as such fires go. Anyhow it was a most impressive sight.

In Melbourne I lived partly at the Menzies Hotel, the Melbourne and Australian Clubs and at the pleasant little Landsdowne Hotel run by a retired Naval Commander. I was introduced to Alan Marshall well known writer of Australian novels and was present on many occasions at the Sunday evening gatherings at his home. Amongst the very varied people I soon had the pleasure to number amongst my hospitable friends were the following:- Rex Pullen, the journalist, Marie Buesst, charming hostess of the socially elect; John Paragreen, exponent of the Ballet; Rupert Black, distinguished man of Law; Bill Bain, popular actor; David Chance, landowner; Geoff. Close, novelist; who had even acquired some notoriety for the frankness of his novels in somewhat reticent minded Australia; Whatmore, Police Chief; Laurence Lott, concert singer; George Cooper, of the Sir Laurence Olivier's theatre Company; and last but not least the famous "Cinders", charming elderly lady who ran the "Cinderella Cafe" that cosy and friendly rendez-vous in Collins Street only one of its kind in Melbourne, of somewhat "bohemian" amiability where an unique assortment of people met every evening just after theatre hours.

The following letter will I think explain itself:-

The Secretary,
Prisoners' Aid Society of Victoria,
20 Russel Street, Melbourne, C.I.

29th January, 1948.

Dear Sir,

Mr. Harold Hindle James a retired Regular Officer of the Royal Air Force who is at present staying at Terang has seen us in connection with the enclosed newspaper cutting taken from the Herald of Tuesday last, the 27th inst.

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Squadron Leader James for a great number of years lived in Egypt and has always taken a keen interest in that country and the people thereof. He was concerned when he read of these two Egyptian youths who were sentenced to three months' imprisonment on a charge of being prohibited immigrants and is anxious to do whatever he can for them.

As there is no diplomatic representative of Egypt resident in Victoria, it seemed to us that your Society might be able to assist Squadron Leader James in his endeavours to in some way aid these unfortunate youths.

If then your Society can in any way assist these youths, we would be pleased to be informed thereof. In addition, on behalf of Squadron Leader James, we would welcome any suggestions you might make as to any way in which he could personally assist them. He had in mind making them an advance of money but considered he would first like to see the youths before this was done. No doubt any money that he gave them would be of use to them when they were deported. Would you then enquire as to where these youths are serving their sentence and whether it would be possible for Squadron Leader James to visit them and, if so, on what days and at what time.

As Squadron Leader James is awaiting passage to England, it would be particularly appreciated if you could favour us with a very early reply to this letter,

Yours faithfully,

A prompt response reached me, and this led to a pleasant friendship with Melbourne's Police Chief whom I met at his Headquarters, and with whom I visited the Egyptian lads in prison. I was allowed to arrange for their speedy return to Egypt.

On Tuesday June 10th after attending Ian Mackimmon's very "society" wedding reception the day before, I went to my sister's Marida Yallick estate for a farewell visit. It was a visit the happy remembrance of which nothing can in any way cloud. Tuesday June 29th, 1948 I embarked at Melbourne on the s.s. "Strathaird". On board I had a pleasant single cabin acquired through the prestige of my brother-in-law's intervention; for in democratic Australia the "old landed gentry" still seemed to have a prestige in their own districts which even in England is now becoming a dim memory!

On board I met friendly people and my voyage to Egypt was extremely pleasant. Twenty-four hours spent on shore at Colombo is a cheering memory for the great friendliness shewn to me by the people of Colombo of all categories.

Hospitality included a charming Garden Party at the home of a local Member of Parliament. Our visit to Bombay was less happy owing to the communal disorders, with murders of Moslems still occurring in the streets.

On arrival in Port Said, in spite of grim rumours which caused my fellow passengers, to bid me farewell with quite ominous concern, my first reaction was delight in well known scenes and greetings of welcome, and in the glow of sunshine after the bleak Melbourne winter, the teeming rain of Bombay, and the often inclement winds of the voyage from Australia. Then on my very first evening at the old familiar Eastern Exchange Hotel, came another familiar but less welcome circumstance, -- the flask of searchlights and the sound of anti aircraft gunfire! Later I was told of rioting in Cairo, and warned that it might be dangerous to travel there. Thus was the fact of the Egypt - Palestine war brought first to my personal notice. This "War", ill-timed for Egypt, inadequately prepared, and administered without experience, was indeed the beginning of a grave sequence of events for Egypt and all the Middle East. I arrived however safely in Cairo, and the helpful friendliness of some Egyptian Officers travelling with me seemed of good augury. By some odd chance Thos. Cook & Son had booked me accommodation at the National Hotel, -- a place which in spite of its convenient central position, and its evident wish to be accommodating and attractive, yet seems to retain also a queer atmosphere in which a vague depressing gloom blends uneasily, -- or so it seems to me (-- with its desire to be hospitable. In Cairo I found a sinister sense of fear and tension. That well known centre of Cairo's fashionable shopping world, Fouad 1st Street, was for about half its length strewn with wreckage & broken glass, the result of a bomb two days before which had badly shattered Circurel, one of its largest and most elite emporiums. Soon I was to become accustomed to the sudden blast of bomb explosions; especially I remember a detonation which destroyed many houses in the old Jewish quarter; and another which nearly bounced me out of bed at 6.30 a.m. caused by a car-load of explosive which had been driven into the courtyard of the chief European Newspaper Offices, and exploding there, had demolished half that building, most of a neighbouring Cinema, several other premises, and two crowded trams, causing heavy casualties. At night there were air-raid alarms, and often heavy anti-aircraft fire. Actually, as far as I know, only once were Jewish bombs in fact dropped on Cairo; but the danger from Shell fragments and from the fanaticism of the mob, was considerable. This fanaticism was much worked upon by extremists of both political and religious elements.

I left the National Hotel, -- where actually I had been very considerably treated, -- and went to a much more congenial pied-a-terre on the 12th floor of a big building at No. Maleka Farida Street. It had an attractive and extensive outlook, but also

at times the anti-aircraft shells seemed to burst almost on a level with my verandah during night alerts, which was not so attractive. In the atmosphere of uncertainty it was however, obviously in appropriate to establish myself in a permanent personal flat, and so my pied-a-terre suited me well. I occupied myself with writing; verses, prose essays of a sort, and so on; also in various kinds of "welfare" work. Then it came into my mind to try to forget the uneasy tensions of the present, by writing up my memories of the past, and that is how these present reminiscences of mine came to be started !

At length on Sunday May 15th 1949 I left Alexandria by B.O.A.C. flying boat for a sojourn in Sicily and Italy on my way to spend several months in England. I hoped, perhaps rather optimistically, to find Egypt more peaceful upon my eventual return; for in spite of the definite interest and thrill of constant upheaval and uncertainty, I felt that for the present I had experienced sufficient of that through many years, and was now much more interested in a period of peace and reasonable security !

The following is an extract from a letter of mine from London, to my sister Molly in Australia; giving my impressions of life in England after an absence of fourteen years abroad:-

Oxford & Cambridge Club,
Pall Mall, London.
28th July, 1949.

"Your letter delivered to me via Aunt Ethel's address has been very welcome. I sent messages to you in notes I sent to John from Taorimina and recently from Oxford. I expect by now both notes have long since reached their destination.

It has been a strange experience to arrive back in England after fourteen years of absence. It is interesting of course, but also in some ways a shattering experience - certainly a deeply moving one. There are many changes here; very much has gone for ever - people, places, things accustomed; but very much of fineness is still here - and memories, and a few friendships that survive - and there stirs in one a new and even deeper veneration for the spirit of our country when one sees - even now - the stark reminders of such grim and long drawn out testing, as every one and every aspect of life has endured, without undue dismay of mind; and with dignity and order even in the fearful streets of ruin, and the austerities - even still - of daily routine.

In this room in which I write in my Club, there is at one end a great mirror splintered at its centre by a bomb fragment. In the fine portico of the entrance door there is also a great rent; and the library upstairs is scorched by a fire bomb. As I glance across the street from the window, I see the great gap of a completely demolished building; beyond that there is a vista of other ruins, so that one gets a view of Piccadilly itself through what used to be a solid mass of stately buildings. Without exaggeration I think I can say that I have not yet passed along any London Street or Square in which there is no ruined building - often there are several - and in the twisted staircases, floorless rooms, sagging roofs and shattered intimacies of home life it takes very small imagination to realise the fearfulness and the courage of which this great city has been the scene. Now however, in almost every direction, one sees the inspiring stir and activity of reconstruction.

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In the road in South Kensington where I now have a "pied a terre", I am in one of six newly painted and plastered houses standing opposite each other, three and three, looking very smart and gay in their new white and green paint. These six are the only houses habitable in the whole street. The rest are still grey, drab, mostly windowless, from bomb blast - and in the large and once fashionable square adjoining there now dwells a colony of foreign refugees - every room crowded, indeed overcrowded, and a hutment camp in the central garden of the square. In all sorts of places one sees these contrasts and changes. People too have amazing stories to tell, which they tell with a matter-of-factness almost as amazing! Richard Hindle - a particularly nice fellow, but as you know, quiet and rather frail looking - was in charge of a rescue squad during all the worst raids. His squad was the first to arrive on the scene after a "buzz bomb" had exploded amidst players and spectators on a football ground - the most terrible to look upon, he thinks, of all the many grim "incidents" to which his squad had to bring assistance day and night throughout the bomb-stricken years. At last Richard became gravely ill with a lung poisoning due to inhaling the foul fumes and heavy dust of the explosives and falling buildings amongst which he had to work. He lives near me just now in Kensington, in a charming little news "maisonette", where he is a "p.g." with pleasant friends whom he first came to know when one of them worked in his rescue squad in the war years. He is fairly well - but naturally what he has had to go through has not made him any more robust. We have resumed personally again the pleasant friendship which has always existed between us.

Trev James met me on arrival in London, and he and his dainty wife have been kindness itself. His sister Pascha, tall, fair and attractive, with a quiet rather stately manner, has also been most kind. She is of an unselfish disposition and seems to "look after" all the family - except herself! Hilary and Mog I've not yet seen. Bob ~~and~~ I just glimpsed at Henley - now a big, tall handsome young fellow - also with a wife and two children. Aunt Ethel in her home at Esher, an especially charming and cosy home, "old world" and friendly, looks and seems exactly as she has always been; overflowing with kindness and with her warm nature bubbling over into a sometimes incoherent stream of words!! Actually, however, she is not very strong now - and they have to take care of her and try to restrain her urge to activity.

In spite of much similarity to remembered days, in fourteen years especially with the war change - most things, people and conditions do however, seem very, very, different. I still feel like a ghost that wanders in familiar places which are yet somehow become intangible, unreal, and strange. When I feel less ghostly I will write again and try to tell you the many things I'm sure you would like to know, from an angle of steadier reality!.

Note.

One of my pleasantest re-discoveries on my return to England was my cousin Peggy Scott. I remember her first as a "flapper" when I used to go to stay with her father and mother, Colonel and Mrs. Fitzroy Scott. As a very senior officer Colonel Scott had an impressive residence facing onto the parade ground in the Royal Marine barracks. He was always very nice to me personally, but was, I believe, something of a martinet. Peggy was already an intelligent and charming young person, and that promise of her 'flapper' days has been amply fulfilled. She has already held impressive appointments during wartime; and is now a leading light in the conservative party of her district at Mersham. Her sensible outlook on world affairs, her eloquence as a speaker, and her steadfast loyalties are a refreshing contrast to some of the self-conscious and unconstructive egoisms of the, as it seemed to me, rather depressingly numerous soi-disant modern young "reformers".

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I have had wonderful weather ever since I arrived - making the countryside particularly beautiful. I have met many interesting people and had interesting experiences. I have been received both formally and informally, for talks with each of the Ambassadors here of each of the Middle Eastern Countries, including Egypt. I have also ^{been} received "in audience" by, and then had tea with H.R.H. the visiting Prince - Regent of Iraq, and Prince Mohamed Aly, heir to Egypt's throne also received me kindly during his recent short visit to London. I have also been kindly received at Marlborough House, where gracious Royal messages awaited me. I stayed the week-end before last with Lord and Lady Luke in charming "traditionally" English circumstances, including an agricultural Show and a village fete with small children dancing round a Maypole. Ian and Barbara Luke are a most pleasing and human couple. They are much in touch with Princess Elizabeth and Philip, for whom they have most affectionate respect. Incidentally Ian Luke's sister is married to a family link of ours, via Mary and George MacQorquodale (is that how the name is spelt?)

Note. It happened that many Middle Eastern personalities visited London that summer. I was received at Claridges' Hotel, firstly by H.R.H. Prince Mohamad Aly of Egypt; and later by H.R.H. Prince Abdul Illah, Regent of Iraq, with whose Staff I found Tahsin Kadri, an old friend. I also attended the Reception given by Prince Haidar, the Jordan Minister in honour of the visit of his King, H.M. King Abdallah of Jordan, and afterwards had a long talk with John Glubb Pasha, Commander-in-Chief of the Jordan army. On November 16th I attended an interesting luncheon party given by Amr Pasha at the Egyptian Embassy. So I still maintained my Middle Eastern contacts very congenially.

My visit to Italy was delightful - a brief but really carefree rest. Taormina was lovely and reposful in setting; Rome full of interest and cheerful hospitality. The Duchess of Sermonita, in her remarkable and historic palace dispensed gracious hospitality with almost Mediaeval statliness; and Baron Cesare Torella di Romagnano, my other main Italian host, motored me all around Rome and its vicinity in his car. There seems no petrol shortage in Italy, nor is there any rationing restriction as far as I could see. How unlike our dear austere old England! Of course there are in Italy, especially Southern Italy, still great differences in social status, and wealth and poverty are more markedly contrasted. Yet what exactly are we seeking in all this rush for "equalization"?

Certainly the gay crowd of peasant folk in simple peasant dress which I saw on a certain "feast day" in Sicily seemed a far happier - and certainly better behaved crowd, than the bank holiday crowd I saw soon after in a London park, pretentiously clad in the "fashionable" dress in which they aped their "betters", yet behaving in their public displays in such a way that the amorous fumbings and fiddlings observable in all directions were not only neither cheerfully gay or beautiful but, even when not actually immoral (and that with aesthetic reticence might be no other person's concern) were certainly ridiculous, nauseating, and without self-respect. I can't imagine what effect this has on our Oriental visitors here, of which there are now a very great number. Such scenes would be unthinkable in any oriental city such as Cairo and Baghdad!

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Am just back from a few days at Lady Lilian Grenfell's home at Sunningdale. The visit passed very pleasantly. There were several local small "parties" including one at a small but charming old house owned by a relative of Lord Wavell; and at another attractive house in old Italian style, with a beautifully kept Italian style garden, where our hostess was Lady Mary Burghley, first wife of Lord Burghley the well known athlete, who is a cousin of Lady L's. We had some rain but not enough to be inconvenient. On my return I have lunched at the Reform Club to meet two friends of mine, one in the Foreign Office and one an ex-member of our Military Mission in Egypt. We had an interesting chat on Egyptian affairs.

I have been to several congenial "functions" since my return to England and amongst the most pleasant was a river-party organized by Trev. and his wife for the last day of the Henley Regatta. I was present at the Garden Party at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, which was a delightful occasion, not least the return for the guests by private launch by river to Westminster. I was likewise a guest at the Anglo-Egyptian Society's party in honour of the Egyptian Ambassador. This was held at the handsome mansion owned by Arthur Rank famous in the cinema world. I went too, to the Royal Tournament at Olympia; a most remarkable and inspiring display. A few days ago the Duchess of Grafton was my guest at this Club - you met her, I think, in Australia? She told me more details about the recent fire at her home - Euston Hall. No great damage fortunately and mainly in a wing which is anyhow to be demolished soon in order to make the mansion smaller and more convenient to live in, in these days when large houses are in increasing numbers being abandoned through weight of taxation. I have also dined with Mrs Kenelm Dormer (lately of Sydney, whom you may also remember?), at her Club, the Ladies Carlton, to meet old friends also of Australian and Egyptian settings. It was pleasant and entertaining. I have been to a few theatres - "Daphne Laureola" - witty and sophisticated character studies with a touch of tragedy. "This Walking Shadow", clever and slightly sinister; and "The Deluded", a first play, a rather interesting psychological study, which was given at a Theatre Club to which I was invited. I have also been more than once to the Albert Hall, where a kind friend of mine has a box. I told John, in my note to him, about my most congenial visit to Oxford as guest of my old College, which you have no doubt heard about from him. It was full of old memories to find myself living "in college" again; and to be wearing academic dress amidst well remembered functions and festivities. I also dined one evening with our cousin Kit Hindle, at his Oxford home. He still lives a very retired life, but continues to hold Bodleian appointment so congenial to him. We spent a friendly pleasant evening, chatting of old days and looking up family records. He has invited me to stay with him later on.

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I am so happy to hear from you that you have formed for yourself a congenial way of life in your Marida Yallock setting. Yours is a fine property and a home of great individuality and attraction in itself. Nevertheless, the Australian way of life needs radical reorientation of outlook for those newly arriving, especially those of a matured way of thinking, involving inevitably much stress of mind. It is fine to know that, though maintaining no doubt entirely your own personality, yet you have adjusted yourself to the new circumstances of special outlook, and different yet wide interests. Here too in England one sees re-adjustments of great courage going on. There has been in fact a complete social revolution, though, thank God, a bloodless one; and now all concerned are on the whole working together in the new conditions with a common-sense and human dignity which tends towards the uplift of a strong democracy of freedom as opposed to the levelling down and slavery which the malice of so called Communism plans. There is still however instability and change and the distress and danger this entails.

Recently I have been having several pleasant meetings again with Norman Smith whom I think I have mentioned to you before when we were both in Egypt. Mary Lampson has also been to lunch with me a couple of times. Norman used to be A.D.C. to Lord Killearn, and Mary is Lord K's daughter, and is now Lady-in-waiting to the Princess Royal. Both are good friends of mine, tho: my terms with Lord K. were, as you know, a good deal less than cordial!

My time in England is speeding on apace! On the whole it is being pleasant inspite of some sad aspects and perplexities. It seems a pity however that during the latter two or three years, whatever place I find myself in, I am unable to appreciate it restfully, as it so has happened that I have to become involved almost at once in the necessarily complicated plans to move on again somewhere else. Already I am much occupied in arranging my return to Egypt. There will be endless formalities again in connection with any property - especially silver etc. - if I take it back to Egypt with me.

Best of wishes to Donald, please, both in his personal affairs and in the coming political campaign in which he will I know be much concerned. "

I returned to Egypt on Wednesday 23rd November 1949. With kind help again from Abdin Palace I very soon obtained my Residence permission yet once more. The extent of the realization of my hopes for quiet retirement in a friendly setting will be shown in the "Epilogue" with which this books of personal "Episodes" is about to come to its close.

Now comes an article of mine which explains some aspects of our work for Arab Refugees at Gaza. In this I had the personal interest of Anthony Eden who wrote encouraging letters on the subject:-

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"The Editor,
"Egyptian Gazette",

"Sir,

Having recently returned from a visit to the Gaza area of Palestine. I would like briefly to record the following aspects of the present situation there.

It was almost exactly one year since the last of my visits to this area (which I had first known at the time of the Battles of Gaza in the 1914-18 war) upon work for Aid to the Arab Refugees, some 200,000 persons, who had fled there from Israeli aggression in 1948.

In addition there are the Gaza townspeople about 65,000 in number themselves also rendered destitute from the same cause, although not technically considered to be "refugees" and so not entitled to United Nations Assistance which makes their condition the more desperate.

Last year, as the outcome of an individual "drive" organised from All Saint's Cathedral in Cairo, clothing and blankets were distributed to about 7,000 persons in the Gaza area.

This year another similar drive was attempted in Cairo, but this time on a wider scale, and with the support of many various communities Egyptian and foreign. This drive had the approval of the Arab Superior Council, and H.R.H. Princess Fawzia graciously gave her personal patronage and support.

Unfortunately abnormal conditions in Egypt during recent months made it impossible to launch all of the work for publicity which had been prepared. Nevertheless the Executive committee, of Egyptian and foreign membership, continued in being, and was able through continuing in cordial co-operation to achieve very considerable results, though of course short of what had originally been our objective.

I was invited to proceed by U.N. aircraft to Gaza on February 15th last, to discuss with the United Nations Organisation at Gaza the methods for distribution of the clothing, blankets and cloth which our combined drive in Cairo had produced. This was satisfactorily arranged, and the actual distribution, after agreement with the Egyptian Military Governor, was undertaken by the United Nations authorities though the practical methods which had been worked out by them for local needs.

A percentage of the supplies was allotted to the Gaza residents, and a small part for emergency needs of the Camp Welfare scheme. On my departure from Cairo for Gaza a cheque for L.E.100 was handed to me from the British Embassy to add to the funds of our Appeal. This generous donation has been passed through our Committee, and with certain other donations recently received, will be used for further Refugee Aid.

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It was a matter of tragic impressiveness to find oneself again, after the passing of another full year, amongst these homeless people their future seemingly as undecided as ever. For most, this has been their fourth winter since being driven from their homes.

I know that special warning was given to senior authorities early last year by U.N. administrators at Gaza that tentage, hutments, and clothing were all in outworn condition and inadequate for any emergency which might arise during winter. Statements publicly issued by various associations, in particular by the World Council of Churches after their conference at Beirut, by the International Red Cross Society, and by 'The Times' newspaper in London, have all during the past year again stressed the desperate condition of these Arab Refugees and the grave implications of this situation.

I myself, in the Arabic and English local press, and elsewhere, have at various times from the point of view of personal informal observation and contacts, pressed, as far as is individually possible, the urgency of the situation and its local repercussions in Egypt and the Middle East generally.

Since then the winter months have passed, and during these months a very grave emergency did in fact arise. Violent storms of bitterly cold wind and weeks of torrential rain brought the misery of these thousands of people, crowded helplessly in the narrow Gaza strip, to a climax of suffering greater than anything which has been experienced before.

Tents and hutments were entirely destroyed, and in spite of every effort by the local U.N. Organisation, shelter and supplies were quite inadequate to meet the emergency. Since then great efforts have been made to repair the damage, and great credit is due to the local U.N. Organisers, and to the Egyptian authorities who, I understand co-operated with all energy.

I visited, during this recent tour, many refugee camps, and was taken again to see schools and hospitals. The T.B. hospital has been much enlarged and is a very fine achievement, of the greatest benefit. It was disturbing however to observe bullet marks both inside and outside the hospital premises which the building had received in the course of a recent frontier skirmish. The C.M.S. hospital in Gaza town still carries on ceaseless work, of great devotion and efficiency.

In the schools, I was greatly impressed by the continued keenness of both teachers and pupils. In view of the increased hardship endured so recently by all categories of these refugees, this is a moving and significant fact.

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Nevertheless, all is evidently not well in these Refugee camps. The old or elderly are becoming perhaps only increasingly apathetic and hopeless, but amongst the young people there is definite resentment and a desperate restlessness. This was made clear to me especially in talks with young men of college age, and some of the young school masters and "intelligencia".

Recent grave events in Cairo have not passed unnoticed, nor are there lacking in Gaza area those agitators who try to make attractive an appeal to violence. Very serious possibilities exist. This danger does not grow less as time passed from year to year without any solution, or even any enheartening sign to give these people, destitute, homeless, workless, some cause for hope and some objective towards which they can aspire.

Surely a practical decision, powerfully implemented can now be devised amongst the authorities of the United Nations, and the Arab and Israeli leaders, to prevent, even at this late moment, some further disaster which may have repercussions throughout the world and can only do great harm to all concerned, from which only subversive elements can profit.

Yours etc.,
H.H.J."