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EPISODE XI

MY HOST KING ABDUL AZIZ IBN SAUD;
& THE JEDDAH SCENE OF 1937.

H.Q.M.E., Cairo

13th of March 1937.

To H.E. Sheikh Fawzan Al Sabek
Saudi Arabian Minister in Cairo.

Dear Sheikh Fawzan,

I thank Your Excellency most sincerely for the assistance you are giving me in my journey ~~to~~ the Hedjaz.

I have sent a telegram to H.E. Sheikh Hafiz Wahba, a copy of which I forward for information.

I leave Cairo by air for Port-Sudan early on Monday morning March 15th. I believe you are kindly sending information unofficially of the date of my arrival in Jeddah.

S Please accept, Excellency, the assurance of my most cordial sentiments and my warm thanks again for the kindness which has been extended to me at the Royal Saudian Legation in Cairo.

Believe me, Excellency,

Yours very sincerely,

H.H.J.

D I A R Y

VISIT TO THE HEDJAZ

We took off from HELIOPOLIS in a Gordon aircraft at 6'clock on Monday, 15th March 1937, the morning being rather cold but pleasant. By 9 o'clock we had reached LUXOR where we landed and had breakfast, first carrying out a little detour round the ruins of which we caught an interesting aerial view. It was

already markedly warmer and we discarded a good deal of our extra flying kit before proceeding onwards.

In flying down the Nile one saw very visible proof of the statement that the Nile is Egypt - just a comparatively narrow line of fertility with vast deserts on either side. The view from the air of ASWAN Dam is very striking, and above the Dam the river broadens out very much, flowing in a broad valley amongst low rocky hills. PHYLAE was clearly visible in its lake setting and the river hereabouts overflows into many of the neighbouring valleys in long fiord like channels. Cultivation, however, seems definitely to grow less above the Dam.

For lunch we landed at WADI HALFA and had a pleasant half-hour's interlude at the excellent hotel there by the river. Then on again to ATBARA where we landed about 5 o'clock, staying the night. Atbara seems distinctly unlike an Egyptian town - darker skinned and more friendly people and different style of architecture in the local buildings which seem to specialise in deep colonnaded verandahs, pleasant to sit on in the evenings.

Temperature by now was definitely hot as compared with CAIRO which we had left in the morning and which now lay about 1000 miles distant from us.

The next day's flight to PORT SUDAN was accomplished pleasantly, but not quite without incident. About half-way to PORT SUDAN, one crosses a range of bare rocky mountains rising to a maximum height of about 10,000 feet. When we reached these mountains, the day was still clear and cloudless so that it did not seem necessary to climb to the maximum height ^{desirable} ~~xxxxxxxx~~ for crossing

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above the peaks and we followed instead the line of a broad valley, flying about 3000 feet above it. Very suddenly, however, a mass of clouds descended upon us. Candidly, it caught us rather unawares and we were unable then to climb owing to the probability of striking some unseen peak so we had to continue following the valley, although the country was new to us both and we did not know exactly what lay ahead. The clouds drove us down eventually to within a couple of 100 feet above the bed of the valley and we were flying in a sort of tunnel with rock each side and dense clouds above. However, just as we were feeling a little uncomfortable, the valley opened out and we found ourselves in sight of the coast.

On landing shortly after at PORT SUDAN, we had pointed out to us a burial ground in which were the graves of the last flyers who lost their way in these clouds, but were less fortunate! Here at PORT SUDAN my pilot and myself reported our arrival to the Commissioner and lunched pleasantly at the hotel after which the aeroplane proceeded on to KHARTOUM, leaving me to complete my journey by sea, and sorry to lose the companionship of my good pilot and our airman mechanic.

PORT SUDAN I found rather different from my expectation for I had thought of it as an extremely bleak and barren outstation. It does, in fact, lie in a rather unpromising setting, being a flat, sandy strip of land along the sea with a background of rocky inhospitable-looking hills. The town itself, which did not exist at all some 40 years ago, has however been marvellously planned and the English community, which I believe numbers some 200, live in attractive houses almost all surrounded by well-kept gardens.

The Government Offices are handsomely housed and the Red Sea Hotel nearby is also well built and comfortable to stay in.

In the centre of the little town, there is a large public garden with grass, trees and a particularly charming corner, bright with flowers and cooled by fountains. This, I believe, is mainly due to the enthusiasm and skill as a gardener of Springfield, the present Commissioner, enthusiastically supported by his wife. Their own garden, which I was taken to explore after receiving hospitality at their house, was also surprisingly green and gay with flowers. I understand, however, that this excellent result has only been obtained after much work and many experiments and only survives the terrific heat of the local summer by the most careful and tireless supervision.

On enquiring, I found that I should have to wait 3 days in PORT SUDAN, as my ship had postponed its sailing. My days, however, passed pleasantly as I found the local community exceedingly hospitable to me, stranger though I was, and I visited numerous houses for meals or pleasant evening refreshment to revive one at sundown. I also hired a car in which I explored the town and vicinity under the guidance of the amiable young Sudanese driver. It was pleasant to find the native population friendly but without subservience.

I went on board the s.s. "TAIF" one night sooner than necessary, as I found that the Master was an old friend of mine with whom I had sailed before on a visit to CYPRUS. He and the mates welcomed me warmly on board and I actually found myself included in a friendly and highly convivial evening. The second

mate was to be married at the end of the next voyage and was taking a job on shore, and that evening was to be his final bachelor fling before becoming a sedate family man. He certainly had his fling and we visited a great number of houses of local residents, finishing up in a bachelor household all of whom seemed to play some kind of cheerful musical instrument and to be skilled in songs of a jovial, though not perhaps entirely drawing-room, quality.

The ship sailed early next morning and I must say it was most creditable the way her officers appeared on duty, as sober and efficient as judges, even though perhaps looking a trifle wan.

One night was spent crossing the RED SEA and by 6 o'clock the following morning the coast of The HEDJAZ was in sight. There are many reefs around the entrance to JEDDA HARBOUR, very dangerous to shipping, and vessels have to anchor at a considerable distance from the shore. Our anchorage was close to a desolate looking wreck, lodged at a precarious angle on one of these reefs. This was the remains of a French Pilgrim ship which had taken fire a year ago or two ago. It was apparently a tragic occasion, as she has 2 or 3,000 pilgrims on board of whom several hundred perished in the fire, were drowned, or mutilated by sharks.

As soon as we dropped anchor, a fleet of local sailing craft came speeding out towards us, looking very charming with the early sunlight on them and the white houses and minarets of JEDDA gleaming behind them. These were followed and of course overtaken by numerous motorboats and two dapper "speed boats". It turned out that in one of these speedboats was the local official who had been sent

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out to greet myself. I was taken ashore forthwith and assisted quickly through the Customs and thence to a large building which seems to be used as a guesthouse by the King.

My Host, H.E. SHAIKH HAFIZ WAHBA, the Saudi-Arabian Minister in London, was also staying at this house, though at the moment of my arrival he was away in attendance on the King at the Palace, outside the walls of the town. While messengers were sent to tell him of my arrival, I settled myself in to my new abode. It was a curious building, modernistic in intention somewhat after the pattern of the new French buildings in CAIRO. It is the only building of its sort in JEDDA and looks strangely incongruous amongst the old Arab houses around it, with their carved balconies and irregular construction.

The furnishing of this house was also somewhat incongruous in an attempt at European style, much of the furniture being carved in a kind of Tudor pattern upholstered in ornate tapestry.

Very soon His Excellency, my host, arrived, welcomed me cordially and from then on made all arrangements for my welfare, acting as my guide and placing cars, etc., at my disposal whenever required.

It was explained to me that, that afternoon there was to be a reception given by SHAIKH ABDULLAH SULAIMAN, the Minister of Finance, and that I was to be welcomed at this reception, and to receive my first presentation to HIS MAJESTY, KING ABDUL AZIZ IBN SAUD.

I next paid my visit of respect to the British Minister, SIR READER BULLARD. The British Legation is housed in a rather

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striking, Arab-type mansion with handsome carvings on the balconies and windows, and with a handsome wooden stairway rising from a large entrance diwan. Sir READER received me kindly, and, after a talk with him, I returned again to my own abode and, after a meal there, served in semi-European style, I set out with SHAIKH HAFIZ WAHBA in his automobile (all the notables in JEDDA seem now to own luxurious cars) to attend the reception. We passed by way of strange narrow streets to a large house in the centre of the town.

We entered first a spacious hall with slaves and servants, in fine flowing robes and all armed with daggers and swords, and also revolvers, lined along the walls. The actual reception room was oblong in shape and not very large. At one end was a vast throne-like chair, heavily gilded, and at the other end of the room, two smaller but similar thrones. On the floor were rich carpets, but the rest of the furniture was very quaint, a sort of first-cousin to early Victorian settees and chairs, ranged primly along the walls. Gradually the company assembled - the British Minister and his Staff, all the King's High Officials, stately in their flowing robes, an English-man and his wife the guests of the British Minister, the famous Mr. PHILBY, and my humble self.

Suddenly, there was a stir and a clanging of swords and accoutrements and there entered HIS MAJESTY, KING ABDUL AZIZ - an impressive and noble looking figure. Everyone stood in silence as he walked very slowly up the room and seated himself on his throne. As soon as he had entered, two enormous black slaves, with drawn swords, stationed themselves at the doorway. Next there came the King's second son, the AMIR FAISAL, Viceroy of the

HEDJAZ, and his youthful brother, named, I think, Mansur, the first a handsome young man as tall as his father and the second a shy-looking youth of about 17 years. These two princes seated themselves on the other two thrones.

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My host then came up to me and led me forward to be presented to the King. He received me cordially, but of course there was no opportunity for any sort of conversation on this

* Note:

When Ibn Saoud made his war-time visit to Cairo to confer with Churchill and other leaders, the following was a story (I think a true one!) which went around. Churchill presented, not without fatherly pride, his son Randolph to the King. "This, Your Majesty" said our great leader "is my son". "Oh indeed" ? commented the King, not impressed, " why! I have fifty of those ! "

In course of conversation a foreign guest spoke enthusiastically of the merits of camel milk refreshing on a journey, and of soft and soothing qualities. The King was

My host then came up to me and led me forward to be presented to the King. He received me cordially, but of course there was no opportunity for any sort of conversation on this occasion.

After ceremonial coffee had been served, the King rose and we all followed him into another apartment in which was a long table. The King seated himself at one end, the two princes at the other and the general company down the two sides. I found myself placed next but one to the King. Then followed a queer repast, something between a schoolroom tea party and an occasion of Royal State. We drank tea and ate sugared biscuits, talking amiably the while.

In course of conversation a foreign guest spoke enthusiastically of the merits of camel milk refreshing on a journey, and of soft and soothing qualities. The King was

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delighted at this and with a twinkle in his eye asked SHAIKH HAFIZ WAHBA, who is his Minister in LONDON, whether he could not arrange to keep a small herd of camels in Eaton Place as he thought perhaps the milk might have a soothing effect on British politicians and make them listen kindly to opinions SHAIKH HAFIZ WAHBA might wish them to consider.

The tea over, the King rose, the Royal Party left, and the company gradually dispersed. Before he left, I managed, however, to have a brief talk with H.R.H. the AMIR FAISAL. The last time I had met him had been at a diplomatic reception at the Hyde Park Hotel in LONDON. FAISAL commented at once at the great difference in the present setting. He seems a pleasant young man, resembling his father in height and build, though actually with much better features. He caused quite a flutter amongst feminine hearts in LONDON, I remember by his good looks and gracious manners.

On a later occasion, PHILBY informed me that he was giving a dinner party at which the British Minister and other personalities of the town would be present, and kindly asked me to add myself to the party. PHILBY, of course, at the reception was dressed in Arab robes and, in fact, conformed more exactly to Arab customs than the Arabs themselves who were present.

Not long after accepting this invitation, SHAIKH HAFIZ WAHBA informed me that the King had sent word that he wished to grant me a personal audience that same evening at the Palace. We explained matters to PHILBY and it was agreed that SHAIKH HAFIZ WAHBA and myself should leave half way through dinner.

At 8 o'clock we assembled in PHILBY'S House, or rather Palace, for it was actually at one time a residence of the King. The English-men present wore dinner jackets, even including PHILBY, and the Arab guests their usual stately robes.

The house is furnished in European style but is, nevertheless, a completely Arab building, handsome in its way but like many Arab buildings, insecure foundations had led to alarming cracks and surprising irregularities in the angle of pillar etc., some, in fact, being propped up by extra wooden supports.

I duly proceeded to the King's Palace. It lies some couple of miles outside the walls of the town and is a large white building of rambling construction with many court-yards. I was led through various rather austere rooms and up to a handsomely carpeted roof where I found His Majesty reclining against a sheep-skin-covered camel saddle upon a broad divan, a few of his striking black bodyguard standing behind him, and at a little distance from him seated upon cushions, just a few of the officials of his household.

The King greeted me warmly and without ceremony - the meeting was, in fact, exactly in the manner of a meeting with any important tribal chieftain. I was placed beside the King on the divan; ceremonial coffee was then served by other slaves and there followed about an hour of most interesting conversation with His Majesty. Amongst other things, we discussed the old days when I first came in touch with some of his District Governors and tribesmen. This was at the time when FAISAL AL DAWISH, the famous fanatical Wahabi leader, was in revolt against KING ABDUL AZIZ, and was raiding and massacring the tribal people of 'IRAQ. The

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King also discussed the European situation and various other points of a political and general sort, including his continual endeavours to improve conditions for Moslem people making the Pilgrimage to MECCA.

The King is truly a striking personality, both in character and in personal appearance. The whole occasion was^a memorable one - the moonlit evening, the broad carpeted roof with its white parapets, the figure of the King on his throne-like divan with tall black slaves behind him and the Officials of State of the Royal household seated silently at a little distance while ~~the~~ His Majesty discussed with knowledge and understanding, the complicated affairs of a Europe which he had never seen.

Arriving in the Hedjaz, one definitely seems to step back several hundred years. The authority of the King is absolute but, nevertheless, many of his subordinate chieftains are also very powerful in their own districts, so that the King has to rule by a combination of tact and force just as the English Kings had to control the great barons in the Middle Ages. When in the presence of European Diplomats, King ABDUL AZIZ now-a-days follows what he considers the proper formalities for Royal personages but with his own people he maintains the traditional attitude of any great Arab Shaikh, and his subordinate Chieftains, and in fact even his ordinary tribal subjects, omit all the trimmings of European Court Protocol and, although holding the King in high esteem and personal awe, they, nevertheless, address him by no royal title by merely as ABDUL AZIZ, and speak to him without any excessive subservience and yet the King, in fact, has the right of life and death over all his people.

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Great Arab leaders maintain their authority largely through their own personality and any chieftain who lacks efficiency in tribal matters will find himself soon replaced by some other and more effective member of his family, and this applies, of course, to IBN SAOUD as much as to any other shaikh; he has gained his position by virtue of his personal strength of character which first proved itself in supplanting and subordination the IBN RASHID family who were his predecessors as rulers of NEJD, and later by his conquest of the HEDJAZ, determinedly yet tolerantly accomplished.

Although IBN SAOUD has shown a very progressive attitude especially in matters concerning armaments to strengthen his forces, and facilities for more rapid travel over his vast empire, nevertheless, the King remains a strict Wahabi leader in all points concerning religious observance. This has been proved again even since I left the HEDJAZ a few weeks ago. At a recent banquet, His Majesty confirmed, in the presence of his own tribal chiefs as well as foreign diplomats, his absolute disapproval of any attempt to introduce modern customs of daily life into his country. Especially he expressed disapproval of wine-drinking and any attempt at the emancipation of women. He even went so far as to say that he would with his own sword execute any person among his subjects whom he discovered to be favouring or attempting to introduce such shameful ideas. This being a sample of the King's drastic religious outlook, I was indeed most surprised to learn that a small building outside the walls of the town (originally probably a Khan for travellers) is actually in use as a Christian church.

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In JEDDA itself the King has given sanction to foreign diplomats and their households to play music and to dance or drink alcohol strictly in the privacy of their houses, but outside, the few Europeans in JEDDA, are expected to conform absolutely to Wahabi traditions and may not even smoke cigarettes in any public place.

The little town of JEDDA, as seen from the sea, looks white and clean and of orderly construction. Upon going ashore, however, one discovers it - as is usually the case with Oriental towns - to be just a precarious jumble of picturesque houses. In JEDDA especially, where the buildings are unusually high, in some cases even of 5 storeys, they seem to be leaning against one another for support. The streets are narrow and overhung by intricately carved balconies and jutting windows. Lack of sanitation, unless one has a very bad cold, makes itself only too obvious, and flies congregate everywhere in unbelievable masses. The quarter of the town for the sale of merchandise is fairly well-stocked but disappointing to anyone in search of objects of local manufacture. Most goods seem to be imported from abroad and the bazaar is singularly uninteresting from the point of view of local colour. One wonders what exchange of trade the people support themselves by, but I believe the fact is they live almost entirely on the proceeds of the annual Pilgrimage to MECCA, and that both individuals and the Government are largely supported by the unfortunate pilgrims who, in spite of their devout objective, seem to be plundered without scruple. Nevertheless they are now at least protected from physical attack while journeying on the routes to the holy cities, and it is a great tribute to KING ABDUL AZIZ IBN SAUD

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that he has achieved complete security of life and property in the pilgrim routes of the HEDJAZ.

The building in JEDDA now used as the Offices of the British Legation was once that occupied by LAWRENCE, and in the small garden there is a sheltered corner in which he used to sit to write his reports. Nearby, there is also the wooden bandstand in which, as he described in "The Seven Pillars of Wisdom" the Turkish band captured by Sherif HUSSEIN was forced to play for the entertainment of the local people.

I was myself at RABEGH at that time as second in command of the Air Force Detachment operating with the Force based on RABEGH Village. The AMIR ALI, son of Sherif HUSSEIN (Later KING HUSSEIN) was our Commander-in-chief. Those were interesting days and I often find it pleasant reading again the diary which I happened to keep at that time.

One cannot in describing JEDDA omit to mention the tomb of our ancestress EVE, evidently a very large lady for her tomb is about 16 to 20 feet long; it used to be covered by an elaborate dome, but when ABDEL AZIZ conquered KING ALI, he destroyed this as he and his puritan Wahabi troops disapprove of all decoration in connection with religious buildings. Close to the tomb of EVE, is the new aeroplane hangar recently presented to KING ABDUL AZIZ by the Italians, and it is most strange to see modern aircraft in close proximity to a traditional Tomb of the very origin of all humanity!

The laws of the country remain of the medieval sort.

Limbs are cut off as punishment for theft and similar severe penalties exist for every sort of transgression. Slavery remains an accepted custom and all well-to-do persons own slaves. There is still a slave market in MECCA where human beings, both light-skinned and dark-skinned, can be purchased at well established rates of charge.

Slaves as a whole are, however, quite well treated and attain positions of considerable authority. A master is quite at liberty, nevertheless, to illuse or execute his human chattels if he thinks fit. Unnecessary cruelty to a slave is, however disapproved of and is looked upon as a thing "not done" just as the English-man disapproves of the ill usage of horses.

His Excellency, my host, a few days after my arrival, received instructions to proceed to RIYADH to carry out certain official visit to BAGHDAD. I thereupon became a guest of SHAIKH YOUSSEF YASSIN, one of the King's personal secretaries and, at that time, acting also as Minister of Foreign Affairs in the absence of FOUAD BEY HAMZA. I did not feel it suitable to remain toolong in JEDDA without my original host and I therefore arranged to embark on the steamship ZAM ZAM. Before leaving, however, I hdd one more interesting experience when a local notable offered to take me in his car along the road to MECCA. We proceeded about 40 miles out of the 50 which is the distance to MECCA along a roughly constructed road.

The country was barren except for camel thorn and in places some low scrubby bushes whose name I do not know, and the road wound its way through low barren foothills. Having reached a

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little wayside rest-house, we alighted and after drinking coffee turned again to JEDDA, I myself deeply interested to have been allowed so close on approach to the Holy City itself.

The afternoon before my departure, I had a final quiet luncheon with the British Minister who was as kindly as ever and told me many interesting things, including his experiences during part of the long siege of JEDDA when KING ABDUL AZIZ was invading the HEDJAZ.

One last picture of HIS MAJESTY KING ABDUL AZIZ IBN SAOUD of NEJD and The HEDJAZ, as I saw him last, the day before I left: Myself on a jutting balcony, facing the MECCA gate - a great double gate, dark and shadowy, amidst the long extent of the white city walls. The guard of troops at the gate is evidently on the alert, and their officer keeps looking a little anxiously along the inner road. These troops are part of the King's "modern" army - but somehow they look ill-at-ease in their unfamiliar uniform. Soon there is a stir and passers-by withdraw hastily to the road side. Moving slowly there comes into view a curious procession, a striking mixture of the ancient and the very new. First comes an open Ford Vanette, in it four tribal soldiers in desert robes and wearing handsome daggers, but at the moment in charge of a machine gun, obviously ready for instant use. Then comes a luxurious limousine, with armed tribesmen standing on the footboard at each side. In it one can at once recognize the broad and imposing figure of the KING, wearing his usual red Arab headress; there follow three more open vanettes each containing about a dozen fully armed negro slaves, and yet another vanette with armed Arab retainers. Next are two large closed cars containing

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several of the King's court officials, and after this a single limousine, its closed windows heavily curtained. This must doubtless contain some of the KING's ladies of the Court. Though His Majesty's religion allows only four wives at any one time, yet it is always permissible rapidly to divorce a wife, without it being considered in any way a disgrace to the divorced lady. The KING in this way has married a great many times, and is intimately related to most of the noble families of his Empire.

Last in the procession comes another vanette, containing another machine gun and its vigilant crew. The guard at the gate springs to attention, and presents arms, not without smartness. At a dignified pace, the procession passes through the gate, and so along the MECCA road outside. HIS MAJESTY is on his way to MECCA, and thence he will proceed to his tribal palace in RIYADH - the remote fortress town far in the interior of his own country, from which for a large part of the year he administers his vast Empire around him, he himself one of the most remarkable characters of this generation linking in his unique mentality the fanaticism of medieval Islam with the progressive modernism of EUROPE today.

The s.s. "ZAM ZAM", in which I duly embarked soon after, a one-time British liner, had been bought and adapted by the Egyptian Misr Company as a pilgrim-carrying vessel. I travelled with some 1600 pilgrims who had just completed their pilgrimage to MECCA and MEDINA. These people almost all came on board at YEMBO, having travelled for several weeks in conditions of great heat and hardship, most in camel caravans. They were brought to the ship which was anchored some way out in the bay, on large

lighters attached to a tug. The packed mass of humanity was an unforgettable spectacle. As they had to come on board the Zam Zam along one narrow gangway, the embarkation took some three hours to accomplish and meantime the unfortunate people were heaving up and down in the lighters in the full blaze of an exceedingly hot sun, and mostly very sea-sick.

It is remarkable that none fell between the lighters into the sea, as many, especially the very old and sick appeared to be in the last stages of exhaustion. I saw myself some dozen cases of injury to feet and limbs but fortunately not of a very serious kind. Several persons also collapsed and had to be carried off on the backs of their relatives.

One very pathetic couple I saw, an old white-bearded man, and his frail old wife - a tidy superior-looking couple. They were huddled forlornly on the forward part of one of the lighters, shrinking back from the merciless crowd fighting its way onto the "ZAM ZAM". The poor old lady was terribly seasick, and obviously felt the great heat of the sun severely. She had a quaint sunshade - already somewhat tattered by contact with the struggling crowd - and with this she tried to shelter herself and her husband. Miserably, she bent her old head on his ancient shoulder, and he on his part stroked and massaged for her, her aching forehead. Every now and then she would open her eyes and readjust the angle of the ridiculous sunshade to ensure the protection of her husband from the sun. They looked so unhappy and helpless, that at last I went to the Egyptian police officer on board, and asked him as a favour if he would send one of his police to help them off the

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lighter. This he kindly agreed to do. I've never seen two such astonished old people as they were when a policeman clambered over to them and proceeded to assist them through the struggling mass of people! At first, they were alarmed but soon their alarm changed to bewildered gratitude! Certainly these pilgrims suffer for their faith! One hopes indeed that they will be rewarded in proportion.

The Egyptian doctors dealt adequately, even if brusquely, with the sick and the most serious cases were lodged in the hospital.

The great danger on such a ship is that of fire and, therefore, all smoking was prohibited and no open lights allowed. Patrols were on duty day and night to enforce this regulation.

For the benefit of the pilgrims, there is a large Mosque and a cinema able to hold several hundred people; also frequent broadcasts in Arabic, including readings from the Koran, as well as selections of Arabic music and various Arabic talks.

I found it of great interest discussing the Pilgrimage with my fellow-travellers - many of whom thought that I too had just done the pilgrimage, and addressed me as "Hajji"; and the spectacle of the reverent crowd of praying people at each sunset, some with tears running down their faces, I found most moving. They all seemed in a state of religious exaltation, but some spoke also with distress of the way the local people had extracted every possible coin from them. One middle-aged merchant was most indignant. Said he "When I did a minor pilgrimage in Palestine, I found railway fares reduced for pilgrims, and every help given to them. How is it then an Infidel Government helps the Moslem pilgrims like that, and then we find that the Moslems of the Hedjaz plunder fellow Moslems throughout the most holy pilgrimage of our Faith?"

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The comment of an Indian lady - a lady-editor of an Indian newspaper - was caustic and to the point. "The HEDJAZ", said she, "I reverence deeply as the holy country of ISLAM, and MECCA as the holiest city of all. In fact, I find final proof of its sanctity in the miracle of the survival of the population, in spite of its utter unsanitariness!" However, all spoke gratefully of KING ABDUL AZIZ and agreed that the travel upon the roads was absolutely secure, and praised the KING sincerely for his success in this great achievement. Travel on the pilgrim routes before his reign was made truly terrifying by the plunderings and murders of lawless tribesmen.

Mohamed BEY AL MISIRI, Director of the Pilgrimage Branch of the Bank Misr Enterprises, seemed to take a personal and fatherly interest in everything on board and was incidentally most helpful and courteous to myself. I several times visited the hospital in company with the doctor and found there some 20 cases more or less seriously ill. No one actually died on the voyage except one very old man who was found dead on deck.

On arrival at TOR, we were all disembarked from the ship and distributed through the fumigation stations. Being the only European, I was allowed accommodation in the hospital premises where three English nursing sisters also resided, most kindly efficient ladies, a blessing indeed to the weary pilgrims.

Soon after arrival I developed a high fever which I was informed was due to the sun. Excellent treatment rapidly reduced my indisposition and on the 4th day I was able to embark again, but this time on board the s.s. "KOWSAR", in which I was conveyed to SUEZ.

The KOWSAR is normally used in the Mediterranean and is equipped more luxuriously than the ZAM ZAM. On arrival on board I found that MISIRI BEY had forwarded instructions that a deluxe suite was to be placed at my disposal. This suite included bedroom, sitting-room and bathroom and I, therefore travelled to SUEZ in the maximum of comfort.

On arrival at SUEZ, disembarkation was carried out with speed and efficiency. I was able, by the kindly courtesy of Commander Bent of the Port Police, to have special facilities given to the Assistant Governor of JEDDA, who was among the pilgrims, in order that he might be passed through Customs formalities as quickly as possible, and for this he showed much appreciation.

7 That day I spent in SUEZ, a place I always enjoy visiting for old times sake, and that evening I proceeded to CAIRO by the little Diesel Express train, which proceeds direct across the desert to CAIRO, an innovation indeed since the days when I first knew this corner of the world. And so ended this somewhat unusual journey, which I shall always remember with great interest.

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Officers' Quarter
Military Hospital
The Citadel,
Cairo.

29th April 1937,

To Sir Reader Bullard, K.C.M.G.
British Legation,
Jedda.

Dear Sir Reader,

I should like to express my warm thanks for the kindness and hospitality you were so good as to extend to me during my recent visit to Jedda. The whole of my stay was exceedingly interesting to me, especially as a contrast to my last sojourn in that part of the world in 1917 when I was with the Forces based on Rabegh.

I had intended to write this letter sooner than this, but I have unfortunately been laid up with fever since my return to Cairo.

I will give your messages to Selous as soon as I am out and about again.

With my warm good wishes, believe me,

Sincerely yours,

H.H.J.

Letter from the Royal Legation of Saudi Arabia,
London.

7th June 1937.

Dear Mr. Hindle-James,

Thank you for your kind letter of the 29th of April last. I am exceedingly sorry to have missed you in Cairo, and to learn that you have been ill in hospital. I am so glad to know that you were treated with kindness and courtesy throughout your visit to the Hedjaz, and that you received a personal audience with H.M. King Abdul Aziz.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely

Hafiz Wahba.

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#Note:

The Citadel, Cairo, was then still occupied by the British Forces, mainly as a hospital. As I was seriously ill with malignant Malaria I was allowed a spacious private room to myself, with the windows looking out onto the enclosed garden -- still quite well kept, of the old Palace; for this part of the Citadel was in fact a Royal Palace in former times. The Commanding Officer, who was also the Medical specialist in malaria, attended me with a kindness as well as efficiency for which I was most grateful. He was Colonel Priest uncle of the lady who some years later married Nashat Pasha, one time Egyptian Ambassador in London; and before that in Berlin, in the early Hitler days. Hassan Nashat attained the difficult and rather incongruous achievement of being exceedingly well liked in both Capitals. His personal charm, and sumptuous hospitality made quite a mark on diplomatic history. How different is Nashat's position now ! Still a rich man, he has however, faded completely into the background, and politically and diplomatically is no longer ever mentioned. This however, in view of the discreditable trend of affairs in Egypt is probably more to his credit than otherwise !

In June 1937 I paid another visit to Jedda, this time in my official capacity as Liaison Officer.

It is a rather interesting point that when Princess Alice and the Earl of Athlone paid their visit to King Abdul Aziz,, the King again expressed his wish for me personally to be of the party.

Our diplomats however, while expressing much regret, stated that official accomodation did not permit the presence of an Air Headquarters representative. The authorities at A.H.Q. were disappointed at this, but of course could not insist. It is amusing, - when not destructive as it often is, - how rigid an exclusiveness the diplomats attempt to preserve for themselves; an anachronism which still persists as far as a certain clique can preserve it.

Letter to M.E.J. from Turf Club Cairo, dated 3rd of July 1937.

Here I am back in Cairo after yet another visit to the Hedjaz. This time I was sent in charge of special despatches to be delivered officially to the British Minister.

We did the whole journey by air, flying by the most direct route. For the night, we landed at a remote point on the Egyptian coast where there is a small "oil" settlement. The next day after further 6½ hours flying, we reached our destination. It was queer country we flew over; low jagged foothills, alternating with sandy areas; and away inland a high mountenous country of barren peaks, and sharp grim looking ridges. We passed over certain districts wellknown to me some 20 or more years ago, and I was distinctly able to recognise the old aerodrome at Rabegh where we had such interesting experiences long ago. On arrival, I became the guest of our Minister at the British Legation. Of course the weather was rather like a vast Turkish bath, which has at least made me appreciate again the comparative mildness of our Cairo temperature.

I am dining tonight with Reggie Bone. Do you remember Group Captain Bone, who used to be a bit of a tyrant as Commanding Officer, when I was Wing Adjutant at Calshot, and who afterwards became Air Attache in Paris? He now has the appointment here of Director of Civil Aviation. We get on very well nowadays, and often talk of old times. His charming married sister was also here recently. It was the latter's visits to her brother at Calshot which we all used much to appreciate, for she used to keep her brother in order, and even tell him not to be "silly", when he started one of his temperemantal explosions! This of course we all thought incredibly brave of her.

"The Sphinx" January 26th, 1946.

Before leaving Egypt H.M.King Abdel Aziz El Sa'ud received in audience Squadron Leader Hindle James who had been His Majesty's personal guest in Jeddah some year ago.