EPISODE XVIII.

Exit from Airways; life on an Egyptian estate;
And establishing a Service Club.

On Wednesday, August 26th 1942, the Egyptian Gazette reproduced a news item from London concerning the meeting between Mr. Winston Churchill and H.M. King Farouk. One paragraph of it reads as follows; "His (Mr. Churchill's) conversation with King Farouk is said to have been particularly frank and cordial". This was very pleasant to read, and confirmed my hopes.

My talk with King Farouk, just before He received Mr. Churchill in audience, had had as its substance the following points. His Majesty had wished to receive the British Premier in audience alone, for a personal talk. He had just been informed however, that our Ambassador, Sir Miles Lampson, insisted upon his right to be present at the audience. What, queried the King, of me, was his best course in this delicate situation. Should His Majesty be merely cold and formal, or should he be extremely frank even at the risk of causing offense to the Ambassador. His Majesty wished earnestly he said, to make clear his desire for friendleness, but at the same time he wished to clarify long existing misunderstandings, and to state clearly the points upon which he found our Ambassador's personal attitude unacceptable. I felt it a startling matter at having this enquiry to consider, but putting aside formalities, and thinking of His Majesty as any other young man asking advice, I tried within the limits of possibility to assist his decision. I suggested a middle course, and advised that the main objective should be for H.M. to "put across" his own individuality and his basic personal desire for cooperation under conditions of mutual consideration and good will. This suggestion appeared to have His Majesty's approval.

I felt strongly that on no account must there be any atmosphere of mystery about this meeting of mine with His Majesty, and so with the King's knowledge and approval, I let this fact be known to the Minister of State who no doubt informed our Ambassador. The outcome seemed satisfactory, and of good augury.

~~Nexxtherexe~~

Some weeks later there came a development which, even in retrospect, surprises me as having been possible.
Briefly what happened is this. I was one day invited to the Office of the Regional Director of British Airways, but without expecting any unusual development. With some personal embarassment which he was unable to hide, the Regional Director stated that our Embassy had made it known to him that my personal relationship with King Farouk was not gongenial to them, and hinted broadly that they would like him to take steps to bring it to an end. This interference was quite unpermissible but the R.D. did not seem to feel in a position to treat it in the way it merited. He admitted his embarassment, but in the end made it clear that he was asking me to guarantee not to meet or have any contacts, formal or informal, with His Majesty so long as I remained with British Airways. It was a preposterous suggestion, impossible to accept, and without any hesitation I refused to accept it. This of course meant that I must also decide to terminate my association with B.O.A.C. I was somewhat sorry to do this, but did so without any great regret as I had already worked with them for almost two years without sparing any energy, and I realised that I was tired, and that my health especially since my recent period in hospital was again rather unsatisfactory. My resignation was made without any ill will, and I remained on excellent personal terms with the Regional Director, - who after all was also young Bob Maxwell whom I had always liked and admired since first I met him. We are still good friends.

NOTE :-

Throughout all these years - in fact since 1936, a period of now of some 16 years in all, a friendship of unusual stability has continued between Max and myself. For this I, - well experienced in the brittleness of soi-disant friendships ! - am greatly appreciative.

Max's position as Director of a vast business concern here, causes his contacts to include very unscrupulous people and ruthless influences, political, diplomatic, and commercial. It is much to his credit that he maintains a sound human outlook nevertheless.

Bob Maxwell's destiny now (Oct.1952) takes him far from his friends here in Egypt; but both he and charming Mary his wife, will maintain, in my heart anyhow, a permanent place of grateful friendship. May all good fortune be with them and theirs.

In the meantime, while the situation was developing, I had written further letters to my Mother, of which the following are extracts:

To M.E.J., from Turf Club, Cairo, dated 2nd September 1942.

The arrival of your letter dated August 20th, has been a pleasant and comfortable event. Here all is as usual, and by "usual", I mean as it has been during the past five weeks, except that in recent days we cannot but feel more conscious of the extreme closeness of the great battle which has now again gathered force. It is strange living as we do these times. Outwardly, everything seems fairly normal, except that there are fewer soldiers in the streets, and certain unobtrusive precautionary measures. We pass our days otherwise as usual, cinemas are well attended, and business has its normal aspect. Most nights however, there are alerts; sometimes two or three; and last night there was a short but rather sharp rade. Hun aeroplanes passed directly over my hotel, and shell fragments came rattling down on the tin roof of the garage below my window; you know the place. The inhabitants of the city are perfectly calm now on these occasions. The official news today states that there were about forty casualties last night. We have been told to be prepared even for the chance of an attack by parachute descent; and counter measures are ready. I know very well the area where the battle is taking place, for it is part of the area I used to cover in my tours uptill recently. There is however, subconsciously an odd feeling in Cairo, even though outwardly so calm. No one talks very much about the attack, but there seems always to be a kind ofquestion in everyone's eyes. Poor old Awad my servant is as loyal and unperturbed as ever, and is always punctual in the morning, whether there have been raidsor no. His home is very near the Railway Station, a likely target, so he and his family spend much

time in air raid shelters. The only time when he gets indignant, is when he cannot buy sufficient bread and rice. How sad it is about the Duke of Kent's death. I met him years ago at a Cowes' week Dance, on board H.M.S. Barham, when I was stationed at Calshot. He seemed such a nice cheery fellow, and he and his brother, the Duke of Windsor, were particular friends. I have of course sent a telegram to H.R.H. in the Bermudas, and have had a reply from him.

It is interesting that you have been meeting Windham Grech; he is a Senior Law Officer at Air Headquarters here. He has been on tour, and told me before going that he hoped to look you up. So he told you about the D.S.O. that did not arrive! It was rather nice of him to tell you, though that episode hurt rather at the time.

The episode mentioned above to which Windham Grech had referred was a curious thing that happened to me after I had been wounded on the Piave front in Italy during the final weeks of the 1914-18 War. It had first been supposed that I had been killed, and my Squadron did not know of my survival until some time after I reached hospital behind the lines. When I returned to my Squadron upon recovery from my wound, I was taken aside rather solemnly by my Commanding Officer, who informed me that he had a letter upon which he felt it his duty to inform me. Apparantly it had been decided that I was to be awarded a D.S.O., and this occasion, when I was ~~shot down~~ wounded, after bringing down a balloon, whould have been the final episode to confirm the award. When however, it was presumed that I was dead, it was decided that this award should be made to my second in command, for whom a decoration was also being considered. The matter had gone too far forward for any alteration to be made. It was very decent and straightforward of my C.O. to let me have this information, but of course nothing could be done about it. Windham Grech who was serving in the same ~~Squadron~~ Wing, is the only remaining person who knows, besides myself, about this incident.

To M.E.J., from Turf Club Cairo, 12th September 1942.

There is a less tense atmosphere in Cairo now. The enemy is still very near, but he seems to be in difficulties, and his long lines of communications are a great strain upon him. We still have alerts, and there has been another raid. Yesterday I gave a successful little luncheon party, the guests being Hare, the Senior Secretary of the American Legation, Husni Bey, Private Secretary of the King, and a friend of mine from the Minister of State's Department. Once or twice lately, I have also dined at an Officers' Mess at Abbasyah, and on these occasions, as I am entitled to do, I wore uniform again. I have under consideration quite a new plan for the near future. The family of a Pasha who are friends of mine has suggested my going to live on their Estates near Benha. I should be living in the guest house at a little distance from the main mansion of the Estate, which actually is unoccupied. I am offered the use of this residence (the guest house) free, but of course I should insist on paying at least a nominal rent.

My connections with British Airways came to an end, as you know, on August 31st. I am now living quietly in Cairo, and regard my surroundings objectively and rather impersonally, but with a rather agreeable sense of undisturbed interest like a spectator not directly involved. No dear Mother, do not be distressed; that D.S.O. you have been told about, which was allotted to me but awarded actually to my second in command because I was supposed to be dead, did bring happiness to someone; to a man I admired and whom I had led; and that one likes to happen. So that's all right.

To M.E.J. From Turf Club Cairo, dated 23rd September 1942.

I leave my present quarters at the end of this month, and on about the 2nd or 3rd of October, hope to be settling into my charming little house near Benha. I am hiring a lorry to take my furniture at a cost of only L.E.4.-; my own servant comes with me, and the servants already on the Estate will help us in moving in. I have electric light, running water and a telephone. First I found the idea of this upheaval rather overwhelming, but now I feel enthusiastic about this experiment.

To M.E.J. from Turf Club Cairo, dated 28th September 1942.

On Saturday last, Cairo had one of the most interesting air attacks yet experienced. The barrage was continuous for about an hour, and some of the incidents were dramatic to watch. It was especially stirring when an enemy aircraft was brought down in flames. The people of Cairo behaved with great calmness.

The streets of course were empty, but windows, balconies and roofs were crowded with spectators, which of course was very rash. Some of the enemy aircraft came so low that they seemed just over the roof tops; and tracers, flares and shells, were flashing in the sky and the aircraft guns rumbled incessantly. The bomb damage however, was eventually found not to have been very serious.

To M.E.J. from Seraya Fahmy Pasha, Benha, 11th October 1942.

It is already a week since I arrived in my new setting. So far all has gone well, and my new little home is in fair working order already. I will give you a description so that you may judge for yourself. I am seated on the verandah, very broad and roofed over, which runs round three sides of the upper story. I look out across the green tops of fruit orchards (Mango and sweet lime) and vine pergolas, to the bank of the river Nile, which is about 200 yards away. Midway between this house and the river, is a high mellow-looking wall, running a considerable distance along the orchard border. Glancing to the right one sees that the river broadens out into a sweeping bend forming on the near side, as it were, a deep bay, about half a mile across; and on the far side of this bay are the minarets and white houses of the little town of Benha, with a clump of high bushy mango trees beyond them. At the far angle of the bay, the railway bridge crosses the river, but without at all detracting from the pleasant balance of the scene. Glancing still more to the right, the eye passes over more orchards and vine avenues, then to some very tall, dark green mango trees from which arises the solid turreted mass of the Pasha's old palace. It is not a specially beautiful building, and like all large empty Mansions, is a bit desolate looking. In the distance however, it's substantial walls, of yellowish gold colour, tone well with the deep green of the nearby trees. Behind us, at a rather greater distance than the river, is a wide high-banked canal, so that this house of mine is pleasantly placed between two cool looking waterways. The country around is flat, but very fertile. Up stream, about a mile to the left ofus, is the village of the pesant folk of this Estate, and at the distant edge of the village, is a group of beehive shaped towers, which are the special dwelling places of the almost sacred pigeons of which every village has a colony. Very often both on the river and the canal, one sees native boats of all sorts and shapes, some piled high with white cotton bales, like one which I see at this moment. Many of them have tall and handsomely spreading white sails; and on the far bank of the river is a track along which interesting little groups of villagers with their donkeys and cattle, and sometimes camels, pass from time to time. All this side of the river, for a mile or two, is the property of this estate.

By contrast, with the scenes of local life, which I suppose have changed very little for many centuries, we are I find, also in the main air route between Cairo, and the Western Desert War zone. Very frequently, both by day and night, aircraft, alone or in large formations pass over us; and now and then from the distance comes the rather friendly rumble of main line trains passing over the bridge. also Several timesalready since I have been here, there has come echoeing across the fields from the little town the queer sinister howling of air raid sirens. Twice bombs have been dropped at Benha, I am told, but some time ago. So indeed one finds oneself in a blended setting of old and new, of the signs of fruitful peace, and the most destructive of wars. On the whole it is peace which predominates here, and fruitfulness which is most evident; but when the evil screech of the siren starts, I notice that even here the women, quietly drawing water at the river bank, usually gather up their skirts and run back across the fields; they don't seem to be running anywhere in particular, but seem to think it wiser just to run! And the children working in the orchards, run together in little groups, and hold on to one another till the screeching stops! Certainly it is a very ugly sound.

Benha is a typically Egyptian country town, picturesque in the distance, but with much that is squalid at closer examination. There is however, a good shopping centre, which though it contains no European type shops, has many small "dokans" mostly Egyptian, and some Greek, which sell most necessities and many conveniencies. My servants do most of my shopping, but I go sometimes personally to my Greek grocer, a pleasant helpful fellow. I have not yet had time to get to know local Egyptian officials, but anyhow they are all in a state of flux as the Government at the moment is making many changes. The Bank Manager here, an Egyptian Christian, seems a pleasant well educated man, very helpfully disposed.

Today is the feast of Bairam at the end of the Ramadan month of fasting. The fast came to an end last evening at 7.p.m., and was celebrated by the firing of a salvo from an ancient gun in the town, and by the cheering of the people. I gave the usual gifts of cloth to my servants and the Ghafeers. The latter who, like all fellaheen, are very poor, have been showering blessings on my head ever since. Thepeasant folk on this Estate seem mainly kind and simple folk who are shy but quite well disposed towards the strange new foreigner who has come to live amongst them, the only person of his race living in Benha or its district. Across the river, in the Menufia area the people are rather different. Many are of tribal origin, and still unruly.

Just now across the fore front of my view, has passed a little group of villagers in festive mood. All are in holiday attire. As they pass in the distance, dancing and chanting, some of the young people pause, and waive shyly and a little guiltily towards me on my balcony, not quite sure whether they ought to include a strange infidel in their Bairam greetings. I have had telegrams and letters of greetings for Bairam from many Moslem friends, including the Regent of Iraq, and King Farouk.

With this letter I send a small plan of the layout of this Estate. My little house is square, but its broad upper verandah, and turret like roof room prevents it looking to box like. Around it is a little formal garden, bordered by creeper-covered trellis work, and some old wooden seats. The approach to the front door is first through a gate in the high wall bordering the orchard, then down a long vine pergola. One enters the front door into a good sized hall passage, with rooms on each side. This extends into a second small hall, with a tall pleasant window of coloured glass set in it, rising the whole height of the two stories. The staircase is not narrow, but slopes up in three easy stages, with little landings at each turn. On the walls of this staircase I have hung carpets and my various trophies, and they look quite effective. At the foot of the staircase, is the old carved mashroubiah screen, which used to stand in the hall of our old Cairo flat. Upstairs, the landing is long shaped and narrow, like a sort of gallery overlooking the staircase. From this landing open three doors, to what are now my sitting room, bedroom, and a quite large bathroom and lavatory. Downstairs are my kitchens, dining room, a spare bedroom and another lavatory. My sitting room, I have made very cosy and pleasant with my old furniture which you know. Certainly this house is in a charming and rather romantic setting, but certainly too it is very solitary and remote. It is lonely, and at night the stillness after Cairo, is remarkable, even though owls and jackals make occasional queer noises, which I find on the whole make me feel all the more cosier alone in my snug retreat. The Estate is green and fruitful, and the property still well-looked after, but the old Palace itself to which it belongs is empty and rather haunted looking; but that perhaps rather suits my present mood, for sometimes I feel a little like a ghost myself, haunting many varied places wherein my associations have been real and intimate but which are all in the past. However, in some ways there is much to be said for being a ghost, and my hauntings will anyhow never be malevelant, and may even achieve some degree of quiet usefulness. I certainly appreciate the spaciousness and calm of my present circumstances. Often at dawn, I go out on to my balcony, and look across the river to catch the first disentangling of the wide land around me from the grayness of mists and half-light. One hopes that before too long the dimness of human mistakes and misunderstandings will clear and lighten up slowly but certainly in the same inspiring way that dawn leads to daylight.

To M.E.J. from Seraya Fahmy Pasha, Benha, dated 17th November 1942.

Once again I am writing from my verandah; but the scene I look out upon has changed a little, for the Nile, at its highest when I arrived, has now gone down very much, and instead of being level with the countryside there are now steep banks, very muddy still in places sloping down to the water. But the great and still all prevalent change is the psychological reaction still felt most strangely everywhere since the threat of German invasion has been taken from Egypt by those brave soldiers of ours on the Desert front. For months there had been an uneasy knowledge of this threat all around us; this peaceful scene of fields and placid farms, and village people, everyone knew might at any time be changed within a few hours to be the scene of every kind of war horror, just as so many other no less peaceful scenes have been laid waste behind other battle zones. However, all that is over. As I am the only British resident here, on one of the early days of the British advance, all the Senior Egyptian Officials, including H.E. the Governor of the Province, came to call upon me at my house, to offer congratulations on the British Victory. Even in Benha town itself, where at first the attitude seemed less than friendly, one now hears many polite remarks about the British. The Egyptian temperament certainly is a respector of the strong, and that shows clearly at such times as this. The evening before last, I had tea at the Residence of the Governor, and he took me afterwards to the little local Sporting Club, of which I am to become a member. The Governor is an intelligent pleasant man, and speaks excellent English. I spent an afternoon recently at the nearby Estate of H.H. Prince Omar Ibrahim. It is a smallish Estate, but run on model lines. I was driven all round the Estate in an amusing little farm wagonette, which afterwards also brought me back to my house. Last week one of the owners of this Estate came to spend the afternoon with me, bringing with him a young Egyptian girl who is the wife of an Iraqi Diplomat. She was pretty and cheerful.

I have also spent an agreeable day at the Estate of Merrit Butros Ghali. We lunched elegantly and then strolled in the gardens. Merrit who is a Member of Egypt's Parliament is married to a young Swiss woman, — very soignée that day in a riding outfit and charming in her conversation; and the furniture and house arrangement reflect her good taste. This Estate is also shared by Geoffrey Ghali, whom I no likewise in Cairo; a good looking, slightly saternine young man, well turned out, much travelled, romantically disposed, and of amusing wit. I visit the family mansion in Cairo sometimes; and meet both young men occasionally at the Mohamed Aly Club. Both are immensely rich, have intelligence, and social opportunities which might bring them high achievement here; but wealthy young men in Egypt are too often indolent, and these two have not succeeded altogether in avoiding that characteristic. The family is Coptic christian, and to be an Egyptian christian also unfortunately includes many obstacles to high political achievement. The Ghali family history is indeed an example. These young men's grandfather did reach the supreme distinction of the Premiership; — but before long assassination ended his work for his country. A disconcerting precedent for these grandsons to remember."

"During my last visit to Cairo, I sold all my remaining spare furniture. The best of my furniture is with me here, except for one sitting room suite which I have lent to Lady Russell for her Soldiers' Club; by the way Russell Pasha is at the moment on holiday in Kenya; perhaps you will meet him again;"

In December 1942, another curious incident happened, which I think I should not leave unrecorded. I was called upon unexpectedly in my house by the Private Secretary of H.R.H. Prince Mohamed Aly. He had come he said to Benha to visit me on a special mission from H.R.H. Briefly, this was to inform me that on a recent occasion when our Ambassador had been paying a visit at Manial Roda Palace, he had implied to the Prince that if the latter could so arrange matters in future that a welcome would no longer be extended to me by H.R.H., this would be much appreciated at the British Embassy. The Prince, in view of the many years of cordiality between him and myself, had avoided any reply to H.E.; and furthermore to make it clear that the Ambassador's suggestion did not meet with His approval, he had decided on a further somewhat unusual course of action. He had sent His Secretary especially to say that he would like to give me an audience in the immediate future. This very distinguished mark of H.R.H.'s consideration for me moved me very much. In due course, I proceeded to Cairo and was received in audience by H.R.H.; and he had so arranged this matter that as I arrived, the Oriental Secretary of the British Embassy was just leaving the Prince's presence, and could not fail to observe me. This was a signal mark of generous good will, which I record most gratefully. H.R.H. did not discuss the matter with me personally, which was also tactful, but he advised me through His Private Secretary to mention to our Minister of State that certain distasteful rumours had reached me. This I did, and the following letter of mine refers to the matter.

From Sqdn.Ldr. H. Hindle-James, O.B.E., M.A., (retired)
Turf Club, Cairo

To Deputy Minister of State,
Office of the Minister of State,
Cairo.

16th January 1943.

My Lord,

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of the letter dated January 12th 1943, sent to me at your direction, recording

the receipt of my protest addressed to Mr. Casey, and recording also the fact that nothing is known in the Office of the Minister of State concerning the allegations referred to.
~~Ifxmy~~ The information to which I was obliged, however reluctantly to call attention, reached me in a form which seems so circumstantial as to make the action I have taken an essential matter.
I trust that this matter is now effectively disposed of.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's obedient servant,

H.H.J.

Looking back, even in the calmness of after years, one is amazed, I think justifiably, at the long drawn out persistance of what seems like mere discreditable malice.

I now continue with more normal events at Benha.

To M.E.J., from Saraya Fahmy Pasha, Benha, dated 5th January 1943.

My Christmas Day turned out to be very agreeable. In the morning I met Colonel Ross at the Turf Club, and he asked me to lunch with him, the other guests being an American Colonel and an American Captain both of the U.S.A. Air Force; the latter

being one of the pilots who recently bombed Tokyo.

I have also been kindly remembered by King Farouk who sent a Secretary to Benha to bring me an excellent radio set, which was a pleasant surprise.

You may remember that I told you that I decided to give a small feast at the Eid El Kebir. I discoveredthat for a moderate cost, I could give a feast for about a hundred people. First a ram had to be selected, and for this a "committee of experts" was chosen from the village. Early one morning, in fact at 4.a.m., this committee came to my house to drink coffee before trudging off to market. On the morning of the festive occasion, my household was astir before dawn; and the poor amiable ram was turned into mutton. By daybreak, pots and couldrons were sizzling briskly over wood fires just outside my house, for the cooking of meat, a lot of rice, vegetables, and spices. Also a large amount of bread was specially baked. The cooks, headed by my household cook, were experts at this sort of thing, and as the savoury smells began to rise, it was most amusing to hear the comments of the interested onlookers who soon began to gather "By Allah that is a fine smell, O master cook!" " A fine smell indeed, but just wait till we add the spices". A chorus of "ya salams" and so on and so forth. Soon after noon all the guests had assembled, rather over a hundred of them, including many children of many ages; and to my surprise, even some of the women folk were allowed to come, feeling very bold and dashing I think, at thus presenting themselves at the foreigner's house. The arrival of those ladies was quite an amusing incident, with much giggling and squeeling on their part, for some pretended to be overcome with bashfulness, and were dragged along by their menfolk, to the great amusement of all. At the height of the festivities, H.E. the Governor of our Province, unexpectedly arrived in his car, complete with uniformed attendants. He was in a very aimiable and fatherly mood, and we all were a very cheerful party. Very early the following morning, I was awakened again by a deputation of parents and children from the village who came to offer me thanks and the blessings of the Eid, which was very nice of them.

To M.E.J. from Seraya Fahmy Pasha, Benha, dated 29th March 1943.

My idea for a welfare scheme for our troops at Benha has greatly interested Brigadier Foster. He says that H.Q. have been wanting such a scheme for a very long time, but could find no one to set it going.

If it can be of use to our troops, and troops of all allied nationalities who pass through Benha, I shall indeed be glad to do what I can to get it going. It is of course no easy task and needs much thought and hard work in the early stages.

The scheme mentioned in this letter to my Mother, referred to the setting up of a Welfare Club for troops at the Railway station at Benha junction. Great numbers of troops were passing through this junction in those days, and often had to wait many hours there. Headquarters in agreeing to my launching this Welfare Scheme, offered to assist me with funds on the condition that I would undertake the design of the building, supply of materials, and the general organisation of the premises. In due course after various vicissitudes, this scheme was established and was known as the United Nations Services Club, Benha Station. After starting in a small way, we finished up by keeping the premises open day and night, and in the course of every 24 hours several hundred troops of many nationalities, both sexes and all ranks, made use of the premises. The following ~~report, dated 12th September 1943~~ extracts are from my report when I handed over the Club organisation on the 12th of September 1943.

" I have greatly appreciated the privilege and interest in having the opportunity for launching and organising this Welfare Centre for Troops at Benha. It is with regret that I am obliged by my impending departure from Benha to relinquish this charge. It is however, a happy matter that future progress is well assured under good guidance. I should like to express our thanks to Corporal Pollard and Tpr. Mountford for their loyal and untiring work on behalf of the Club, and to thank all our helpers and members of the staff, Egyptian as well as American and British for making this enterprise a work of helpfulness and good cheer. Last but certainly not least, our warm thanks are due to Brigadier Foster personally and the Officers of his staff, and to Major Quentin-Carr at G.H.Q. M.E., without whose consistant support, this undertaking would not have been possible.....

" In addition to increasing sales to Troops, the facilities for rest, baths, haircutting, etc., are taken full advantage of in the course of every 24 hours. It will thus be realised

that several hundred troops are still making use of the premises throughout each day and night. The building of extensions to this Club is now completed, and the new accommodation is furnished and in use, including the Officers' wash place and shower bath. The new rest room and roofed garden provide extra space of which we had previously been in great need. This covered garden, it seems, is especially appreciated by Indian troops and troops from East and West Africa, who seem to prefer this open air setting. Many Service Women, have been using the Club, including Polish women and women of other Allied Nations. In fact it is an interesting point at this Club, that it is shared continually by Service personnel of so many of the various nations, united in the present war effort and finding themselves at the moment in Egypt.

The following are extracts from letters of thanks.

H.Q. British Troops in Egypt, Cairo.
20th October 1943 from
Brigadier Foster.

Dear Hindle-James,

I regret the delay in answering your letter, I have studied the "handing over " Report where you outline the position very clearly. May I thank you for the very great initiative and interest you have shown in developing the Benha Club. Without your untiring efforts, this project would not have been possible.

Yours sincerely, G.V. Foster

H.M.S. Resource, Alexandria.
From Commander Kenneth Childs.
1.6.43.

Dear Sqdr.Ldr. James,

Just a line in appreciation of your Services Club at Benha Station. It was a great relief to us, as it must be, to many others who travel daily on the railways for long periods to have a comfortable and clean place to rest and get refreshment before continuing the journey. It is a great service and comfort to those travelling and a very welcome break in the journey.

With kindest regards,
Yours sincerely,

(signed) H.Kenneth Childs.

254A

* Note: A period of "discord" did arise when certain of the Military Police attempted to assert undue authority upon the Club premises ! This I refused to tolerate. I received Brigadier Fosters' full support in this incident, and the offending police were repremonded and transferred.

MARLBOROUGH HOUSE
S.W.1.

5th September 1945.

Dear Sir,

I have received Queen Mary's commands to thank you very much indeed for your kind letter of the 22nd July and to say that Her Majesty was very glad to hear news of you and of your work on behalf of the troops in Egypt.

Queen Mary greatly appreciated your kind words about the interest she took in years past in your work at the Crypt Club, and later the Oval House Club, and well remembers her visits to them.

I am to assure you that it gave Her Majesty great pleasure to receive your letter, which brought back happy recollections of days gone by.

Yours very truly,

J.L. Wickham
Private Secretary to H.M.Queen Mary.

The above extracts are sufficient to remind me congenially of one aspect of this endeavour; and now I go back to some comments of mine in letters to my Mother.

To M.E.J., from United Nations Services Club, Benha, dated 16.4.43.

My poor Mother, I know exactly how you are feeling when you wrote, with an uncomfortable early start for a long journey before you, and with people, not all of them congenial, around you at that trying moment. I am glad however, that Lettie continued to be so helpful. My new enterprise here is already well started, and in fact is now an established entity. Walls have arisen, roofs gone into position, and water and lighting are being installed.

17.4.43. I am writing now from the verandah of my house in the early morning sunshine. I really have very little time at home these days, in great contrast to my very free hours during my

months at Benha, before I undertook to launch this Club. I am no longer a solitary inhabitant of my little house. For convenience of Club organisation, it has been arranged that a young American, John Adair, should sleep and breakfast at my house. John is actually the son of Missionaries in the Sudan, and has been caught in Egypt by the War while on his way to England to continue his education. He is kindly helping us here in the meantime. I myself usually leave my house at 8.30 a.m. and walk to Benha, which takes about half an hour. John has a bicycle, so gets along quicker. Unless due to work at the Club all night, I return home at 7.30p.m., and usually go straight to bed. At first I tried walking both to and from the Club; but I found that my injured side began to trouble me a bit, so now I only walk one way and take an arabiya for the homeward journeys. I have an arrangement with one special arabiya driver, so as to avoid any haggling about the fair. All the "cabs" here, including my special one, are old as the hills, and I have already had the oddest adventures; sometimes the shafts fall off; often the harnest breaks sometimes the hood slips off the back of the cab; but, perhaps fortunately, the horses are as elderly as the cab, and never get excited, so wealways reach our destination sooner or later!
My corporal, Pollard by name, lives in a little Greek hotel in Benha town, and for the Egyptian staff I have taken a house near the Club. The owner of the house is a nice shoemaker fellow, who makes shoes for me at half the cost which Cairo shoemakers now demand!
Miss Harper of the American Mission is now our treasurer, and visits the Club from time to time. Corporal Pollard is an excellent man, companionable as well as efficient, yet very correct in his attitude as my Corporal in our rather unusual official yet unofficial relationship. He was very badly wounded in the Battle of Alamein; trapped in a burning tank, then hit by shell splinters as he struggled out of it. In peace time, he is head game-keeper on a big Estate in England. So now after a long time of solitude in my lone house in this Egyptian setting, I have now gathered around me in Benha quite a varied and amiable community. So far all goes well, and without discord; but, having, as you know, organised this sort of thing before, I shall not be surprised or unduly pained if or when those almost inevitable symptoms arise.

24.4.43. I have been trying to continue this letter, but the last two days have been very busy with a continuous passage of troops. I have now managed to get armchairs into the new rest-room and it was pleasing to see how our poor tired chaps curled up in them and went asleep promptly, instead of standing about the platform disconsolately as they used to do. We are now staying open all night as well as all day. I have had a lot to do today inspecting supplies, buying kerosene, signing contracts about electric light and water supply, checking on accounts, etc.. etc... Once each week our Corporal goes to Cairo to replenish stores which he brings back personally.

To M.E.J. from United Nations Services Club, Benha, dated 8.5.43.

My loving greetings, dear little Mother for your Birthday. This letter is mainly to carry all my warmest good wishes.

All well here, and the Club, as I had visualised it, is now fully built, furnished, and in working order. Our feeding arrangements seem to meet with approval, and the new facilities for bathing and washing seem especially appreciated. Early yesterday morning I found about 150 chaps all washing, shaving or bathing at the same time. A terrific scene of splashing and lather and soap-suds! A gratifying comment was from a bluff Seargent-Major two days ago. He and a large party of his men, all just back from the fighting round Tunis, had spent some hours with us. Just before leaving, he came up and spoke to me; I will try to reproduce for you as nearly as possible his exact words. "Me and my chaps would like to thank you, Sir, because it has meant a lot to us finding this welcome here. If you'll excuse me, Sir, it's funny meeting a chap like you in a place like this. Coming into this canteen, we felt like we was all back in an English Inn, and meeting the Squire of the village for a nice chat! You know, Sir, if you'll excuse me, you are so English that it has done us all good to be here with you!" I must say I can hardly imagine a kinder compliment, or one more to be appreciated by a person for so long a wanderer in outlandish places! I wonder what some of my less amiable Embassy "friends" in Egypt would think of this description of me!

Our Egyptian King's Accession Day has been the occasion of a friendly exchange of telegrams between this Services Club and Abdin Palace, which seems to have pleased everyone. Prince Mohamed Aly also passed through here yesterday on his way back to Alexandria after signing the King's Book in Cairo. I had received a telegram from the Prince's Secretary telling me the time of his passing Benha, and so I found myself in the select company of the Governor and local personalities to greet H.R.H. at this station. We have had some inconvenience lately in this district through an epidemic. But this is now improving. (This epidemic, though of course I did not inform my Mother was actually typhus, which for a while was serious and created a menacing situation).

A very pleasing part to mention in this Services Club enterprise is the cooperation I had from local Egyptian people. I had agreed, in proposing the matter, to launch the scheme without disturbing G.H.Q. in Cairo with details, and so I had to rely greatly on local assistance. I learned much about the essentials for building, drainage, roofing etc.. under the amiable guidance of El Hag Zaazaa our local builder a cheerful plump rogue, whose appearance seems somehow to fit his name. My accounting system, and as time passed, we had considerable accounting todo, was supervised for me by young Mohamed Ahmed, a clerk at the small local branch of the National Bank. For this he refused to accept any remuneration, though he gave us almost every day a portion of his treasured "off duty" hours. He said it was his contribution to the War Effort "for justice". Alas these wars "for justice"! If only the injustice of war itself could become apparent to humanity as a whole. The Club domestic staff was entirely Egyptian, and a very cheerful willing party they were. Our local Provincial Governor and his subordinates were always helpful; and only one "hidden influence" — a senior railway official with ani-British sentiments — ever raised difficulties for us, and these were soon disposed of. Most of our marketing was of course done locally, and altogether those were busy days of mutual occupations for a common friendly purpose, in which almost all Benha seemed by degrees to become interested.

Early in June; I unfortunately contracted diphteria, and the following letter was written while recovering from this.

To M.E.J., from Anglo-American Hospital, Gezira, Cairo, dated 20.6.43.

This is my first attempt at letter writing since I was taken ill with this tiresome disease. For a long time I have been kept lying flat on my back and not allowed to move. Now however, I am much better and it is a great relief to have left the Isolation Hospital and to have returned to the Anglo-American. I was sent to the Military Isolation place, which was supposed to be a special concession; but which proved to be a bleak and desolate place, with a Staff Sister in charge who was a tyrant of the sort that unfortunately sometimes occurs in such places. I was glad when I was passed free of infection, and was able to leave. You will be interested to know that the young King here, hearing that I had diphteria thought that I would be sent to the Egyptian Isolation Hospital, and sent personal orders about reserving me good accommodation and giving instructions to the doctors about my welfare. Of course I did not know about this till later. While I was in hospital, His Majesty's Secretary telephoned daily to enquire as to my condition. I think you will agree that this was all exceedingly kind. My progress is good though I still have injections for my heart twice daily. It will not be long however, before I can hope to be normal again.

Towards the end of my convalescence, my servant Ibrahim who had been looking after my house at Benha, was himself taken seriously ill. He was a loyal young chap who had been with me ever since he was 16; and now he had become a married man with a young wife and daughter at his village at Toshke. I decided to speed up my exit from hospital; and learning of this, the King sent me a car from the Palace so that my journey home might be carried out with minimum fatigue. Upon visiting the Hospital at Benha, I discovered deplorable conditions and much neglect, so immediately removed Ibrahim back to my house. The following report will describe the distressing incidents which followed.

To the Private Secretary to His Majesty the King, Abdin Palace, Cairo dated 10.7.43.

Two days before, I ~~myself~~ recently left the Anglo-American Hospital, my servant Ibrahim Jamal was reported to be seriously ill at Benha. The following day, as you know, I myself left hospital for Benha in the automobile which had been so graciously placed at my disposal from Abdin Palace. I reached Benha at about 3.30.p.m., and found Ibrahim in the Government Hospital, but in a distressing condition, having had no food, and no treatment.

No doctors were available, but I spoke drastically to a tamurgi, requiring immediate attention for my servant, and also for another patient terribly ill in the bed next to him, who also seemed to need help. Next day I had my servant brought back to my house, and sent for a Greek doctor who pronounced him gravely ill; and he was in fact constantly vomiting blood. I also made enquiries as to what had happened to the other sick man. I discovered that he had grown worse but nevertheless the following morning the doctor had ordered his relations to remove him from hospital, which they were obliged to do. It was confirmed later that this patient left hospital unwillingly, for his relatives came to me to ask me to get the unfortunate man re-admitted.

I wrote a note to H.E. the Governor asking his advice as to removing my servant to hospital in Cairo. Most considerately H.E. immediately had the emergency ambulance sent out to my house, and this arrived while the principal Medical Officer of Benha Hospital was with me, he having come to explain, as he put it, the "misunderstandings" which had taken place concerning his hospital. The P.M.O. then informed me that Helouan Sanatorium would be the right place to send my servant. At my requirement the P.M.O. wrote a letter to the Director of the Sanatorium requesting admission for the sick man, and with this letter I also sent my visiting card; then at about 3.30 p.m. the ambulance left for Helouan. At Helouan, in spite of the P.M.O's letter there was long delay, and finally a refusal to admit the patient, the ambulance being ordered to proceed to Kasr-El-Aini Hospital. At Kasr-El-Aini, further long delay occurred, although the ambulance driver emphasized that the patient was very ill. At about 10.30.p.m. a doctor admitted the patient into the hospital building, and the ambulance left him. Yet another long delay followed, until at the very late hour of midnight, a second doctor approached the patient and disregarding the previous doctor's order (a written one), brusquely ordered him to leave the hospital and return for examination next morning. Gravely ill, very weary, and without any transport, the unfortunate man then had to make his way on foot as best he could to a friend's house, where he collapsed from exhaustion and had a further severe hammorhage. The whole story is a shocking one. It seems to show complete lack of cooperation between Senior Medical Authorities, and an amazing absence of even ordinary human consideration for a man, gravely ill, who as a loyal Egyptian subject has a <u>right</u> to all proper consideration at Egyptian Government hospitals.

Now comes a more happy sequal to this story. As soon as I learned of these facts, I reported them in writing to the Governor of Qalyoubia. He immediately called at my house, and expressed great indignation at the story. Next day he went to Cairo himself and reported the case to H.E. the Minister for Health.

H.E. the Minister equally expressed his indignation, and the outcome was that by the personal order of the Minister, my servant was forthwith properly examined at Kasr-El-Aini Hospital and then, admitted at once for treatment at Helouan Sanatorium.

As you yourself well know, this personal case is not the only subject concerning Egyptian hospitals which you and I have discussed. There are those other most disturbing reports concerning lack of supervision and reluctance to meet urgent medical need even during the recent epidemic.

Finally there is also the question, whether it is wise or proper that Medical Officers in charge of Government hospitals should be allowed to engage in the work of private clinics which work can, and does, so often conflict with their public duties.

I know how high and inspiring is the concern at Abdin Palace for the encouragement of hospital progress in Egypt, and so I venture to pass to you these personal impressions.

From the Private Secretary to H.M. the King, Abdin Palace, dated 18.7.43.

..... The appalling story of which you gave me an account in your kind letter is being given full consideration in "High Quarters". .....

Very cordially yours,

H.Husni.

From Ministère de l'Hygiène Publique
Cabinet du Ministre. 14.8.43.

To Squadron Leader Hindle-James, O.B.E.

Dear friend,

It was my happy fortune to get again into touch with you, through your kind letter of the 12th inst. I shall always covet the very encouraging words therein, and hope that both of us will one day see Egypt on a higher standardof health and its hospitals run in a better way.

Hoping to see you whenever you have time, believe me to remain,

Yours very sincerely,

A.W. Wakil,

Minister of Public Health.

My meetings with H.E. the Minister for Public Health, and the fact that our Bishop, Bishop Gwynne, was also interested in hospital reform, led to further developments which the following letter extracts will show.

From Saraya Aly Pasha Fahmy, Benha, dated 20.8.43. to
The Right Reverend Bishop Gwynne.

The talk which you kindly spared time to have with me, has been a great encouragement and help. I duly had my interview with Abdel Wahed Bey El Wakil at his Ministry, and he allowed me time for a long talk on the question of hospitals in Egypt. His desire for reform seems energetic and with a realistic attitude to hard facts. The Minister has since also written to me a friendly note inviting me to make contact with him at any time.

His Majesty also has allowed me a gracious and sympathetic reply to my informal "memo" to him on the same subject. It will interest you too I think, that from Abdin Palace today I am also asked to convey, confidentially, a message to yourself. His Majesty would like you to know that you could receive a "most welcome reception" from Him personally, on any suitable occasion you might care to select for asking for an audience. Evidently His Majesty particularly wishes to give you a cordial greeting. Of course the suggestion is informal and confidential at this stage, but should you consider the idea appropriate, may I be allowed to convey this fact privately to the King. H.M's wish to receive yourself seems a perhaps important gesture of good will, and so with all personal diffidence, I venture to put it before you for consideration.

With my warm thanks,

I am most sincerely yours,

H.H.J.

From All Saints Cathedral, Cairo, dated August 24, 1943.

From Bishop Gwinne,

I received your confidential letter on Saturday, and hasten to say that if you think that an interview with His Majesty would be wise and useful, I will ask for private audience with H.M. I will do so, but will you please hold your hand about this until the end of the week.

Ever yours,

Llewellynn H. Gwynne.

The outcome of these letters was that Bishop Gwynne was received in audience by His Majesty on September 14th 1943, and apparantly the meeting was very cordial. In October 1943, His Majesty, himself called on the Bishop, the story of which was told as follows in the local press, (Oct. 6th).

"His Majesty King Farouk, accompanied by His Private Secretary, Dr. Hussein Husni Bey, on Monday evening, visited All Saints Cathedral, where he was received by the Bishop of the Diocese"

In fact H.M. took tea with the Bishop, and it so happened that the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Bloemfontein were also staying at that time as guests of the Bishop's house. The party proceeded round the Cathedral, and before leaving His Majesty expressed his desire to make a gift to the Cathedral of Bronze Grilles to replace the temporary grilles in the sanctuary. This generous gesture was greatly appreciated, and in due course, on February 11th, 1944, at a special ceremony, this gift was formally unveiled by the Grand Chamberlain, Abdul Latif Talaat Pasha on behalf of His Majesty the King. These bronze grilles of most handsome construction, are now a lasting reminder of a most unusual and distinctive gesture of good will.

My Mother was present with me on that memorable occasion of the dedication of these grilles. Mother had a great dislike still for crowds or congregations, so I arranged with the kind cooperation of Archdeacon Johnson that we should ascend alone to a quiet corner in the Gallery over the left of the choir. From this retired place we took part unobserved in the Bedication Ceremony. Lord Killearn, as our Ambassador was the senior British personality present at this ceremony. Regrettably I feel fairly sure that the fact that the reconciliation between our Bishop and Egypt's King, after years of coldness between them, had been initiated by so ordinary a person as myself, was really far from welcome to H.E. Anyhow it is a curious thing that the importance of this gift from Egypt's Moslem King to our Christian Cathedral, which actually was an unique gesture of its sort, was then, and still is, minimised in our Senior Diplomatic circles; ___ a lead which has it seems, deplorably been followed by the Cathedral clergy. King Farouk has himself noticed and commented with some distress on these circumstances. It is for me unexplainable, and adds some sadness to an otherwise happy memory. One has not infrequently in Cairo heard the criticism that our Cathedral is often allowed to seem a sub - Department of our Embassy. A peculiar implication indeed!

During the visit of H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh to Cairo, I rang up our Enbassy (and the Bishop, suggesting that if a word of appreciation could be introduced by H.R.H. to King Farouk about the gift of the Bronze Grilles to our Cathedral, it might

be very opportune and welcome. Both agreed cordially; but our plan somehow went adrift in Embassy high places. It was a great pity, and I feel sure King Farouk was disappointed. Now comes an extract from a note on this matter from Roddy Parkes of our Enbassy on this matter.

British Embassy,

Cairo.

2nd February 1950.

I return the various articles which you sent me with many thanks, I was very much interested in them. I now hear that, as I suspected when I spoke to you last night about it, our plan miscarried owing to the absence of the second party. A thousand pities but no fault of ours.

Yours Sincerely,

R. P.

During September 1943, a decision, happy for myself was reached. This was that my Mother should return to me again in Egypt. This however, necessitated of course some readjustment of my plans and I decided to leave Benha, and return again to Cairo which in due course I did.

D.C's Office,
Kampala
Uganda.

Monday Jul. 26 1943

Huck darling. Thank you, thank you dear old boy for your lovely wire, which came yesterday, telling me of such a warm and loving welcome which is awaiting me when I arrived back to you in Cairo. Its lovely to feelthat I shall really be welcome