

# *Colonel Lawrence* *and* *The Hedjaz*



## **Romantic Career of the Young English Archaeologist Who Led 200,000 Arab Horsemen Against the Turks**

**O**NE of the most romantic figures of the entire war was Thomas Lawrence, a young Oxford graduate who had specialized in archaeology. For seven years he had wandered about Syria and other Eastern countries, dressed in native costume and living with the various Bedouin tribes whom he encountered on his way. At the outbreak of the war with Germany he was engaged in excavation work among the ruined cities of Mesopotamia. He had lived in Arabia so long and had gained such a remarkable knowledge of the various tribes, their language, customs, and peculiarities, that when war was declared the British authorities called him to Cairo and appointed him to the map department of the British Office there, with the title of Lieutenant.

He was still employed in this capacity in 1916, doing the most valuable kind of work in connection with the laying out of maps of localities which he knew far more intimately than the official topographers, when the Sherreef of Mecca, King Hussein of Arabia, who had been for years a virtual prisoner of the Turks at Constantinople, gave the word for his long-prepared revolt against the Turks,

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oppressors of Arabia for fully 500 years. This revolt proved formidable. When it began, the British authorities at Cairo decided that Thomas Lawrence was pre-eminently fitted to be sent to Arabia as British military representative.

His achievements from that time on placed him in the list of that small band of Englishmen whose romantic exploits in exotic countries have been written permanently into the pages of world history—the Raleighs, the Drakes, the Kitchenors, the Gordons, and such men as Sir Richard Burton, the first foreigner who ever penetrated within the forbidden walls of the holy city of Mecca.

The revolution that has resulted in the new Kingdom of the Hedjaz was chiefly due to the Arabo-Turkish Army. The Turkish principle of government had been to fill all the responsible official posts with Turks. Especially was this



COLONEL LAWRENCE IN HIS COSTUME  
AS AN ARAB COMMANDER

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the case with the Young Turks. But they enforced military conscription among the Arab population to the best of their ability, for the Balkan war had made a wide chasm in the Turkish population of military age. The result was that the so-called Turkish Army in Arabia consisted very largely of Arabs, whose sympathies were wholly with their fatherland and against their oppressors. When the general rising occurred the Arab portion of the army deserted almost en masse. The Turkish Army, thus depleted, was forced to take refuge in various forts, and was gradually driven to surrender, except at Medina, where a considerable number of Turks collected and succeeded in holding out until the end of the war.

The Arab deserters, with their Western drill and modern weapons, formed the nucleus of the new army of the Hedjaz. With the addition of new recruits and supplies from the Allies an excellent force of regulars was formed. These were supplemented by swarms of irregulars — Bedouin horsemen and camelmen from the deserts. This was the army which was to co-operate with the British in the conquest of Syria. Its guiding spirits were Emir Faisal, third son of King Hussein—a man of strong patriotism, energy, tact, and ability to command—and Colonel Thomas Lawrence.

To Colonel Lawrence more than to any other man was due the efficient organization of the Hedjaz Army. He worked in perfect harmony with King Hussein and Prince Faisal, to whom he was second in command. For months his wild and reckless yet continually successful exploits at the head of his Bedouin force of 200,000 horsemen were spoken of in this and other countries of the East. A small blonde young Englishman, with intensely blue eyes and a strong chin, he was adored by the fierce tribesmen whose every exploit with horse or camel he could equal, if not surpass. Fearless and resourceful, defeat to him meant simply accomplishing a given task in a different way. He wore on all occasions full Bedouin costume, and his achievements as military commander in the impetuous raids which he led against the Turks, and which drove them out of Arabia, were such that King Hussein

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A DETACHMENT OF HEDOUIN VOLUNTEERS  
IN ARABIA MARCHING TO THE FRONT TO  
FIGHT UNDER PRINCE FAISAL

conferred on him the title of Shereef, the first instance in history of a Westerner holding that much-prized religious rank, which entitled him to wear the *agal*, *kuffia*, and *abba*, distinctive of Arabic Princes of the blood. He also wore a curved golden sword which Prince Faisal himself presented to his English commander.

Despite his fame and the brilliant record of his achievements, Colonel Lawrence was an extremely silent and almost abnormally modest man. On more than one occasion he literally fled from the honors which the British Government wished to confer upon him. Blonde as a Viking, he walked about in the streets of Jerusalem or other cities, in full panoply of Arab royal costume, plunged in some inner dream. His leisure moments he spent in the study of archaeology. His influence over his native followers was amazing; he accomplished what had never been accomplished before—the welding of many different and often hostile tribes into one single patriotic unit. In none of his wild raids was he ever wounded, though he exposed himself in the most reckless fashion, leading cavalry charges in the style of Cromwell or Seydlitz.

It should not be forgotten, in this connection, that he had never had military training, and was noteworthy when wearing British uniform (after his capture of Akaba he had been made a Colonel) for his serene disregard of all matters of military etiquette. His power over his Arabic followers was due to his knowledge of their dialects, his understanding of their religion, his tact in settling disputes, and his inborn military ability.

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The Germans and Turks alike soon discovered the presence of this young Englishman among their Arabic opponents in the desert, and, realizing the menace of his mysterious and amazing successes, put a price of \$500,000 upon his head. Needless to say, this blood money was never paid; the Turks were driven out of Holy Arabia forever, and Germany saw the miraged vision of the Berlin-to-Bagdad route vanish into the arid wastes across which the Bedouin forces of Colonel Lawrence drove the disillusioned Turks.

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