HELL IN THE HOLY LAND

by

LOWELL THOMAS

Author of With Lawrence in Arabia, Beyond Khyber Pass, etc.

with KENNETH BROWN COLLINGS

Allenby, the Last Crusader, at the time of his ever-glorious conquest.

HELL in the Holy Land! That is no mere phrase. It is fact, the truth—and is becoming as true of this hour as it was and is of those World War days when Allenby and his Last Crusade smote the menacing Turks and swept them out of Palestine.

Do you fully realize what has been happening in the Holy Land of late?—toward what an appalling explosion and conflagration events there have been trending?

Seven hundred thousand Arabs, long inflamed against four hundred thousand Jews, seethe more and more fiercely with resentment of the Zionist immigration and land purchase by the immigrants.

Communist and Fascist fingers are stirring this witches' caldron—and Great Britain, with her mandate government, is supposed among Moslems to be weakening, to have backed down in the crisis that arose over Ethiopia. Clashes with bloodshed; then an Arab general strike; then formal civil disobedience; then terrorism, mass outrages—and now, at this writing, with Britain standing firm, the most ominous signs of an actual general rebellion!

Oh, yes; there is hell in the Holy Land again today. Make no mistake about that. You will get a real idea of what may well be impending from the story Ken Collings and I have to tell you—the story of how the largest cavalry army in all history succeeded at last where Richard of the Lion Heart had failed. It's an untold story. Even today, after eighteen

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Turks in Gaza

years, no clear-cut account of Allenby's campaign has been set down. And since " 'Omer smote 'is bloomin' lyre " there has been no war story to match it!

Allenby brought true the age-old dream of Western peoples. He drove the Turks from Gaza and Beersheba, from Hebron and Bethlehem, from Jerusalem, from Jericho. Then, with the aid of Arabs led by Lawrence of Arabia, his flying horsemen cleared the Plain of Armaggedon. In a blazing finale they captured Damascus and forced the Sultan's armies to surrender. . . . Such is the tale we now proceed to tell:

PART ONE—BOATS ACROSS THE WILDERNESS OF SIN

IT was Christmas Day of 1917, in Jerusalem. General Allenby and his British army had just captured the Holy City from the Turks. *The holy places of Christianity were delivered from Mohammedan domination! The centuries-old dream of the crusaders was realized at last!*

I stood talking to Todd Gilney—the liaison officer—on the old Turkish airdrome where I had landed.

" It's a grand feeling," said Todd, " a glorious feeling. There's not a man in the army but feels personally happy about delivering Jerusalem—and just a bit awed. Soldiers are ordinarily pretty rough, but they pass the holy places here in silence. Everywhere in the city they talk in low tones and go slow on the profanity.

" I'm certain the folks back home must be elated too; I know my old mother is. She will be in church right now offering a prayer of thanksgiving.

" Yes," Todd continued, " the people at home will be overjoyed by our victory—*but they won't realize the ghastly price.* They won't see the desperate fighting nor the sacrifice in human lives that brought it about. They can't see, Lowell; they're too close to France; this campaign is overshadowed by events on the western front. But it hasn't been any triumphal procession—not by a

jugful. It's been pure unadulterated hell every inch of the way. It started with the Suez Canal running blood; we finished it by cutting a bunch of Turkish—and British—throats with bayonets—right over there on the Mount of Olives." He pointed a lean forefinger toward the shrine of Christianity.

"Somebody ought to tell them, Lowell. Maybe you can do it."

I had been thinking the same thing as I flew up from Cairo and watched the battlefields pass beneath me: somebody *should* tell the story of this modern crusade. It marked an epoch in world history and every inch of it was being fought over historic and holy ground.

Our take-off took us—my pilot and me—over the pyramids of Egypt and the Sphinx. Then we struck out across the Suez Canal and the Desert of Sinai, where Moses received the Ten Commandments. We flew over the route traveled by the Israelites—and it was the same route traveled twice in this war by the Turks, coming and going, in their amazing attempt to cut the Suez Canal.

That had been the first battle of the campaign. The attack had failed—but only by a hair's breadth. Since then the British had been pushing the Turks north through the Holy Land—but not always steadily. There had been nasty defeats, and it wasn't over yet.

Two of those defeats were at Gaza; we passed it as we left the Wilderness of Sin—or Sinai—behind and flew to the west of Beersheba, over the plains of Philistia, then turned right toward the Judean hills. We passed over Bethlehem and swung in a wide circle; I saw the Dead Sea, Jericho, and the valley of the Jordan.

But I saw more than cities, mountains, and plains: I saw the surge of history up and down those slopes. I saw the embattled hosts of Joshua; I saw Joshua himself—winning his fight by commanding the sun and the moon to stand still. I heard "seven priests blow upon seven trumpets of rams' horns"; I heard a mighty roar of crumbling masonry, and I saw the walls of Jericho collapse into dust at Joshua's feet.

I saw Alexander the Great storm the city of Gaza. Then came Pompey and the legions of Rome; I saw them tramp over the plains of Philistia. Next, Saladin. Then I saw Richard of the Lion Heart climb to the top of the hill of Nebi Samwel whence might be seen the battlements of Jerusalem; I saw Richard fall on his knees—but refuse to *look* at the Holy City which he never could hope to *reach*.

And now I saw Allenby's gallant army remarch the ancient routes; refight the historic battles; redrench the fabled cities, hills, and valleys in human blood. The boys in ragged khaki didn't look much like crusading knights in shining armor—but I saw them *win* where Richard *lost*.

"Yes, Todd," I said. "It *is* a tremendous story—a magnificent story. Some day I am going to be proud to tell it. But the fighting started back there at the Suez Canal—before I arrived—so I need your help. You're the one man who knows all about that show, and tonight you're going to tell me."

"You seem pretty sure about that."

"Positive," I said. "If you don't talk you don't get so much as a smell of the bottle of Irish whisky I have in my bag."

"Bribery and corruption," Todd muttered. "All right. Eight o'clock at my quarters, over near Herod's gate. It's upstairs over a vacant store—but any sentry will tell you where I live."

Todd Gilney was a mysterious figure in those days—and he still is. He was a combination of liaison officer, secret agent, and more. His services were so valuable that he was supposed to keep out of danger. But Todd wasn't that kind. He was in every battle in the campaign, and he was under fire dozens of times while on reconnaissance missions in rattletrap old airplanes.

He was tall and lanky, with coal-black hair and steely-blue eyes, a combination which he thought was probably a result of mixing most of the bloods in the British Isles. He had lived in Australia and Canada; his speech was an odd mixture of Anzac English and Yankee slang.

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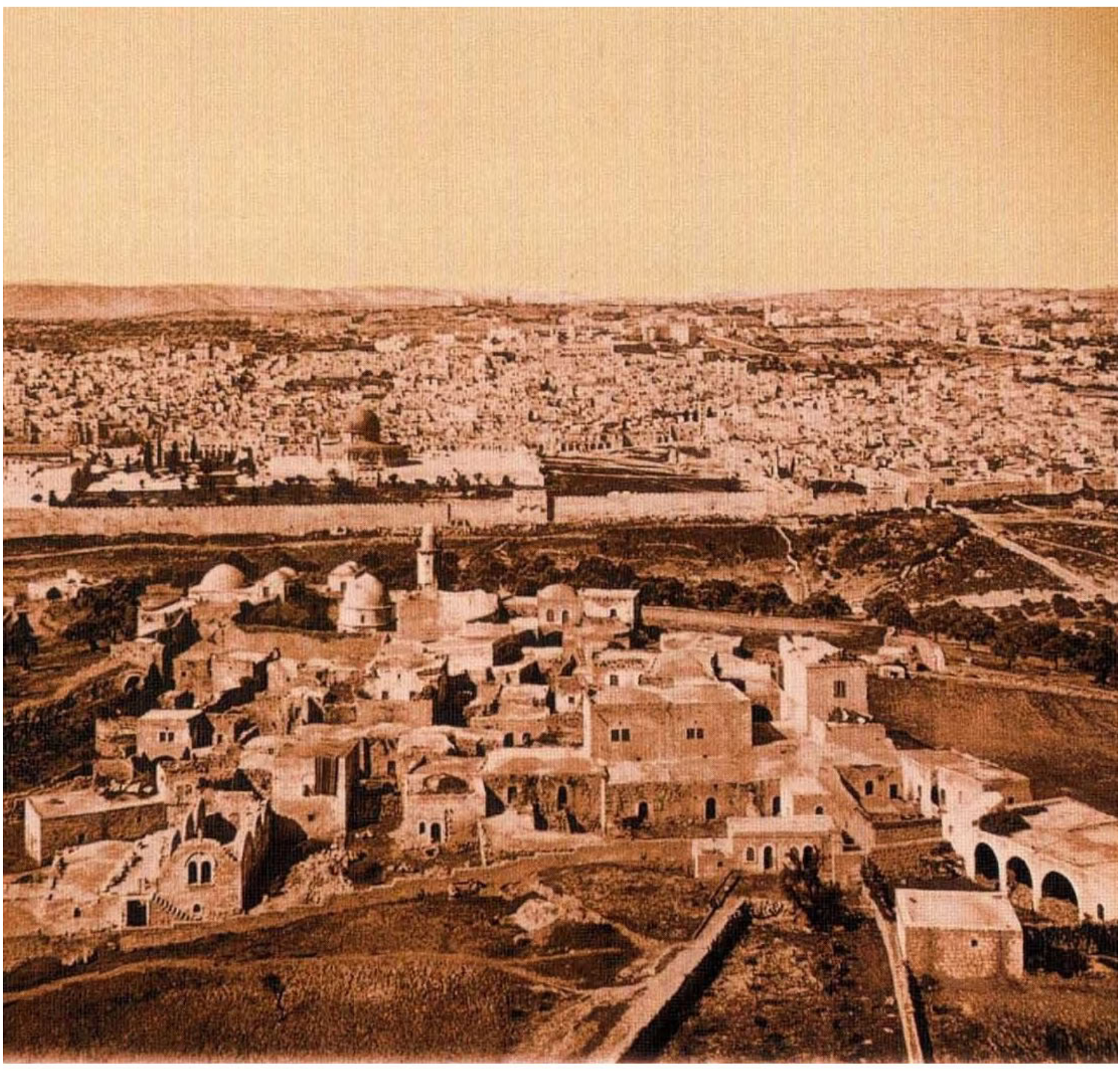

Palestine

I found his quarters. The room was bare except for a rough board table, an army cot, and half a dozen tactical maps which Todd had pinned to the walls and marked with red and blue thumbtacks. I deposited my precious bottle on the table.

"The blue tacks are the British," said Todd, with a wave toward the maps, "and the red are the Turks. It's easy to remember; the home team is always the blues. I'm sorry everything is so primitive here; some Johnny Turks occupied these quarters, and before they left they took an ax to the furniture. I guess we'll have to sit on the cot. As for glasses—" He fished out a shaving mug and a teacup without a handle. I furnished the corkscrew and Todd began to talk.

I am going to let him tell his own story of that fight for the Suez Canal; I couldn't improve on it if I tried.

KITCHENER [said Todd] had left Sir John Maxwell to run the show and sit on the lid of Egypt. It was likely to blow off at any second, because Egyptians are Mohammedans and they might decide to pitch in with the Turks, especially if they won a big battle. There were a few English troops in Egypt but they were raw. The only ones we could rely on were Indians—Sikhs, Gurkhas, Punjabis—and a lot of them had Mohammedan leanings, so we couldn't be really sure about them. Every one of those babies knew fancy things to do with a knife, and if they ever *did* turn against us, the butchery and slaughter—well, with women and children around, you don't like to think of such things.

But we had to think of them. The Turks were swarming south to Beersheba by the trainload. Beersheba is the southernmost city of the Holy Land and Turkish concentrations there could spell only one thing: They were getting ready to cross the desert and attack the Suez Canal—*but we didn't know where.*

The chief of intelligence called me into his Cairo office. "Find out!" he barked. "I want to know which way the Turks are coming and where they will hit."

That was a big order, but I said, "Yes, sir," and started to leave. Before I could get out of the office, the old boy called me back. He wasn't hard-boiled now; there was real worry in his voice.

"Er—Gilney," he said, "I don't suppose I need to impress on you the importance of your mission. You know what this means to Great Britain and the Allied cause. You won't fail me?"

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I knew what it meant, Lowell—knew too damn well. The Turks weren't staging a desultory raid that we could block with a few companies. This attack had been ordered by the German high command at Potsdam. It was a key part of the Kaiser's war plan. The assault would hit us like a ton of brick and with the fury of the damned. There would be plenty of blood spilled and here the Turks would have their Arab allies—the champions of Islam—along. Those lads didn't give any quarter nor take any prisoners.

And the Kaiser knew what he was doing. The Suez Canal is, as he himself called it, the jugular vein of the British Empire—a hundred exposed miles long. If the Turks succeeded in cutting it, what happened in France wouldn't make much difference; the Allied cause would bleed to death right there in the sands of the Wilderness of Sin. The troops on the western front might hold out for a while, but with the canal blocked and no reinforcements or supplies from Australia, New Zealand, or India, *it would be only a question of time until Germany won the war.*

And it was up to *me* to get the information which would prevent the disaster. Whew!

To succeed, I had to reconnoiter the entire Sinai Peninsula—one hundred and fifty miles long and almost as wide—with three trails across it seventy or more miles apart. The Turks could choose any of those routes, and they had the German, Kress von Kressenstein, to advise in their choice. With his brains behind the attack, it was sure to keep us guessing until the last second. To gain any inkling of his intentions I would have to fly—and the best airplane in Egypt had a cruising radius of a pitiful seventy-five miles.

WE had five old Farmans and a BE-2B—and what junk they were! They were useless for my purposes, so I went to see a French outfit that operated from a mother ship up the coast near El Arish. Their crocks would fly farther than ours but they had only eighty horsepower and just crawled. They were seaplanes, and the one place I *had* to see was Beersheba—*thirty miles inland.* A French pilot named L'Estreau agreed to take me.

"But you weel comprehend," he said, just before we took off, "zat zee seaplane cannot land in zee desert. Eef we have trouble wiz zee motor—" He kissed his fingertips meaningly and waved them toward heaven.

I said, "Yes, I comprehend—too damn well; give her the gun."

We turned inland over Gaza. We were flying low and the Turks opened up with everything but the rolling kitchens. A few holes pecked through the right wing tip and a shell exploded far ahead. That was rotten shooting; it didn't worry me much. I relaxed to take a look at the scenery, and a burst of machine-gun fire ripped through the fuselage within six inches of my back and left me talking to myself.

We kept on to Beersheba.

Three divisions of Turks were camped there with their artillery, camels and horses. That was plenty to worry about in itself—but then I saw something which gave me gray hair! Piled on the desert side of the town were *dozens of steel boats,* and carpenters were *building rafts* of empty gasoline cans and strips of lumber.

Kress von Kressenstein meant business. The Turks were going to carry those boats and rafts on their shoulders across the frying pan of the Sinai Desert and use them in crossing the Suez Canal.

That sounds wild, doesn't it—crazy? Maybe so. But when I saw those steel boats glistening out there in the blazing sun and thought of the grim determination of the man

who could conceive of such a scheme, I was scared!

But I had learned several things. From the location of the Turks and the position of the boats, I figured that the attack was coming across central Sinai. The "way of the Philistines" along the coast was the easiest, but by *not* using it Kress probably thought he would catch us napping. Not if I could prevent it! I signaled L'Estreau to start for El Arish.

THAT was a needless effort: a Turkish shell gave us a boost that took us halfway there. The plane jumped and shivered; I knew it was hit, badly. I was sure we were all washed up. But the ship didn't fall apart, so I looked around for the damage. At first I couldn't find it—and then I looked down. The entire rear end of one pontoon was hanging in ribbons!

L'Estreau throttled his motor. "Monsieur," he yelled, "you weel now comprehend zat we can descend on *neizzer* zee land *nor* zee water!"

That seemed like enough grief for one trip; but our troubles were just starting. We were flying at about four thousand feet, which was about the ceiling of the old crate, when I saw that L'Estreau was trying to nurse more altitude out of it. I guessed what was coming next: we were about out of gas.

I was wrong. We weren't about out; we were completely out. The motor coughed a couple of times, then quit cold—and we were at least five miles from the coast line.

"L'Estreau," I yelled, "I'm resigning from His Majesty's forces right now!"

That Frenchman was one grand chap in a pinch. He grinned from ear to ear. "'Zee resignation ees not acceptable in time of war,'" he quoted from Regulations. "But I weel gladly geef you zee transfer. How you like to enlist wiz zee angels?"

For a minute I thought I was going to accept his offer. But the wind was on our tail, and that helped. We slid over the beach so close that a trailing shred from the shattered pontoon scraped the sand. We made the water with only inches to spare. L'Estreau held the plane off and killed speed just as long as he could. It stalled, then flopped into the Mediterranean with a bone-racking jolt, and promptly sank to the level of the gas tank.

The tank kept us afloat until a gunboat picked us up—two hours later. It was lucky for L'Estreau that the wreckage didn't sink; he was a naval lieutenant, so of course he couldn't swim. But there was no place to swim to even if he could have. The shore was lined with Arabs who amused themselves for the entire two hours by taking pot shots at our heads.

The gunboat took me to Port Said. I went to Cairo by train. I made my report.

"Hmm!" said my chief. "Interesting information, very—if true. Go down to Aqaba and verify it."

I knew what he wanted. Aqaba sits at the southern end of the Sinai Desert—near the lowest of the three routes available to the Turks. If there was no Turkish activity near Aqaba, I was right about Kress selecting the center crossing.

To reach the place I would have to travel by boat down the Suez Canal, then across the top of the Red Sea, and backtrack up the Gulf of Aqaba—unless I flew. Headquarters had arranged for L'Estreau to bring down another seaplane for my use after I got to Aqaba. I didn't see any reason why I shouldn't ride along.

G.H.Q. did; it must have been against the rules for me to ride in airplanes except when the Turks were shooting at them. "No!" roared the chief. "Take a boat!" I took a boat.

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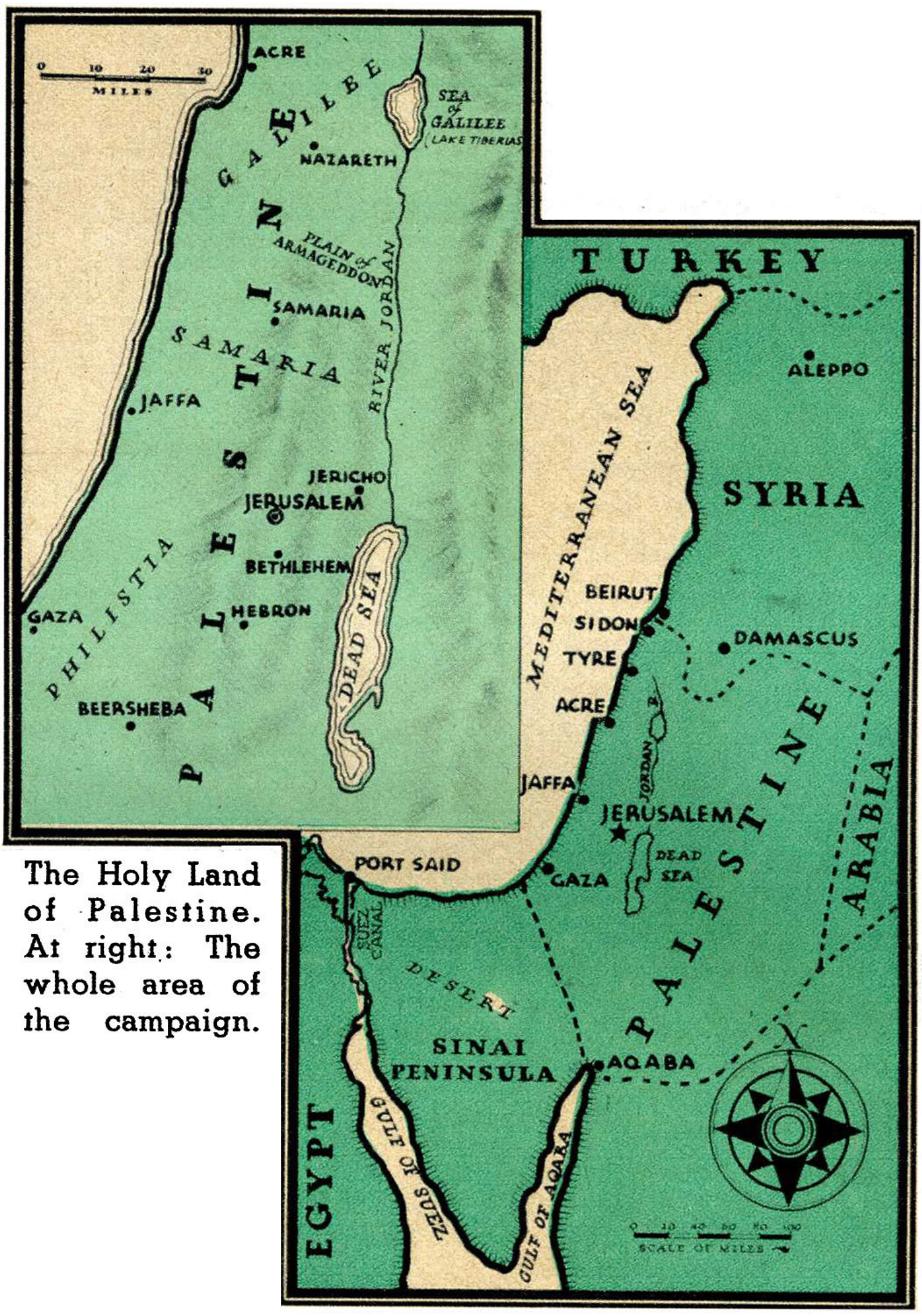
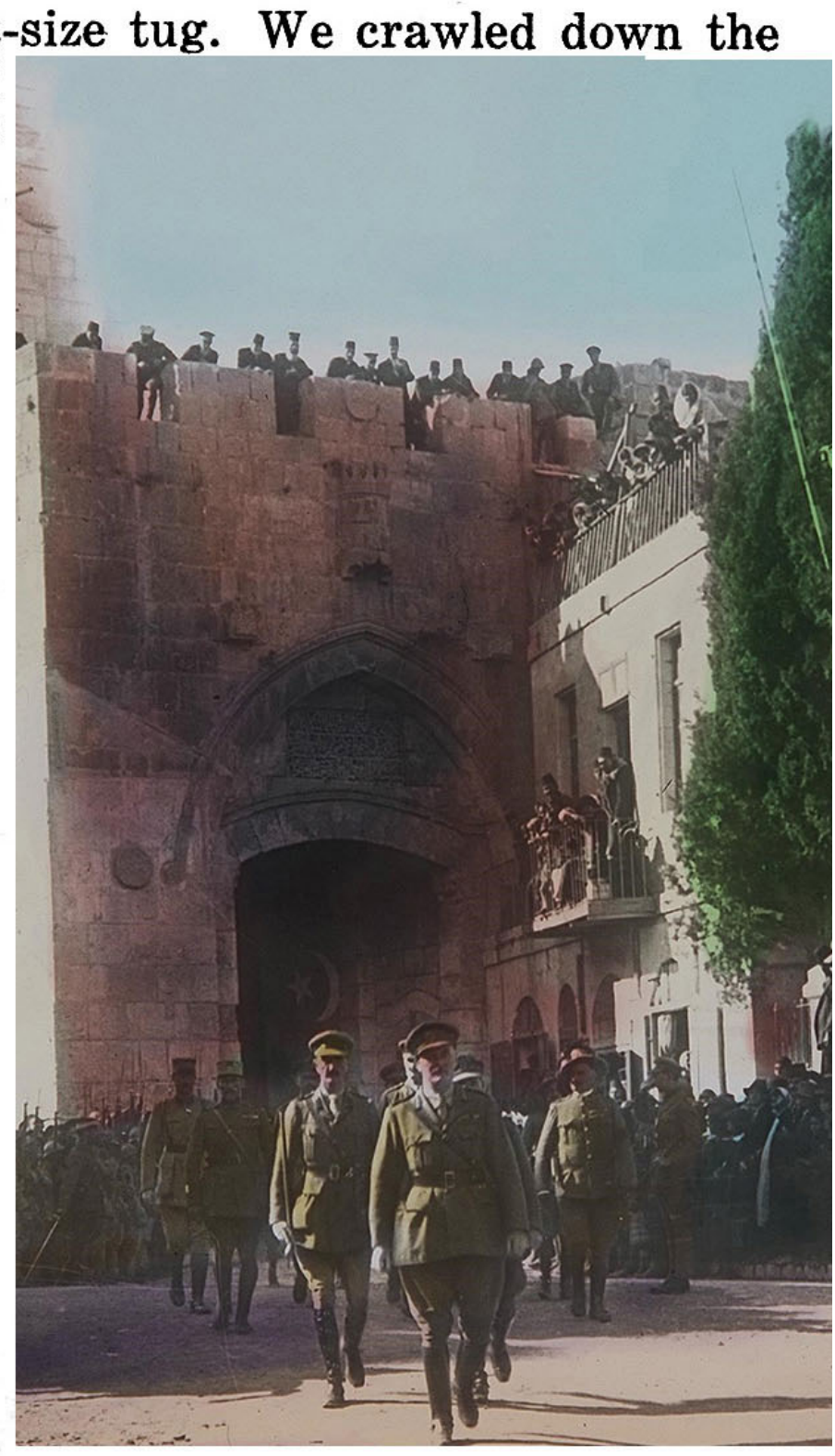


The Holy Land of Palestine. At right: The whole area of the campaign.

They gave me a pint-size tug. We crawled down the blazing hot ribbon of canal between endless stretches of blistering white sand. The tugboat was stuffy and lousy, but I couldn't feel very sorry for myself after I got a close-up look at our soldiers along the banks.

The poor devils were cooking in the sun while they dug trenches and rigged barbed wire to stop the Turks. Still, at least we had plenty of food and water and we were already in position. The Turks had to march clear across the desert and they wouldn't have a thing except what they brought with them —not even water.

Most of our trenches were on the west bank. The canal was in front



" When Allenby entered the Holy City he walked. 'How could it be otherwise, where One had walked before?' "

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of them and served for a moat, exactly like the castle defenses of the days of Richard and the crusaders. The Turks would have to cross it under direct fire from our machine guns. It was only some fifty yards wide, but that was enough to make them lug those boats I had seen at Beersheba across the Wilderness of Sin.

I began to believe I was dreaming; the whole thing must be a nightmare. If soldiers were going to carry boats across dry land instead of boats carrying sailors across water, then the only thing lacking to complete the craziest extravaganza in the history of the world was a few battleships in the center of the desert to sink the infantry . . . and—hell's bells and a jingle!—*there they were!*

THE French battleship Requim had just dropped anchor, and Johnny Carew, the civilian canal pilot, waved me a greeting as he warped the Royal Indian Marine Ship Hardinge into a mooring above Tussum. Gunboats were stationed at intervals all down the canal.

I knew they were there so their guns could cover up our big weakness, which was the lack of artillery—but it was playing with fire. A ship moored to the canal bank blocks half the channel. The Turks asked nothing better than to sink a few ships in the canal and block it; the more boats we stationed there, the better chance they had.

Aqaba is an Arab village and it stinks. L'Estreau met me there; his face was wreathed in smiles.

"You remember zee veree bad motor zat we had at Beersheba? *Voilà!* Zee one we have now, she ees worse!"

That was great news considering the job I was supposed to do. A river bed runs north from Aqaba along the valley which was the floor of the Dead Sea before it shrank to its present size. To the east of the valley is a range of mountains. One of them is Mount Hor; Aaron, the brother of Moses, is buried up there. Beyond the mountains lies Ma'an—on the Hejaz railway. I wanted to fly over the mountains and check up Turkish activity along the railroad. To make the crossing we would have to coax the old seaplane to at least four or five thousand feet.

We tried time and again, but it couldn't be done. I reconnoitered on the near side of the mountains, but that was all. I reported the facts to Cairo, expecting to be bawled out. I wasn't; they seemed to be happy; they even let me fly back. And that wasn't all.

I hadn't received so much as a "thank you" for my successful Beersheba job, but I got a beautiful medal for *failing* to play leapfrog with the mountains at Aqaba.

"Ah!" said L'Estreau. "Eet ees too bad zat zee motor was not a leetle worse. Eef we had been unable to arise from zee water at all, you might have received zee Veectoria Cross."

But the Turks *were* on the way—and I was right: they were coming across the desert, somewhere between Timsah and the Bitter Lakes. Everybody in Egypt was jittery from trying to guess exactly where the attack would fall—and then G.H.Q. calmly told me that it was my business to find out. The chief called me in.

"Gilney," he said, "select a spot along the bank where you will be certain of being an eyewitness of the attack."

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KENNETH BROWN COLLINGS *is the veteran War Bird who "flew for the hell of it" as a Flying Marine and has told his own memorable story in Liberty. By birth a Nebraskan, he was a knockabout adventurer as a boy before the World War.*

I laughed. No one could be certain of doing that. I thought the old man was joking; I waited for him to laugh too. He didn't. Far from it.

"London—Kitchener—brass hats," he growled. "They are suddenly questioning our entire scheme of defense. They have got the idea that our army should have moved into the desert to meet the Turk, instead of waiting for him at the banks of the canal. You're to make a confidential report on the subject."

My nerves were on edge too; I wasn't very diplomatic. I said, "It's a swell time to be thinking of that when Johnny Turk is knocking at the door. I'll report, all right, but if the scheme is haywire and we're beaten, there won't be anything confidential about it: the whole world will read about it in the morning papers."

The chief was pretty human. All he said was, "Calm down, Gilney, and get the hell out of here and do something—I don't care what—anything useful."

I found something I thought would fill the bill. The Turks were so close now that even our old Farmans would fly far enough to reconnoiter their camps—if we could find them in all those sand hills. I had information that they were concentrated somewhere behind the "Wells of Moses," but I wasn't sure where the wells were. I asked an Australian sergeant who had just returned from a patrol in the desert. He was a big help.

"There's some old dry springs out there a piece to the southeast," he said, "but you've got the name wrong. They calls 'em 'Oh-sis,' and not 'Moh-sis.' I know, because I've got it right here on this sketch map." He pointed a grimy forefinger to the word "Oasis."

That gave me all the information I needed. I flew across and counted more than ten thousand Turks and a lot of their Arab playmates. They were within twenty miles of the canal and closing in fast.

I reported, "They will hit us tonight, sure, somewhere near Tussum." Then I begged a ride down the canal bank in a motorcycle sidecar. I pitched in my lot with the little garrison of outpost Number Five, entrenched on the west bank, and hoped I would see the mess.

I did, Lowell—plenty. It started with a sandstorm. The wind raged and whipped up sand until it blotted out the sun, and the air turned pitch-black at four in the afternoon. The sand cut like a thousand knives; it poured into my eyes and ears and filled my clothes. Our patrols groped their way back from across the canal; they cursed the wind and the sand and the Turks, whom they couldn't locate. The Indian soldiers wrapped their faces in their puggrees, swathed their rifle breeches with rags, and held their hands over the muzzles.

"I wonder what's playing in the London theaters," said Major Harrington. His voice was even and unperturbed; you'd have thought he was in a Mayfair drawing room. "Ever see a bucko named George Arliss play Disraeli?"

"My word, yes," said Major Hopkins—or it might have been Danforth; I couldn't tell in the darkness. "This jolly ditch was Disraeli's idea, wasn't it? He's the bloke who bought it, isn't he? The blighter can have it, can't

LOWELL THOMAS *the radio news commentator and widely read author, was not only "with Lawrence in Arabia"—hence the title of one of his books—but with General Allenby himself in Palestine and Syria. As an American official historian he was attached in turn to the armies of most of the Allies. Altogether, he is the ideal man to tell the story of the Last Crusade.*

he? Have a banana, old bean, do." Something slimy and gritty pressed against my mouth. I munched banana, spit out mouthfuls of sand, and waited for the Turks to strike.

It was long past midnight. The storm stopped and the moon came out. The opposite bank of the canal was a mass of silvery high lights and indistinct shadows. Suddenly dark bulky objects moved over the rim; the bank was crawling with them.

It was the Turks! They were bringing their boats down to the water! Somebody gave the order to open fire —I think it was St. John Skene but I'm not sure; nobody could be sure of anything that night.

Machine guns stuttered; rifles cracked; the entire west bank blazed with fire. The Turks with the boats were our enemies and all that, but they were game. Bullets rained on them like hailstones; they dropped like flies; their wounded fell into the canal and were drowned—but on they came! The boats were in the water in a dozen places, scattered over a distance of a mile and a half up and down the canal.

NOW we started to catch hell! Turkish machine gunners took cover across the canal; they opened up on us in an effort to stop our fire and protect the crossing. The canal was a shambles; outpost Five was a bedlam! A Punjabi beside me grunted; he was hit—drilled clean, right through the chest. I tried to stop the welter of blood but it was no use; he was dead.

A runner crawled up with a message from Colonel Geoghan, and the paper was shot from his fingers as he groped for my hand to pass it across. There were groans and curses all about me, in five languages.

"Watch yourself!" yelled Skene.

A boatload of Turks emerged from the gloom—*on our side of the canal!* How they survived that hell of shot I don't know, but there they were, right on our necks and fighting like demons. I grabbed the rifle with fixed bayonet that had belonged to the dead Punjabi; and it's odd what a man thinks about at a time like that.

"'They shall not pass by me,'" my lips were moving; I was repeating from the Old Testament—"'lest I come out against them with the sword'!" I lunged at a big Turk and pinned him just as he pulled the trigger of his pistol. It was close; the bullet grazed my cheek.

We polished off the rest of that boatload; but a little farther along the bank two more boats were across. Captain Morgan and Lieutenant FitzGibbon charged down the bank and met the Turks at the water's edge. They cleaned them out—but FitzGibbon was killed; Morgan was wounded.

Day broke at last. The Turks had withdrawn a little way into the desert—we couldn't tell how far. Their artillery was shelling hell out of the Hardinge and the Requim. The barrage had all the earmarks of a preparation for another attack, and that was bad because the opposite bank was littered with their boats and rafts, most of them shattered, but some still serviceable. As long as any of them would float they were a menace.

Just as I was wondering what to do about it, one of our torpedo boats steamed along the canal. It fired a couple of three-pound shells into each boat—and that seemed to be that, except that there might be more of them behind the bank where we couldn't see them. The skipper tied his ship to the bank and rowed ashore in a dinghy to find out.

I RECOGNIZED him; it was Lieutenant Commander Palmes. He poked around in the wreckage on the near side of the bank. He found two more rafts and blew them up with guncotton. Then he walked over the bank—and stepped right into a trenchful of Turks. They bounced up all around the commander and started popping off with everything from hand grenades to machine guns.

I never knew a sailor could run so fast. He was nicked by a bullet but he regained his dinghy.

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Now the Hardinge was in a bad way. The Turkish artillery had her range exactly; shells knocked off her radio masts and both funnels; another burst on the forward gun turret and mangled a dozen sailors. I had a ringside seat for the show—and, Lowell, it was the queerest sensation I ever had.

There I was sitting on dry land watching our ship being sunk—almost at arm's length—and absolutely powerless to do anything about it. I guess I went a bit crazy; I jumped up and down and waved my arms.

"Carew!" I screamed at the pilot. "George Carew! For God's sake, move your ship! Take her away, boy, before it's too late!" As if he could have heard me in that mad tumult of sound and destruction!

The Hardinge did start to move, and just as she got under way a last shell landed fair and square on her pilothouse. It almost tore George in half; it clipped off one of his legs clean, and broke a rib for good measure. Some brave things were done that day but he capped them all; he stayed on her bridge until he had saved his ship—*and he was only a civilian.*

They gave Carew the Legion of Honor for that. If you ask me, Lowell, they should have given him Paris.

The canal was saved—for the time being. But it had been too close. The post-mortems around G.H.Q.—and London—were just starting. If the British army had been the least bit mobile it could have pursued the beaten Turks into the desert and perhaps have destroyed them completely. We weren't mobile: we were stuck in the sand of that canal bank. We couldn't pursue, and the Turks got completely away. Under present arrangements, all we could do was sit and wait for another attack.

How the British piped the Nile across an inferno to Judea, paying with a soldier's life for every section of pipe they laid; how a mysterious countess appeared, haunting Port Said with cutthroats in her shadow; how Von Kressenstein struck and struck from the dark at the Suez Canal and its defenders; how Gilney and his daredevil comrades bombed the Turks' planes at El Arish—these high-voltage thrills are in store for you in next week's installment of Hell in the Holy Land!

Liberty

JUNE 27, 1936

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HELL IN THE HOLY LAND

"Charge for the Guns!"—Neby Samwil, Key to Zion—"You Can't Shell Jerusalem". . . The Epic Story of Allenby's "Last Crusade"

by

LOWELL THOMAS

Author of With Lawrence in Arabia, Beyond Khyber Pass, etc.

with KENNETH BROWN COLLINGS

ARRIVING and taking command, Allenby made elaborate preparations to attack Gaza, the seacoast end of the Turks' thirty-mile fortified line. But Todd Gilney (still telling this story to Mr. Thomas) found himself ordered to photog-

raph from the air that line's other end, inland at Beersheba. So the general's preparations were a feint. During one of Todd's camera flights, Major Sternman, in another plane, was beset by three Fokkers and driven far westward, out of sight. His comrades gave him up for dead or captured, but three days later he reappeared inside the British lines, naked and in torment from thirst, hunger, sunburn, and insect bites. He had come down in the Mediterranean, swum ashore, and manfully endured these things while making his way beyond Turkish territory.

The first surrender of Jerusalem--to two Tommies! They're wearing sun helmets. The mayor has a cane.

Private Benson brought Todd a package from England that looked like either candy or cigars—and knocked him out with a bootjack just in time to keep him from opening it and exploding the bomb in it. Benson ventured the opinion that Todd hadn't heard the last of the Countess Warbuta.

Allenby bombarded Gaza for four days, during which his army swung in toward Beersheba, where it "caught the Turks flat-footed." Beersheba taken, the Gaza-Jerusalem road was severed and Falkenhayn, his forces cut in two, was compelled to evacuate Gaza and begin a retreat.

The "crusaders" were now in the Holy Land, with the Holy City ahead of them.

PART FIVE—"WHERE ONE HAD WALKED BEFORE"

TODD GILNEY continues his story:

Mughar Hill was a madhouse!

All I can think of, Lowell, when I recall that fight, is the "sound of many horses running to battle." The horse had proved his usefulness at Beersheba, but *Mughar Hill was the greatest cavalry battle of modern times*—probably of all time.

The fighting was bitter! Johnny Turk was making his last stand at the border of the land of the Philistines. If he failed, he would have to abandon Jaffa. He would have to give up Hebron. And that wasn't all. Falkenhayn

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would have to form his new line far to the north, along the route from the coast north of Jaffa to Jerusalem. We would sweep up the maritime plain and the foothills of the Shephe'lah; nothing could stop us short of Gezer—*the ancient doorway to the Holy City itself.*

We won, but the victory cost us plenty. Mughar Hill was on the far end of a vast plain, and was defended by cactus hedges, worse than the terrors of Gaza. We had to charge across the plain. There was no cover except the dry river beds, and they made things worse. The Wadi Janis was a deep gash in the earth; the sides were slippery; the fall to the bottom was precipitous. Horses had to be shoved into it, had to be pulled out—one at a time. As we emerged on the far side in single file, the Turkish artillery loosed a torrent of death.

The slaughter was terrible! The confusion was appalling! Horses milled around; they reared and kicked. Billjims shoved and cursed!

Clouds of dust blurred the troopers' eyes, clogged their throats, and parched their tongues. Men dropped. Horses crashed into the ravine on the heads of men and other horses struggling to get out. My pack mule slipped as he went into the wadi, and that ended my usefulness as a communications officer for the time being.

The mule landed fair and square on the top of the field wireless set, which broke into smithereens. I was furious, but Hog Hampshire was pathetic. That set was his pride and joy. He sat right down in the rocky bottom of the wadi and cried like a baby.

But not for long; he jumped to his feet, rage in his eyes. "Smash my wireless set, will you, you Turkish dogs! I'll get the blighter that did that!"

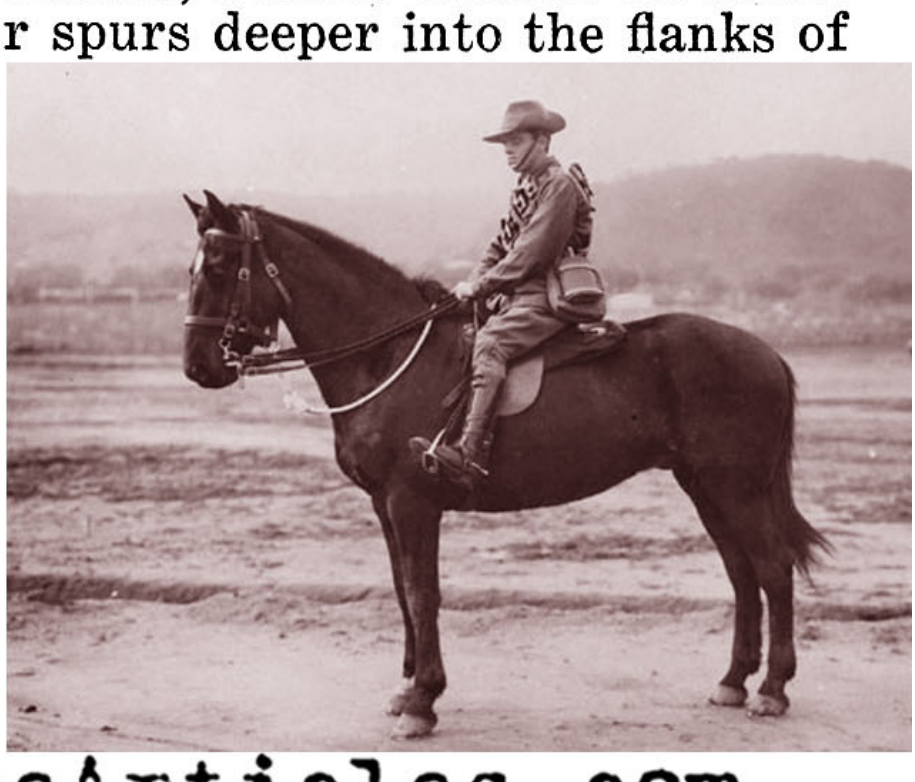
Hampshire was strong. He wrestled his horse up the bank—almost carried it up. He grabbed a saber from beside the body of a hussar.

"Come on, Benson!" he yelled. "What are you waiting for?"

"Nothing," said Benson. "Let's go."

Captain Bulteel's squadron led the advance at a rapid trot. The three of us joined him. The Turks were on a ridge more than half a mile away. About halfway there, the captain gave the order, "Charge!"

It was magnificent! The horses broke into a dead gallop; a myriad of hoofs thundered across the plain. Machine guns opened up along the ridge; the diabolical *ha-ha-ha-ha* of high-speed firing chattered in our ears. Rifles barked, artillery roared, bullets whined all about us, but we only sank our spurs deeper into the flanks of our horses and leaped to the attack.



Benson rode at my side, but Hog Hampshire was flying along in front, revenge in his heart. I saw Benson wince; he was shot through the arm. Major de Rothschild dropped from his saddle—within sight of a

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little Jewish settlement that his family had founded.

He was dead, but we couldn't stop. Speed was our only protection; it made us difficult targets for the Turks.

A second of hesitation would be fatal. On we went, faster and faster.

My horse leaped a cactus bush; the thorns tore at my boots. There was a confused blur right in front of my nose—a burst of flame - and a noise like the crash of doom! It was a Turkish machine gun firing at point-blank range. Two bullets whipped through the sleeve of my tunic, and we were on top of the trenches, sabers swinging.

It's hard for a man on a horse to reach far enough below him to slash a man who is standing in a trench. I tried. I swung at a big Turk—and missed.

He dropped his machine gun, grabbed a rifle, and lunged up at me with the bayonet. But the thrust never got home. Hog Hampshire came from somewhere, the whole two hundred and fifty pounds of him. He launched himself from his saddle. An avalanche of human flesh hit the Turk below and flattened him like a pancake.

The Turks had enough—all along the ridge. They surrendered. Hog Hampshire came out of the trench dragging the man who had tried to kill me. He announced that this was his "personal prisoner."

"What are you going to do with him?" I asked in amazement.

"Make the blinking——fix my wireless set," said Hog.

The Berkshire cavalry had captured the position alongside us. Neither outfit had lost as heavily as you might have expected; we had moved too fast. But the sabers of the Billjims had taken a ghastly toll. Turkish dead with cleft heads lay all over the place. I helped Hampshire bandage Benson's arm.

The next goal was Ekron. It was easy. The Turks held out for the night, but when they heard the story of Mughar Hill they moved — moved backward — fast! We swept into Junction Station on the Turks' Jaffa-Jerusalem railroad. We captured forty-five cars, two big guns mounted on trucks, and two engines. That was priceless!

And Hampshire was delighted. If he couldn't have a wireless set to play with, a locomotive would do. And he knew a lot about steam engines; he had learned it at sea when he had belonged

to the "black gang" in the engine room of a steamship.

We needed that rolling stock — but the Turks didn't intend to let us get it away. They had left the engines dry and smashed the water tanks before abandoning the station. Now they opened up with their artillery. Shells crashed all over the railroad yards.

Hampshire ducked through the smoke following an explosion, hopped into the control cab of an engine, and looked it over. "Nothing busted!" he yelled. "Find something that will hold water and fill her up!"

The station had been stripped. We couldn't find a thing except a five-gallon jug. It would hold quite a bit, but the opening was so small that the jug itself took forever to fill. Somebody else found a washbasin.

A GANG of troopers went to work. Other Billjims were filling the second engine, using cooking kettles and empty wine bottles. There was only one spigot; everybody had to wait their turn on the water supply. I thought we would never finish—and any second the Turks might break up the party with a well aimed shell.

They tried, and they had no excuse for failure. It took us *five hours* to fill the two locomotives and get up steam, so they had ample time. After that Johnny Turk had the doubtful pleasure of watching his trains roll out of the station. We parked them in a narrow cut where the guns couldn't reach them and plowed ahead.

General Cox's brigade seized Ramleh and Ludd, *and the Turks evacuated Jaffa without a struggle.*

They had no choice. Our wedge up the Judean foothills had completely isolated them. They *had* to leave—and that showed the fine hand of Bull Allenby. His plans were clicking. He had won Jaffa without losing a man, which is the supreme mark of military genius.

Just before we took Ramleh I heard the *whish* of a throttled airplane and saw a DH sliding into a landing. It was Elton. The R. A. F. had a temporary field in a pasture; they were about to raid a Turkish airdrome behind Ramleh. I didn't have any orders for what I did next —but then, I hadn't had any orders for anything for the past ten days.

"Take me along," I said.

Elton grinned. "Righto—but it may be a hot party. You'll have to handle the Lewis gun."

He loaded his bomb racks and we took off. Lieutenant Peter Drummond followed us leading a formation of five Nieuports for protection. His scouts were all doing double duty; they carried baby bombs.

We flew northeast. Gezer, guardian of the Vale of Ajalon, was off to our left. It sits on a ridge jutting out from the Judean hills. It is high and commanding, and the ancient key to Jerusalem.

History has surged past the base of Gezer. It was the citadel of King Horam of the Canaanites. Pharaoh gave it to Solomon. Judas Maccabaeus captured Gezer; Simon fortified it; Saladin was defeated there.

The passes into the Judean hills behind Gezer are narrow and tortuous; they have seldom been forced in history. One machine gun mounted in a cleft in the rocks could prevent the advance of five hundred men. As I looked down I felt a grim foreboding of the difficulties ahead. If we ever gave the Turks time to dig in among that maze of mountain passes, we were licked.

Elton wobbled his wings to attract my attention.

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Five thousand feet below us was the Turkish airdrome. Five airplanes sat on the ground. What were they doing down there instead of "upstairs" at a time like this when the Turk needed all the aerial protection he could get?

Elton nosed over into a glide. We came lower, and I understood why the planes were on the ground: It was moving day. The Turks were abandoning this field and falling back; the pilots had landed to pack their belongings and load them on trucks.

Wagons and trucks churned around the field. A line of Turks heaved bundles and boxes into the conveyances and went back for more. They were so busy that they didn't see us yet; there was so much noise from automobile exhausts that they didn't hear our throttled motors.

A Turk sentry looked up. What happened next was funny—for us. Down on that flying field all was turmoil. "Some cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused." Everybody dropped everything and ran six ways at once.

We dived into that mess—and left it a shambles. Flaming bombs destroyed the five planes and wrecked most of the trucks and wagons. Our machine guns mowed down the pilots and the drivers. We didn't lose a plane; we hardly got a scratch.

We went home and landed. I thanked Elton for the ride; the aerial view had given me a much better idea of the problems ahead. And they were grave. Our only chance to force the passes of the Judean hills was to hit them fast. We did! The entire army swung right, like a gate; it faced the foothills of the Shephelah and without a second's hesitation moved ahead and up.

It was tough climbing. The heat of the plains below gave way to the winter rains of Judea. It was cold. I had one thin blanket; Benson and Hampshire had one between them. We pooled the coverings and slept together out in the open. There were stone houses around belonging to the natives, but we didn't dare use them. This was enemy territory, and cutting a sleeping soldier's throat is easy.

The rains seldom stopped; the mud was a foot deep. The going was cruel—but I was happy.

Jerusalem the golden lay just ahead!

And Hampshire was happy—he had another wireless set. That enabled me again to be some help to the communications service.

The Turks were in the monastery of Latron. We drove them out. Saris was next, and it was a nightmare. The road to the village rises nearly fifteen hundred feet in four miles. It was pouring rain and cold; the troops were in cotton shirts and shorts. The Turks had snipers on every hill, machine guns behind every rock. We couldn't drive them out from the front; we had to surround every gun and rush it from the flanks.

We took Saris.

Enab is two miles from Saris and all but impregnable. It might have stopped us, but there was a providential fog, under cover of which the Somersets were able to approach unseen. They drove the Turks from Enab at the point of the bayonet.

Next came the hill Neby Samwil—where Richard of the Lion Heart knelt and prayed, "May I never see Thy Holy City, if it so be that I may not rescue it from the hands of Thine enemies."

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THE Turkish defenses before Jerusalem were a series of fortified mountains to delight the heart of any general. Neby Samwil was their key point. General Maclean's brigade rushed the steep slope in the teeth of artillery and machine-gun fire. But no men could weather *that* storm; the attack withered; the Turks threw us back. The Tommies waited until after dark and tried again. This time they did not fail.

Neby Samwil was ours! We spent a cold night up there, impatiently awaiting the dawn. Then, Lowell—

I saw Jerusalem!

That view was worth all the hardship it had cost. It buoyed our spirits, and Falkenhayn knew it. He had no intention of letting us keep Neby Samwil. He turned all his big guns on the crest; he launched a counter-attack, a second thrust, a third.

Three times he failed.

Maclean's boys were magnificent; they hurled the Turks back and we kept Neby Samwil. But the things that happened next were heartbreaking! Maddening.

They couldn't be avoided because Allenby was determined to surround Jerusalem and force its surrender *without subjecting any of the holy places to bombardment.* Falkenhayn knew that. He took advantage of it. He concentrated his entire army against our left flank.

The Turkish stand was magnificent. The fighting was hammer and tongs—on a dozen mountains and in twenty passes, all at the same time. There was no respite for days. We won here; we lost there. As fast as we took one strong point, Johnny Turk held us up at the next.

The Billjims caught hell! The only place where the horses could make any headway was up the valleys of streams, and there the snipers in the hills knocked them off. They were subjected to crossfire. If a trooper got a rock between himself and one sniper, another would get him. The mounted troops had their bitterest fight around Beth-horon — where Joshua defeated the Canaanites on that extra-long day.

We couldn't crush the Turkish left. We were held up for ten solid days, during which any ordinary city could have been captured again and again. A few well placed shells would have done the trick—*but, Lowell, you can't shell Jerusalem.*

Supply was becoming a problem. The rains were heavier; the roads worse. Something had to be done. The staff held a conference. Allenby formulated a new plan. If he couldn't force the Turk defenses north of Jerusalem, he would try the south. The first I heard of it was when a runner slogged up with orders: Captain Gilney was to "proceed to Hebron by air and report to the chief of communications."

Hebron was the right flank of the army and a long way over. I couldn't

take Benson and Hampshire in an airplane. I wrote a pass for each of them. I said, "You've each got a horse and a head. Work your way around behind the lines. You'll find me sooner or later."

I reported to the nearest airdrome. It was a dinky little clearing; it didn't seem big enough to allow a loaded plane to take off. I said so.

"I take it you haven't seen our new Bristol fighters," said Lieutenant Jamieson, my pilot. "They'll take off from a back yard, and maybe they aren't bad news for Johnny Turk!"

THE Bristol *was* a sweet bus, Lowell. We hopped over the olive trees with room to spare; it was just like going up in an elevator. My pilot headed southeast and I settled to watch the scenery. He cut his motor and yelled back, "Want to try out that Lewis gun?"

"At what?"

"There's a pair of Taubes over there. See 'em?"

I did. But just at that second the Taubes saw *us*. And did they run! The Taubes had a long head start; chasing them was carrying us far off our course. We circled back toward Hebron and landed.

I tried to report; I couldn't. The division had already moved up the road toward Bethlehem.

"You'll find them camped at Solomon's Pools," said an officer.

In the morning the weather was vile. We took off in an interval between rainstorms. The visibility was poor; the ground below was foggy in patches. We flew north. Through a hole in the soup we saw Welsh troopers watering horses. That would be the division. About two miles to the west Jamieson spotted a field. He throttled down and glided in for a landing.

The wheels touched the ground—and a Turkish machine gun opened up at the far end of the field. Bullets buzzed around us. One splintered a strut; another tore a gash in the fabric of the fuselage beside me.

We had landed in Turkish territory by mistake. Had the Turk gunner waited until we rolled to a stop he would have had us cold. As it was, Jamieson jammed on his throttle and we were off the ground again in ten seconds.

AT the end of the field Jamieson banked over and pointed down. He pulled his trigger finger suggestively; he pointed at the Lewis gun—but I already knew what he wanted. I could see the Turk behind a stone wall. I watched my tracers; a burst of a dozen bullets plowed into him. He curled up in a heap.

Jamieson started south to look for a field that he could be sure was behind our lines. He didn't need to. That machine gun below us had been the last Turkish rear guard. Now that it was silenced, Welsh troopers poured across the clearing. Five

minutes later we landed safely in the same field.

That night the Welshmen chased the Turks out of a carefully prepared position on a hill called Sherifieh. Then they held the ridge of Sherifieh all night in the pouring rain without any rations and without any coats. It was miserable—but the next goal was *Bethlehem*, and the thought of actually entering the birthplace of the Prince of Peace on the morrow was enough to repay us for our hardships.

But our entry wasn't destined to be made so soon. There were obstacles. The Turks had seven mountain guns in the gardens of a big house in the southern outskirts of Bethlehem, and "there was war in the gates." The guns slowed down our advance for the balance of the day.

However, Johnny Turk had no intention of making a stand in Bethlehem; he was retreating to Jerusalem. The next night volunteer patrols found the town deserted.

At dawn a silent army that trod softly in awe and reverence entered "Bethlehem of Judea." I walked down into the crypt below the Church of the Nativity and stood reverently beside the silver star set into the floor which marks the spot where Mary "brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger."

We swept on toward Jerusalem, and left Colonel Camp—a Yankee from Ohio—as military governor of Bethlehem. Camp was the first Christian to hold authority over that city since the time of the crusaders, and he had his hands full.

Our center was now on Lifta Hill—in sight of the western walls of Jerusalem. A corporal named Train is going to get a Victoria Cross for his work over that way.

Two Turkish machine guns and some riflemen were dug in close to Ain Karim. Their fire was deadly; it held up an entire brigade. The brigadier was getting ready to send a whole company to take the position from the flank when Train and a lad named Thornhill crept close in the face of a deluge of fire. It was a miracle that they weren't hit. With bullets biting the dirt all around him, Train took careful aim. He fired a rifle grenade and scored a perfect hit on one machine gun. Then he calmly picked off the gun crew, one at a time. He finished in time to help Thornhill wipe out the other gun. The advance went on.

Our division approached Jerusalem from the south. The opposition was spotty; the Turkish army couldn't be everywhere at once. It was obvious that Falkenhayn was now in a position where he would have to retreat.

We were busy with a hand-to-hand bayonet fight with a Turkish rear guard — "nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives." The battle lasted until dark. In the morning the Turks

were gone. Then we got the glad news—but the manner of its happening sounds like fiction.

The Sixtieth Division was on the other side of the city; they were cockneys from London. Although the surrender of the Holy City was imminent, army life had to go on, and that included eating. Before dawn Major Bain sent his cook and a kitchen helper to forage for eggs for breakfast. The two Tommies got lost; they wandered on to a broad highroad; they rounded a bend.

JUST then a party of men came down the road. One of them carried a white flag. Another rode a horse and wore a red fez. He was the Arab mayor of Jerusalem.

The Turks had fled during the night; the mayor was coming out to surrender the city to Allenby's army. The first British soldiers he saw were the two Tommies. The mayor didn't know anything about army rank; any British uniform was the symbol of Britain's might as far as he was concerned. He made an eloquent speech and surrendered the Holy City—*to a cockney cook and a kitchen mechanic.*

That was too deep for the cook. "We don't want the surrender of the 'Oly City, sir," he said. "All we wants is heggs for our hofficer."

That didn't end it, Lowell. The two soldiers reported the incident to their major. He took the news to his brigade commander, General Watson. Every general in the army would have given his right arm for the honor of accepting the surrender. General Watson didn't say a word to anybody higher up. He sent the major and his cook to locate the mayor and arrange for the whole thing to be done over again—then rode into Jerusalem with his staff.

The whole population of the city turned out to receive General Watson. Flags waved; people cheered wildly. The mayor made another eloquent speech; General Watson made a speech—and the thing was official—so Watson thought and the overworked mayor hoped.

Not a bit of it. Watson's divisional commander was Major General Sir John Shea. Shea was Irish; nobody was going to put anything over on him. He sent word to the mayor that *he* would arrive the next day to receive the "surrender" of Jerusalem. The mayor had to go through it again.

General Shea then reported to Allenby. The commander in chief calmly ignored the previous "surrenders" and set a day when he would officially enter the Holy City. Of course Allenby's entrance was the only one that counted—but the mayor wished he had known that in advance.

The people were so glad to see our British uniforms that it was pitiful. The Turks had taken all the available food and paid for it in worthless paper money. The people were starving.

The population took to Allenby

from the start; they couldn't help it. They are used to triumphant entries, but this one was different. The Kaiser of Germany visited here some years before the war. They couldn't get his automobile through the gates, so they knocked an ugly breach in the historic walls to allow his procession to pass.

But when Allenby entered the Holy City *he walked.*

Somebody asked him why.

"How could it be otherwise," said Allenby simply, "*where One had walked before?*" . . .

Todd Gilney paused for a moment. Through the window of the little room in Jerusalem we could see the dawn breaking in the east. At the same time there came a dull rumble and a prolonged succession of ominous crashes.

"Do you know what that is?" asked Todd. "That's our guns. They are roaring away at Johnny Turk from beyond the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives.

"No, Lowell, just because we have taken the Holy City, we must not fool ourselves into thinking that this war is over. It isn't! Samaria, the city of Nazareth, and all of Syria are still in Turkish hands.

"We have made a good beginning, but while the Turks are this side of Damascus we can't be sure that they won't strike back. We've got to chase them completely out of the Holy Land.

"And we will!"

Remember "a man named Lawrence" whom Todd went to see? Of course it was Lawrence of Arabia—and in next week's installment you will meet him in Jerusalem! Then, with Mr. Thomas himself, you will watch Lawrence and Sherif Feisal and their Arab hordes campaign, gloriously, against the hated Turks in Mecca and Medina and Aqaba.

Liberty
JULY 25,
1936