

wrought to British prestige in the world of Islam; for it had begun under British auspices. But what could we do in a forbidden land? We had strength to contribute; but how bring it into play?

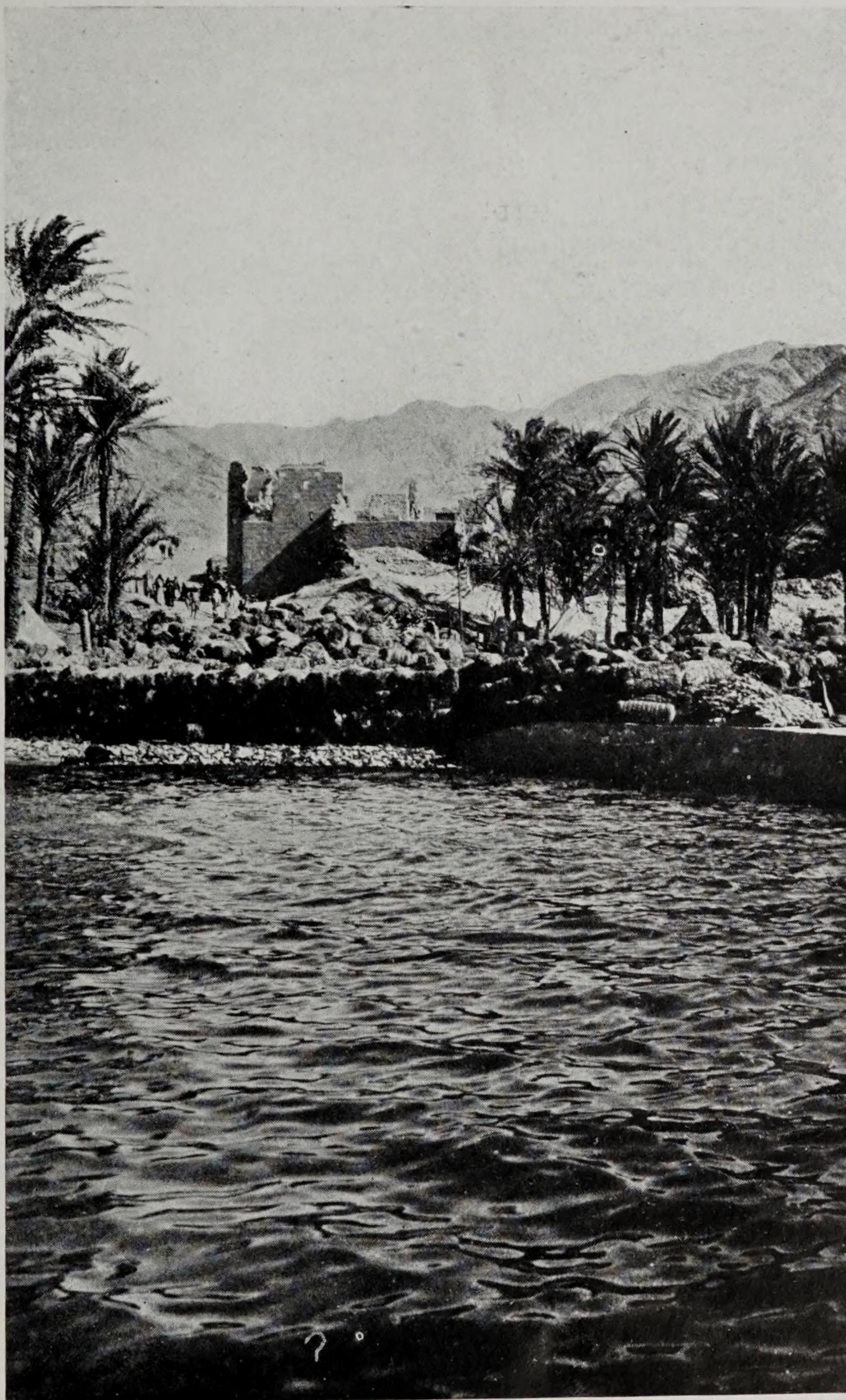


FIG. 3—The fort of Aqaba (Akaba). Aqaba at the head of the gulf of that name was a flourishing port from the days of Solomon to those of Saladin, whence dates its decline. Aqaba figured as an important station during the War.

#### LAWRENCE AND FEISAL IN NORTHERN HEJAZ

At this juncture, in early October, 1916, a lieutenant on the staff, Thomas Edward Lawrence, was sitting in the Military Intelligence Office in Paris. He had had intimate acquaintance with Arabs before the War and had been pulling the strings of the Hejaz affair since its start. Endowed with a

compelling personality, as persuasive as forceful, a very clear head, and extraordinary initiative and promptitude, he thought more rapidly and saw farther ahead than most men. He had always believed that the Arab revolt could be led on to affect greater issues than those of Hejaz, and he felt keenly the danger of its actual crisis. Some single leader must be found for its forces and some liaison with British strength established. He asked leave to take a short holiday trip down the Red Sea on a patrol ship and turned up at Jiddah. There he met Abdullah, the second son of the Emir, and the best known to us of the family. In five minutes he knew this man was not the leader required: but he had heard better things of Feisal who was far away inland from Yambo. Abdullah was asked to call up his father on the telephone (Husein's number is Mecca 1) and get leave for Lawrence to ride inland from Rabegh. The old man demurred to this request but finally gave way and wrote a letter to his eldest son, Ali, who was in command at Rabegh. When this letter came to hand Lawrence went aboard his ship again and dropped down the coast. Ali demurred even more than his father; but Lawrence insisted on his letter and offered to don Arab clothes the better to avoid notice on the way, and to travel by night. Ali agreed at last and Lawrence slipped out of camp one evening with half a dozen Bedouins.

Three days later Lawrence walked into Feisal's tent in Wadi Safra and sat himself down. Feisal was surprised, displeased, and doubtful what his wild Bedouins might think and do; but he put the best face on the accomplished fact and asked Lawrence politely what he thought of Wadi Safra. "Very pleasant and pretty," said his guest, "but a long way from Damascus." There was a moment of acute tension; for Feisal understood perfectly that his failure before Medina and his present inaction were in his visitor's mind. But the tension passed, and he did the right thing. He set forth frankly his situation—his lack of guns and food, the impossibility of his getting up supplies from distant Rabegh, and the incapacity of his troops to prosecute siege operations and railway demolition. Lawrence saw before him the desired leader, and Feisal, as he talked for hours that day and the next, realized that he had found a man who could and would help him. He showed his visitor everything, initiated him into guerilla fighting on the flank of the advancing Turks, and sent him away in peace to sail for Cairo and persuade the British military authorities to organize a new base at Yambo for the supply of a big Arab force, which Feisal undertook to call out at once. The plan was to go north and there cut the railway communications of Medina. All this was done. Lawrence went and came again; and the result was Feisal's march with Lawrence and some 20,000 riders up the coast to Wejh in January, 1917.

From this new base among weak and, on the whole, friendly tribesmen—a base so far north, too, that it fell outside the holiest and most jealously guarded region—we were able to push inland cars, airplanes, and selected officer-instructors. Abdullah had come round Medina with another force



FIG. 4

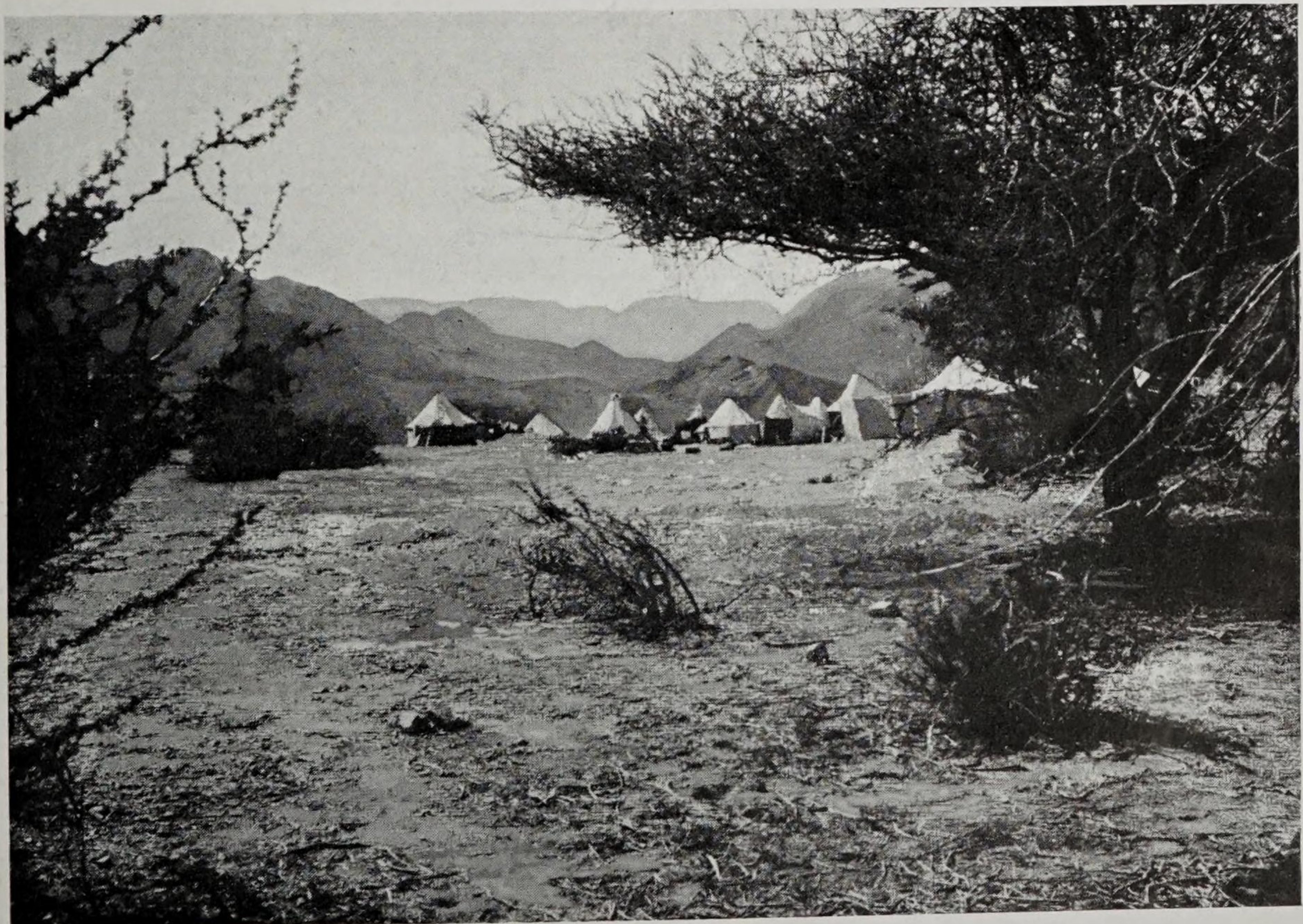


FIG. 5

FIG. 4—The oasis of Nakhl Mubarak in the Wadi Yambo looking southwest. Emir Feisal's tents in the foreground.

FIG. 5—Abdullah's tents in Abu Markha, Wadi Ais, 1917.

and formed a camp in Wadi Ais, within a day's march of the railway. Not only Lawrence but many other British officers now donned Arab dress, as Feisal's men, and passed up and down, the Bedouins growing accustomed to the sight of them and frankly accepting their instruction and leading. The railway was attacked at many points, and the whole block of northern Hejaz from the coast line between Rabegh and Wejh up to a section of the railway nearly 200 miles long, between Abu Naim and El Ala, became familiar to Christian officers, both British and French. Lawrence was always their inspirer and moving spirit, and his way with the Arabs became our recognized canon of conduct among them.

#### THE GEOGRAPHY OF NORTHERN HEJAZ

What was learned about the geography of Hejaz by these officers, by the flight of our planes, by the passage of our cars, and by conversations with Feisal, with his officers, and with all sorts and conditions of his rank and file—amounts in sum to this.<sup>1</sup>

Hejaz is one facet of the irregular pyramidal mass of peninsular Arabia, whose apex lies some distance south of Taif. From this culminating point four gable ridges run, one south of west through Asir to the Red Sea about Hali Point, one southwards towards Aden, one northeastwards through Nejd by Sedeir towards Koweit, and one northwards by Kheibar towards Moab. Hejaz is the northwestern facet of this pyramid, enclosed between the first-named and the last of the gable ridges. A short slope falls to the west and a long one to the northwest. The short slope is marked off from the other, which declines towards Medina and Midian, by a great triangular mass of lava-covered highland (*harra*), broadening inland from a point near the sea at Rabegh to a long base between Taif and Medina. This divides Hejaz into two main districts, southern and northern, whose only ways of intercommunication lie either round the point of the *harra* near Rabegh or right round the back of it. The central *harra* itself seems to be virtually uninhabited and almost inaccessible, being not only of most forbidding surface but also without water. Lawrence has told me that he never met a Hejazi, from Feisal downwards, who could tell him anything about it. No one goes there. Our airplanes flew a little way over its mass from Rabegh, but not far. The two great pilgrim roads turn its flanks, the Darb es-Sultani skirting its northwestern face from Medina to Rabegh and then striking inland to Mecca under its southwestern face; the Darb es-Sharqi bending eastwards towards the central steppe, behind the base of the triangle and following up a long watercourse, the Wadi Aqiq, which flows from an elevation of some 6,500 feet at the apex of the peninsular pyramid south of Taif and descends the long northwestward slope to Medina where it joins a main channel called Hamdh. This rises at Kheibar and flows out to the Red Sea near Wejh. We learned for the first time about this great drainage

<sup>1</sup> See also the author's article "War and Discovery in Arabia," *Geogr. Journ.*, Vol. 55, 1920, pp. 422-436.