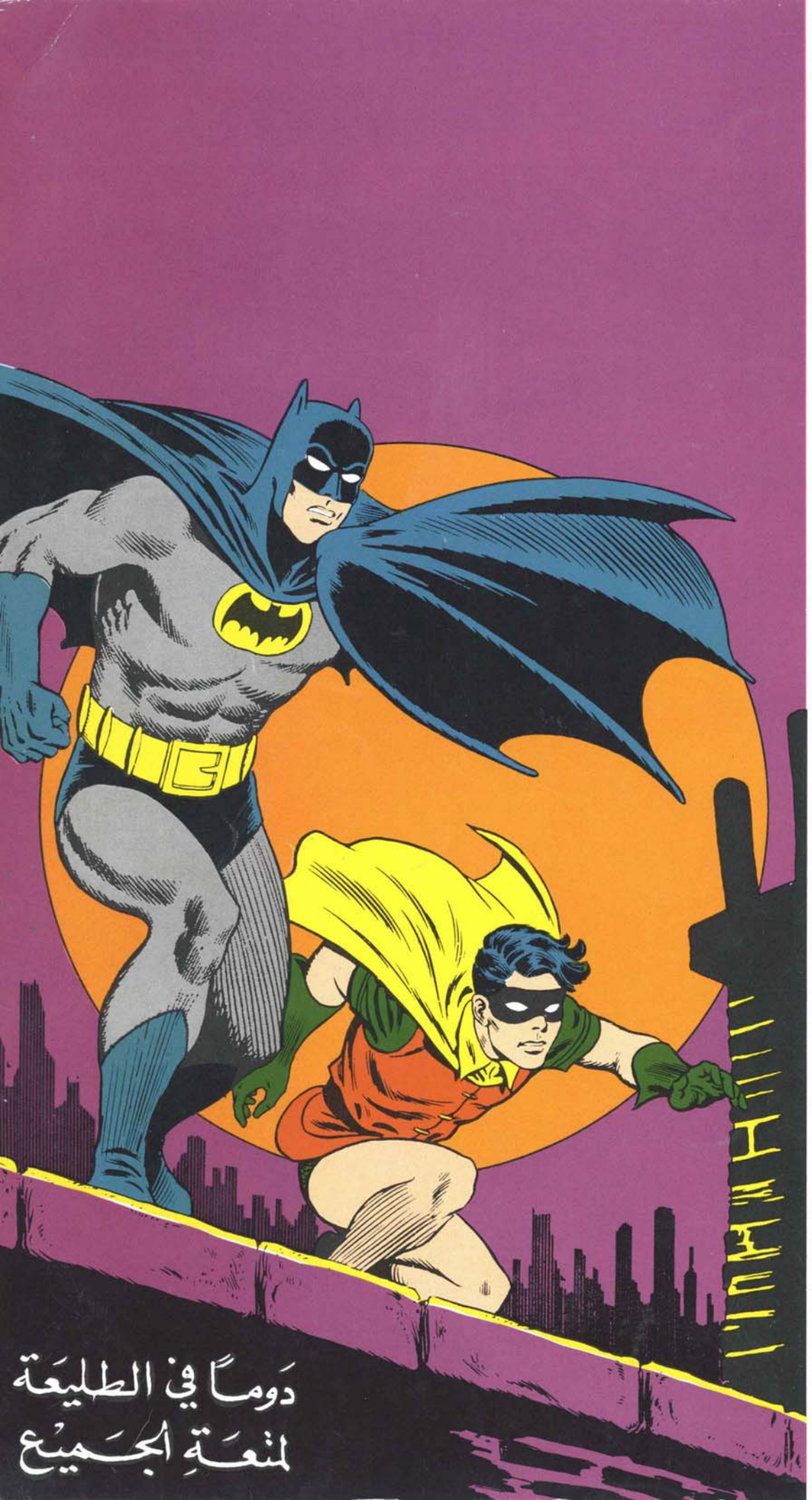

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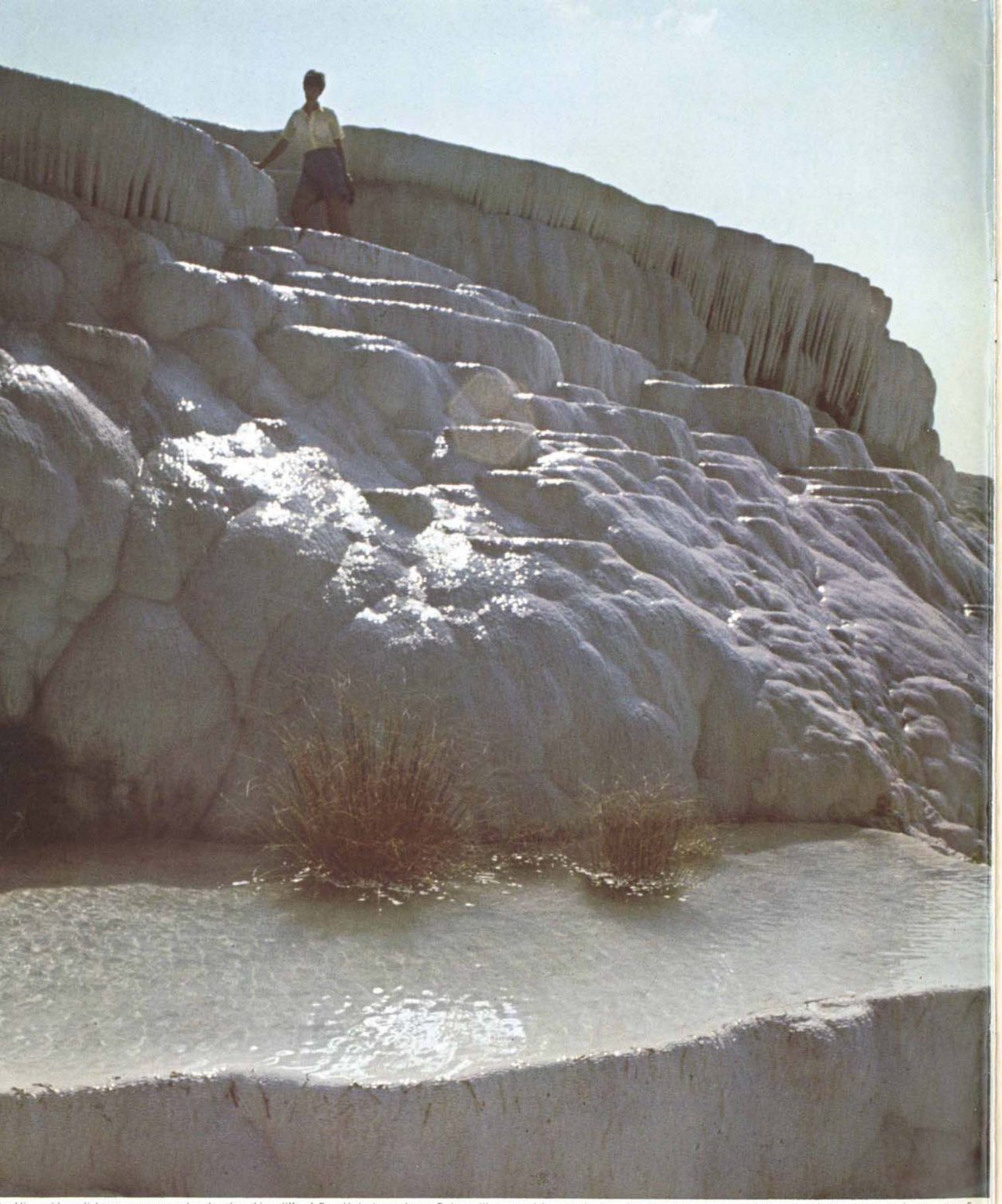
MARCH-APRIL 1970

ARAMCO WORLD MAGAZINE

IT'S A BIRD! IT'S A PLANE! IT'S NABIL FAWZI!



Sparkling with sunlight on water-covered rocks, the white cliffs of Pamukkale in southwest Turkey still attract visitors to the hot mineral springs of a spa 2,000 years old. Photo-story begins on page 5.

ARAMCO WORLD magazine

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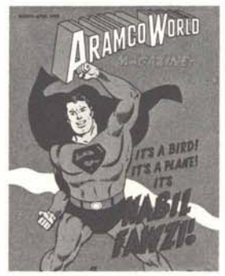


Cover: Yes, that familiar figure in the blue and red costume is Superman. In the Middle East, however, he's Nabil Fawzi instead of Clark Kent. Furthermore, he has had to learn Arabic because, we're told, the 270,000 or so Arab boys and girls who so eagerly await his exploits each week refused to learn Kryptonese. Story on page 18.

Roberts of the Prints

Drawings by David Roberts. Photographed by Khalil Abou El-Nasr from the Trans-Arabian Pipe Line Company and Aramco Overseas Company collections.

BY JOHN BRINTON

In the sharpness of his eye and the talent of his pen—an unrivaled record of the historic Middle East.

David Roberts led a life that might have been the model for Horatio Alger's books. Born to poverty in Scotland, he began his artistic career by drawing pictures of wild animals for his proud mother, using a burnt stick and a piece of red chalk on the white-washed walls of her poor kitchen. He finished it as one of the wealthiest and most respected British artists of his century, his magnificent pictorial record of his journey to the Holy Land patronized by Queen Victoria herself.

David Roberts was born on the 24th of October, 1796, in a village near Edinburgh. His father was a devout but very poor shoemaker. Young David developed a strong dislike for school and from the age of 12 he was apprenticed for seven years to a house painter at the starting pay of two shillings a week. This was the vocation reluctantly chosen for him when his father finally realized that he was not going to have his son as cobbler's assistant, the son who spent all his free time scratching pictures for his enthusiastic mother, on kitchen walls which she kept always freshly whitewashed to encourage him.

Life as an apprentice house painter in those times meant hard work and long hours for a boy. On the other hand, grinding up colors and mixing shades was not bad training for an aspiring artist. Despite the fact that he was sometimes severely treated by his master, young David valued the experience.

In 1816 Roberts joined a company of traveling pantomimists. His father and mother did not at all approve of the job but as Roberts wrote later, "To travel in company with strolling players . . . might not be very respectable, but it gave me an opportunity of seeing England, and of painting pictures on a large scale." The 'pictures' were huge theatrical backdrops and Roberts gradually became skilled in what he termed "aerial perspective", that is, a blending of objects together without hard and accurate lines. He also learned—by necessity—to work with great speed and mastered the art of painting scenery to look like wood or marble, a technique that helped give photographic realism to his later work.

When the pantomimists' company folded, Roberts alternated between decorating houses and painting scenery in theaters. He also continued to paint for his own pleasure, sketching from nature or, in the evenings, painting small oils which he found useful in understanding composition and the play of light and shadow and in perfecting aerial perspective.

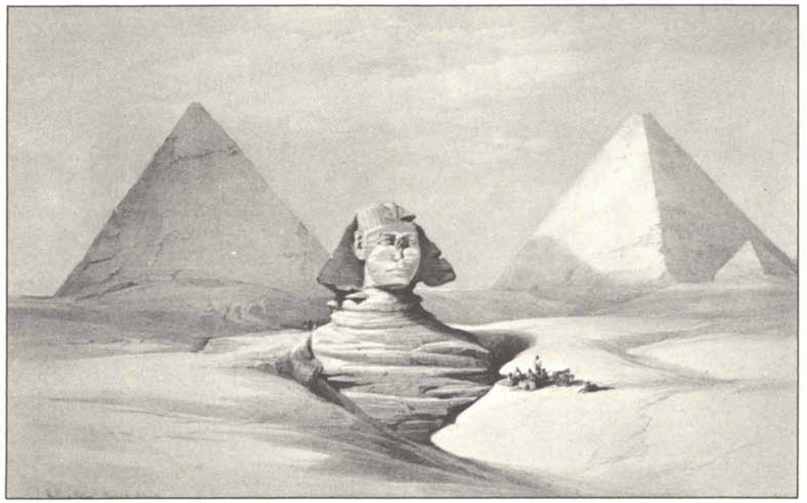
By 1823 he had settled in London and was working mostly for the Drury Lane Theater. Soon he was elected a member of the fledgling Society of British Artists—and had started his climb to fame. The following year he traveled on the continent and did many sketches of the cathedrals and monuments, emphasizing minute architectural details and elaborate, almost photographically realistic perspective. Back in London these were worked into romantic paintings, according to the taste of the times, which were exhibited and sold at ever increasing prices. It was not long before David Roberts had gained his first patron, Lord Northwick; his work was being reviewed in the *Times;* and he was painting stage scenery for Covent Garden. He was particularly pleased when, in 1827, the Royal Scottish Academy was founded and he was asked to exhibit. He was made president of the Society of British Artists in 1830, and then elected a member of the new Garrick Club. (His enormous painting, "Halting of a Caravan at Baalbeck," nearly 7 by 12 feet, still hangs in the theatrical club today.)

By the time Roberts journeyed to Spain, Portugal and Morocco in 1832-33, he was already a celebrated artist. Throughout the journey he sketched and wrote prolifically. He made more than 200 drawings of the people and costumes but said in a letter home, "I begin to doubt whether I shall be able to paint half of them." He did, however, and their issuance, along with the publication of a number of engravings in *Landscape Annual*, placed Roberts in the foremost rank of contemporary artists.

It was not, however, until he went to the Holy Land that he began what would be remembered as the outstanding achievement of his life. It was, as one biographer later wrote, "the dream of his boyhood, and the great end and aim of his manhood."

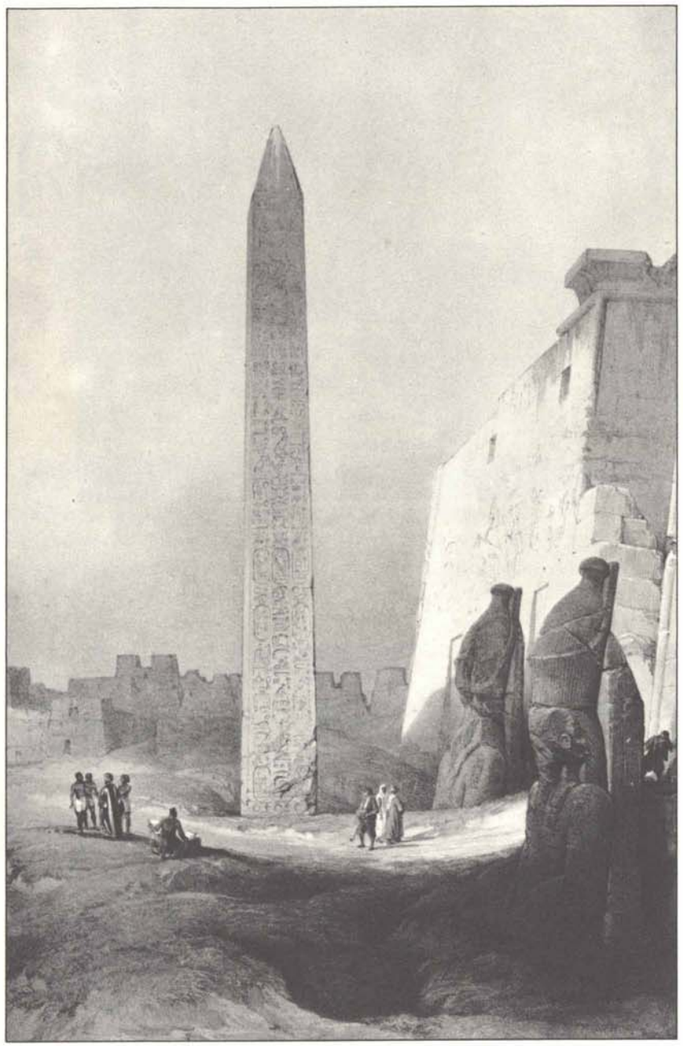
Roberts left London in August, 1838, arriving in Alexandria 24 days later. He kept a detailed account of his trip. First impressions of Egypt often deplored by other travelers, the tedium of landing, the smells, the pushing crowds and exotic dress, were to him an artistic inspiration.

Roberts next sailed up the canal joining Alexandria with the Nile, then on to Boulac,



The Great Sphinx, Pyramids of Gizeh.

Kom Ombo, Nov. 21st, 1838.



Luxor, Dec. 1st, 1838.

Front Elevation of the Great Temple of Aboosimble, Nubia.

the port of Cairo. His first glimpse of the Pyramids from a distance was a tremendous thrill. A few days later he visited them close up. "Not much struck with the size of the great one till I began the ascent, which is no joke," he wrote in his journal. "The Sphinx pleased me even more than the Pyramids." But later when sketching them he noted, "I cannot express my feelings on seeing these vast monuments."

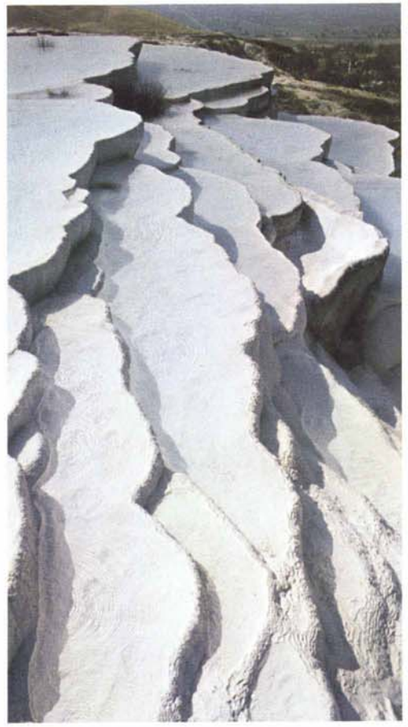
When he left Cairo, in a Nile sailboat flying the British flag, the river was in such full flood that the ascent was slow, and much of the time the boat was rowed, or towed from the bank by its crew. But at last they reached Dendera. It is, he wrote, "the most beautiful of the Egyptian temples, and I shall soon see whether my expectations are to be realized." They were and more. When he had explored the majestic ruins he wrote, "I reached my boat overcome by melancholy reflections on the mutability of all human greatness, and the perishable nature of even the most enduring works of human genius."

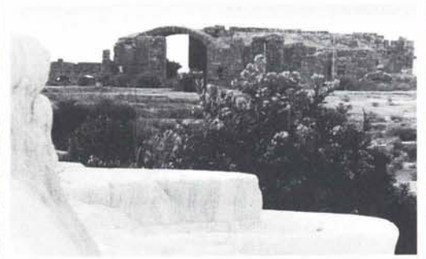
Roberts went as far south as the temples at Abu Simbel, "those stupendous edifices," and then began to descend the river, retracing his steps and lingering where he had seen the most interesting subjects: Luxor, Karnak, Idfu, Aswan, Philae. A few sample entries in his journal give an idea of the rhythm of his production:

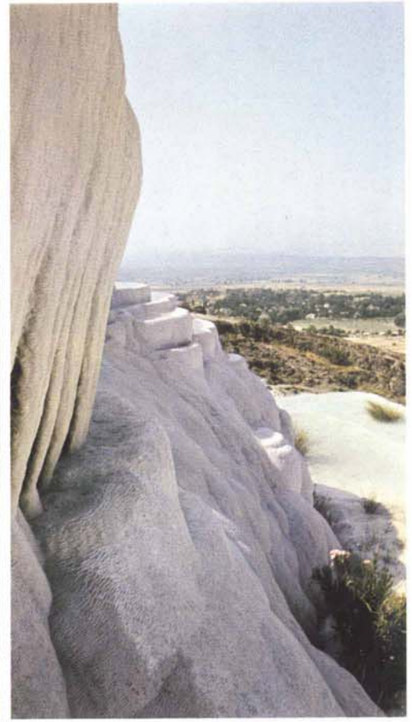
November—
27th. — Made two drawings of Karnak.
28th. — Made two drawings of the Great Temple at Karnak.
29th. — Made three drawings of Karnak.
30th. — Made two studies in oil, and one general view in pencil.
December—
1st. — Commenced and finished at Luxor. Made three large sketches, one ... coloured.
2nd. — Sunday. ...
3rd. — Visited the Tombs of the Kings. Made a coloured sketch of the valley ...
4th. — Made three coloured sketches of colossal statue in the plain of Thebes.

Soon he had finished more than 100 sketches, "all of them paintable subjects," he wrote in his journal. "I am the first English artist who has been here ... we shall see what impression they make in England ..."

Continued on page 29





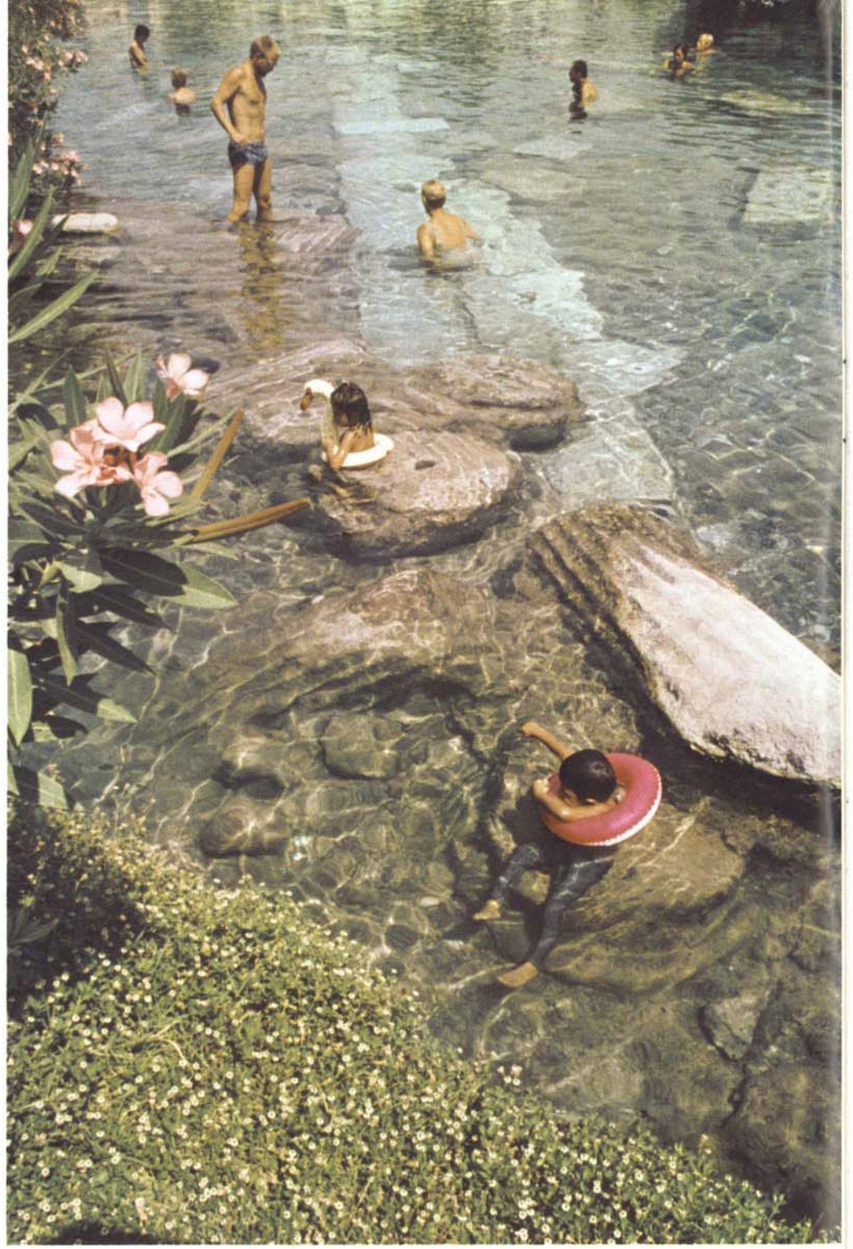


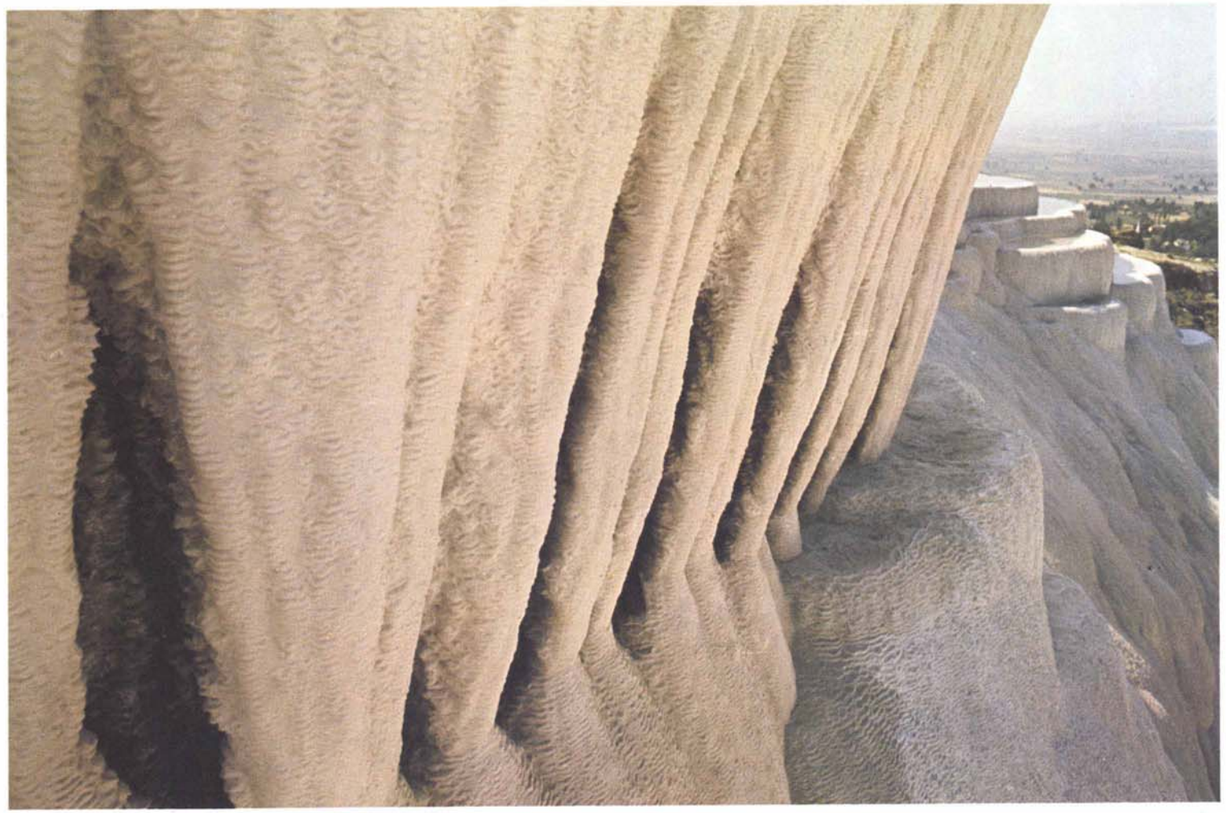
Terraced hillside pools, clusters of pink oleander and banks of blue-white "icicles", all contributed by Nature, eclipse the monumental, man-made baths (center) which the Romans built in Hierapolis.

COTTON CASTLE

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM TRACY

Modern motels perched atop the sculptured cliffs offer turquoise pools of hot spring water with marble ruins strewn on the bottom and a sweeping panorama of the Meander valley.





Up close the cliffs of Pamukkale look like banks of dripping, blue-white icicles, or cascades of frozen surf suddenly exposed to the bright Aegean sunlight. From afar they look like great mounds of fluffy cotton—the reason, apparently, for the Turkish nickname, "Cotton Castle."

The cliffs, however, are much more durable. They are formations of calcium carbonate, the material which builds underground stalactites and stalagmites. But unlike the stalactites and stalagmites the cliffs of Pamukkale were not constructed out of the drippings of icy underground leakage but from hot spring water gushing from an ancient hilltop source and streaming over a wide cliff. The temperature of the water is about 95° F—roughly blood temperature—and it is full of minerals: calcium, chlorine, carbonic and sulfuric acids, sodium, iron.

Since Hellenic times men have come to this hilltop in southwest Turkey to bathe in the soothing water and in the minerals, dissolved in the water like white talcum power, seek a cure for a list of ailments as varied as asthma, rheumatism, acne, heart disease and hardening of the arteries. They still come, but today it is easier. Visitors swim in pools built almost on the edge of space, with the lovely valley of the Meander River more than 300 feet below. At one lovely pool they can float in turquoise waters among white marble pavement and the fluted columns of some ancient monument strewn on the bottom. In winter, they can even dash from heated rooms in motels that adjoin the spa and plunge into steaming water with scarcely a moment's discomfort.

Hierapolis, the sacred city whose massive ruins share the plateau above the cotton cliffs with the modern motels and swimming pools, was probably founded by Eumenes II, King of Pergamum, in the second century B.C. Later, as a Roman possession, it prospered and grew. In A.D. 300 it was graced with a gymnasium, a theater seating 10,000 spectators and the great marble-lined baths whose remnants can be seen near today's pools. One of the city's attractions was a deep, mysterious pit near the hot springs called the Plutonion. It seethed with suffocating carbon dioxide and was believed by some to be a door to the underworld where men's souls reposed. The Greek geographer, Strabo, wrote that when he threw sparrows into the hole they died before they could fly away.

In Byzantine times Hierapolis became the seat of a bishopric, and in the fourth century one of the great vaulted baths was converted into a Christian basilica dedicated to the Apostle Philip who was said to have been martyred there in the year 80. In 1354, an earthquake leveled the area, the inhabitants deserted the site and the hot mineral waters, shaken from their ancient channels and left untended by man, began to plunge freely over the broad front of the promontory—to build the now dazzling travertine parapets.

DISCOVERY!

the story of ARAMCO then

CHAPTER 13: THE TIME OF THE HUNDRED MEN

BY WALLACE STEGNER
ILLUSTRATED BY DONALD THOMPSON

SYNOPSIS: From the first the story of Aramco read more like a novel than a corporate history.

This was partly because of the sheer size of the challenge inherent in an effort to find oil in an area as huge, as isolated and as harsh as the Arabian Peninsula, and partly because the men who accepted that challenge were exactly the kind of tough and competent individuals so common in fictional adventure. Men like able Lloyd Hamilton, who hammered out the original concession agreements with Saudi Arabia's ministers; impetuous Krug Henry, who swept Annette Rabil into marriage not long after the search got underway; the incredible Khamis ibn Rimthan, whose unerring instincts guided the oilmen into the farthest reaches of the country; burly Max Steineke, who was to unlock the major mysteries of Arabia's geology, young Tom Barger, who would rise from geologist to chairman of the board, not to mention the great Ibn Sa'ud and any number of financiers, adventurers and diplomats whose efforts through the 1920's and 1930's eventually brought Aramco—then called Casoc—into the Middle East.

Admittedly, the plot was not unusual. Once the hard-working geologists had staked out the most likely regions and the phlegmatic, large-muscled drillers had poked into the strata of Dammam No. 7 there was no doubt that the venture would be a success. But there was a wealth of incident—the mid-Gulf explosion that took the lives of Charlie Herring and his wife, the fantastic visit to Dhahran of the King and his entourage of 5,000 followers, the fire at Dammam No. 12 which seared poor Bill Eisler and flared into one of the world's great oil fires, the air raid, in which a squadron of Italian bombers came in over the desert and dropped 50-pound fragmentation bombs on Dhahran and Bahrain.

Until that occurred—October 19, 1940—Casoc's people had not been directly affected by the war. Now and for the next four years they would be.

At first, the evacuation of wives and children aside, the impact was little more than an occasional delay in oil shipments. But as time went on the company slowly closed down most of its operations and the working force shrank to about 100 hardy souls who devoted most of the ensuing period to just surviving. One of these was Steve Furman, a supply expert, who was about to have his finest hour.

Pearl Harbor caught the greatly reduced contingent of men in Dhahran, as it caught nearly everyone else, by surprise, and their surprise was like that of Americans everywhere, complicated by the sharp increase in anxiety that went with being made without warning into combatants. In spite of general sympathy, they had been a little aloof from the problems of the English on Bahrain. Now, no longer protected by the neutrality of their country, their shipping no longer even nominally safe, both their supply lines and themselves exposed and many of their lines of communication interrupted or cut, they felt themselves at loose ends; they were driven by a grim and unsatisfied desire to contribute.

There were only two women in Dhahran now, both nurses, and about the middle of December one of them, Mary Margaret Bours, announced that she had been married some time previously, and thus took herself out of circulation. Immediately after that, as if to make the most of what little remained to them, Bob Williams of the Accounting Department announced that he was going to marry the other, Anna Mary Snyder.

No Christian marriage had ever been performed in al-Hasa. It took special permission from Ibn Sa'ud himself before the Williams-Snyder marriage could be held in Dhahran. Because of the general atmosphere of isolation, scarcity and anxiety, the couple had planned a private wedding, but Floyd Ohliger and Bill Eltiste, looking around at the morale of the camp, suggested that they make it public and invite everyone. Among the guests were two Saudi Government officials, happily turned tourist to observe the quaint customs of the foreigners.

There were only three women to take care of the details: the bride, Mary Margaret Bours, and Mrs. M. D. Van Peursem, wife of the Dutch Reformed Minister from Bahrain who was to perform the ceremony. It was to be held in the auditorium, which they decorated as they could—Arabia, except in the time of rains, was then an almost flowerless country. For music they had only a phonograph. What they would play on it was a difficulty, since the camp contained more jazz and dance records than music appropriate to sentimental or ceremonial uses. But at the last minute somebody on Bahrain found a recording of Mendelssohn's "Wedding March", and rushed it over by launch.

Phil McConnell, over from Bahrain, was by this time part of the Dhahran hundred. Wifeless and lonesome like the rest of them, he did his job by day and spent a good many night hours recording their communal life in his diary. A literate man, sensitive to the human and emotional implications of a situation, he came into the auditorium that day a little behind the crowd and had a shock that made him realize how much their morale had sagged, how much they needed such a lift as the wedding.

There they sat, every man of them, well ahead of starting time, row upon row of white collars, ties, dark suits. The raffish costume of every day was gone—not a single pair of suntan khakis with grease smudges where hands had been wiped on them, not a pair of suntans of any kind, not a pair of prospector's boots or work shoes, not a khaki or blue shirt, none of the dusty and wrinkled mixtures of American work clothes and Arab costume that they lived in the year around. This was as decorous as a church funeral; they had scrubbed for it, and they were sober. And when the phonograph wheezed out the march and the bride came down the aisle on the arm of Dr. Alexander, followed by her two attendants—all of them wearing flowers, Good Lord, with the bride in lilies of the valley—and the minister stood up in front of the two and bent his head down toward them and began to intone, some of the audience were guilty of sneaky tears.

It did them good. It did them all the good in the world, and not even the revelation that the lilies of the valley had been painfully created out of tiny jasmine blossoms sewn together with thread could undo the pleasure they took in that wedding. They might be lonesome and wifeless and marooned, they might eat like pigs and talk like ruffians and sleep in their unwashed socks, they might be completely out of touch with the world whose very recollection made them weak with homesickness, but here was an American wedding, complete with all the expected and sentimental attachments. Life had not stopped; it had only been interrupted and reduced, and enough of it remained.

As the war went on, however, life in Dhahran, once so complex and hurried continued to taper off. Something like the frontier casualness returned to them. And as it did, their morale improved. They did their work without watching the clock, and did it better; even if they worked long hours as they often did, they seemed to have time on their hands. What had begun as a time of gloom and sagging spirits became a time of alertness and confidence and cooperation, largely because it was the conviction of C. E. (Charlie) Davies, manager of operations, that the work to be done would be better done, and everyone would better do his share of it, if there were a minimum of supervision and a maximum of personal initiative. He could not have applied his theory of management to a more responsive crew or at a more propitious time, for as the war dragged on and the stock of cars, trucks, tires, spare parts, and all the instrumentalities of repair were used up or worn out, ingenuity sometimes had to reach the level of inspiration.

The strain on the Company was doubled by the Government's distress. After 1943 especially, with the rice of India and Burma cut off and the local crops shriveled in a severe drought, the Company not only had to divert many of its trucks to haul food to Riyadh, but it had to undertake the supply and distribution of hundreds of tons of staples to its Arab employes and their dependents. And when it wasn't limping through its own proper chores, or assisting the Government, it found itself called upon to be the Mr. Fixit of the Gulf.

Did Lieutenant General Raymond Wheeler in India send an emergency call for tank trucks to help the war effort? The Company sent down what it could—or rather couldn't—spare, and muttered angrily when the general complained that they were too rusty inside to be used for airplane gasoline. What did the general think he was drawing on—General Motors? Everything in al-Hasa, including the men, had rust in its insides.

Did Burma-Shell, also in India, send a pleading SOS for spare welding machines? The Company obliged with half its creaking supply, and bore with notable meekness the insulting letter which grumbled that there were neither shields nor masks with the machines, and that the tires were in terrible condition. The ones sent were as good as the ones kept, and al-Hasa was getting by.

Did E. F. Wakefield, the Political Agent at Bahrain, request their help to pull three Hurricane fighters out of a *sabkha* near Safaniya where they had made an emergency landing? Phil McConnell, Floyd Meeker, Charles Homewood and Glenn Bunton took two pickups and three six-ton Marmon-Herringtons 200 miles up there, pulled out in an hour what had baffled 28 men of an RAF salvage unit for nine days, and rescued the 12-ton crane the salvage unit had bogged down in the *sabkha* beside the planes. They returned without official thanks; the lieutenant in charge of the salvage unit, who spent the afternoon shooting at tin cans while they bailed him out, neither introduced himself nor recognized their existence nor asked them to dinner.

That was in 1942, the summer when Rommel and Montgomery were chasing each other back and forth along the one narrow road between Tobruk and El Alamein. Dick Kerr and Bill Eltiste and Floyd Meeker and the others, who had pioneered sand tires for off-road desert driving, were holding their breath, for some of them had run around in the desert south of that North African road testing their equipment, and they knew that if the German general ever caught on to what any Aramco employe knew as a matter of course, he could whip around Montgomery and have him. And if Rommel whipped around Montgomery, he would have the whole Middle East; he could pick it like a plum. Fortunately, Rommel appeared to know as little about desert transportation as the lieutenant at Safaniya and by fall, after El Alamein, the boys breathed easier. From that time on, the behavior of the lieutenant could become a cause for laughter rather than rage; it is easy to forgive people when you know a whole lot more than they do.

The Casoc people knew plenty. In fact they were probably the best set of teachers the Saudi Arabs could have found. And their teaching took. Don Mair, who had left Sun Yat-sen's China and gone building radio stations around the world, came over to Dhahran when he had the Jiddah-Dhahran circuit improved, and one day when out in the desert with a Saudi driver he broke a pulley in his water pump. There was no way of fixing it except with a new part. Mair sat down to wait for help, while the driver stuck the broken pulley in his pocket and went over to visit a Bedouin camp a few hundred yards away. It grew late. Eventually the driver returned. He had whittled a facsimile pulley out of the hardwood of a jack block. With a little scraping, it fitted. It worked, too. It took them into camp. That was an Arab who five years before had never looked inside a hood.

In the late war years the tinkerers and gadgeteers went to such wild extremes in an attempt to keep anything running that it got funny. Mr. Fixit or Mr. Fixit's Saudi brother, it made no difference. Either one of them could plug a leaky radiator with old date pulp, or manufacture a part out of whatever

was lying around. Phil McConnell, a great hand with a guitar and a bunkhouse song, put the whole thing into a ballad he called "Car 405."

Earlier, someone had suggested sending on camel caravans anything that could be divided into small enough parcels. It would save their cars and trucks and it would offer a few riyals to the Bedouins, who were pinched by wartime shrinkage in the economy and by severe cold and drought. They called their impromptu camel corps the Khamis Transportation Company in honor of Khamis ibn Rimthan, who acted as agent to the Bedouins. It never worked impeccably, and it cost the Company at least as much, and perhaps twice as much, as automotive hauling would have, but it did make good public relations by distributing needed wages among many Arab families; and at its height it moved a considerable tonnage. During the drilling of the al-Jauf wildcat (a dry hole) in 1944, everything except the rig and the drill pipe was sent out by camel. Some of the stuff went by dhow to what is now Safaniya, and thence by caravan; some of it went all the way in caravans of from 700 to 1,000 snarling, complaining, sneering, indefatigable, patient, and enduring beasts. One of their first jobs, in the late summer of 1942, was the transportation of drilling mud, cement, lubricating oil and other supplies from al-Khobar to Abqaiq, where one of their worn-out strings of tools was drilling a new well to help establish more clearly the outline and extent of the field. The plan of Cal Ross and Floyd Meeker, who had charge of the haul, was to keep about 75 camels busy on a regular schedule over the two-day route. Khamis had made arrangements, with some difficulty, for between 50 and 100 camels and their drivers. On the appointed morning, about 500 showed up.

Well, make the best of it; instead of a systematic schedule, divide the total load and send it all at once. (And what a hell of a row, said Phil McConnell, recording it in his journal, when those sacks were being loaded). The Company people, a little skeptical of the experiment, and afraid that many sacks would be broken, had to admit that in that regard the experiment was a complete success—hardly any breakage at all.

But it was sometimes like breaking a cat to harness to get a Bedouin to do the full job. He was very sharp in a deal, and good at cutting corners. At al-Khobar, Ross and Khamis had a group hauling barite from the pier to the storage yard. There was a limited amount of barite and a large number of Bedouins, and in the competition for loads, some men seemed to complete a trip and get back for another load in a remarkably short time. Khamis, a Bedouin himself, began to smell a rat. Following some of the speedsters he and Ross discovered out among the dunes about a mile from the pier a considerable cache of barite under careful guard. The stuff was perfectly safe, and, by Bedouin reasoning, in good hands. They were just making sure that they got enough loads to make the thing worth their while, and after assuring themselves of that they would haul the whole batch to the storage yard at their leisure.

Shortages and strains did not make any easier the task of training the Saudi Arabs in industrial techniques and an industrial attitude of mind. Sometimes the Arabs' innocent incomprehension and innocent complication of shortages drove them half wild. Jim Suter, for instance, came during the build-up in 1944 and was first set to welding tanks at Ras Tanura. He had not been on the job more than a short time when he felt a tap on the shoulder. He raised his welding mask and looked. A smiling Arab worker stood there. It seemed he wanted a short section of four-inch pipe welded to a circular steel plate. Suter obligingly lowered his helmet and welded the two together into a crude cup for him, and the man went away. But another came, and another, and still another, each with a section of pipe and a steel bottom plate. Suter didn't know what the things were for, or who kept sending the men around, but he wanted to make a good impression on everybody, and to be agreeable. He was on his 27th little cup when the boss welder came around. Suter explained that he hadn't got far with his tank welding because somebody kept sending around those pieces of pipe to be welded. What were they for, anyway? The boss welder made an examination and came back looking weary. "Son," he said, "you have spent the day making every Arab workman on the job a coffee mortar."

In the same category of exasperations was the telephone problem. All over the camp, in bunkhouses and cottages, the bells had the habit of ringing all the time, most often late at night, but when one picked up the receiver no voice would reply. One night Ohliger's patience gave out when he was called out of bed by the ringing of the telephone and found no one on the line. He hurled on his clothes and stormed down to the telephone office. Gavin Witherspoon and another outraged householder were there ahead of him. Voices of laughter came from inside, by the switchboard. Like detectives in a movie the three tiptoed in and peeked through the doorway. The switchboard operator was giving instructions to a group of his friends. Everybody was having a wonderful time pushing plugs in and out of holes. Until the irritated Americans broke it up, it was like a great punchboard, or a game of tic-tac-toe.

And it was absolutely certain that after a little comic relief like the telephone incident, Ohliger would get up in the morning to discover that San Francisco wanted a new test well put down, refusing to acknowledge that every string of tools they had was worn out, and that for months they had been robbing parts off one to keep the others going. Or the Amir Ibn Madi of al-Khobar would request tires to make a trip to Riyadh. Or someone would come in to say that they were out of office supplies, typing paper, toilet paper, carbon paper, a certain size of bushings. Or the Government would call and want to discuss another loan. Or a complaint would come from al-Khobar, which the Company had surveyed and laid out as a model modern town, that some ambitious shopkeeper had conformed to ancient practice and set up his shop in the middle of the street.

The best time of all had been the frontier time, and the war returned the Hundred Men to the frontier. For nearly four years they went back to making do, improvising, doing without, building things out of nothing. Some things were easier than others, some were hard indeed. It was one thing to cobble up industrial equipment, or even to do without it. It was another to do without fresh meat and still another to do without mail. In both these last their low point was the winter of 1942, before improvisation had built up either sources of meat supplies or routes of communication.

For meat they could on occasion fall back upon the country, as when at Thanksgiving, 1942 a providentially heavy flight of southering ducks came down on the *sabkhas* near Qatif, and John Ames, Hank Trotter, and others of the Bunyans went out and bagged enough for a Thanksgiving dinner for all hands. But for mail there was no substitute. For weeks on end no ships came in, which meant that mail could neither go nor come. With the wartime demand on the service, cables took an endless time. Men traveling to or from the States, beating their way by whatever route they could find, were sometimes on the road for as much as 110 days—nearly four months. And when Christmas drew near, and there had been no word from home for weeks, and no fresh meat for nearly as long, spirits drooped and some asked themselves what they were doing there. Floyd Ohliger's announcement that there would be a Christmas Eve party at the club cheered them some, but not much. Same old faces, same old pretending to a cheerfulness none of them felt. Even when several carloads of hunters went out into the desert and came back with meat for Christmas dinner, their flagging enthusiasm for Arabia was not notably revived. But they went on over to the club—what else was there to do on Christmas Eve?—and there was Floyd Ohliger dressed up as Santa Claus, standing by a mock Christmas tree and trying to cheer people up by reading them phony messages and greetings from their wives and children at home. They sat there and listened politely for quite a while before it began to seep through to them that the greetings had an intimate and authentic sound, and it was even longer before they fully accepted the truth: that Socal had rounded up all the dependents it could locate and collected their greetings and sent them on from San Francisco as a Christmas present to Dhahran. It had also sent a film, made at the suggestion of Esta Eltiste, that showed a good many of the wives and children at home. Not even the ones who had no wives and children, or whose wives and children had been missed by the camera, could resist that. There was not a dry eye in the place. They cursed Ohliger and Willie Jones, acting as his secretary, for their successful secrecy, and they would not for a thousand dollars have had Ohliger and Jones do it any other way.

One thing they had plenty of, no matter how long the war dragged on and no matter how many months passed between the freighters that brought them their long-delayed supplies and mail. Their plenty was brussels sprouts—and shredded wheat, of which Les Snyder, looking backward, insists they had a 125-year supply. They felt that, in Steve Furman's commissary, there must be whole warehouses stacked to the ceiling with cans of brussels sprouts. They ate brussels sprouts in every form that imagination could suggest and necessity demand, as soup, as salad, as stew, as garnishment for a dozen different things. They complained bitterly that they had been served brussels sprouts waffles.

But of other things, especially fresh meat, they were lamentably short, and both Arabs and Americans were meat eaters. No refrigerated meat reached them from Australia or Denmark or the United States or South America; no vegetables except the pallid contents of cans passed their teeth for a long time. So, as they were forced to do in other matters, the Hundred Men decided to produce their own; in doing so they created the Sewage Oasis and the Animal Farm and gave Steve Furman his finest hour.

The effluent from the sewage disposal plant at Dhahran ran down into low ground out toward the al-Khobar road, and had created there a patch of vivid green. It was no problem whatever to level, plow, seed and irrigate it; it was their collective Victory Garden, the apple of their eye. They were making the desert blossom as the rose and fulfilling the buried desire of at least every western American among them. They planted onions, carrots, tomatoes, lima beans, cucumbers, sweet corn, all the varieties of the weekend gardener.

Dr. Alexander gave them a little trouble—he wouldn't permit them to plant melons, for instance, because however healthful they might be inside the rind, they could be polluted in the handling. He also permitted carrots and onions only on the promise that they would always be eaten cooked, and he insisted that tomatoes, cucumbers and lima beans be supported and kept off the ground. With these limitations, they had the vegetable problem whipped within the first war year, and they kept a steady rotation of crops growing green in Sewage Acres until long after the war. Charlie Davies even tried hydroponics, and there was a night when he entertained and served proudly up to each guest, as a salad, a single air-grown leaf of lettuce.

But it was stock farming that really excited their full effort. Steve Furman, especially, was a frustrated farmer; he must have yearned all his life, without perhaps being aware of it, for the chance to run a ranch. Now, almost from the time he arrived in January, 1940, he had it—and what a ranch, a ranch that made the King Ranch and the Matador and the 76 look like backyard goat pastures. He had all of Arabia to grow meat in, and he used a good bit of it. Running the Animal Farm was pure satisfaction; he was bitterly disappointed when they closed it down in 1947 and made him a wholesale grocer again.

He bought rabbits in Hofuf, chickens and pigeons in Qatif and Hofuf, local cattle, sheep, goats and camels where he could get them, and he started building up flocks and herds like an Abraham. The stock of every sort which he got was adapted to the climate and forage conditions of Arabia, which meant that none of it was very toothsome to people brought up on the best meat in the world. So Furman began to tinker with the genetic composition of Arabian livestock. He had his henchmen gather up eggs from here and there, and he got George Vivian, the carpenter foreman, and "Goodie" Goodwin, the head electrician, to build an incubator, feeling that if he could raise up his own chickens from the shell they might have a little more meat on their bones.

The Arab farmers from al-Khobar, Qatif and Dammam—where today there is a thriving poultry industry—seeing the eggs put in the incubator, did not believe what the Americans told them. The news spread like wildfire that the crazy Americans were building a machine to make chickens. They had accepted the idea of building machines to do men's work, but fooling around with the reproduction of life—which they understood—*that* was something else! It was a trick of some kind; the eggs would assuredly not hatch. When they did hatch, the farmers were astonished, but not convinced. Somebody had slipped the chickens in and the eggs out. They watched the next batch very carefully, counting the 19 to 21 days that Furman said would be necessary. On the 19th day they were full of laughter and jeers; there lay the eggs which, carefully watched to avoid trickery, were obviously not hatchable. While they were laughing, the first chick pipped his shell. Old Habib, headman at the farm, had been at the commissary at 7:00 A.M. on that 19th day, and actually sat in front of the incubator for four hours until the first egg pipped. He couldn't believe it. It was the work of jinns.

Furman was inclined to give them more miracles than that. He selected the biggest roosters and the biggest hens he could find, put them together in the chicken yard, and collected the eggs for incubation to start improving the breed. Depressed by the way Arabian sheep stored fat in their tails, as a camel does in his hump, he cut the tails off some of them to see if he couldn't make them put a little more on their ribs. He himself had to do this. The Arab helpers wouldn't have done it if he had ordered them to. The sheep, they said, would die. They didn't. They got fat. Furman had to cut the tails off perhaps 200 sheep before he was able to persuade a young Arab to learn the trick and take over the job. But probably the most dreadful thing that Furman did, in the eyes of his assistants, was to start castrating the bull calves. Cutting off sheeps' tail was one thing, but taking the manhood from a male animal was something that the Saudi men, admirers of masculinity, wanted no part of.

Camels were no problem—veal camels could be bought eight or ten at a time whenever the needs of the Saudi employes' camp called for them. Sheep likewise, though with their tails cut they might make better mutton chops. The rabbits, the pigeons, and the chickens multiplied. At the peak, toward the end of the war, Furman had 2,000 pigeons, 500 rabbits and 6,000 chickens at the Animal Farm down near Sewage Oasis. Out in the desert he had flocks totaling 5,000 sheep, of which they brought in about 500 at a time to the farm feed lots for fattening and slaughtering. At that same peak period he had 1,200 cattle, part dairy and part beef. It was these that caused him the most trouble and gave him the greatest satisfaction.

Arabia is not cattle country. The Bedouins depend on camels for both milk and meat, as well as for transport, and find their fat-tailed sheep and their long-eared goats better adapted to the desert than cows. Only around the oasis were there a few scrubby cattle for Furman to start with. But an old Bedouin named Mutlag, who came from somewhere down south of Riyadh, offered to bring a herd up from Yemen in the winter of 1941-42. Mutlag was an old man, desiccated and wrinkled and tough—leather on bone. For a helper he had a half-grown boy. The drive he proposed so calmly was something that would have scared out a Chisholm or a Goodnight—well over a thousand miles, around the edge of the most terrible desert in the entire world and catercorner across the whole Arabian Peninsula.

It did not sound plausible that Mutlag would get any cattle through, but Furman was perfectly willing to buy them if he could. Besides, Mutlag tickled him. He was a little like the Old Man of Hisy, and he came from the same part of the country. Furman wrote up a short agreement and Tom Barger translated it into Arabic for Mutlag to sign. But when Mutlag finally realized the nature of the document, he became indignant, and perhaps he had every reason to be: after all, he was a Bedouin, and his word had been given. They never tried a contract on Mutlag again.

Mutlag started in January from the mountains of Yemen. By slow stages he and the boy brought their herd up along the Tuwaiq Mountains past Sulaiyl and Layla, moving from well to well and from patch to patch of forage where the desert lived. From the mountains, after many weeks, he broke eastward and struck the oasis at al-Kharj, watered by great flowing wells like rivers bursting from underground, and from al-Kharj he made a hard dry crossing to Haradh, and from Haradh to Hofuf. The last leg, from Hofuf up, was actually the hardest and driest part of the trip, and Mutlag's cattle, like himself, were bones held together by hide when he brought them in. Still he had brought them. He and his boy, alone and on foot, had done something that might have elicited the respect of the men who made the drives up from Texas that stocked America's northern plains.

Next year, while some of his first herd contentedly ate alfalfa and bore calves and gave milk and grew fat, and Steve Furman's farm hands tried their best to keep a few of them through that lean wartime winter as the nucleus of a breeding herd, old Mutlag and his boy went down and did it again. In 1943-44, for some reason, he did not appear—perhaps he was living on his riches down somewhere in the southern Najd. Furman had to bring in cattle from Iraq to keep his herd up to a size conforming to his market.

Even if Mutlag and Iraq had been able to supply indefinite numbers of cattle, Steve Furman would have been a long way from satisfied. He had no more respect for the unmodified Arabian or Yemenite or Iraqi steer, which would run about 350 pounds on the hoof, than he had for the Arabian sheep before surgery. He set out to improve this breed also. Because every country on the Gulf had export restrictions, and because the job of explaining would have been totally impossible, he paid a dhow captain to smuggle in the biggest bull he could find in Iraq, and when the stevedores unloaded him at al-Khobar Steve led him up to the Animal Farm and put him to work.

In the fall of 1944 Mutlag was back, ready to take on his 1000-mile cattle drive for the third time. But that winter was very dry. No rains fell, the seeds lay unsprouted in the sand, the desert slept, many of the water holes were dry. When Mutlag, who had started from Yemen with over 200 head, struggled into al-Kharj with the hardest third of his drive still ahead of him, dozens of his cattle were dead on the road. The rest were walking skeletons.

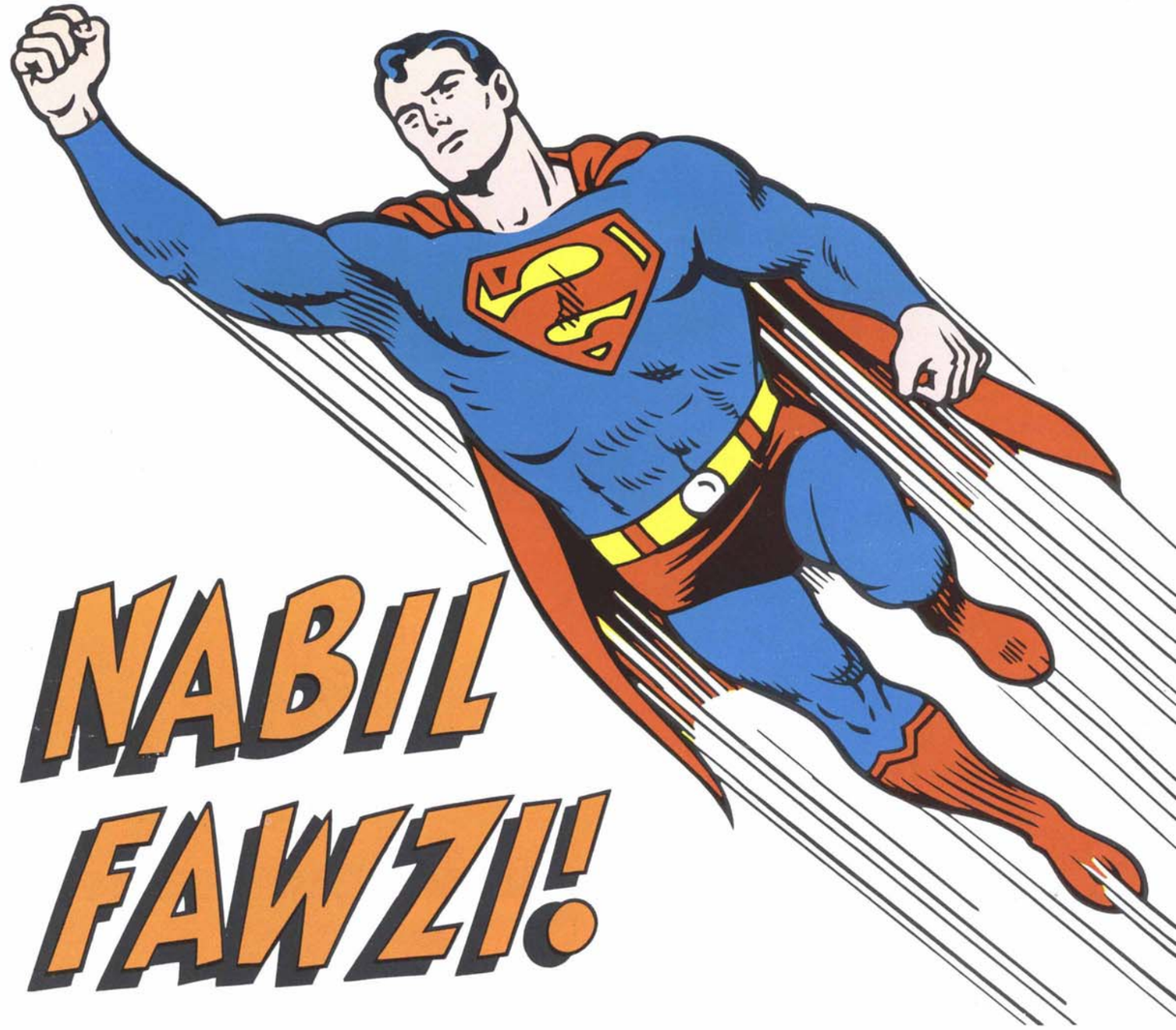
From al-Kharj, Burt Beverly and the other engineers who were assisting the Government in its big new agricultural development radioed Dhahran that if Furman wanted any live cattle he had better haul them the rest of the way by truck. He did, those of them that were still alive when the supply trucks got there to pick them up. Only 20 or 30 cattle, about one in ten, made it all the way to Dhahran, and Mutlag, betrayed like many another gambling rancher by the chances of the weather, was so broken up he didn't come in for months to collect what little he had coming for his labor. When he did, he brought Furman a small rug. Asked the reason for the gift, Mutlag replied that Furman had been very good about not talking, and had not shamed Mutlag about the failure of the expedition.

By then, early summer of 1944, Furman didn't actually need Mutlag any more. His Iraqi bull was making almost as many changes in bovine Arabia as Casoc had made in its industry. Instead of 350-pound steers, they were beginning to get some 1,000-pound ones. They had a dairy herd of 35 that was supplying milk for the whole camp, and they were getting 35 to 50 calves a month from the breeding stock. By the time Furman had his dairy herd developed, however, they were so short of everything else that there was no glass tubing for a pasteurization unit. At first they pasteurized milk in the autoclave at the hospital; later they built a tinkerers' contraption with a stock pot, an agitator and a thermometer, and did their pasteurizing in the mess hall kitchen.

There was evidence that the wartime mousetrap they built was appreciated. Their only regular communication with the world was by means of the flights that the Persian Gulf Command flew between Basra and Karachi. The regular landing place was Bahrain, and only special flights were supposed to bring planes to Saudi Arabia, but it was remarkable how often the pilots on those flights found it essential, for mechanical or other reasons, to come down on the makeshift landing strip at Dhahran, and when they did, how infallibly they found their way to wherever they could lay hands on a glass of cold, pasteurized milk.

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE JULY-AUGUST ISSUE

IT'S A BIRD! IT'S A PLANE! IT'S...



NABIL FAWZI!

It was very confusing. The man looked like Clark Kent but was called Nabil Fawzi. Batman was barking instructions to a kid named Zakkour and the man vaulting over Metropolis looked like Superman but seemed to be speaking Arabic.

"I suppose it looks strange to you to see Superman speaking Arabic," said the lady with the comic books on her desk, "but to about 270,000 Arab children it looks perfectly natural. Otherwise we wouldn't be in business."

The lady, Leila Shaheen da Cruz, ought to know. She is the editor-in-chief of Illustrated Publications, an enterprising Beirut firm that has built a profitable and still growing comic book business on the Arabs' fierce pride in their own rich language.

"Until about 1964 most comic books in the Middle East were in either English or French," said Mrs. da Cruz. "Then a forward-looking editor began to wonder why comic books could not be translated into Arabic. This editor expected it to be profitable, of course, but was equally interested in encouraging children to read more in their own language."

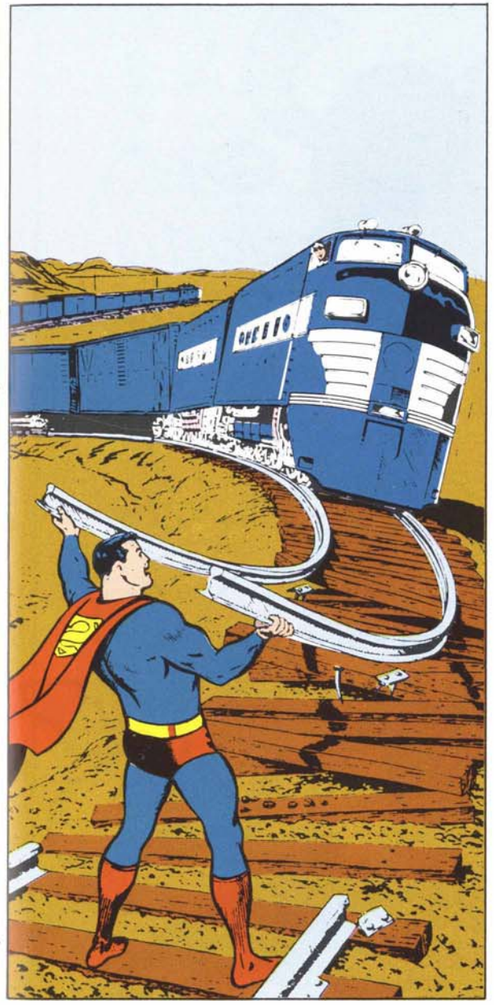
On both counts that editor was right. The project was profitable—Illustrated Publications currently publishes an estimated 2,600,000 copies annually—and it did promote the read-

ing of Arabic. "Kids from Saudi Arabia to Morocco were so enthusiastic that we had to stop answering their letters," said Mrs. da Cruz. "It was taking too much time."

The first comic strip to be issued in Arabic by IP was Superman. In the guise of Nabil Fawzi, a reporter for "Al-Kawkab Al Yawmi" he swooped into the Middle East from distant Krypton on February 4, 1964, to the instantaneous delight of thousands of young Arab children. A year later Nabil was joined by a man called "Sobhi" and a young boy called "Zakkour," who at night became Batman and Robin. The Lone Ranger, (known in these parts as the "Masked Rider,"), along with Tonto and Silver, rode in on July 17, 1967, followed not long after by Ben Cartwright, complete with "Hoss," "Little Joe" and the endless problems of the Ponderosa. Next came "Little Lulu," "Tarzan," and most recently, "The Flash."

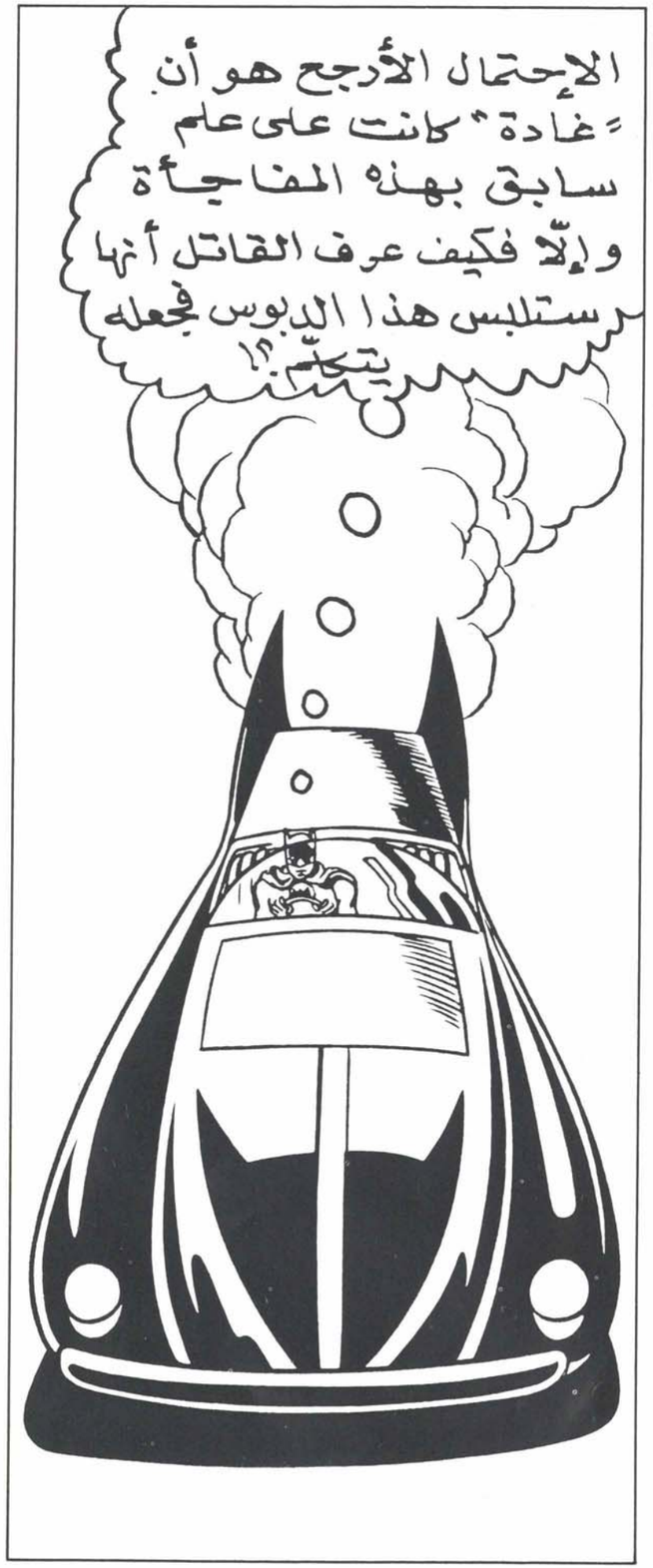
At first, translating comics was not as easy as it sounds. Illustrated Publications had to first persuade western companies to license Arabic editions. Since some publishers in the Middle East had a history of pirating material, it took a while to convince the copyright owners that a licensed company would be more likely to not only pay its fees, but eliminate the pirates.

They also had to soothe tradition-minded



Superman, the "Man of Steel"—or "the Giant Hero" as he is known to thousands of Middle Eastern boys and girls—has no trouble lifting elephants and automobiles through the sky, tying railroad tracks in knots or constructing skyscrapers with his bare hands, but even in the Middle East he has trouble guarding his secret identity as Nabil Fawzi, mild-mannered newspaper reporter. Luckily, when his snoopy girl friend Randa tries to trap him in a tight spot Nabil can always fall back on his "super-powerful sight."

"Watwat" Man's powerful fist strikes a loud blow for justice. BOOO! TOKH! "What do you think of this?" his dynamic sidekick asks. TSEK! BOUGH! Then, into the Batcar once again and racing through dark streets to answer a signal for help beamed into the night sky by the constantly helpless police commissioner.



parents who were not entirely convinced that their children's Arabic was going to be improved by translations of Tarzanic victory howls, the banging of Colt 44's, or the less-than-Shakespearean flavor of the dialogue between Clark and—sorry, between Nabil and Randa. Parents also pointed out that even though those masked, caped, hooded, cowled, gun-belted and loin-clothed champions were obviously very adept at the bashing and smashing of the ungodly, it still didn't tend to develop the best of manners in their children. To meet such objections, IP added eight pages of educational games, stories and contests which, they correctly guessed, would not only soften parental hostility but improve the children's language and grammar.

There was also the matter of competition. In addition to several well-drawn French comic strips that were translated and published off and on in a number of short-lived publications, the Arab world had also been exposed to the famous works of Walt Disney. Even the lovable Mickey Mouse, however, was no match for a lineup that led off with Superman, Tarzan and the Lone Ranger, and IP soon pulled ahead.

Another problem had to do with the distressing fact that Arabic reads from right to left instead of left to right and that kids in the Middle East open the comic book at what in western countries would be the back. That meant that the filmed reproductions of the original art work had to be reversed before printing plates could be made, a process that immediately produced a basket of letters from curious kids who wanted to know why the "S" on Superman's costume was backwards.


Leila Shaheen da Cruz, IP's editor-in-chief.

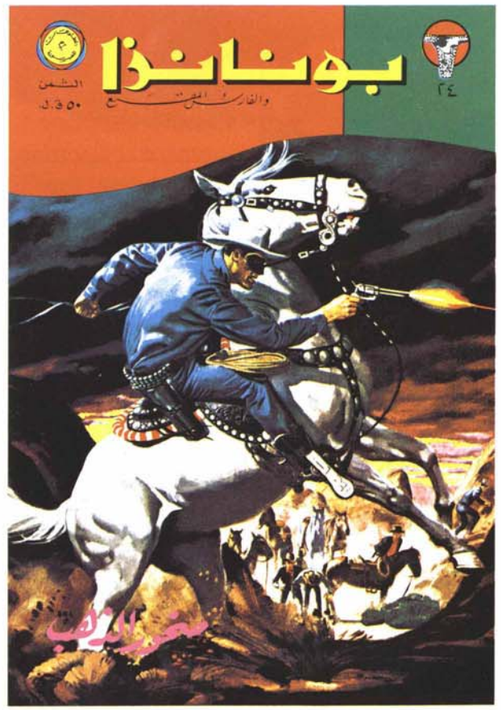
Because Arabic is a language that tends to run on at sometimes extravagant length, IP also had difficulties with translation. Until translators and calligraphers (who inscribe the translated text right onto the filmed copies of the original artwork) got the hang of it, the crisp English, neatly fitted into the "balloons", often expanded into enough text to fill a pamphlet.

It was no surprise either when nationalistic readers objected to the importation of western material and IP was the first to agree that Arab history and traditions ought to generate enough ideas for at least one locally-written and drawn comic or adventure strip. Unfortunately, it proved impractical.

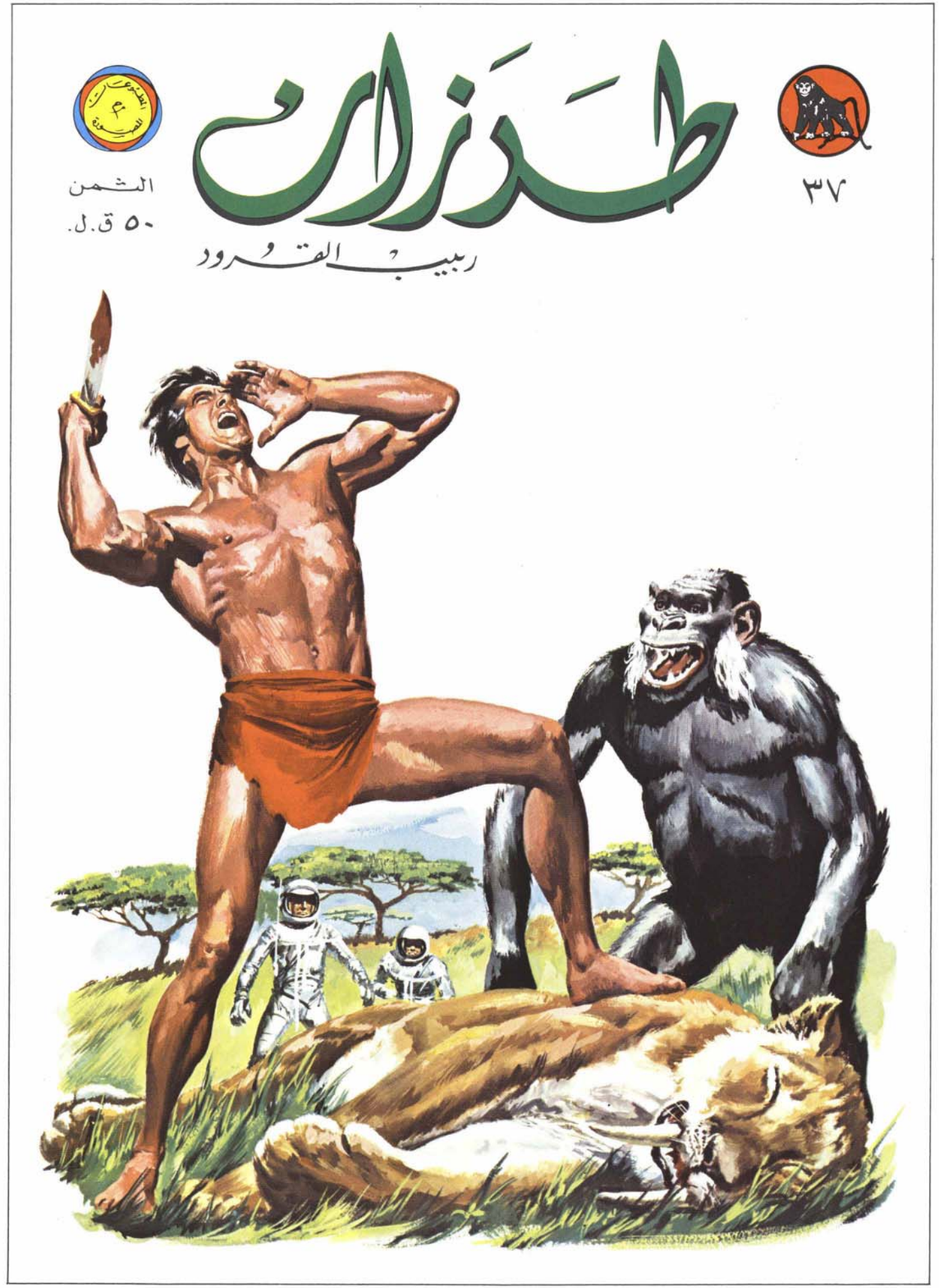
"That kind of art work, story continuity and long-range planning," said Mrs. da Cruz, "is still unfamiliar to most local artists or is too expensive. The adventures of Sinbad, the Sailor, for example, would be a natural out here, and we know that there would be a rich market for an adventure strip based on the exploits of Arab commandos. But so far we haven't found a local cartoonist who is not either inexperienced or overpriced."

By now, however, most of the problems, have been overcome, and while solving them IP has built up a circulation estimated at 2,600,000 copies annually which are distributed in 17 countries to an estimated 270,000 avid kids who not only can't wait to read them but, as Mrs. da Cruz related ruefully, remember what they read.

"This year we published a Superman adventure that we thought was new," she said. "But it turned out that it was one we ran five years ago under another title. And do you know how we found out? Kids from five countries wrote in to tell us."



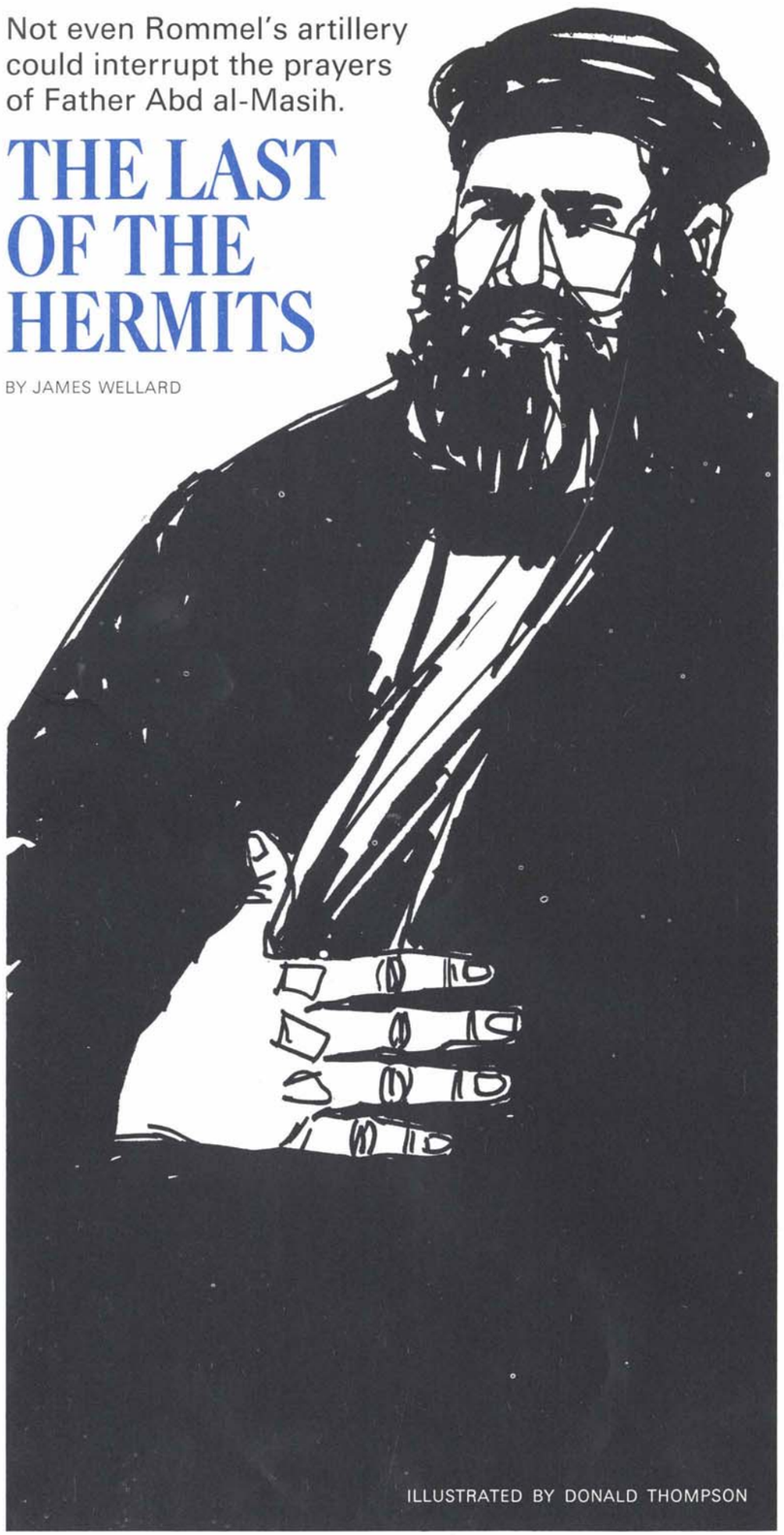
Two recent Illustrated Publications comic book covers. One shows The Lone Ranger ("The Masked Rider") and Silver featured in the comic book "Bonanza", a title familiar to many Arab children through the popular television series. The other features the perennial—and obviously universal—Tarzan of the Apes who, the saber-tooth slain, screams the classic bull ape's cry of victory through the jungle. The comics sell for about 15 cents each.



Not even Rommel's artillery could interrupt the prayers of Father Abd al-Masih.

THE LAST OF THE HERMITS

BY JAMES WELLARD



ILLUSTRATED BY DONALD THOMPSON

Around midnight, Abuna Abd al-Masih comes out of his cave in the Libyan Desert and stands with his hands held palm upwards in the same posture that the first Christians used when praying. His lips move as he looks up into the sky. Sometimes he kneels and touches the ground with his forehead. For the rest of the night he will continue his prayers and genuflections as he has been doing for the last 34 years.

Abuna Abd al-Masih is a Coptic monk and he is 72 years old. Forty years ago, he walked the 1500 miles from his village in Ethiopia to the monastery of Baramous on the edge of the Western Desert, some 70 miles northwest of Cairo. He spent five years behind the high walls of this Egyptian monastery, distinguishing himself by the severity of his penances, until he found the company of the dozen other monks distracted him from his aim of total mortification. He decided, therefore, to go out into the desert which surrounds Baramous, to find his own cave, and to spend the rest of his life in complete solitude communing with his Maker.

In those early days when he was younger, the Ethiopian hermit used to walk once a week three miles back to the monastery to get bread, beans, dates, and a jerrycan of water. Now that he is an old man, the monks of Baramous take his meager rations out to him. He exchanges ritual greetings with his brothers, but that is all. He wants to know nothing about what is going on in the outside world and has no interest in that world in any case. He refuses to see visitors, and the monks of the nearby monastery where I spent two days and a night were gently but firmly opposed to my approaching his cave.

He even scolds the monks themselves, saying to them,

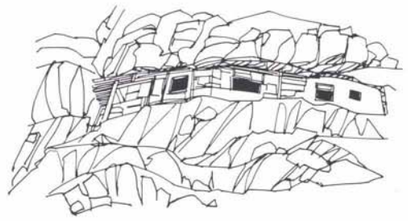
"You monks should know that when you eat oil and fish (he is referring to sardines), the devil will visit you at night."

I would very much have liked to visit Abuna Abd al-Masih, since he and several other hermits also living in caves in the region are the direct descendants of the famous anchorites of the Thebaid—of Saints Paul, Antony, Macarius, and thousands of other solitaries who peopled the Egyptian deserts in the third and fourth centuries of our era. To us in the western world, so totally oriented to a machine civilization, the very idea of a man living and thinking exactly as the Desert Fathers did 1600 years ago is almost incomprehensible.

But standing that night on the ramparts of the monastery of Baramous and looking out across the silent wasteland, I did not find it so hard to understand. In fact, the monks were not in the least amazed by the spiritual feats of Abuna Abd al-Masih and the other "athletes of God," as the hermits used to be called. In the first place, the present patriarch of the Copts, His Holiness Kirellos the Sixth, 116th pope of the Egyptian Church and "spiritual head of the town of Alexandria, all the countries of Egypt, of Jerusalem, Nubia, Abyssinia, Pentapolis, and all the lands in which Saint Mark preached," was himself a hermit for 10 years while a monk at the Baramous Monastery. Yet when one meets the patriarch himself, sitting, as I found him, in his armchair beside his bed with a row of medicine bottles on the table nearby, one sees no marks of the extraordinary experience that he has undergone—an experience few other living men would care even to contemplate. It is not, then, surprising that his brother monks request Abuna Abd al-Masih to grant them the privilege of sharing his solitude, though the Ethiopian had now made it clear that he wants to spend the remaining years of his life alone in his desert retreat. But there are plenty of other caves in the cliffs of the Wadi Natroun; and according to the early historians thousands of hermits occupied them in the fourth century A.D. And even today, no Copt, whether monk or layman, would find it unusual if a monk should walk out of his convent to live alone in the desert for months, or even years.

Alternatively, the brothers can mortify themselves within the confines of their own monastic cell, and Father David, my guide at Baramous, told me that the Ethiopians were renowned for the severity of their self-inflicted ordeals. One Abyssinian spent every night of his life, for 26 years, standing outside his cell, facing east, hands upraised, praying until the first rays of the sun came over the fortress wall. Others subject themselves to long fasts, though this is not in the least unusual, since all must fast most of the time, particularly during the Coptic Lent, lasting 56 days. While I was visiting the Wadi Natroun monasteries, the rule prescribed only one meal of bread and bean soup a day.

In some monasteries, masses are continuous throughout the 24 hours, the one I attended beginning at four o'clock in the morning and continuing to six. I envied those old monks who had a tau-stick, or crook, to lean on, as we stood most of the time. On the other hand, the service and ritual in these Coptic churches, several of which claim to be built on the site where the Holy Family rested on their flight into Egypt, are so fascinating that I did not mind standing. The prayers and lessons are recited in Coptic, the direct descendant of the ancient Egyptian language, so that what one is hearing is a faint echo of the speech of the Pharaohs. I don't imagine, however, that even a first-class scholar of Coptic would understand what was being said any more than the lay congregation, for Coptic to the Egyptian Christians (unless they are churchmen) is as incomprehensible as Latin



to most Catholics. In any case, I never heard words issue from the mouths of men faster than the liturgy did from the lips of the officiating priests. Prayers and liturgies are accompanied by the clash of a cymbal and the tinkle of a triangle and shouts of "Kyrie eleison" repeated rapidly many times over.

Life in the desert monasteries is not, however, all austerity, and it is certainly not as severe as it used to be when these remote citadels of Christianity were completely cut off from the outside world. Even 30 years ago, it took five or six days to reach the convent of Saint Antony on the Red Sea, for instance; and it was necessary until quite recently to organize a camel caravan to cross the desert west of the Nile in order to visit the four monasteries of the Wadi Natroun. Only a handful of travelers made the arduous and sometimes dangerous journey in the 18th and 19th centuries, and some of these enterprising explorers came back with the priceless manuscripts which now form the great collections in the national libraries of Britain, France, and the Vatican.

The story of these "finds" by the Assemanis, Curzon, Tattam, Tischendorf, and others is in some respects discreditable to these travelers, and some commentators have gone so far as to call their activities outright looting of the monastery libraries. Certainly Robert Curzon in his *Visits to Monasteries in the Levant* (one of the best travel books ever written, but now out of print) relates how he plied the monks of Baramous and other monasteries with an Italian cordial called *rosoglio*, then practically helped himself to their rarest manuscripts, bundled them into his saddle bags, and hurried off. In this manner he got away with a unique gospel of Saint Matthew and Mark written on vellum by a monk called Sapita Leporos, a disciple of the great abbot Macarius himself. He acquired this manuscript in the monastery of Suriani, a neighbor of Baramous in the Wadi Natroun. Tischendorf's "scoop" in obtaining the *Codex Sinaiticus* (now in the British Museum) from Saint Catherine's is, of course, one of the great classics of book collecting.

But those days are over. The situation of the monasteries nowadays is quite different from what it was when Curzon was ransacking the treasures of the libraries while the monks looked on slightly anesthetized on *rosoglio*. The convents are linked with the outside world by good roads, though the visitor needs a jeep or Land-Rover to reach some of them in the full desert. But roads, cars, telephones, transistor radios, and above all, tourists have introduced a new note into monastic life. Concessions have been made to modern attitudes as well as to modern machines.

Father David, my companion during my stay at Baramous, was typical of an old-style monk with a 20th-century outlook. He does not live in one of the traditional dungeon-like cells so small that the occupant could not stand upright inside, but had to crawl in on all fours. He has two small rooms in an upper story overlooking the central courtyard which is cultivated as a garden and miniature orchard. He can sit of an evening on the balcony looking down on this tiny oasis where a few birds nest in the orange trees; or he can work in his front

room at his hobby of watch-repairing. One of his rooms has been fitted up as a kitchen, for all the monks now prepare their own food, and meet for community meals in the refectory, with its long table hewn from a single slab of stone, only on feast days. The Father and I took late tea together in his rooms just as two bachelors might do in the middle of London, chatting about everyday affairs and looking over the photographs of his family. Other monks dropped in to share the tea and conversation.

Later, as we walked on the ramparts to see the desert under a full moon, we were joined by a Father Ibrahim, who brought along a dish of dates culled from the monastery palms, the graceful trees whose dark green plumes are one of the first signs of life one sees on approaching the citadel of Baramous across the desert. Father Ibrahim offered me both dates and cigarettes, for smoking is not prohibited, and some monks smoke 30 cigarettes a day. Alcohol, however, is forbidden, except for a glass of wine on feast days.

And so, listening to the murmur of prayers coming from some of the cells and looking out across the sand to the cliffs where Abuna Abd al-Masih was now standing with hands upraised praying outside his cave, I was struck by the curious disparity between what seemed like laxity on the one hand and extreme asceticism on the other. Inside the 40-foot-high walls, my two monkish companions appeared to be enjoying a pleasant and serene sort of life, while outside another monk was undergoing the severest conceivable penance. Both modes of spiritual services, however, are alike acceptable under the rules of Coptic monasticism, which has always left it to the wisdom of each man to work out his own salvation. Father David happened to prefer the security of the monastery, with his snug suite of rooms and a big table on which to set out the parts of the watches he was repairing and the tools he repaired them with. Father Ibrahim liked a smoke before retiring. Both liked to play with the monastery cat—a queen with two fat kittens now gamboling about in the garden. The fondness of the two fathers for the puss reminded me of the stories of how the first hermits shared their frugal rations with any animal that happened to drop in from the surrounding desert. In fact, Macarius, the founder of the monastery of Baramous, once looked after a litter of orphaned kittens in a cave not far from here; and the great Saint Antony himself, we are told, was always extremely courteous to wild animals. Thus, when he caught a gazelle eating the bean plants he had planted outside his cave, "he took hold of it gently and said to it, 'Why do you do harm to me when I do no harm to you? Go away, and in the Lord's name, do not come into my garden again.' And ever afterwards," says Athanasius's *Life*, "the wild animals left his garden alone."

But strolling along the ramparts with Father David or taking tea with him in his rooms, I found myself continually thinking of the hermits outside the monastery walls, for these solitaries are the last survivors of a class of men who actually changed the history of the world. For the fact is that the original Egyptian anchorites were the founders of monasticism as we know it in

the West; and no historian would deny that it was the monasteries of medieval Europe which were the principal, and almost the only, conservators of art and culture for almost six centuries. And the great monasteries of Europe were founded by religious leaders who were following the example of Egyptian hermits whose names are now almost forgotten—Paul, Antony, Athanasius, Pachomius, Shenouda. The idea of the cenobitic community was brought to Europe from Egypt by Athanasius and Jerome, while the rule governing such communities was first laid down by the Egyptian monk Shenouda.

What the visitor to the Coptic desert monasteries is seeing today, therefore, is the birthplace of the most significant movement in Christian history, as well as some of the oldest shrines of our religion. There is not much left to see in the case of some of them. The huge fortress-monastery of Saint Simeon at Aswan is abandoned; the Red and White monasteries near Luxor are in a state of disrepair; and 46 of an original 50 convents in the Wadi Natroun have disappeared under the sands.

All the same, cenobitic life in Egypt has continued almost uninterrupted for 1600 years, sometimes under the most appalling difficulties and during periods when the monasteries were sacked or burnt and their inmates massacred. The evidence of these calamities is still seen in the high walls and blocked gates of these remote citadels of Christianity, and especially in the massive keeps within the walls, the last refuge of the besieged brothers to which they could retire over a drawbridge when attacked.

Yet all through these centuries of persecution and outright destruction, the monks continued to feed any passerby who asked for food. Their one concession to the hostility of the outside world was to lower food from the walls in baskets and to raise visitors in a net. Many a 19th-century traveler was hauled up over the ramparts in this manner. And even today, one enters the desert monasteries through a small postern-gate which is unlocked by a massive key; and after sundown, no one can gain admittance at all.

So the Coptic monasteries of Egypt stand as the first models of Christian monasteries all over the world; and hermits like Abuna Abd al-Masih as the last descendant of the primitive saints from an age when saintliness was equated with the annihilation of all earthly vanities.

I was told that the Ethiopian was in his cave during the campaigns in the Western Desert and that he was under fire during Rommel's advance on the Nile. We have no way of knowing what he thought about the experience. Judging by his contempt of the outside world and all its works, the probability is that he dismissed the bursting shells and the showers of shrapnel as another trick by the devil to interrupt his prayers and meditations.

It is also reported that British GHQ in Cairo apologized to the hermit for any inconvenience caused him—an ironic homage of the 20th century to the third.

James Wellard, foreign correspondent, lecturer and author, has written for The Times, Encounter *and* Holiday. *Among his 12 books are* The Great Sahara *and* Lost Worlds of Africa, *both histories of exploration in the African deserts.*

Roberts of the Prints

Continued from page 4

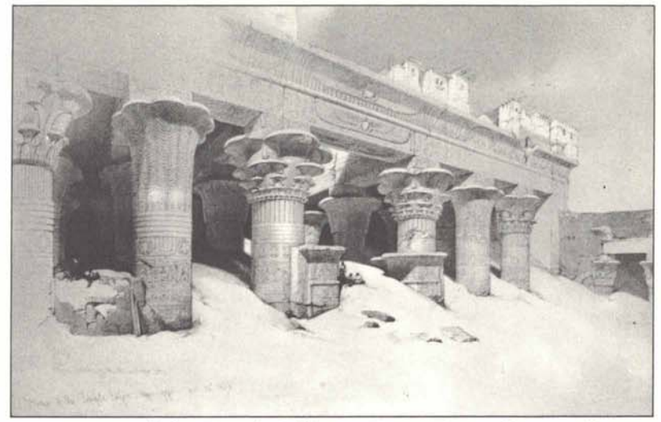
Back in Cairo, Roberts spent six busy weeks drawing streets and monuments and even the interiors of the mosques. Muhammad Ali, the Viceroy of Egypt, had given special permission for him to visit them if he promised to wear Turkish dress, and provided he did not use brushes made from pigs' bristles. Roberts conformed wholeheartedly. "Having taken such a long journey, I must not stick at trifles." He wore a beautiful Cashmere shawl wound around his head and even cut off his whiskers.

All along, Roberts had planned to go to Palestine and Syria, but towards the end of his stay in Cairo he was invited to join a party of British friends who were going to the Holy Land by way of Petra. Roberts was delighted. "If God spares me in life and health," Roberts wrote to his daughter, "I expect to bring home with me the most interesting collection of sketches that has ever left the East."

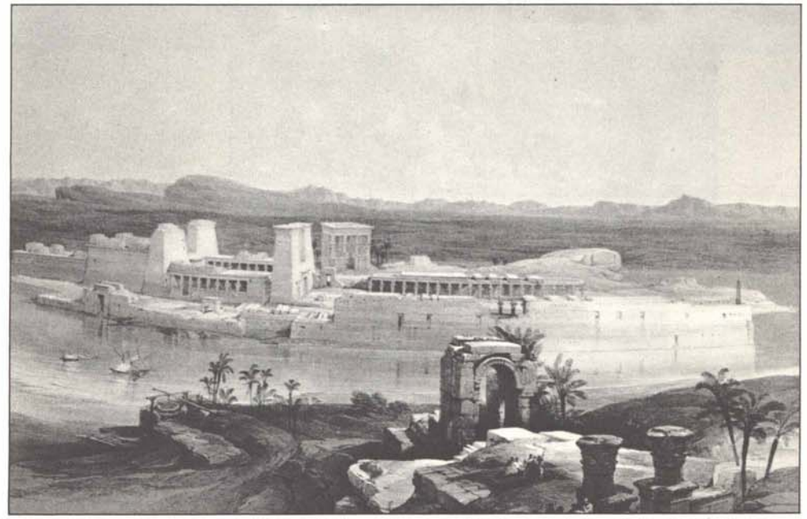
The first goal was St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai. It took them ten days. Five days were spent in the monastery, and anyone looking at Roberts' drawings can see that he did not waste a moment of his time.

In Petra they were able to obtain permission from the local shaikh to stay and pitch their tents among the ruins; previous travelers had been hustled through. Roberts wrote in his diary, "I am more and more astonished and bewildered with this extraordinary city ..." then continued in dismay, "I have often thrown my pencil away in despair of even being able to convey any idea of this extraordinary place." Fortunately he always picked it up again.

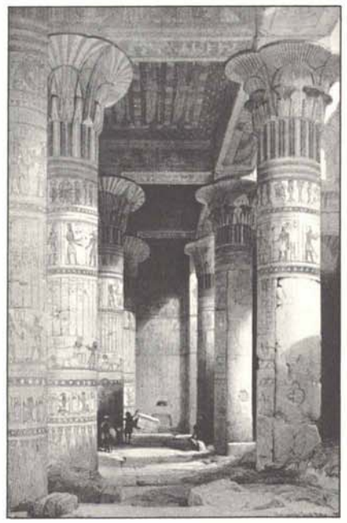
The party moved on through southern Palestine, visiting Hebron and Gaza. After the desert of Sinai Roberts was delighted by the olive orchards and orange groves of the Arab farmers in the hills and along the coast. In Jaffa they changed from camels to horses and then, while riding up towards Jerusalem, Roberts noted in his journal, they passed through "richly cultivated country. The ground ... carpeted with flowers, the plain ... studded with small villages and groups of palm trees ... the country is the loveliest I ever beheld."



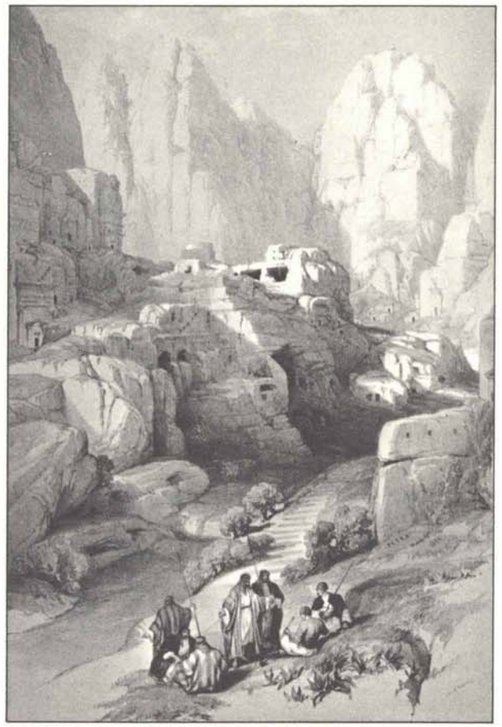
Portico of the Temple Edfou — Upper Egypt, Nov. 23rd, 1838.



General View of the Island of Philae, Nubia, Nov. 18, 1838.



View Under the Grand Portico, Philae.



Petra, March 10, 1839.

A NOTE ON LITHOGRAPHY

Lithography, the art of printing from stone, was invented about 1796 by Aloys Senefelder, a citizen of Munich. The process is based on the mutually repellent character of oil and water.

First an image is drawn in reverse on a smooth slab of limestone, using a kind of greasy chalk which interacts with the lime of the stone beneath it. The part of the surface which has not been drawn on is desensitized to grease by treatment with a solution of gum arabic and acids. Once the image has actually penetrated into the stone the drawing is washed off the surface with turpentine and water. Greasy printing ink will then adhere to the stone only where the image had been drawn and will be rejected by the rest of the surface, which is kept moist with water. Although the lithographic stones are heavy and expensive, they have the advantage of being usable over and over by the simple process of repolishing the surface after a number of prints have been pulled off, since the image is fixed within the stone itself. In all, several hundred fine proofs can come from each stone.

The great advantage of the process to an artist is that it produces a full range of black and gray tones and can thus simulate the exact original effect of pen, pencil or brush. Haghe, the master lithographer of his day, had the laborious job of redrawing all of Roberts' original sketches on stone in mirror image, while Roberts worked closely with him to be sure of obtaining a faithful reproduction.

There is a strong similarity between lithography and modern offset printing, in which flexible metal sheets take the place of stone and photography has replaced hand drawings—the process by which this page, both text and illustration, was printed.

Thanks to the kindness and help of the Turkish governor, Roberts was able to sketch most of the sites in and around Jerusalem, Bethany, Jericho, Bethlehem, and many of the colorful ceremonies and processions of Easter week.

After Jerusalem, Roberts separated from his friends, who were returning to Egypt, and continued with a guide to Nablus, Nazareth and Galilee, then on to St. Jean d'Acre, up the coast to Tyre, Sidon and Baalbek.

Through it had begun to rain as Roberts rode on towards the Roman ruins at Baalbek and he felt ill with fever, he was so struck with the magnificence of the great temple that he could not resist visiting it at once. "The beauty of its form, the exquisite richness of its ornament, and the vast magnitude of its dimensions, are altogether unparalleled."

From Lebanon Roberts sailed for Alexandria where the British Consul General welcomed him again and took him to meet Muhammad Ali at his summer palace. Roberts sketched the audience: the Viceroy sitting cross-legged on a red divan on the terrace of the palace in Alexandria harbor surrounded by courtiers, the British Consul General talking to him, perhaps about the proposed overland route to India, since Lt. Waghorn (Aramco World, November-December, 1968) is sitting with them.

From Alexandria Roberts sailed on to Malta where he was kept in quarantine for three weeks. Then, at last, he was able to write in his journal, "Landed safely, thank God, in London, on the 21st of July, having been eleven months absent."

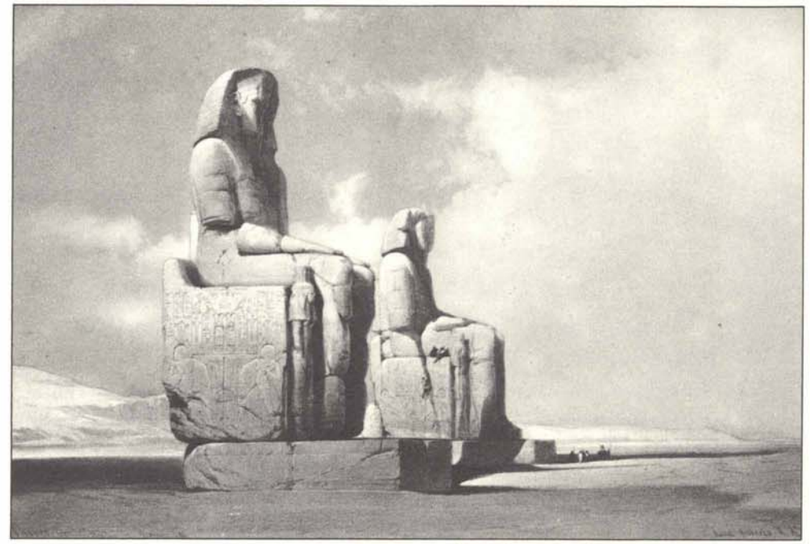
Since it had been a costly trip, Roberts quickly suggested that his publishers issue a picture book of the Holy Land. Both his former publishers, Messrs. Finden, and John Murray, turned down his scheme (having estimated that it would require a capital outlay of £10,000 sterling), but F.G. Moon of 20 Threadneedle St. undertook the risk of publishing the books as Roberts had proposed. The work would be entitled *The Holy Land*, and would appear in three volumes: the total cost to the public would be £52 sterling, 10 shillings—more than $125 even at today's exchange rates, and an enormous sum for a century ago. Roberts would receive £3,000 for the use of the drawings. The great lithographer, Louis Haghe, would draw the plates directly on stone, under the watchful eye of Mr. Roberts.

To launch this great venture, Roberts exhibited his finished drawings and paintings in London, Edinburgh and other principal cities, and a subscription list was opened for those interested in buying the three volumes. The response was extraordinary. Queen Victoria and the Archbishops of York and Canterbury led off with their beneficial blessings, and by May, 1841, (a few months after Roberts had been elected to the Royal Academy), the publisher had twice as many subscriptions as anticipated.

In 1842 Mr. Moon published the following notice: "*The Holy Land:* Views in Palestine, Egypt and Syria, from drawings made on the spot by David Roberts, R.A., with historical and descriptive notes by the Rev. George Groly, LLD., Rector of St. Stephen's, London. This work will be published in parts, each containing six facsimiles of the original drawings, executed in lithography under the inspection of the artist, at £ sterling 1.10.0; proofs £ sterling 1.11.6, and a few copies, coloured and mounted in imitation of the original drawings in a portfolio at £ sterling 2.2.0."

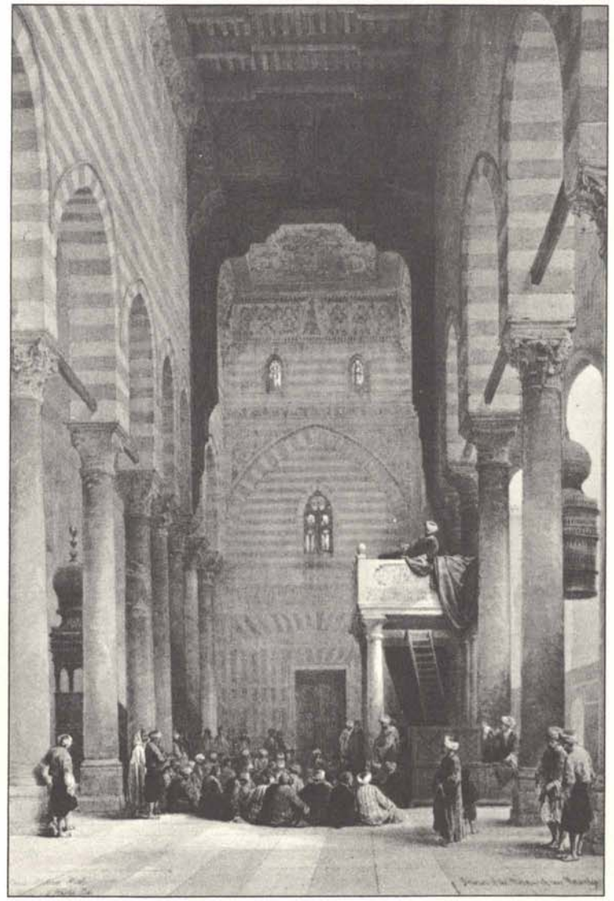
The work appeared in parts between the years 1842-49, Haghe's lithographs hand colored by women artists who carefully copied Roberts' original sketches. The large plates measured 19 by 13 inches, and the vignettes 13 by 9 inches. There were 250 engraved plates in all, divided equally between Egypt and Syria. A subscription list and title page were issued to each subscriber to bind up with the books. (Subscribers bound their parts as they liked so that today one finds complete sets in from two to eight volumes.) The subscription list contains 634 names. Queen Victoria was followed by seven kings, emperors and rulers; then came two archbishops, the Duke of Wellington and eight marquises. Ten earls and countesses, six viscounts and eleven lords followed. It was all very grand and very snobbish.

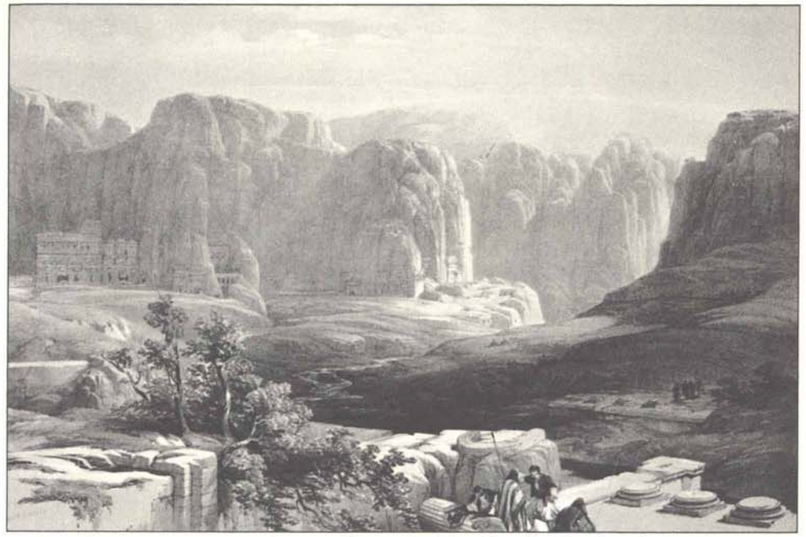
By 1855 a cheaper edition in six volumes was produced by Day & Son, and D. Appleton & Co. brought out an American edition with plates lithographed in small size. Roberts' fame was now world-wide. He traveled and sketched in Italy and he



Thebes, Dec. 4th, 1838 (The Colossi).

Interior of the Mosque of the Metwalys (Cairo).





Petra, looking South, March 9th, 1839.

Caiphas, looking towards Mount Carmel, April 24th, 1839.

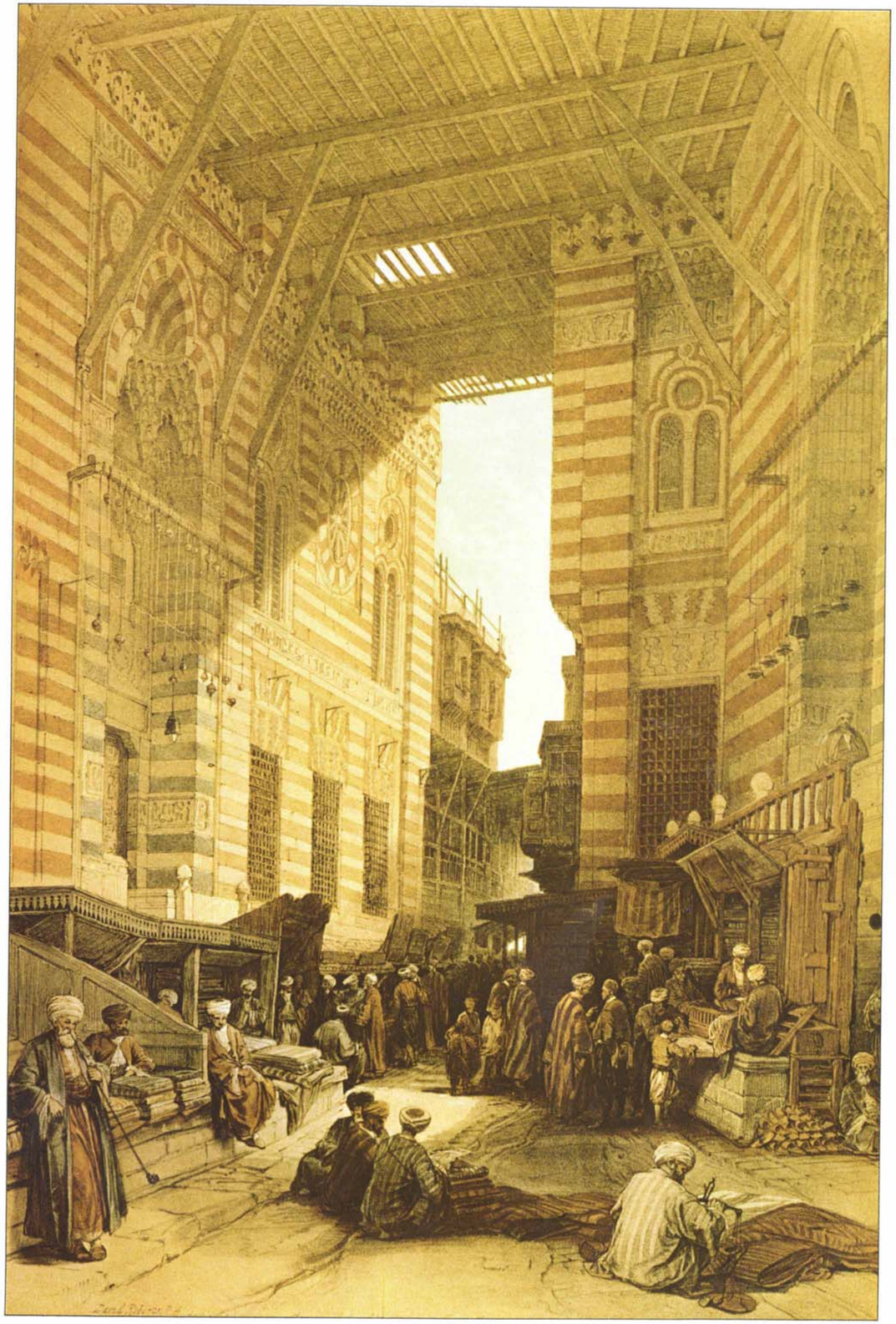
continued to paint, often commanding well over £500 for a major work. He became a member of at least nine societies and academies, including one in America, the Academy of Arts in Philadelphia. He was received everywhere with great acclaim, even dining with the King of the Belgians when in Brussels.

In 1864, still at the pinnacle of his popularity and the climax of the Horatio Alger success story, Roberts was seized with apoplexy in the street one evening and died suddenly at the age of 68. He had been painting that same morning, one of a new series he was working on, "London from the Thames."

In a little over 40 years Roberts had painted and sold nearly 280 large oil paintings, over 50 of which were of the Holy Land. Where are they all today? As a painter it cannot be said that he has survived the test of time. He has gone the way of most of the sentimental Victorians. But the story of his drawings has a different ending, though for a long time his work was almost completely forgotten. At one point even A.E. Newton, the great American bibliophile and book collector, said that Roberts' folios of the Holy Land were "only fit to be stored under the bed or on a billiard table."

But time proved Newton wrong. As people's tastes came full circle there was a new appetite for old prints. That fact, coupled with the great interest today in the Middle East, helped bring about a deserved revival of Roberts' popularity. Once again he ranks among the best of the pictorial chroniclers of the Holy Land. No one remains long in the Middle East today without acquiring some Roberts prints, as a result of which prices of originals have soared and a complete bound set is almost impossible to come by. There is still something for everyone, however, original or copy, colored or uncolored, large or small, for Roberts prints now appear in calendars, on Christmas cards, in guide-books and programs. And as you might very well say about the hero of an Alger book, "It couldn't have happened to a nicer—or more talented—fellow."

John Brinton is the author of a series of articles on interesting personalities who contributed to the history of the Middle East in the 19th century.



Bazaar of the Silk Weavers, Cairo.