

# HELL IN THE HOLY LAND

by

LOWELL THOMAS

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

with KENNETH BROWN COLLINGS

**Lawrence of Arabia Sweeps**

**the Right Flank — Another**

**Vivid Chapter in the Great**

**Story of the Last Crusade**



Photo from Lowell Thomas

"The old dream of Christendom at last come true :"  
a British soldier standing guard over Jerusalem.

**TODD GILNEY'S** story of the stirring events leading up to the capture of Jerusalem reached its climax in last week's installment. Todd told Mr. Thomas of the great cavalry charge at El Mughar, where the Turks were dislodged from their last stronghold on the border of Palestine. Hog Hampshire's treasured wireless set was broken, but Hog was consoled when he threw himself from his saddle upon a Turk who was about to bayonet Todd, made the Turk his "personal prisoner," and vowed he'd make him repair the set!

The "crusaders" swept on to Ekron. Jaffa fell without a struggle. Jerusalem now lay just ahead, but under Falkenhayn's command the Turks' resistance became desperate. They were driven by the hardest from the heights of Saris, then from Neby Samwil, key defense of the city itself. Allenby's artillery could have made short work of the capture—but, as Todd explained, "you can't shell Jerusalem." So the grueling deadlock was prolonged for ten days.

Eventually the British entered Bethlehem as the enemy retreated, and then approached Jerusalem from the south. It was surrendered to them four times by its well-meaning Arab mayor, the first time to two Tommies whom he came upon as they were foraging for "heggs" for their "hofficer." In the end, Allenby entered the Holy City on foot—walking, he said, "where One had walked before."

Finishing his story, Todd warned Mr. Thomas that the fighting wasn't over by a long shot. While the Turks were

OldMagazineArticles.com

## Lawrence of Arabia



Lawrence's Arabs, a turbulent horde of sons of the desert, charged in wildly.

still "this side of Damascus," they might strike back. They must be chased completely out of the Holy Land.

### PART SIX—A BLUE-EYED PRINCE OF MECCA

**I SAW** the sunrise in war-torn Jerusalem! Nothing in my life of wandering to the four quarters of the globe has ever impressed me as that did. The holy places of Christianity were all about me—and I had just heard the stirring tale of the sacrifice which had brought them once more under Christian domination. I had sat so spellbound that I hardly realized that a night had passed in the telling.

"Todd," I said, "I know you are tired, but I would like to take a walk and have you show me the city."

"Right-o! I'd like to poke about a bit myself. I might blunder across Benson and Hog Hampshire."

I saw the Church of the Holy Sepulcher that morning. I saw the now walled-up Golden Gate where Christ made His triumphal entry. I saw the Dome of the Rock, built on the foundation of Solomon's Temple. The Dome occu-



## Lawrence of Arabia

pies the site of the attempted sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham; the Ark of the Covenant was said to have been hidden beneath the rock when Jerusalem was destroyed. The Dome is aglow with Christian legends—but now it is a Mohammedan shrine.

It is equally holy to Islam. It contains the rock of Moriah, which the Moslems say hovers over an abyss in which are heard the roaring waters of the flood. It is from there that Mohammed is supposed to have been taken to heaven on the back of his horse. Mohammedans believe that from the rock the trumpets of Judgment Day will sound and that there God's throne will be placed.

Jerusalem was a series of contrasts. The Dome of the Rock was guarded by British soldiers, but they were Mohammedans from India whom Allenby had tactfully detailed for the duty. The army paymaster was setting up shop in the old German hospice on the Mount of Olives, past the Rock of the Agony and the spot where Jesus wept. British troops patrolled the Damascus Gate; the Y. M. C. A. took care of feeding the Russian pilgrims who were stranded in the Holy City—and in the background was the roar of British guns.

It was all amazing; but I encountered the greatest surprise as we wandered through Christian Street. A group of Arabs crossed our path. One arrested my attention. Although he was shorter than his companions, and slender as a boy, he stood out among them; he was obviously a leader of men. He wore Arab dress and the short curved sword of a prince of Mecca, but he was beardless and *blond as a viking*.

I turned to ask Todd Gilney if he knew who this man could be—but Todd was gone, on a dead run. He was rushing up a side street after a pair of extra-dirty-looking Tommies who walked the other way. One was small and slender; the other was fat.

I laughed. I knew Todd had located his missing henchmen—Benson and Hampshire. But I *had* to know something more about that prince of Mecca. I strolled over to headquarters in the palace near Solomon's quarries, and found General Ronald Storrs, British successor to Pontius Pilate as military governor of Jerusalem.

"Who is the blue-eyed prince of Mecca I saw in the—"

Before I finished speaking the general opened the door into the next room. The slender little Arab stood beside the table which had been Falkenhayn's workbench.

General Storrs said, "I want you to meet Colonel Lawrence, the uncrowned king of Arabia."

Now it all came back to me!

This was the man Todd Gilney had spoken of—the man who had fostered the Arab revolt against Turkish rule. He was the leader who had single-handedly welded a hundred warring desert tribes into a compact fighting force which now protected Allenby's right wing.



Colonel Lawrence

But he was shy and unassuming; he said very little. That night I told Todd Gilney about meeting him, and asked Todd's advice. "I am determined," I said, "to watch this war from now to the bitter end. But I don't know whether to stay here and watch General Allenby make his final drive for Damascus, or to attempt the impossible."

"Meaning what?"

"I want to go into the desert with Colonel Lawrence."

"Whe-w-w!"

"Is it impossible?"

"It might be done, but it won't be easy."

"The only thing that bothers me," I said, "is missing the drive on Damascus."

Todd thought a moment. "I'll tell you what I'll do," he said. "I'll make a bargain with you."

**H**E gave me a bit of confidential information. Allenby was *not* to drive for Damascus for many months; he couldn't. On the western front Ludendorff was pushing hard, and the War Office was desperate. It was with-

## Lawrence of Arabia

drawing most of Allenby's veteran divisions and sending them to France. The commander would have to train an entire new army.

"It will take time," said Todd. "And besides, Lowell, Lawrence's goal is the same as ours: Damascus. He and his Arabs will drive north through the desert on the *far* side of Jordan, the Dead Sea, and the Sea of Galilee; we will go up *this* side. But if we are victorious, we will both arrive in the same place.

"Here is my proposition. You go south and visit Lawrence; I'll stick here and go along with Allenby. We'll meet in Damascus some fine day and swap tales."

"Agreed."

"One more thing," Todd grinned. "You must be sure to look up an Arab sheik named Auda and give him my regards. He's a big chief and a brigand of the first class; he's the Robin Hood of the desert. He was the cause of one of my airplane trips to Arabia—but he will have to tell you about that. Otherwise it's a diplomatic secret."

I didn't waste any time. Getting permission to go wasn't easy; but getting into Arabia was well-nigh impossible. Lawrence had already departed—the same way he had come: across the desert sands. I couldn't go that way. I wasn't known to the tribesmen. They would murder me before I went ten miles.

be offended with me for falling off," he said. "I have not yet learned to ride one of those things."

Auda's house was a wonder, with forty rooms and four towers. He had listened to Lawrence's description of the marvels of London; he had determined that he would not be outdone. He secured his laborers by capturing fifty Turks. Everything went well until it was time to roof the big structure; then Auda discovered that there was no timber in the desert long enough to stretch from wall to wall and support the roof.

Except in one place. Auda called out his warriors. They descended on the Hejaz railway and tore up thirty telegraph poles—and there they were, over my head.

I asked about Petra, the battle the Arab women won. Lawrence had planned that fight. As usual, he was reticent about his own exploits. But Auda wasn't; he was delighted to tell about his friend.

Petra is the rose-red city, half as old as time, which lies north of Aqaba. It is the key to the Arabian seacoast. To recapture Aqaba, the Turks must take Petra.

That wasn't easy. Petra is carved out of the precipitous canyon walls of the Edom mountains. It was the stronghold of the Nabataean pirates before the time of Christ. The Greeks renamed it Petra, which means rock, and it is one city that Alexander the Great *failed* to conquer. His general Demetrius came to grief in the same narrow defile which ruined the Turks and through which I afterward entered the city.

The Turks held the summit of a steep hill of white chalk fifteen miles from Petra. That was Shobek—around the crest of which Baldwin the First, King of Jerusalem, built a wall in the days of the crusaders. But the modern Shobek garrison was made up principally of Syrians; they deserted to the Arabs.

## Lawrence of Arabia

The desertions caused the Turks to send an entire infantry brigade and a crack cavalry regiment south. The regular troops were disdainful of Lawrence's Arab "mob."

**L**AURENCE, hard-pressed for soldiers, split his few mounted men into two detachments to hit the Turks on the flanks, *and recruited Arab women to hold the heights of Petra itself.*

Those women were barefoot and in their long blue cotton robes. They brought their children with them to form their battalion of death.

The Turks advanced. Lawrence's Arabs opened fire and then "retreated" a little nearer to Petra. They dug shallow trenches on the next ridge, and let the Turks "drive" them from that. The Turks were elated; they thought they had the Arabs whipped.

A thousand of them pushed headlong into the gorge and—

*They met the women!*

With shrill screams the women and children rolled huge rocks from the cliffs where Amaziah, King of Israel, had hurled ten thousand of the inhabitants to their death. The rocks landed on the heads of the startled Turks below. Some women were stationed behind the columns of the Temple of Isis. They weren't good shots and they were armed with antique muskets and horse pistols, but they were too close to miss.

The Turks bolted—but they couldn't go far. They collided with the stone walls; they churned each other underfoot. It was chaos, and Lawrence, watching from the heights above, knew that the time had come. He passed the word for the Arab men to charge.

"Up, children of the desert!" rang the wild cry.

Crouching figures sprang from behind rocks and hurled themselves upon the Turks. They didn't use guns; they couldn't—the fighting was too close—but swords flashed and knives sank deep. It was all over in a few minutes; all the Turks were killed or captured.

"We let the women fight at Petra because we had to," said Auda. "I had but few warriors then. Now I have many. I will show them to you."

**H**E did. The next morning he held a review of his camel troops in our honor. I stood with him and Lawrence in the black reviewing tent as a horde of ten thousand tribesmen charged by.

Then—seemingly—a miracle happened. The thundering feet of the camels churned the sand to dust. The dust hung low about the shoulders of the beasts; it turned milky in the sunlight; it thickened until the camels became absolutely invisible. *Ten thousand Arab warriors floated past me riding on nothing more tangible than the top of a foaming white cloud.*

## Lawrence of Arabia

As they passed, ten thousand arms convulsed upward; they brandished ten thousand rifles on high, and ten thousand voices shouted, "Allah! Allah!"

News came to Arabia that in Palestine Allenby was driving fast toward Damascus. Lawrence departed to protect his flank. I tried to go along. Lawrence was willing but the War Office said "No."

There was nothing for me to do but return to the Holy Land the best way I could. Luckily I found an airplane that would take me at least part way.

Auda found time to see me off. Just before I climbed into the cockpit it occurred to me that I had overlooked something important.

*In Damascus Todd Gilney told the terrific tale of Allenby's intrepid life-or-death drive northward after the Turks had all but recaptured the Holy City. The green-eyed Countess Warbuta flashes into the tale—and Todd gets shot; Hog Hampshire, in the bullet-swept ford of the Jordan, thumbs his nose at a Turkish army! That's next week's installment.*

# Liberty

AUGUST 1, 1936

# HELL IN THE HOLY LAND

by

LOWELL THOMAS

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

with KENNETH BROWN COLLINGS

*Falkenhayn Hits Back—The Fall of Jericho—"Hog" Hampshire Crosses the Jordan... A Thrilling Story of the Last Crusade Approaches Its Climax*

**M**R. THOMAS last week interrupted Todd Gilney's account of the campaign with Allenby to tell his own story of Lawrence of Arabia. He met Lawrence in Jerusalem, and got official permission to accompany him and his Arabs in the desert. Todd, who was to push on with the British army, of course, agreed to swap stories with his friend Lowell when the two should meet again.

Joining Lawrence at Aqaba, Mr. Thomas learned in detail about what he had thus far accomplished. When the Sultan of Turkey proclaimed a holy war against Great Britain, the Arab Sherif of Mecca and his sons disregarded the proclamation and revolted. They took Mecca and the port of Jidda; but at Medina, after fierce fighting, their revolt came to a standstill. It would have died but for young Lawrence turning up: an archaeologist, a scholar, a second lieutenant on

OldMagazineArticles.com

## Lawrence of Arabia

two weeks' leave! He proceeded to weld the warring Arab tribes into a compact force, and to prove himself a strategist and tactician. He and Feisal captured Yenbo, then Aqaba. Medina he spared; the Turkish supplies being sent there by rail were more valuable than the city itself, and Lawrence with his high-explosive "tulips" was gathering in the supply trains. It was old Auda, Robin Hood of the desert, who told Mr. Thomas the great story of the defense of Petra, a battle won by Arab women under Lawrence's generalship.

News came that Allenby was driving on toward Damascus. Lawrence set out to protect the right flank. Mr. Thomas made for the Holy Land by plane—and now we find him reunited with Todd Gilney.

### THE ROAD TO ARMAGEDDON

**T**ODD sat in his headquarters in Damascus with a nasty scar on his forehead that had not been there the last time I saw him.

I had arrived in the city after a frenzied trip north from Arabia. Answering Todd's questions, I had told him all about my experiences with Lawrence.

"What has happened to the army?" I asked. "And what happened to *you*?"

"Everything has happened that could happen, including a hairbreadth escape from losing the Holy City to the Turks again, running afoul of my friend the Countess Warbuta—and getting shot. She shot me."

Then he told me all about it from the beginning:

When you left Palestine, Lowell, we held a line from Jerusalem to Jaffa, but it was far from secure. Falkenhayn wasn't convinced that he was whipped. He made one more try for the Holy City; he hit us with everything he had—and he almost succeeded. He didn't, but it was the most heroic Turkish effort of the entire war.

The Turks weathered our artillery barrage; they crashed through our machine-gun defenses. We slaughtered them wholesale, but they drove right up to our trenches. They heaved hand grenades, then charged with the bayonet. We broke up the attack, but the Turk was only four miles from Jerusalem's walls when we did.

That was too close, especially in view of what might happen next. The War Office had warned Allenby that he might lose his veterans. He had to be ready to transfer them to France at a moment's notice. He would receive green replacements which would have to be trained before we could even think of advancing on Damascus. Worse! *Our defensive position was entirely too weak to protect us during the training period!*

One glaring weakness was our failure to hold Jericho and the Jordan. Another vulnerable spot was Jaffa, where the children of Israel at last got their first and only port, and where Peter saw "A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet."

The situations in those two places were bad enough with seasoned troops; they were impossible if raw replacements were to defend our hard-earned advances. Something had to be done before we lost our veterans.

Allenby did it! He planned a lightning series of attacks designed to push the Turk back at vital spots and protect Jerusalem. We were to hit the fords of the Auja River first. I flew down to the coast to have a look at the preparations, and landed on a field behind Jaffa. The first person I ran into was Peter Drummond. He was looking for another airplane.

"What's the matter with your old one?" I asked.

"There are some holes in it," said Drummond. Then he told me what happened.

The Royal Air Force—they changed the name from Royal Flying Corps—had already received some replacements. The new pilots were mere boys; they didn't know a Fokker from Adam's off ox.

The veterans escorted them across the lines on their first two or three raids, lest a Turkish or German veteran burn them up before they had cut their milk teeth.

A lad named Bryce came up to Drummond's Nieuport squadron. He was scheduled to go out on a morning patrol with another pilot. Drummond volunteered. He told Bryce to stick right on his tail no

## Lawrence of Arabia

matter what happened. If Drummond gave the signal, Bryce was to high-tail for home—and ask questions afterward.

They hadn't gone more than ten miles behind the lines when Drummond's rotary motor started to sputter. He was so busy playing with the carburetor adjustment that he didn't see three Pfalzes drop down from above. When he did look up, he wobbled his wings frantically as a signal for Bryce to go home.

Bryce didn't see it; he stayed. Two Pfalzes jumped his tail. Spandaus yammered, hell popped—and Drummond fought madly with his needle valve.

**TWO** Germans boxed Bryce. The third dived for the kill just as Drummond's motor roared into life. He pulled up and plowed into the path of the diving German.

He couldn't bring his gun to bear, but he cut in between the diving Pfalz and Bryce, and forced the German to pull away or else crash. It must have been a sweet instant for Peter Drummond as he waited to see what the Pfalz pilot would decide to do.

He pulled up! Drummond turned on another Pfalz, and wobbled his wings again as a signal for Bryce to leave. This time Bryce saw him. He dived out of the fight—and Drummond's motor conked again!

Peter kicked the Nieuport into a spin. It was the only thing he could do; it made him a more difficult target for the Germans. They saw the black smoke belching from his motor; they knew he was crippled. They let Bryce get away and ganged on Drummond. They followed him down, guns blazing.

Peter pulled out of the spin just over the treetops. He flattened out and landed—deep in Turkish territory. There didn't seem to be anybody around on the ground, but there were three Pfalzes upstairs, and they were having a swell time! Peter wasn't!

The Pfalzes took turns diving on the helpless plane and filling it full of lead. Peter slid over the edge of the cockpit, slumped to the ground, and pretended to be dead—and still they didn't stop. They made two more passes at him. Bullets kicked up dust on every side. They missed him by inches—but *they missed*.

The Turks decided he was dead and went home.

Peter jumped to his feet. He tinkered with his motor and finally got it to hitting—enough to limp off the ground. He barely cleared the treetops on the take-off; he started south, motor spitting and coughing.

He never did get higher than a few hundred feet, and two miles farther the motor quit again. He was so low that he couldn't choose his landing place. He poked his nose over, luckily into a big clearing.

There was a Turkish camp in the meadow, but he couldn't help that. He rolled to a stop right in front of the Turkish officers' mess tent where the officers were eating lunch. His motor was still ticking a little; as the Nieuport stopped, it banged out a backfire, and the most surprised bunch of Turks in Palestine tumbled out of the tent brandishing forks and table knives.

Their pistols were in their living quarters. They couldn't do anything more drastic than grab the tips of Drummond's wings to keep him from taking off. They took hold—and just then Peter's motor caught again. Now he *could* take off, except for those restraining hands.

He touched his trigger; a burst of machine-gun fire rattled across the airdrome. It scared the Turks stiff, and they let go. Of course the gun couldn't hit them; it could only fire straight ahead; but by the time they thought of that, he was in the air.

The Nieuport roared away from the mess tent. The officers' clothesline, which was drying their weekly wash, was in the way. Peter's right wing snagged the rope; off it went, clothes and all. He disappeared over the trees dragging everything from handkerchiefs to undershirts. A pair of riding breeches clung firmly to his tail and



## Lawrence of Arabia

flapped in the propeller blast.

This time he got as far as the lines before his motor conked. Then it let him down for the third time—squarely in the center of no man's land. The Turks took one look at the British insignia on the plane and riddled it with rifle and machine-gun fire.

Peter jumped out and dived into a shell hole—just in time. He stayed there until dark, then crawled to the lines. A volunteer detachment of Tommies crawled out under cover of the darkness and pulled in the plane.

“They could have saved themselves the trouble,” said Peter. “It was ruined. But the breeches were all right. See? I got 'em on!”

He did have. Aside from two bullet holes, they were a perfectly good pair of ex-Turkish pants.

The Auja River is the boundary line between Judea and Samaria. We were south of it; the Turks held the northern bank. The situation was especially bad because the Turkish artillery was parked on a hill which commanded the Jaffa-Jerusalem road. And it wasn't going to be easy to capture their position. The River Auja formed a natural defense.

I HAD a motorcycle sidecar to speed up my reconnaissance work. They tried to give me a driver to go with it, but I didn't want him; Hog Hampshire could do that job. Hampshire was delighted. Benson wasn't. Bullets didn't scare that laddie, but the idea of riding in a sidecar with Hampshire driving did.

I said, “All right, Benson. I'll ride and you can walk—into Jaffa. When you get into the city, give this note of authority to the provost, then start canvassing the houses of the German colony and see how many rugs and carpets you can collect.”

I had an idea we would need them; I'll tell you why in a minute. Benson started south and Hampshire drove me north, as close to the river fords as we could get without the Turks hearing the noise of the exhaust. We walked the rest of the way and waited for darkness.

Our next move was a midnight swimming party to find out how deep the water was and whether or not the Turks had blocked the fords. It was one nasty job. We couldn't strip for fear the Turk sentries would spot the whiteness of our naked bodies. We took off our boots, tied them around our necks, and slid into the inky water.

It was cold—plenty. The bottom was full of snags and the stones of the fords cut our feet. We worked our way downstream. We swam, floated, waded. I slipped and made a big splash. A Turk sentry ran to the water's edge. He threw a cartridge into the chamber; I heard the click of his rifle bolt. Both of us sank to our chins and held breathlessly still.

The sentry wasn't sure whether he had heard anything or not, but he wasn't taking any chances. He hung around for ages—or so it seemed to Hampshire and me, crouched in the water and slowly freezing to death!

Finally he went away. We finished our work and crawled shivering on to the southern bank. Both of us had caught heavy colds which we didn't lose for weeks—but we had found out what the staff needed to know: *the fords were unusable*. An advance party of a few men might work their way across, but the heavy rains had made the water so deep that large bodies of men in marching order would become hopelessly tangled and founder.

That was bad. It meant that we would have to use boats and rafts and construct pontoon bridges. But to keep from being slaughtered, we had to surprise the Turks, and building bridges and marching across them made that difficult.

Still, I wasn't going to give up hope until I heard the results of Benson's mission into Jaffa. I had suspected from the first that we would have to build bridges, and that was why I had sent him scouting for rugs. *If we could find enough of them to carpet the boards we might successfully deaden the sound of the marching feet.*

Meanwhile we must build boats and train men to use them. We asked for volunteer boatbuilders. The volun-

## Lawrence of Arabia

teers got out of sentry duty, so every man in the army who had ever seen a hammer said he was a carpenter. The results were pretty terrible, but they would float. The boats were canvas-covered wooden frames. The rafts weighed plenty; getting them into the river wasn't going to be easy.

**N**OW where were we to find enough experienced boatmen to handle the craft without capsizing them and sprinkling soldiers all over the Auja River? Hog Hampshire was pessimistic but he had a suggestion:

"Those hams will never do it, sir, without practice. There's a big pond back there a bit. We can launch the boats and train the crews on the pond just as well as on the river."

He was right. We practiced, and it was lucky we did. The amateur boat crews were awkward even in daylight. Tommies clouted each other over the heads with oars, capsized boats by the dozen. Then they tried it at night and it was worse. They put their feet through the canvas and the boats sank. We fished them out and repaired the holes.

But in three or four days the boys had the hang of the thing. We parked the boats and rafts in the orange groves of Saroná. We were ready to go!

Zero night arrived. It was pitch black and raining pitchforks. The torrents of rain soaked the canvas and doubled the weight of the boats. The men detailed to carry them had a bad time; but it was nothing to what the Scots who lugged the rafts had. They sank to their knees in mud and slime—and they couldn't even curse: orders called for absolute silence.

However, there was less likelihood of detection by the Turks across the river. They would be seeking shelter from the elements in dugouts or houses. At least, I hoped so.

The advance party crossed on foot. The Tommies plunged into the water—and the current swept them off their feet. Two were drowned before they progressed three yards. Major Brandon, who commanded, saw what was happening. He didn't dare shout any orders. He whispered into the ear of the nearest soldier:

"Pass this word down the line from ear to ear: Form fours, lock your right arm around the man next to you, and hold on to the man in front with your left."

It was done. The human serpent struggled across and reached the other side. The first boats were launched; Tommies rowed them across with muffled oars. The Turks hadn't heard a thing yet.

I crossed in one of the first boats with Hampshire. The boat tipped perilously. The river gushed over the gunwale. Nevertheless we landed on the far bank. We rigged a rope across the river so that the following boats wouldn't need to be rowed: their passengers could haul them hand over hand.

Enough soldiers were across to protect us from a Turkish attack—perhaps. We started work on the bridges. Engineers fought the current and pushed the cumbersome rafts into place, then lashed them together. They ran beams from one to another and covered them with floor boards from the German ballrooms of Jaffa. Then they spread the carpets. The troops started across—and maybe I wasn't just a bit happy when I saw that my scheme worked! The carpets muffled the tramp of the marching feet. There was hardly a sound.

But the bridges swayed under the weight of the troops. The vibration snapped one of them in half! It pitched an entire platoon into the river. There was a mad silent scramble to get out, and the advance went on.

We *did* surprise the Turks. Most of them were huddled inside huts, secure in the belief that the Auja River protected them from attack. They discovered their mistake suddenly. Grim dripping-wet Scots flung open the doors, grenades poised in their hands. The thunder-struck Turks marched out, hands over their heads.

## Lawrence of Arabia

We took the town of Muannis without firing a shot. We rushed a trenchful of Turks, blocking the approach to Hadrah, with the bayonet; they never knew what hit them. Aside from the squish of wet shoes and the shuffle of footsteps, there was still no noise. We did our work so silently that the Turkish officers knew nothing about it; they were sound asleep in the darkened houses of the town. We organized a door-to-door search to rout them out and tell them that they were prisoners.

In the last house in town I saw a light. I led a squad of men quietly into the garden, peeked through the window, saw a table littered with papers and a Turkish officer working over some maps. We went around to the front door and rapped. The officer answered the knock himself. He was a prisoner before he knew it.

I thought he was alone but I couldn't be sure. I sent the corporal inside to search the house. He came back in a minute or two.

"Sir," he said, "there's a lady inside, and she's got the wind up and won't come out. She's afraid British soldiers ain't gentlemen. Says she wants to talk to the officer in charge."

I said, "All right. I'll talk to her. Take the prisoners back to headquarters."

I walked through the darkened front room and into the rear of the house. I stepped into the light and saw—  
*The Countess Warbuta!*



**I** DON'T know which of us was the more startled. All she said was, "You!" I didn't say anything; I didn't get the chance. Quick as lightning she whipped up a nasty-looking little revolver and snapped:

"Stand where you are, Captain Gilney!"

I started for her. She didn't hesitate. The pistol barked; I felt something hot in my arm. I was a fool not to stop then—but I didn't.

I reached for her gun. She fired again.

I woke up in the hospital in Jaffa. The bullet in my arm didn't matter, but if the one that creased my skull had been half an inch lower—

Well, it wasn't. The countess had vanished into thin air—but, Lowell—

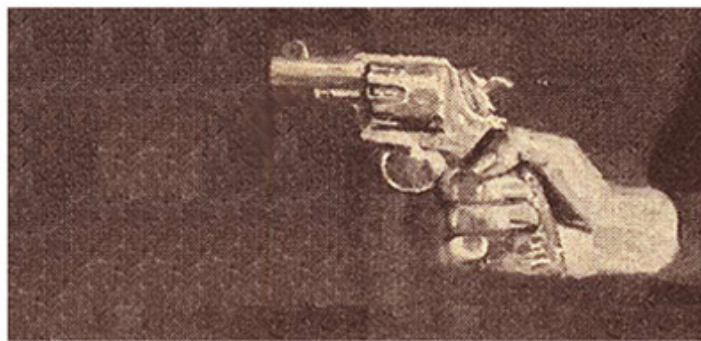
*I'll catch that green-eyed spy yet!*

The Auja crossing made the left of Allenby's line secure, but the right was still in bad shape. The Turks held Jericho and the fords of the Jordan. Until Lawrence and his Arabs advanced north of the Dead Sea, that would endanger our right flank. The Turks were strongly entrenched; they felt pretty safe.

They were justified. The country around Jericho has been called "the wilderness" since the beginning of time. It was a maze of jagged mountains and yawning chasms cut by the floodwaters of the Judean rainy season racing down into the Dead Sea and the Jordan.

The key position was Talad ed Dum. The Turks fortified that mountain's crest with modern guns. But the transfer of our veterans was coming any day; we had to chase the Turks out before it happened.

The London troops charged the first Turkish defenses at Muntar, close to the historic road from Jericho to Jerusalem, where the Israelites let go the scapegoat to "bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited."



## Lawrence of Arabia

THE defense was heroic—but the Londoners won! The Billjims were off to the right, “nigh unto Jericho,” where “a certain blind man sat by the way side begging.”

They were *fighting their way through the pages of the Bible*.

Snipers picked them off as they led their horses down the tortuous passes of the wilderness between the pilgrims' road and the Dead Sea. Machine guns mowed them down as they turned up the Jordan valley in the shadow of Nebo's lonely mountain, “which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho,” where the Lord sent Moses to “behold the land of Canaan . . . and die.”

I was with the cockneys. We hit Talad ed Dum, and it was a tough nut to crack. Every crevice sheltered a

sniper; every rock covered a machine gun. Turkish marksmanship was improving; they made every bullet count. The cockneys suffered horribly but they were game.

Our artillery opened against the hill. The cockneys attacked the slope under a rising barrage. Nothing could stop them. The Turks saw themselves being surrounded. They abandoned both fort and town, retreating across the Jordan while they had the chance—and—

Jericho was ours!

We had chased the Turks out just in time. No sooner had we done it than the long-expected word came down from London transferring most of our veteran infantry divisions to France. The need of foot soldiers on the western front was so dire that they even dismounted some of our Anzac cavalymen and sent them along. I took a look at what was left, and our green Indian replacements—and, Lowell, I'll admit I was disheartened. Almost any one would have been—except an Allenby.

After Jericho he held victory within his grasp, only to have it snatched away. He could have pushed up the Jordan and the far side of the Sea of Galilee to Damascus, and the Turks knew it. His inability to do it now was no fault of his own. It was enough to crush any general. But Allenby took a deep breath and went to work to build a new army.

He formulated an entirely new plan of campaign. Falkenhayn knew that Allenby's logical path to Damascus lay “over Jordan”; he thought we would attack that way when we were ready. Allenby helped him to think so.

Allenby's plan was Gaza all over again—in reverse. At Gaza we aimed at the seacoast and hit inland. Now we had every intention of attacking along the coast, so we piled up our troops and made gestures in the mountains and beyond. Not even in the days of Joshua had the Jordan plain held such a mighty host. But that, Lowell, was after we “went down” and “took the fords of Jordan toward Moab.” The taking wasn't so easy.

The Londoners attacked the river at Hajlah. They had to force a passage across in the face of withering machine-gun fire. One raft only reached the far side before the Turks saw them—and then the party began.

I was proud of Hog Hampshire that day. They had him down at the Jordan because of his experience with the boats at Auja. He was now Sergeant Hampshire, also because of his work at Auja, and was ready to crown anybody who called him “Hog.”

He went across on the first raft with

13  
Lawrence of Arabia

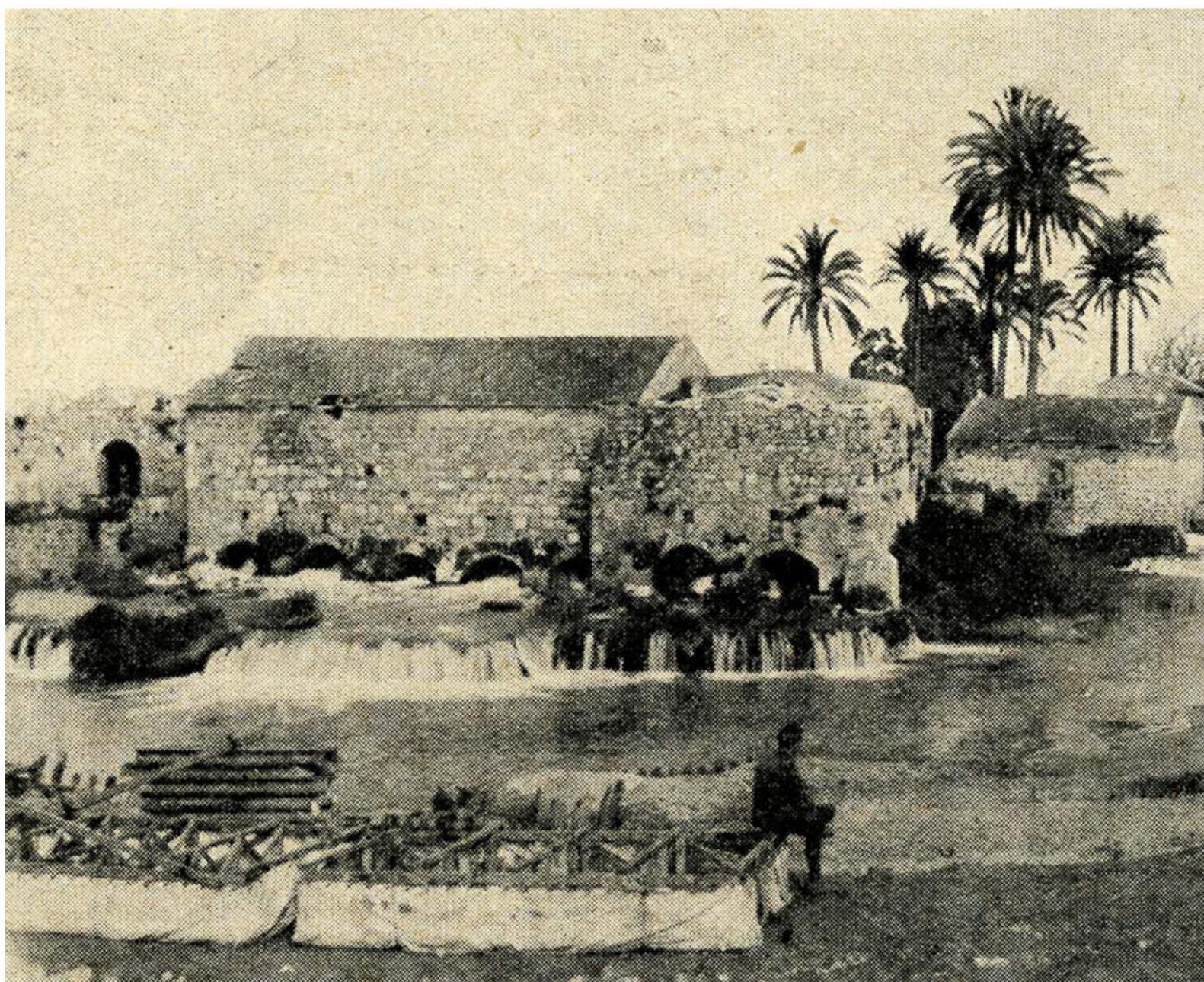


Photo from Lowell Thomas

The ford of the Auja River. The Highlander sits on one of the canvas-covered boats used in the surprise attack.

twenty-six men. At least five hundred Turks jumped them. But the far bank of Jordan was a mass of thickets. The boys hid behind the bushes and fought for their lives and those behind them.

Hampshire's raft had towed a rope across. We tied it to a tree and started sending raft-loads of reinforcements across. Maybe they didn't catch hell! They were far worse off than the men already on the far side. The rafts were big, slow-moving, easy targets, and they came one at a time. The Turks concentrated all their fire on each raft as it left the bank. By the time it got across it was a morgue. There was no protection on the rafts except a low log rail; it would partly conceal eight men. *On one trip seven out of the eight were killed.* That wasn't all. It was raining somewhere up in the hills; the Jordan was rising fast!

It came up six feet while I watched it; it spread over its banks. Stumps hurtled down the swollen stream; logs raced by; then a tree trunk struck a raft which was about one third of the way across, and upended it!

The passengers were hurled into the roaring waters. The raft fouled the rope; something hung. We pulled, we hauled, but the raft was stuck. It wouldn't move an inch; our crossing was blocked.

**EVERYBODY** on our bank was paralyzed. The other bank was different; Hog Hampshire knew what to do. The Promised Land has seen many men "arise" and "go over this Jordan," but it never saw a crossing like Hampshire's.

He jumped to his feet the instant the raft jammed. He saw that the current was too strong for any man to swim directly across, so he raced upstream to get a lead. He stooped and cut his shoelaces with a knife; he stripped off his boots; he plunged into the milling water!

"Look't Hampshire!" howled Benson. "Look't the Hog, captain! Look't 'im go!"



Lowell Thomas

## Lawrence of Arabia

I was already looking—and holding my breath. I knew he could swim, but I hadn't seen anything like this. He swam a perfect Australian crawl; he streaked for the raft with the speed of a torpedo—but bullets are faster than that!

The second he hit the water the Turks opened up. A dozen machine guns shifted from other targets and converged on him. The slugs flailed the water about him like hailstones. They were bound to hit him; they had to; men just don't live through fire like that!

"Come on, Hog!" bawled Benson, and the yell was contagious. I yelled; everybody on the bank yelled. We howled! We cried! We prayed, "*Come on, Hog!*" and on he came, arms, legs—and *bullets*—beating his wake to froth.

He was almost there! He might make it! We turned every gun we had on the Turkish positions to try and silence them and give Hog a chance. We knocked out some of them; not enough.

He reached the raft and climbed aboard. He reached for the rope—and he was a stationary target for just an instant. *So many bullets struck that heavy raft at one time that it actually jumped from the shock!*

Maybe that helped the Hog in what he did next. He grabbed the knotted rope and gave a mighty heave! Something slipped; the raft was free again. He hesitated only a split instant before he dived into the water again and swam to our shore—but—

In that minute fraction of time he faced the Turk gunners—and *disdainfully thumbed his nose!*

**T**HAT, Lowell, was the gesture magnificent—or at least I thought so until Hampshire pulled himself out on our bank. Then he said, "And just because I'm swimming don't think I can't hear you. I'll smack the next bird that calls me 'Hog.'"

The new troops were being whipped into shape. Allenby was about to spring his trap by the sea. We increased our gestures in the Jordan valley, we marched troops eastward in broad daylight. We wanted to be sure that the Turkish aviators would see them, so we kept our planes on the ground.

We marched the same troops back to the seacoast again—at night, when nobody could see them. Their empty tents stayed behind to fool the Turks.

They *were* fooled. Liman von Sanders, who now commanded the Turks from his headquarters in Nazareth, thought most of our army was camped by the Jordan. But pretending that the army was where it wasn't was only half the job. We had to keep it out of sight where it was, had to hide a division of infantry, three divisions of cavalry, and a lot of artillery.

There was no drilling. No troop movements were allowed in daylight. Soldiers and horses remained under orange trees until dark. We cooked with alcohol to avoid telltale smoke from kitchen fires.

But that wasn't enough. The Turks had spies.

I "quietly" leased a house in Jaffa for the winter. I told the landlord that it was a "deep secret," but that the army would not move until spring. Other officers did the same thing. The chief of staff made the proprietor

## Lawrence of Arabia

of a hotel in Jerusalem give all his civilian guests notice to vacate; he said he needed more space for staff headquarters for an indefinite period.

All that reached Turkish ears, and they believed it. Von Sanders never did discover his mistake until the dawn of "the battle of that great day of God Almighty," at a place called—

*Armageddon.*

---

*With that battle, in which Allenby trapped the Turks everywhere, and with the subsequent fall of Damascus and the news that Turkey had capitulated—to say nothing of the amazing fate that befell the Countess Warbuta! --Hell in the Holy Land will be concluded next week.*

# Liberty

AUGUST 8, 1936

OldMagazineArticles.com