PREFACE BY A. W. LAWRENCE

The seven pillars of wisdom are first mentioned in the Bible, in the Book of Proverbs (ix. 1).

"Wisdom hath builded a house; she hath hewn out her seven pillars."

The title was originally applied by the author to a book of his about seven cities. He decided not to publish this early book because he considered it immature, but he transferred the title as a memento.

A four-page leaflet entitled SOME NOTES ON THE WRITING OF THE SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM BY T. E. SHAW was issued by my brother to those who bought or were presented with copies of the 1926 edition. It contains the following information:

MANUSCRIPTS

Text I

I WROTE Books 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 10 in Paris between February and June of 1919. The Introduction was written between Paris and Egypt on my way out to Cairo by Handley-Page in July and August 1919. Afterwards in England I wrote Book 1; and then lost all but the Introduction and drafts of Books 9 and 10 at Reading Station, while changing trains. This was about Christmas, 1919.

Text I, if completed, would have been about 250,000 words, a little less than the privately printed Seven Pillars as subscribers received it. My war-time notes, on which it was largely constructed, were destroyed as each section was finished. Only three people read much of it before I lost it.

Text II

A month or so later I began, in London, to scribble out what I remembered of the first text. The original Introduction was of course still available. The other ten Books I completed in less than three months, by doing many thousand words at a time, in long sittings. Thus Book VI was written entire between sunrise and sunrise. Naturally the style was careless: and so Text II (though it introduced a few new episodes) came to over 400,000 words. I corrected it at intervals throughout 1920, checking it with the files of the Arab Bulletin, and with two diaries and some of my surviving field-notes. Though
hopelessly bad as a text, it became substantially complete and accurate. All but one page of this text was burned by me in 1922.

Text III

With Text II available on the table, Text III was begun in London, and worked on there, in Jeddah, and in Amman during 1921, and again in London till February 1922. It was composed with great care. This manuscript still exists. It is nearly 330,000 words long.

PRIVATELY PRINTED TEXTS

Oxford 1922

THOUGH the story, as completed in Text III, appeared to me still diffuse and unsatisfactory, yet for security's sake it was set up and printed textually, in sheets, at Oxford in the first quarter of 1922, by care of the Oxford Times staff. Since eight copies were required, and the book was very large, printing was preferred to typewriting. Five copies (bound in book form, for the convenience of those former members of the Hejaz Expeditionary Force who undertook to read it critically for me) have not yet (April 1927) been destroyed.

Subscribers' Text 1. xii. 26

This text, as issued to subscribers in December 1926 and January 1927, was a recension of the Oxford sheets of 1922. They were condensed (the single canon of change being literary) during 1923 and 1924 (Royal Tank Corps) and 1925 and 1926 (Royal Air Force) in my spare evenings. Beginners in literature are inclined to fumble with a handful of adjectives round the outline of what they want to describe: but by 1924 I had learnt my first lessons in writing, and was often able to combine two or three of my 1921 phrases into one.

There were four exceptions to the rule of condensation:

i) An incident, of less than a page, was cut out because two seniors of our party thought it unpleasantly unnecessary.

ii) Two characters of Englishmen were modified: one into nothing, because the worm no longer seemed worth treading on; the other into plain praise, because what I had innocently written as complaint was read ambiguously by an authority well able to judge.
iii) One chapter of the Introduction was omitted. My best critic told me it was much inferior to the rest.

iv) Book VIII, intended as a ‘flat’, to interpose between the comparative excitements of Book VII and the final advance on Damascus, was shortened of an abortive reconnaissance, some 10,000 words long. Several of those who read the Oxford text complained of the inordinate boredom of the ‘flat’, and upon reflection I agreed with them that it was perhaps too successful.

By thus excising 3 per cent and condensing the rest of the Oxford text a total reduction of 15 per cent was achieved, and the length of the subscribers’ text brought down to some 280,000 words. It is swifter and more pungent than the Oxford text; and it would have been improved yet more if I had had leisure to carry the process of revision further.

The Seven Pillars was so printed and assembled that nobody but myself knew how many copies were produced. I propose to keep this knowledge to myself. Newspaper statements of 107 copies can be easily disproved, for there were more than 107 subscribers: and in addition I gave away, not perhaps as many copies as I owed, but as many as my bankers could afford, to those who had shared with me in the Arab effort, or in the actual production of the volume.

PUBLISHED TEXTS

New York Text

A PROOF of the subscribers’ text was sent to New York, and reprinted there by the George Doran Publishing Company. This was necessary to ensure U.S.A. copyright of the Seven Pillars. Ten copies are offered for sale, at a price high enough to prevent their ever being sold.

No further issue of the Seven Pillars will be made in my lifetime.

Revolt in the Desert

This abridgement of the Seven Pillars contains about 130,000 words. It was made by myself in 1926, with the minimum of necessary adjustment (perhaps three new paragraphs in all) to preserve sense and continuity. Parts of it appeared serially in the Daily Telegraph in December 1926. The whole was published in England by Jonathan Cape, and in U.S.A. by Doran in March 1927.

T. E. SHAW
To bring the information up to date, I add that the remaining copies of the Oxford printed Text of 1922 are still in existence, but will not be made public for at least ten years, and then only in a limited edition. *Revolt in the Desert* will not be printed again, at least during the remainder of the legal term of copyright.

The text of the present edition is identical with that of the thirty-guinea edition of 1926, except for the following omissions and alterations. The omissions are necessary to save hurting the feelings of persons still living; they come on pages 61, 62, and 329 where gaps of the same length are left in the present text. The 1926 edition contains no Chapter XI; the chapters have now been renumbered to remove this anomaly. On p. 300 (line 7) the phrase 'halts to breath' has been changed to 'halts to breathe' in agreement with the corresponding passage in the Oxford Text of 1922, 'we let the camels breathe a little'. On p. 398 (line 14) the word 'Humber' has been printed in italics instead of Roman type, to make the sense clearer; in 1926 the names of some other ships were similarly italicized.

The spelling of Arabic names varies greatly in all editions, and I have made no alterations. It should be explained that only three vowels are recognized in Arabic, and that some of the consonants have no equivalents in English. The general practice of orientalists in recent years has been to adopt one of the various sets of conventional signs for the letters and vowel marks of the Arabic alphabet, transliterating Mohamed as Muhammad, muezzin as mu’edddhin, and Koran as Qur’an or Kur’an. This method is useful to those who know what it means, but this book follows the old fashion of writing the best phonetic approximations according to ordinary English spelling. The same place-name will be found spelt in several different ways, not only because the sound of many Arabic words can legitimately be represented in English in a variety of ways, but also because the natives of a district often differ as to the pronunciation of any place-name which has not already become famous or fixed by literary usage. (For example a locality near Akaba is called Abu Lissan, Abu el Lissan or Abu Lissal.) A reference by the author to his views on this matter occurs on page 664. I reprint here a series of questions by the publisher and answers by the author concerning the printing of *Revolt in the Desert*. 
Q.

I attach a list of queries raised by F. who is reading the proofs. He finds these very clean, but full of inconsistencies in the spelling of proper names, a point which reviewers often take up. Will you annotate it in the margin, so that I can get the proofs straightened?

Annotated: not very helpfully perhaps. Arabic names won't go into English, exactly, for their consonants are not the same as ours, and their vowels, like ours, vary from district to district. There are some 'scientific systems' of transliteration, helpful to people who know enough Arabic not to need helping, but a wash-out for the world. I spell my names anyhow, to show what rot the systems are.

Slip 1. Jeddah and Jidda used impartially throughout. Intentional?

Rather!

Slip 16. Bir Waheida, was Bir Waheidi.

Why not? All one place.

Slip 20. Nuri, Emir of the Ruwalla, belongs to the 'chief family of the Rualla'. On Slip 23, 'Rualla horse', and Slip 38, 'killed one Rueli'. In all later slips 'Rualla'.

Should have also used Ruwala and Ruala.

Slip 28. The Bisaita is also spelt Biseita.

Good.

Slip 47. Jedha, the she-camel, was Jedhah on Slip 40.

She was a splendid beast.

Slip 53. 'Meleager, the immoral poet'. I have put 'immortal' poet, but the author may mean immoral after all.

Immorality I know. Immortality I cannot judge. As you please: Meleager will not sue us for libel.
Q.

Slip 65. Author is addressed 'Ya Auruns', but on Slip 56 was 'Aurans'.

Slip 78. Sherif Abd el Mayin of Slip 68 becomes el Main, el Mayein, el Muein, el Mayin, and le Muyein.

A.

Also Lurens and Runs: not to mention 'Shaw'. More to follow, if time permits.

Good egg. I call this really ingenious.

A. W. LAWRENCE

POSTSCRIPT

The subscribers' edition of Seven Pillars of Wisdom contained no chapter eleven, for the original first chapter had been omitted in the course of proof-correction, and renumbering proceeded only as far as the next ten. For the first published edition (1935) the chapters were renumbered throughout, so as to remove this anomaly. In this edition the suppressed chapter again appears in its rightful place, but, in order to avoid further renumbering, it has been entitled Introductory Chapter. In 1939, it was included in Oriental Assembly among other uncollected writings of T. E. Lawrence, together with a short explanatory note of my own.

A. W. L.