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PERSIAN GULF

(5) Dubai

By Major T. L. C. TOMKINS

IF you look at a map of Arabia, you will notice at the entrance to the Gulf, a large horn or promontory, jutting out nearly to the Persian side just North of Muscat.

If you look closely, on a good map, you will also notice that, not only is this called Ruus al Jibal, which is only relevant because it happens to separate the Gulf from the Gulf of Oman; but you will, if you read carefully, see that the whole of the Northern side of this promontory was called the "Pirate Coast"—and this for very good reasons.

This coast of the Gulf was the home of the notorious Qawasim or Jawasmi, who, in company with the Muscat Arabs, looked upon piracy not only as a means of livelihood without much hard work, but also as a national sport. They were quite impartial, in that they attacked and plundered ships belonging to the Portuguese, Dutch, and the East India Company, as well as those boats from other parts of the Gulf. In the circumstances, it is perhaps, not surprising that neither Portuguese, Dutch, nor British, ever attempted to establish trading posts on this coast. Whilst the various European nations were concerned chiefly with ousting each other from more settled ports, little could be done to combat this menace, but once the East India Co. had finally established themselves and obtained most of the Gulf trade, they began to take steps to abate what was by then a considerable nuisance. The early years of the 19th century were one long record of unending struggle to suppress these pirates. The culminating point was reached in 1819, when a large and powerful force was assembled under the command of Major-General Sir William Keir. This force proceeded to Qishm, where it was joined by a strong force of Arabs sent by the Anti-Pirate Sheikh Sayyid Sa'id of Muscat.

The first town attacked was Ras al Khaima, which after a week's siege, was stormed; the fort destroyed and all the pirate boats burnt. The rest of the pirate towns were threatened with similar treatment, with the result that the pirate Sheikhs, amongst whom was the Sheikh of Dubai, were only too willing to sign a treaty with their conquerors. A translation of the treaty made with the Sheikh of Dubai is appended below; this is typical of the simple, direct way of doing such things in those days.

"Bismillah, Er-Rahmin, Er-Rahim.

(In the Name of Allah, the merciful, the compassionate).

"Know all men that Mahomed bin Haza bin Zaal, a minor, accompanied by Ahmed bin Futeiss, has been in the presence of General Sir William Keir, and there have passed between them the following stipulations:—

ARTICLE 1.

The people of Debay shall surrender to the General the vessels which are in Debay and its dependencies and the guns which are in the town and in the towers. The General will leave the boats which are for the pearl fishery and fishing boats.

ARTICLE 2.

The people of Debay shall give up all the Indian prisoners if any such are in their possession.

ARTICLE 3.

The General will not allow the troops to enter the town to

lay it waste, and further, as a mark of consideration towards his Highness the Imam Saeed bin Sultan on the part of the General, he will not demolish the fort and towers.

ARTICLE 4.

After the execution of these engagements Mahomed bin Haza bin Zaal and his followers shall be admitted to the same terms of peace as the remainder of the friendly Arabs. On these conditions there is a cessation of hostilities between the British and Mahomed bin Haza bin Zaal and his followers, with the exception that their boats are not to go to sea.

Done at Ras-ool-Kheimah on the 23rd of the month of Rabee-ul-Awul, in the year 1235, corresponding to the 9th of January, 1820.

W. GRANT KEIR,
Major-General.
Seal of Ahmed Futeiss."

This preliminary treaty was followed by a general one, embracing all the Sheikhs of the pirate coast, by which they swore that "There shall be a cessation of plunder and piracy by land and sea on the part of the Arabs who are parties to this contract, for ever". Following a ten year truce, a final Treaty of peace in perpetuity was signed in 1853.

Thereafter the name of the Coast was changed from "Pirate" to "Trucial" and has remained so ever since.

You will notice the spelling of Dubai in the treaty mentioned—Debay: It is also found as Dibai, Dabai and Debai, according to whichever atlas or gazetteer you use. Dubai is a small town on the promontory, about 100 miles S.W. of Ras al Musandam, and near Sharjah. Although small, it is an important distribution centre for goods for the interior and the other coast towns, having a good anchorage for large vessels about a mile off shore, and several good landing jetties for smaller boats. The Indian Post Office opened at Dubai in 1909. Communications are by British India Steam Navigation Co. whose intermediate boat calls at Dubai every other voyage, i.e., once a fortnight. Air mail can be sent either from Bahrain, or from Sharjah which has a Flying Boat station.

Cancellations: The earliest I have seen is a new type for the Gulf, Type 12, which consists of a circle 25 mm. in diameter with the word DUBAI curved round the top portion, PERSIAN GULF round the lower part, and the letters P.O. under the office name. This can be found on Indian stamps of K.E. VII, as late as 1915, as I have a cover addressed to Bombay for that year, with the Bombay

Censor mark on it. It is also found on the issues of K.G. V and apparently lasted until the start of the second World War. Type 10 has been seen with dates during 1936 cancelling the later K.G. V stamps of India. During 1941, an Experimental type was used as Type E.1. This has the words EXPERI-



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(Cont'ued on page 17.)

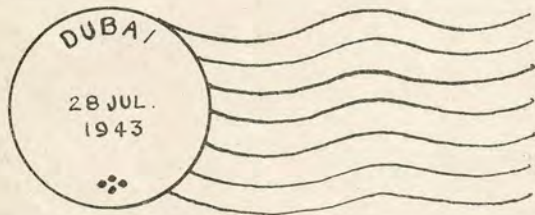
Dubai (continued from page 15.)



E 1

MENTAL P.O. round the top of a 32 mm. circle, with the date in the centre, and the letters K-46 over the date. The reason for this I do not know as yet; there are several possibilities. The original obliterator may have been lost or damaged; or with the War in progress, there may have been an increase in the volume of postal traffic there, necessitating the employment of extra obliterations, or it may have been a special

cancellation supplied for the use of troops engaged on L. of C. duties.



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However, by 1943, or possibly earlier, Type 9 was being used, a double circle of 32 mm. with DUBAI at the top, date across the centre, and a small ornament at the foot. 1943 saw yet another Type; 14, the special type of handstamp designed to obliterate more than one stamp at a go. This is a single circle of 25 mm. with 7 wavy lines 41 mm. long. In 1948, the post office at Dubai was transferred from India to Great

Britain, and the current issue was surcharged with new values in Annas and Rupees without any indication as to where they were to be used. Actually they are valid for postage in both Dubai and Muscat. The same tactics were carried out with the Silver Weddings, and the Olympic Games, and presumably any further issues of Gt. Britain will be similarly surcharged. Type 9 came back into use with the surcharged issues—the few covers I have seen from here—I shouldn't wonder if Weddings and Olympics on cover were quite a nice property one of these fine days: *verb. sap.*

(Next Post: HENJAM.)

Questions and Answers

Q.—What is the enclosed? (Illustration attached.) (A. E. P., Barkingside.)

A.—A local charity label, without postal validity, issued by Franco supporters during the Spanish Civil War. There does not exist an English catalogue of these labels, which are not without interest.

Q.—When did the Empire "All Up" scheme start and end? (H. D. C., London, E.C.3.)

A.—June 29th, 1937 (S. African route); February 23rd, 1938 (Egypt, India, Malaya, etc.); July 28th, 1938 (Australasia); Sept. 1st, 1938 (Hong-Kong); May 21st, 1939 (Iraq, Kuwait). Suspended on Sept. 2nd, 1939.

