"FROM CAIRO TO SIWA."
Across the Libyan Desert with Armoured Cars.

By Major T. I. DUN, D.S.O., M.C.,
Royal Army Medical Corps.

"INTRIGUING."—Mr. George Bernard Shaw, after his world tour, is quoted as saying: "Civilized people are unhappy and anxious, uncivilized people are happy and care-free." One of the magnificent designs by N. Strekalowsky, from Major Dun's book.
Major Dun originally intended to write an account of the journey from Cairo to Siwa by the armoured cars of the 12th Lancers for the Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps, but as the story grew under his hands and the necessity for illustrations quite beyond our scope became apparent he enlarged the article into a remarkable book, to be published entirely by Egyptian printers. Field-Marshal Sir William Birdwood has written a foreword and some idea of the character of the book can be obtained from a cursory glance through the prospectus which has just been issued. Many of the illustrations are magnificent and the most remarkable are those by N. Strekalowsky, who has also illuminated each page of the narrative. The author has designed the covers, and many other artists, as well as students of the School of Fine Art, Egypt, have contributed drawings.

This book would make an unusual and most attractive present to any Mess.

The book is divided into four parts. The first is a narrative of the journey from Cairo to Siwa and back; the second is a short history of the customs and superstitions of the Siwa Oasis and adjacent Libyan Desert. Then come photographic pages and lastly a map drawn by Mr. J. H. Rowntree, supplementing the sketch map in the text.

The armoured cars took the northern route across the Wadi Matrun desert to Burg el Arab, next marched to Mersa Matruh on the coast, then on to Sollum and south to Siwa across the desert and the sea of stones. The return journey was from Siwa direct to Mersa Matruh and then to Cairo by the route previously followed.

Major Dun writes: “One’s first ride outside an armoured car standing at the base of the turret and above the well, was a mixed joy. The Giant Racer at Wembley was as nothing to this. For one short moment when we met a bump as we dashed along, everything except my hands, which were clinging to the side of a slit in the top of the turret, left the vehicle. I admired the limpet-like tenacity and nonchalance of the serjeant by my side.”

The great thing was to move forward as fast as possible. When a car stuck in a soft patch re-starting was done by placing two poles lengthwise on the ground. The end of each pole was pushed between the twin-tyres...
of each rear wheel. When the engine was started the car ran along these rails on rope and cane mats, which had been placed ahead.

When the cars crested the high hill above Mersa Matruh Major Dun writes: "We saw beneath us the peacock blue and green waters creaming on a beach of dazzling whiteness, from which stretches of sand ran far off into the western salt water lagoon. A gaily coloured Greek sponge fishing fleet was in the eastern harbour. The rocky forehead jutting into the sea on the eastern reaches was crowned with a crumbling fortress, a Roman stronghold of old. Here was a sight for desert-weary eyes. Surely an echo of the sea could be heard faintly across the years when that warrior host of Greece, wandering and almost without hope of reaching the sea, suddenly came on such a scene as this."

At the end of the narrative Major Dun pays a great tribute to the men. A beautiful page is dedicated to "the salt of the earth, whose fund of humour, doggedness and language we so admired in those past years and still find present, and who are steeped in the tradition of gallant deeds and chivalrous behaviour."

The performance of the machines over a difficult terrain was a matter for surprise. While methods of transport can tax the resourcefulness and ingenuity of the keenest intellect, and discussions on the horse versus the machine and road versus rail still occupy the stage, there is yet an enigma whose transport virtues are also great, but who has moved across the centuries, unhonoured and unsung—*the camel*. Too often regarded as vicious and stupid, his long suffering is proverbial; he has a great and stout heart; waterless, he will allow himself to be worked for five days. The true desert type gives of his best. Major Dun writes in conclusion: "The horse has a hundred books to tell of his needs and assure his comfort. The camel has but one. So when you pass this proud and gallant gentleman of toil doff the hat and bow deeply. One who has carried a heavy burden to many a battlefield of ours dumbly salutes you."