

By now, continued traffic over the Baghdad-Damascus desert route was beginning to mark a well-defined track, so that even compasses were no longer essential. Traffic was increasing, and the Nairns extended their service to the Mediterranean coast at Haifa. A coastal service was also run, linking Homs and Tripoli with Haifa, and turning inland to Jerusalem. Most of the Nairn's cars by this time were Cadillacs and larger than the original Buicks. Increased traffic, however, made it essential to obtain buses. The first models used were of the six-wheeled twin-axle type. These were used on the desert run only, as their size made them unsuitable for the coastal route.

The two great difficulties of desert travel are dust and heat. An ordinary



winding glass window is useless against the finer desert dust, which will find its way through the smallest crevice. Nor is the average bus, however well ventilated, calculated to remain habitable in temperatures of 120 degrees and more. To overcome these difficulties, Norman Nairn travelled to the United States and placed the order for the first two of the monster coaches which have since made the Nairn Transport standard of comfort famous all over the world. The coaches were mounted on a Marmon-Harrington chassis which had eighteen wheels. The total weight of each vehicle was 26 tons, and each was designed to carry 40 to 45 passengers, and reasonable luggage.

The coaches were of Pullman design, built of stainless steel. The interiors were air-conditioned and fully dustproof, and

were cool in summer and warm in winter. Meals were served on board, and a well-stocked bar was kept (during this war a wider variety of excellent liquor was to be found on the Nairn buses than in any hotel in the Middle East). These vast vehicles were at the time, and probably still are, the finest of the kind in the world. They run on Diesel fuel, and complete the journey of about 550 miles from Damascus to Baghdad at an average speed of 30 miles per hour, which means a speed of 55 m.p.h. wherever conditions permit. At present the two Pullman coaches are still going well, and each has covered about 800,000 miles. This is 250,000 miles more than was thought possible.

Before this war the French Government in Syria and the Lebanon was quick to realize the value of Nairn Transport to those countries, and were most helpful. Not only did they pay the company a small annual subsidy, but also permitted the duty-free importation of spare parts and equipment for the firm—a valuable concession.

Tires have always been the firm's greatest running problem. The route is said to be the hardest in the world for tire wear. Five rubber companies have sent men to study the problem on the spot. With the costliest make of heavy-duty tire the best mileage ever obtained was 16,000 miles. Synthetic rubber during the war reduced the average life of a tire to about 2,000 miles. At present the Nairns have a priority call on genuine rubber tires from South Africa, and this has improved the position.

Nairn Transport has not always had a monopoly of the Baghdad-Damascus traffic. Eight or ten firms have in the past started in competition. Gerald Nairn estimated that about £200,000 had been lost in this way. The most serious threat came from a British firm, who started with fine equipment and a large staff in a determined effort to oust Nairn Transport from its position. The Nairns put themselves and their staff on half-pay and declared war. Nineteen months later they took over the assets of the rival company. Much of the Nairns' success is undoubtedly because both brothers have a thorough first-hand knowledge of every phase of their business. For example,