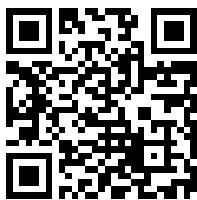

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ARABIAN JUBILEE

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H.M. King 'Abdul-'Aziz Ibn Sa'ud in the Jubilee Year of 1950

ARABIAN JUBILEE

by

H. STJ. B. PHILBY

an Asia book

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إِنْ سُئِلْتَ عَنْ تَارِيخِ عِينِيْدِ جُلُوسِيْهِ قَوْلُ :
هُوَ الْإِمَامُ عَبْدُ الْعَزِيزُ ابْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ ابْنِ سَعْوُدِ مَلِكُ الْعَرَبِ

١٣٦٩

“Praise him for his mighty acts ; praise him according to his excellent greatness.”

Psalm cl. 2

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PREFACE

THIS has by no means been an easy book to write. Apart from the fact that it is always difficult to write frankly or critically about a lifelong friend, however eminent or meritorious, these pages inevitably have about them the aura of an epitaph, happily not on the hero of the story, who is still very much alive, but on an age of which he has been the outstanding representative, and which has passed away for ever. From Abraham to Ibn Sa'ud, for a period of nearly 4,000 years, the sociological evolution of Arabia had followed a pattern comparable with the geological processes to which we owe the sedimentary strata of the earth's crust. There was little in the Arabia of twenty years ago which the patriarchs would have found uncouth or revolutionary, while they might have been flattered to find the Unitarianism of which they were the authors still flourishing and dominant in the land of its birth.

But the latter decades of Ibn Sa'ud's long reign have witnessed a break with the past as profound, for instance, as the great geological fault which created the Rift Valley and the Red Sea. The new problems posed by a sociological and economic revolution of such magnitude postulate new methods and qualities which it may take a generation or two to develop and stabilise. So the record of an era of unquestionably great achievement under the aegis of a great Wahhabi monarch is inevitably tempered with anxiety for the future. And I have tried not to shrink from the task of pointing out present shortcomings and the potential dangers inherent in the new dispensation. It is for the rising generations of the Arabs to prove their worthiness of an opportunity bequeathed to them by one of the greatest men in the long and honourable history of their land.

This volume does not pretend to be a full historical record of the life and reign of Ibn Sa'ud. It is rather a pageant of his achievement, set forth in a series of tableaux illustrating characteristic phases of his career. Inevitably, therefore, there has been some repetition of matter in these pictures, which I would ask the indulgent reader to regard, not as accidental or the result of careless editing, but as calculated emphasis on certain *leit-motifs* essential to the elucidation of the progress of a unique career.

Preface

Apart from a few footnotes referring to events subsequent to the year of Jubilee, 1369 A.H. (= 1949–50 A.D.), and added in the course of proof-reading, I have deemed it best to leave this record of the king's life as it stood on the day of his completion of fifty (lunar) years of absolute rule in Arabia in July, 1950. And in particular I have, after careful consideration of the matter, decided to leave unchanged the chapter dealing with Ibn Sa'ud's relations with King 'Abdullah of Jordan, and all incidental references to the latter in other passages of the book. It would indeed be but a poor compliment to one who has played so important and spectacular a part on the Arabian stage during the whole period to which this volume is dedicated to ignore or minimise the impact of his character and activities on the contemporary scene. He himself was never one to shun the controversies of his time, as readers of his outspoken autobiography know full well. And the fact that my study of his reactions to the developments recorded in these pages was written in the conviction and hope that he would have an opportunity of reading it seems to me a strong argument for leaving it as it stands. The principle of *De mortuis nil nisi bonum* can be carried too far in the case of the great ones of the earth, whose lives are lived in the lime-light of publicity, and whose acts are liable to have wider repercussions in space and time than those of ordinary mortals.

“The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones.
So let it be with Caesar.”

In any case a decent period of mourning will have elapsed before the appearance of this volume, and the chorus of eulogy will long since have died away which greeted the passing of one who will henceforth have to stand at the bar of history.

It only remains for me to acknowledge much generous help in the preparation of this work. In particular I am indebted to Sir Rupert Hay, British Resident in the Persian Gulf, for the trouble he has taken in searching the old records of the Residency for contemporary information about Ibn Sa'ud's capture of Riyadh and the Hasa in 1902 and 1913 respectively, the dates and details of which can now be regarded as definitely established.

For other historical information of importance I have to thank the king's brother, Musa'id ibn 'Abdul-Rahman, for placing at my disposal an important manuscript history of Najd (entitled '*Anwan al Sa'd w'al Majd*'), covering the period between 1885 and 1935,

Preface

compiled by 'Abdul-Rahman ibn Nasir of Majma'a and apparently based on, if not actually copied from, the lost second part of a manuscript history (entitled '*Iqd al Durur*) by Ibrahim ibn Salih ibn 'Isa. The extant part of this work begins with the year 1851, in continuation of the well-known history of 'Uthman ibn Bishr ending in 1850, and takes the story of the Sa'ud dynasty down to 1885.

It is probable that the second part of '*Iqd al Durur*' was deliberately suppressed by official action owing to the unorthodox political views of the author, who strongly favoured the rival Ibn Rashid dynasty. At any rate the two copies of the work, placed at my disposal by Sa'ud ibn Hidhlul of the Thunaian branch of the Sa'ud family and by Mit'ab ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz, one of the king's sons, respectively, end abruptly with the year 1885. And it is only conjecture that the remainder of Ibn 'Isa's history may survive in the copy of 'Abdul-Rahman ibn Nasir, above referred to. The same may to some extent be true of another manuscript history (entitled *Thabit al Hawadith*) by Sa'ud ibn Hidhlul himself, who has kindly lent me his original copy, which brings the story down to about 1940, with desultory notes of the events of still more recent years.

Yet another manuscript history of the Sa'ud dynasty, which has been lent me by Mit'ab ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz, already mentioned, is entitled *Shadha al Nadd*. This is by Mutlaq ibn Salih, covering the years between 1880 and his death in 1917, after which the work was continued by his unnamed son up to the year 1940.

To all those who have helped me to run these works to earth I am deeply grateful for a mass of material which will be indispensable for the piecing together in due course of the rather involved history of Najd and the Sa'ud dynasty during the second half of the nineteenth century. For the purposes of the present work, however, I have only had to use them for the verification of certain dates and details relevant to the matter in hand.

For the genealogical tables and kindred matter in the appendices I have to acknowledge a deep debt of gratitude to many members of the royal family and others who have come forward to assist me in the task of preparing as accurate and definitive a record as possible of all the generations of the House of Sa'ud from the earliest known beginnings of the clan down to and including the Jubilee year of His Majesty. In particular I have again to thank Sa'ud ibn Hidhlul, who has proved to be a mine of useful information on all such matters, and especially in regard to some of the more recondite and

Preface

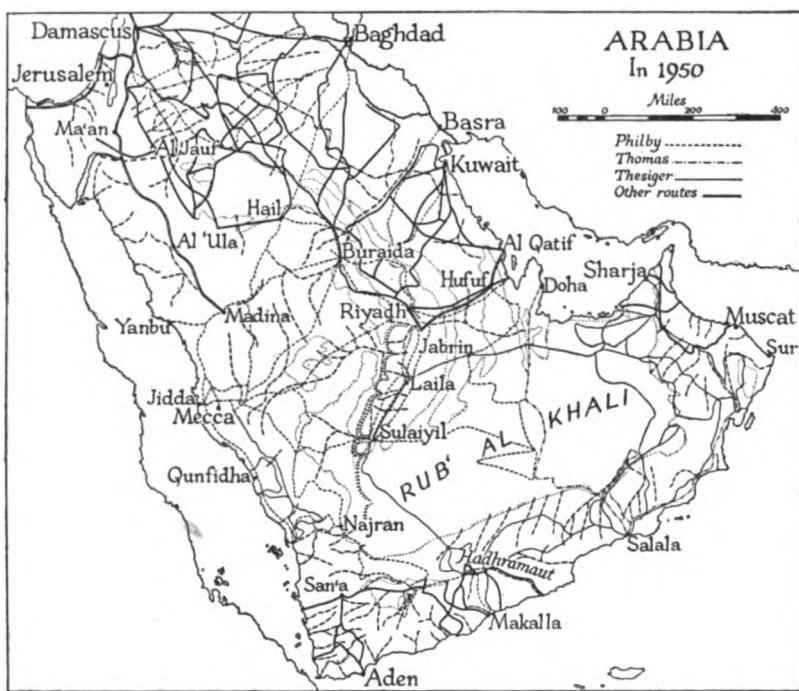
intractable collateral branches of the family, to one of which he himself belongs. In addition two members of the Sudairi clan, from which His Majesty himself derives through his mother, have helped me nobly to prepare a complete family tree of a house famous in the modern annals of Najd for its numerous marriage links with the royal family and the equally numerous provincial governors which it has contributed towards the administration of the country. The two members to whom I am especially indebted for their cordial co-operation in this task are the Amir 'Abdullah ibn Sa'd ibn 'Abdul-Muhsin ibn Ahmad al Sudairi and the Amir 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al Sudairi, respectively the present governors of Madina and Quraiyat al Milh, and both of them brothers-in-law of the king.

With these explanations of matters relevant to the following pages and acknowledgments of help received in the preparation thereof I submit this volume to the public, to whom I leave the assessment of the debt I owe to my publishers for the skill and patience they have displayed in bringing my labours to fruition.

H. StJ. B. PHILBY

Mecca,

September 20th, 1951



CHAPTER I

SUNRISE

THE exact hour and day of the birth of the remarkable man who is the hero of this story is not, and probably never can be, precisely known. There was nothing in the circumstances of his coming into the world to suggest the arrival of a prodigy. He was not the first-born of his father's sons; and his mother, proudly conscious no doubt of having been blessed with a man-child after an initial disappointment, could neither read nor write, and probably did not know the date anyway. So the great event was not recorded with the precision so dear to the chroniclers of anniversaries, though subsequent calculations, mainly based on the vague memories of folk alive on the occasion, have resulted in the official acceptance of the 20th day of Dhul-Hijja of the year 1297 *anno hegirae*, corresponding with November 24th, 1880 A.D., as the probable date of the birth of 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn 'Abdul-Rahman ibn Faisal Al Sa'ud: by the grace of God King of Sa'udi Arabia. He is thus seventy years old by European reckoning, and slightly over seventy-two by the lunar calendar.

For those interested in the significance of numbers, it may be mentioned that the years of his birth and his jubilee, 1297 and 1369 respectively, add up in each case to 19: pointing forwards and backwards to the year of destiny, the nineteenth year of the fourteenth century of the Islamic era, 1319 A.H., whose figures add up to 14. It was on Shawwal 3rd of this year that his long reign began, whose jubilee in 1369 A.H. is the occasion of this volume. The intelligent reader may have noticed the coincidence of this great Arabian occasion with the golden jubilee of the British Labour Party, and with a Holy Year of the Roman Catholic world; while, according to the official lunar calendar, this same year should have been one of the recurrent holy years of Islam: a year of Friday pilgrimage, or *Hajj Akbar*, with its comprehensive pardons and absolutions for the fortunate thousands standing on 'Arafat that day. The calendar was, however, belied by the alleged sighting of the new moon by some folk

at Rass in the Qasim at sunset of September 12th, with the result that the standing on 'Arafat took place on a Thursday.

Some of those present on this occasion may have been able to cast their minds back to the first pilgrimage celebrated under Wahhabi auspices in 1925, and to ponder on the record of a Wahhabi king whose very name in those days struck terror into their hearts, if their hearts planned evil. Some of them may stay on a few months in the Hijaz to celebrate the solar silver jubilee of his proclamation as king at Mecca on January 8th, 1926, though few of them, if any, will have noticed the lunar date of the same event: Jamada al Akhira 23rd, 1369 A.H., or April 11th, 1950. And as, so far as I know, neither the Poet Laureate of Sa'udi Arabia nor anyone else has sought to link the name of the hero of this great occasion with the year of his golden jubilee, I may point out as a final coincidence that the phrase, "*Ya al-Imam 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn 'Abdul-Rahman ibn Sa'ud, malik al 'Arab!*" by which any of his lieges or admirers might well address him, reproduces the date of 1369 as the numerical equivalent of the letters employed in it under the *Abjad* system of enumeration.

The dawn of a new era in the history of Arabia was dimmed by clouds of ominous density and blackness. The first phase of the fratricidal strife which ensued on the death of the great Faisal ibn Sa'ud in 1865 had indeed ended exactly ten years later with the death of his second son Sa'ud, who had usurped the throne from his elder brother 'Abdullah in 1870 and had lost the important Hasa province to the Turks in the following year, to say nothing of having had to acquiesce in the independence of the Qasim province. 'Abdullah, having thus returned to his throne after an interval of five years, lost no time in proving himself entirely devoid of diplomatic or military competence. The childhood memories of his nephew picture him as a man of considerable charm, well versed in the traditional inanities of the baronial hall and eloquent of speech, with a fund of good stories and an armoury of quips and repartee that often wounded, but lacking in judgment and easily flustered in a crisis: in fact, like Charles II of England, a man who "never said a foolish thing and never did a wise one."

The general ineptitude of 'Abdullah and the chaotic state of his realm were in striking contrast with the stable administration and general peace and prosperity of the rival northern principality of Jabal Shammar under the great Muhammad ibn Rashid. To his credit be it said that he had played the part of a loyal friend in arranging for the acquiescence of the ambitious sons of Sa'ud, four of them, in the

restoration of the vacant throne of Riyadh to 'Abdullah. He was himself at this time more interested in extending his realm northwards to include the Jauf and Wadi Sirhan area, and in consolidating his position on ground where his pre-eminence was unchallenged, while rather more vaguely spreading the skirts of his control over the Qasim and the contiguous northern provinces of the Wahhabi realm. A part of the Qasim resented such interference; and 'Abdullah unwisely supported Zamil al Sulaim of 'Anaiza, the local champion, in an attempt to throw off a yoke that was little more than nominal, while he also exposed his forces to annihilation at the battle of Hamada in 1883 in an attempt to reassert his authority over the Sudair province and Zilfi. 'Abdullah, fleeing from the battlefield to Riyadh, sent his brother Muhammad to negotiate an accommodation with the victor, who rather surprisingly and generously restored all the occupied territory to its original allegiance. He had, he said, only encroached on it in order to ensure peace and security on his own frontiers! But Muhammad ibn Rashid knew well enough that the royal family of Riyadh could safely be left to encompass its own destruction by internal dissension, as his own family had done but little more than a decade since in raising him to his throne. At any rate the humiliation of 'Abdullah encouraged the "pretenders" to make another bid for power; and in 1884, after an unsuccessful brush with Ibn Rashid in one of the tribal campaigns which illustrated the anarchy of Arabia in those days, the sons of Sa'ud turned on their uncle and soon had him in their hands. Suspecting the possibility of such action on their part, 'Abdullah had previously appealed to Ibn Rashid for help, which was willingly and immediately accorded! The pretenders were easily disposed of, with their own consent, by banishment from Riyadh. 'Abdullah himself, his youngest brother 'Abdul-Rahman, and a dozen of the principal members of the Sa'ud family were invited to take up their residence at Hail as the guests of their liberator, who proceeded to appoint his own nominee, one Salim ibn Subhan, to rule Riyadh with a rod of iron on behalf of the absent prince. The virtual extinction of the dynasty of Sa'ud was thus consummated about the time of my own birth in April, 1885; and it would have taken a bold prophet to predict that the puny babe of Badulla would one day play the rôle of St John the Baptist to a child "born to be king" in the deserts of Arabia. Yet my god-parents evidently took such a possibility into account when they gave me my names!

So far as I have been able to ascertain, the young 'Abdul-'Aziz

ibn 'Abdul-Rahman (then in his sixth year) and his full-sister Nura, one year older than him, remained behind at Riyadh when their father was carried off to Hail. They were old enough in 1886 to sense the thrill of horror which shocked their elders at the news of the butchery of their pretender cousins in Kharj by the fierce Salim; and to share their joy and relief at his summary dismissal in response to their protests. Two years later they could rejoice at the return of their father from exile with their uncle 'Abdullah, who had been seriously ill at Hail and was graciously allowed to go back to Riyadh as its governor on behalf of Ibn Rashid. This was indeed a bold experiment on the part of the Shammar prince, and may well have been a deliberate move on the chequerboard of his astute and intricate policy: the sacrifice of a castle to mate the king. Actually 'Abdullah facilitated matters by succumbing to his disease in 1889 before he had formally assumed office. Muhammad ibn Rashid had good reason to know that the youngest of Faisal's sons, 'Abdul-Rahman, now accepted as head of the Sa'ud family in preference to his unambitious elder surviving brother Muhammad, was likely to be more dangerous, because more astute and fanatical, than his easy-going eldest brother had ever been. He accordingly rejected his claim to become Governor of Riyadh and, to guard against possible trouble with him, re-appointed the ferocious Salim ibn Subhan to the post. At the Feast of Sacrifices of the following year (1890) he summoned all the adult males of the Sa'ud family to his presence to hear a message of greeting from their overlord. They went to the audience chamber forewarned and forearmed; and in a few moments Salim and many of his henchmen lay dead in the room. 'Abdul-Rahman was master of Riyadh, and immediately proceeded to place the capital in a proper state of defence against the storm that was bound to burst on him. Meanwhile Zamil of 'Anaiza had determined to throw off the Rashid yoke, and hastened to send his congratulations to 'Abdul-Rahman with an offer of an all-in alliance to restore the independence of southern Najd. But Muhammad was too quick for the allies. Zamil, unable to offer any serious resistance without outside help, was forced to accept a temporary accommodation with the enemy, whose whole force thus became available for the crushing of Riyadh. 'Abdul-Rahman was as brave as he was intelligent, and determined to resist the attack; but a siege of forty days bore hard on the querulous citizens of Riyadh, and he was forced to parley. His elder brother Muhammad and the leading prelate 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdul-Latif headed the negotiating deputation, which included also 'Abdul-

'Aziz, the ten-year-old son of 'Abdul-Rahman, who thus made his first appearance on the stage of Arabian history.

Muhammad ibn Rashid was again generous. He agreed to 'Abdul-Rahman remaining as governor of the Riyadh district under his suzerainty, and forthwith drew off his army to the north, where before the year was out he was again involved in difficulties with Zamil. The latter, having had a breathing-space to prepare the sinews of war, took the field in January, 1891; and 'Abdul-Rahman was soon posting north by forced marches to join him in a final effort to destroy the common enemy. It was a forlorn and rather stupid venture; and he never reached the battlefield of Mulaida. After several days of desultory fighting amid the sand-dunes of Wadi Rima, where Ibn Rashid's cavalry fought at a disadvantage with the 'Anaiza yeomen and their Badawin commandos, Zamil was lured out into the plain by a pretended flight of the enemy. He himself and several important members of his family were killed in the ensuing mêlée, and his army was routed decisively. On hearing the news of this disaster to his ally, 'Abdul-Rahman retreated with all speed to Riyadh; but he was not staying there to meet the pursuing vengeance. Preparations for flight were rapidly organised; and the slow caravan trailed out into the desert, carrying into exile all that remained of the scions of the House of Sa'ud: men, women and children, with all their impedimenta. With it went the lad 'Abdul-'Aziz, ensconced in a saddle-bag with his sister Nura in another on one of the baggage camels, as he well remembers to this day.

The dynasty of Sa'ud had, for all practical purposes, been in eclipse since 1885. The eclipse was now total, and none could predict its duration. All that mattered now was to find a refuge for that period: perhaps for ever if the sun were to shine no more. The immediate destination was the Turkish province of the Hasa, where 'Abdul-Rahman found not only a welcome, but an offer of reinstatement at Riyadh under Turkish auspices: with a garrison of Turkish troops to defend him from his enemies; and doubtless to keep an eye on himself and to collect a nominal tribute. He was, however, too broken by his experiences to be tempted by such an offer; and in due course he passed on to Qatar, where he came under suspicion by the Turks of intriguing against them with his host, Qasim ibn Thani. An attempt to settle at Kuwait was frustrated by the refusal of the then Shaikh, Muhammad ibn Sabah, probably acting on a hint from the Turks, to receive his party. A period of wandering in the eastern

desert with the 'Ajman tribe brought him again to Qatar, whence, after further negotiations with the Turkish authorities in the Hasa, the party returned to Kuwait with permission to settle there for good. And there, in the bosom of his family, the young 'Abdul-'Aziz lived until the turn of the century. The stern tenets of the Wahhabi faith were the principal item of his educational curriculum, while his upbringing in secular matters was left to chance, and from the age of puberty onwards, to the privilege of attending the solemn coffee-parties of his elders and of listening to their often instructive and always entertaining conversation. He must in particular have derived much profit from regular attendance at the general audiences of his host, Shaikh Mubarak ibn Sabah, who was unquestionably one of the outstanding personalities of Arabia in those critical days, when German policy envisaged Kuwait as the terminus of the Berlin-Baghdad railway. He must have been aware too at all times of the protecting shadow of the British Empire, felt rather than seen in the days before the Persian Gulf came to be regarded as a British lake: when the nebulous fiction of Ottoman sovereignty or suzerainty was scrupulously respected so long as it was not invoked in the interests of potentially hostile elements. It was undoubtedly at this period that the young 'Abdul-'Aziz developed a boyish admiration for British imperialism, which has accompanied him through life, modified only by the proviso that it should not impinge on his own sphere of activity. And it may well be that his brain began during these years to contemplate the possibility of building up an empire for himself out of the shattered fragments of his ancestors' dominions, now loosely held together by Muhammad ibn Rashid until his death in 1897. That event may well have been a decisive factor in his day-dreams, though it would be some years before he could be ready to give them substance.

Meanwhile he conformed readily enough to the normal pattern of Arabian life in those days. There were horses and camels to ride, and hawks and *Saluqis* to hunt withal; there were camp-fires and coffee to warm one as one whiled away the hours of darkness, listening to veterans' tales of war and love. And there were the mysteries of domestic bliss into which one was initiated at a tender age to keep one out of mischief. In this respect 'Abdul-'Aziz had nothing to complain of, though his first bride, Bint al Fiqri, died within six months of their marriage. His memories of her have not been dimmed by the passing years, and often he harks back gratefully to those few happy months. It was relatively some time before he could be

induced to assuage his grief with another bride, who bore his eldest son Turki in the first year of the century, and the present Crown Prince Sa'ud in the month of his triumph over the usurping Rashids (February, 1902). She is still alive to rejoice in the jubilee of that occasion.

CHAPTER II

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

IT was not long, however, before the youthful 'Abdul-'Aziz began to turn his thoughts from the charms of love and dalliance to more serious matters. Muhammad ibn Rashid, who had come to the throne of Hail in 1872 to dominate the politics of desert Arabia for a generation, and to be its effective ruler since 1891, had died in 1897. His nephew and successor, 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Mit'ab, was a brave warrior but a poor politician and administrator, destined to lose much of the territory ruled by his distinguished predecessor, and to pave the way for the eventual collapse of the Ibn Rashid dynasty. His principal rival at this time was Shaikh Mubarak ibn Sabah of Kuwait, who was flirting with Great Britain in self-defence against the efforts of Turkey to convert her vague suzerainty over his principality into actual sovereignty. And yet a third power in desert politics was represented by Sa'dun Pasha of the important tribal confederation of the Muntafiq on the borders of the Basra Wilayat, which was constantly in trouble with the Ottoman régime in Mesopotamia. Now Muhammad ibn Rashid before his death had strongly advised his successor-to-be not to be tempted by Turkish blandishments into hostilities with Kuwait, which could bring him no possible advantage and would certainly give rise to international complications in view of British commitments to Mubarak in certain eventualities. This advice was, however, ignored by 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Rashid, who had not been long on the throne before he initiated a desultory sparring campaign in the direction of Kuwait itself and the tribal hinterland of 'Iraq: thus forcing both Mubarak and Sa'dun into active alliance to resist his pressure, which in turn had the approval and encouragement of the Turks. In addition Mubarak could count on the enthusiastic co-operation against Ibn Rashid of his guests, the Sa'udi princes under the leadership of the veteran Imam 'Abdul-Rahman ibn Faisal. With their servants and retainers they could provide but a small contingent for active service; but in those days leadership and personal prowess in desert-craft were more

important than mere numbers. And in fact, as events were to show very soon, they were to emerge as the dark horse in the big race: the Arabian Stakes!

In 1899, after long hesitation, the British had been forced by Turkish activities in connection with the proposed construction of a railway to the head of the Persian Gulf to reconsider their hitherto platonic attitude towards the charms of Kuwait; and Mubarak had eagerly accepted their proposal of honourable marriage. A treaty on the lines of those already in force with Bahrain and Maskat provided Mubarak with the protection he sought against any attempt of his suzerain to interfere with the administration of his principality, and gave the British the security they desired against the alienation of any part of Kuwait territory to undesirable foreigners. The Turks, trying to intervene too late, found themselves stymied by the *fait accompli*, and could do no more than encourage their desert friends to make things as uncomfortable as possible for Mubarak: being convinced that the British would be no more anxious than themselves to intervene actively in desert politics. In these circumstances Ibn Rashid kicked off with a gentle pass out to his left wing, where Sa'dun Pasha was forced to concede a corner before play reverted to mid-field. 'Abdul-Rahman ibn Sa'ud then took up the running for Kuwait with a dash into the eastern desert on the enemy's right wing without material result. Ibn Rashid countered with a move towards 'Ain al Saiyid, where a brush with an allied force compelled him to retire well within his own half to await developments. These events occurred during the spring of 1900, in the autumn of which year the allies moved out of Kuwait in force for a grand offensive. The rendezvous for the tribal levies from the Mutair, 'Ajman and Murra was the valley of Sha'ib Shauki, on the western fringe of the Dahna; and when the full muster of 10,000 men was assembled ready for action, Mubarak led the main body northward to seek out Ibn Rashid and his main force, while the young 'Abdul-'Aziz was given the command of a detachment, with which he was to make a strong diversion in the direction of Riyadh. His operations amounted to little more than the cutting off of supplies to the garrison, and preventing any egress from the capital of reinforcements for Ibn Rashid's forces. It was not till February, 1900, that, after the usual manoeuvring of desert warfare, the rival armies faced each other for a serious test of strength among the sandhills of Sarif and Tarafiya, to the northward of Buraida. The battle of Sarif, as it is called in the annals of the desert, ended in the disastrous defeat of the allies, who

fled back to Kuwait with all speed to mourn their losses, which were not light. On receiving the bad news, 'Abdul-'Aziz raised the "siege" of Riyadh and retreated to the coast, while Ibn Rashid made a triumphal march through the districts north of the town, punishing with quite unnecessary severity all who had helped or welcomed the enemy. He then turned eastward, and launched an attack on the coastal village of Jahra near Kuwait; but the people there held out stoutly long enough for a British warship to appear on the scene with promise of at least moral support. Ibn Rashid then withdrew to his camp at Hafar al Batin, hoping that the Turks would now give him material support for the resumption of his campaign. The Ottoman Government, however, being then engaged in negotiations with Berlin in connection with the railway to Baghdad and the Persian Gulf, did not wish to provoke the British to actual intervention, and left their ally to fend for himself, while giving him only the moral support of their approval for anything he could do to keep the situation fluid. Mubarak, smarting under his recent reverse, also refrained from further ventures into the desert for fear of rousing the Turks. And it looked as if the winter season of 1901/2 might pass without incident, although 'Abdul-'Aziz may have had other ideas in his mind, when he obtained the Shaikh's approval for an excursion into the desert in search of any mischief that might materialise. Neither Mubarak nor 'Abdul-Rahman anticipated any important results from such an expedition, though they warned the youthful warrior against getting into any unnecessary trouble, as he and his forty stalwarts rode forth from Kuwait. Travelling southwards in the desert hinterland of the then Turkish province of Hasa, they gathered Badawin allies as they went, and at the turn of the year, they had settled down at the watering of Haradh, destined to become famous nearly fifty years later as one of the most productive oilfields in the world. Their wanderings up to this point had been utterly unfruitful, and most of the Badawin contingents had filtered away to their home-camps to spend the fasting month of Ramdhan in some sort of comfort.

Towards the end of the month 'Abdul-'Aziz led the remnants of his force, some 200 strong, eastward to the wells of Abu Jifan, where the '*Id al Fitr*' was celebrated. And that very night they saddled up to march on Riyadh! The following day was spent lying up in the shallow valleys of the Jubail plateau, where they were scarcely likely to be observed during the holiday period, when everybody would be staying at home to celebrate the occasion with their families. As

the sun set, the march was resumed by the selected striking force of forty* men, while the rest of the party was left behind with the impedimenta and with their chief's instructions to make their way back to Kuwait as fast as possible if they had received no news of the night's doings by noon of the morrow. Approaching Riyadh in the darkness of a moonless night, 'Abdul-'Aziz posted the bulk of his party under his brother Muhammad in the outlying palm-groves of al 'Aud to await events, while he himself and his fifteen chosen men worked their way quietly round to the northern side of the town where, as they had probably noted during the expedition of the previous year, the wall was in bad repair and was easily scalable. Everything went well for them. The breach had not been repaired, and the good citizens of Riyadh had retired to their beds after the evening prayers. No one had observed them, and without difficulty they found themselves inside the town, near the Mismak castle where the Rashidi governor, 'Ajlan, was known to spend his nights in case of accidents. His private quarters were in a house immediately opposite the only gate of the fort; and it was thither that 'Abdul-'Aziz and his companions proceeded, still unobserved. A woman opened to their knocking; and in a matter of seconds the invaders were in possession, while all the womenfolk and servants had been herded into one room and left there under guard. Then from an upper lattice 'Abdul-'Aziz and his men kept watch on the castle gate, sipping coffee and reading the Quran, till dawn, when it was the governor's custom to leave the fort for home. As the gate was thrown open and the governor and his retinue stalked across the street, 'Abdul-'Aziz and his men burst out of the house. In the fierce struggle that ensued 'Ajlan was killed with several of his escort, while others were cut down by 'Abdullah ibn Jiluwi as they tried to shut the gate in the face of the attackers. It was all over in a few minutes; and once more a prince of the House of Sa'ud was master of Riyadh, whose citizens flocked to the scene to congratulate and welcome back the victor.

'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Rashid reacted but sluggishly to the fall of Riyadh. He may have thought that he could restore the situation in

* So far as I have been able to ascertain, the following four members of this force are still living: namely, the King himself, his cousin 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Musa'id (then in his early 'teens), Sa'd ibn Bukhaiyit ibn Sa'id and, possibly, 'Abdullah al Hazzani (though he is believed to have died recently). Shuwaish ibn Dhuwaihi, still living, was a member of the Rashidi garrison of the castle. 'Abdul-'Aziz al Ruba'i was also of the party that left Kuwait, though he did not take part in the final operation.

Central Arabia in his own good time, while his immediate attention was concentrated on the capture of Kuwait. He remained, therefore, in his war-camp at Hafar al Batin, hoping and angling for the Turkish military help which never materialised. As summer approached, he retired disgruntled to Hail, to make his preparations for a campaign against Ibn Sa'ud in the coming winter. The latter's first preoccupation was the rebuilding of the walls of his capital, while in the political sphere he concentrated on the reorganisation of the southern provinces of Kharj, Hauta, Aflaj and Wadi Dawasir, in which even Muhammad ibn Rashid had never been able to establish his authority effectively, and which had on more than one occasion driven away his tax-collectors. The harsh treatment meted out to the northern provinces by 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Rashid after his victory at Sarif showed them what they too might expect in the event of his recovery of their territory; and Ibn Sa'ud could therefore count on solid support from this area.

In all these activities his brother Sa'd was his right-hand man; and by the autumn, when Ibn Rashid launched his expected offensive, everything was ready to give him a warm reception. Meanwhile Ibn Sa'ud had invited his father, who had formally abdicated in his favour after the battle of Sarif, to return to Riyadh to act as regent during his absence in the field. His home-coming after an absence of twelve years was made the occasion of a triumphal celebration of the restoration of the rightful dynasty to power in the land of its ancestors; and for the next quarter of a century the father served the son as guide, philosopher and friend in an association which was a touching demonstration of paternal pride and filial piety. On ceremonial occasions the father took precedence as a matter of course, while in the executive government the son's authority and responsibility were absolute. The father was the *Imam*, while the son was *al Shuyukh*, the leader of his people in peace and war; but there were few matters of importance on which the young prince did not consult the head of the family.

Meanwhile Ibn Rashid was working southwards in the leisurely fashion of desert warfare, with scouting parties out in advance of and on the flanks of the main body in search of openings to exploit. A direct attack on Riyadh itself was ruled out by its new fortifications and strong garrison of picked troops. On the other hand Ibn Sa'ud was known to be in the south collecting a large force and ample supplies for a prolonged campaign; and Ibn Rashid decided to force him to a fight before the completion of his arrangements.

He therefore gave a wide birth to Riyadh, advancing down the valley of Wadi Sulaiy towards the province of Kharj, whose capital, Dilam, was his immediate objective. Camping for the night in the palm-groves of Na'jan, he launched his shock troops at dawn across the open ground between his position and the main oasis; but when they had got to within striking distance of their objective they came under heavy fire from a strong force which Ibn Sa'ud had brought down under cover of darkness and posted in the palm-groves with instructions to hold their fire until the enemy were within easy range. This unexpected setback produced some confusion in the enemy's ranks; but 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Rashid, who was an accomplished military commander, rallied his men for a dour battle which lasted till sunset without decisive result, though the advantage rested with the defenders, who had neither been surprised, as intended, nor dismayed, though they had come perilously near to the exhaustion of their ammunition. In ignorance of this vital fact, Ibn Rashid decided to withdraw during the night to Sulaimiya, whence, satisfied that the enemy was not in a position to pursue, he marched northwards to regroup for another test of strength. Thus the first round went on points to Ibn Sa'ud, who had gained a precious breathing space for the completion of his plans, which by no means envisaged a purely defensive rôle.

Ibn Rashid now switched his attention back to Kuwait, and was soon pitched again on the wells of Hafar al Batin, whence he organised constant raids on Mubarak's territory up to the walls of the town itself. The Turks maintained their passive attitude, while Mubarak, hard pressed by these operations, sent an urgent appeal for help to Ibn Sa'ud. The latter, having replenished his stores and re-organised his army, was soon down in the coastal area to join forces with Jabir, Mubarak's eldest son, in offensive operations round the enemy's camp. After some desultory but indecisive fighting Ibn Rashid struck camp for a general withdrawal towards Ha'il, leaving the second round also to go to the allies on points.

Within a few days he was before the walls of Riyadh! But Ibn Sa'ud, apprised of this new move, left his capital to look after itself, and made all speed for the northern province of Qasim for a raid on the Mutair and other tribal elements of the enemy's forces. This effectively drew Ibn Rashid away from Riyadh, though not without a desperate but futile onslaught on its fortifications. 'Abdul-Rahman saw in the enemy's retreat an opportunity of striking a blow for his son's cause; and the pursuing force launched by him actually reached

the Washm district ahead of the retreating Shammar, who found their way barred by a strong force in occupation of Shaqra, the principal town, under Musa'id ibn Suwailim, who had also occupied the village of Tharmida with an outpost. This village had always been partial to Ibn Rashid, who had no difficulty in driving out the small Sa'udi garrison before proceeding to deal with Shaqra, to which he laid siege. This was raised on the sudden appearance of Ibn Sa'ud with a considerable force, a contingent of which under 'Abdullah ibn Jiluwi carried Tharmida by storm after a stubborn fight. Ibn Rashid turned east into the province of Sudair on the Tuwaiq plateau, but the Wahhabis pursued him from pillar to post until the whole province was in their hands except the capital, Majma'a. The campaigning season was now drawing to an end, and Ibn Rashid decided to cut his losses and withdraw to the Qasim, where he could count on strong support at Buraida and its satellite villages. Ibn Sa'ud stayed only long enough to reorganise the administration of the two recovered provinces, and, leaving Ahmad al Sudairi, shortly to become his father-in-law, in charge of them, returned to Riyadh, whither the whole of his family had now come up from Kuwait: itself a striking proof of his confidence in the permanence of the new order.

The summer respite was followed in the autumn of 1903 by a Shammar raid on the 'Ataiba and Qahtan tribes, now restored to Sa'udi allegiance by the recovery of Washm. Ibn Sa'ud came up to Sudair to watch the situation and to make preparations for the next step, which envisaged an advance on the Qasim; but the failure of the seasonal rains, which had left the central districts of Najd in the grip of drought and famine, necessitated a postponement of his plans, and he again retired to Riyadh.

Ibn Rashid took advantage of the temporary immobilisation of his rival to visit the 'Iraq frontier, both to recruit troops from among the Shammar in that area and to press, now more urgently than ever, for active Turkish assistance in a situation which threatened to become intractable in view of the new danger from the south. Before departing, however, he took the precaution of establishing strong outposts in the Sirr district, north of Washm, and of leaving the flower of his army in the Qasim under the command of Husain ibn Jarrad; the latter measure was in part necessitated by the possibility of hostile action on the part of the numerous Sa'udi sympathisers at 'Anaiza, which was very much a house divided against itself.

It was not till March, 1904, that Ibn Sa'ud bestirred himself again; but when he acted he did so to some purpose. Advancing very rapidly on Sirr, he inflicted a resounding defeat on the Rashidi commander, who was himself killed in action. This gave him partial control of the important Harb tribe, whose main body, however, still remained faithful to Ibn Rashid in the area north of Wadi Rima. After a short breathing space, Ibn Sa'ud sent forth his messengers in all directions to summon a general muster of the clans to meet him at Thadiq within the folds of the Tuwaiq plateau. This suggested something in the nature of a recoil before the next advance; and Ibn Sa'ud duly struck his camp in Sirr to keep his tryst. Once in the sands of the Nafud, however, he turned abruptly north, and appeared without warning before the walls of 'Anaiza. He had already been joined by many prominent citizens of the oasis, including most of the descendants of Zamil, who had fallen at Mulaida in 1891. The Rashidi governor of the town was Majid ibn Subhan, who was loyally supported by the Bassam and other prominent local families. The attack on the oasis was begun by the 'Anaiza contingent, supported at a later stage of the battle by 'Abdullah ibn Jiluwi and his janissaries. The day went steadily, though slowly, in favour of the attackers; and the Rashidi governor, deeming discretion the better part of valour, beat in hasty retreat with his henchmen, leaving the loyal citizens to surrender to the Sulaim leaders rather than risk falling into the hands of Ibn Jiluwi's fanatics. It was after this battle that Ibn Sa'ud found his long-lost cousins, the three grandsons of his uncle Sa'ud, who may well have come down from Hail in the hope of getting something for themselves in the event of a serious reverse to the Wahhabis, but who appear to have taken no part in the action: even going to the length of ham-stringing their horses to immobilise themselves. They were received with open arms by their victorious cousin who jokingly nicknamed them *al 'Araif*, a term applied to stolen camels recovered from an enemy. As we shall see in due course, they were to prove but poor companions: asserting more than once in rebellion a claim to the throne of Riyadh, which they based on the fact that they were the senior branch of the Sa'ud family. One of them, Sa'ud ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Sa'ud, was to marry Ibn Sa'ud's sister Nura, to whose hand he had a prescriptive right by the custom of Najd in spite of his rebellious attitude towards her brother. The quarrel has happily long since been forgotten, and the two cousins survive to celebrate the golden jubilee of the event which gave rise to it. They are the two senior male members of the

family in point of age, though they belong to different generations; and Sa'ud takes precedence of all other members of the royal house in the court of his cousin, the king.

Ibn Sa'ud lost no time in following up his success by marching on the sister town of Buraida, which Majid ibn Subhan made no attempt to defend. Its citizens had no stomach for a fight, and hastened to open the gates to the conqueror, though the local Rashidi governor and his garrison held out stubbornly for two months in the great fort in hopes of succour. They were left to their fate, and surrendered in June. Ibn Sa'ud had now, within less than two and a half years from his dramatic capture of Riyadh, recovered the whole of his grandfather's dominions in Najd; and all the gains of the great Muhammad ibn Rashid had been dissipated by his successor, whose prowess in battle was in striking contrast with his futility as an administrator.

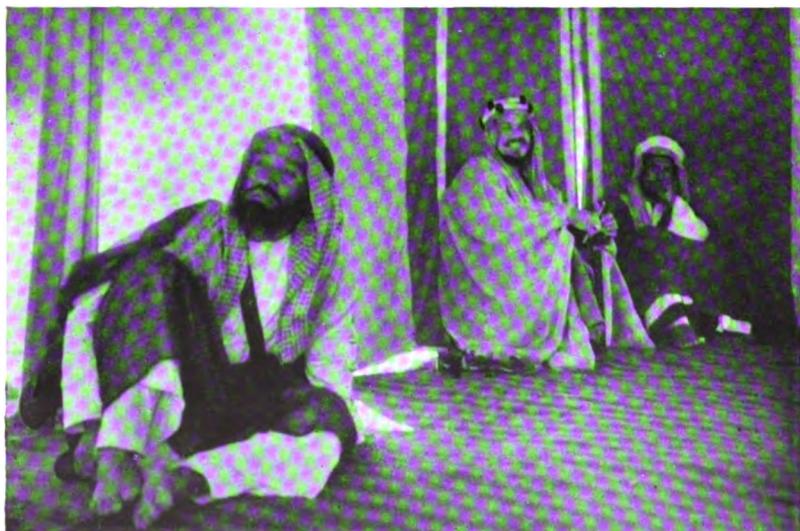
If Ibn Sa'ud's original objective had envisaged no more than the recovery of all the Najdi territories of his ancestors, he now saw possibilities of empire on a larger scale, with no serious obstacle in the way to their realisation except the man whom he had so far defeated in every encounter. 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Rashid seems to have taken these defeats very philosophically, vaguely hoping perhaps in truly Badawin fashion that the day of revenge would come in due course. To that end he was exerting every possible effort, from his camp in the Batin, to persuade the Turks to come to his rescue, for it was clear to him that Ibn Sa'ud would not be content to halt on the frontiers of the Qasim. The Turks now realised, from the pronouncements and activities of Lord Lansdowne and Lord Curzon in 1903, that the British would permit no tampering with the virtual independence of Kuwait, where for the first time a British Political Agent, Major S. G. Knox, had been appointed in the following year in spite of the protests of the Sublime Porte. They accordingly transferred their attention to the desert hinterland, where events with which they had not reckoned threatened the stability of northern Arabia, which they had always considered as a part of the Ottoman Empire. Ibn Rashid certainly regarded himself as their vassal, though for all practical purposes independent of their control or supervision, while Ibn Sa'ud could only be considered a potential enemy in virtual alliance with elements basically hostile to the Porte. At any rate the situation of Ibn Rashid was now acute enough to force a reconsideration of Turkish policy in the desert. In spite of the summer heat the Turks decided to send military assistance to him forthwith, to help in the restoration of the position in the Qasim.



The King (fourth from left) and members of his family at Riyadh in 1918



Shaikh Yusuf Yasin in Municipal Garden of Mecca in 1935



'Abdullah Sa'dun (left) and other visitors in tent of the Crown Prince in 1933

And at the end of May, 1904, eight Turkish battalions, accompanied by Shammar levies collected by Ibn Rashid himself from the Badawin camps along the Euphrates, marched into the desert, reaching Qusaiba, in northern Qasim, simultaneously with the Shammar garrison of Buraida, which had been allowed to march home in accordance with the terms of its surrender.

With Ibn Sa'ud now in effective occupation of the Qasim, immediate action was deemed necessary; and Ahmad Faizi Pasha, the Turkish commander, advanced southwards with his whole force to the salt-pans of Qara'a, near the scene of Muhammad ibn Rashid's victory at Mulaida in 1891. Ibn Sa'ud moved out from Buraida in force to meet this threat, and took up his position near Busar in the sand-hills of the Khubub district, while the enemy marched along the fringe of the sands to Bukairiya. It was here that, on June 15th, battle was joined, continuing throughout the day with varying fortune. The Turks clung tenaciously to their positions, while the Qasim contingent of Ibn Sa'ud's army had successfully charged and occupied the camp of their Shammar allies. Returning to headquarters after looting the camp and scattering its occupants, it found to its dismay that the Turks were in occupation of the Wahhabi tents, from which Ibn Sa'ud, wounded in the hand by a bullet, had fled, thinking the day lost and his allies scattered. The doughty yeomen of 'Anaiza fell upon the astonished Turks, who little expected to see an enemy force coming up in their rear and, in their turn, fled: leaving behind all their booty and the two guns they had brought up to defend the camp in case of a renewed attack. But the 'Anaiza folk were uneasy about the unexplained absence of Ibn Sa'ud, and deemed it discreet to withdraw from their exposed position. Thus the Turks were left in occupation of the battlefield, and could reasonably claim a tactical victory. And, if they had followed it up in the right direction, they might well have won the campaign before the enemy could recover from his shock and regroup for another round. It is said that the dead alone on both sides numbered a thousand men.

Fortunately for Ibn Sa'ud the Turks and their Shammar allies decided first to reduce the settlements in Wadi Rima upstream of Bukairiya, with Rass as their main objective. Meanwhile the Wahhabi army received tribal reinforcements from the 'Ataiba and Mutair; and Ibn Sa'ud was soon in a position to advance on Bukairiya, where the Turks had left their camp and supplies lightly guarded, while they were engaged among the villages further west.

After a sharp brush with an enemy cavalry detachment, the Wahhabis had no difficulty in occupying the camp, while the Turks were bombarding the village of Khabra, which held out until forced to surrender by an outbreak of cholera, hitherto unknown in desert Arabia, emanating from the enemy positions. The Turks then advanced to Shinana for the siege of Rass itself, while Ibn Sa'ud hastened to cover the town against assault. The Turks contented themselves with long-range bombardment and desultory skirmishing, while the rival armies remained facing each other rather aimlessly for no less than three months through the summer heat, aggravated by the presence of cholera in both camps. The Wahhabi army was soon in a state of almost open mutiny, and Ibn Sa'ud had no alternative but to make overtures for peace. These were rejected with derision by Ibn Rashid, but it was his own Shammar tribesmen, weary of so prolonged and profitless a campaign, who made the first move to break off the engagement. He had to permit them to move off to their pastures to refresh their camels; but Ibn Sa'ud was not disposed to let them go in peace. Their caravans, laden with stores and the spoils taken during the recent operations, were vigorously attacked as they went; and the Turks countered by bringing up their guns to bombard the fortified grange of Qasr 'Uqaiyil, whence some of these attacks had emanated. Ibn Sa'ud came up to challenge them, and the enemy began to retreat northwards. The Wahhabi cavalry was now launched against the heavily encumbered Turks, who were forced to make a stand in the channel of Wadi Rima. In the first encounters the Shammar horsemen dealt some heavy blows at the right wing of the Wahhabis, which began to give ground. But Ibn Sa'ud, seeing this, boldly led his shocktroops at the enemy centre, where the Turks were posted with their artillery. Surprised by this manœuvre, they began to retreat, whereupon the whole of the Shammar contingent broke and fled, leaving their guns, stores and other impedimenta to the enemy. The booty taken was immense, including a large sum in gold intended for the pay of the Turkish troops; and the Wahhabis were so busy collecting the spoils that no thought of pursuit even entered their minds. The defeat of the Turks and their allies might well have been converted into a rout; but there was no doubt about the completeness of Ibn Sa'ud's victory. The campaign, which had opened so unpromisingly at Bukairiya in June, had now ended in September in a decisive victory; and the Turks, dispirited by defeat and worn out by a long campaign in a most unpropitious climate, had virtually ceased to have any military

value. Some of them surrendered to Ibn Sa'ud, while many perished of disease and thirst in the desert: the remainder retreating with Ibn Rashid to Hail. The Ottoman Government, being simultaneously committed to a more serious campaign in the Yaman, decided to call off the Arabian adventure. Faizi Pasha was accordingly instructed to open negotiations with Ibn Sa'ud for a treaty providing for the neutralisation of the Qasim as a buffer province between the Wahhabi and Shammar States, with Turkish garrisons at 'Anaiza and Buraida and a Turkish governor-general in supreme charge! They scarcely seem to have realised the precariousness of the position of their troops in Arabia; but Ibn Sa'ud, not too sure of his own position with the fickle inhabitants of the province, actually agreed to discuss matters on the basis proposed, and nominated his father to conduct the negotiations with Faizi Pasha. They dragged on month after month without the slightest prospect of a definite result until events in the Yaman necessitated the withdrawal of Faizi, to take command of the expedition organised to restore the situation in that country. His deputy, Sidqi Pasha, was left in charge of the negotiations, which soon came to an end with the decision of the Ottoman Government to withdraw the expeditionary force from Arabia to 'Iraq and Madina. Ibn Sa'ud was willing enough to let the troops go unmolested; stipulating only that they should go under proper escort to ensure their leaving the country and that the body destined for Madina should remain in Arabia until the other had crossed the frontier into 'Iraq. This was no more than a precaution against possible treachery; but the Turks were only too glad to go, and their evacuation took place without incident. It is alleged that syphilis, virtually unknown in central Arabia since the last sojourn of the Turks in the country in the early part of the nineteenth century, reappeared in the wake of this Qasim campaign. The disease is unfortunately now too common in Arabia to arouse comment; but its incidence was slight when I first went to Najd more than thirty years ago, and the cases known to exist were attributed either to this Turkish expedition or to contacts with the coastal areas, particularly the Hijaz.

With the withdrawal of the Turks in circumstances which greatly enhanced the prestige of Ibn Sa'ud, the two rivals for hegemony in the desert were left to fight out the issue between themselves without outside interference. Shaikh Mubarak of Kuwait, however, now jealous of the outstanding achievements and successes of his former pupil, sought spasmodically to create a balance of power by

intriguing with his former enemy. Ibn Sa'ud had every intention of keeping the Qasim within his dominions; but the intrigues of the rival sections of both the main towns wearied him beyond measure. To bring matters to a head he conceived an interesting experiment in local psychology. He had received an urgent appeal for assistance from Qasim ibn Thani, the Shaikh of Qatar on the Persian Gulf, whose brother, Ahmad, had staged a rebellion against his authority. This gave him a plausible excuse for leaving the Qasim to its own devices for the time being, though he knew that Ibn Rashid would take advantage of his absence to make another bid for the province. No sooner was his back turned than Ibn Rashid came down and occupied Rass as a base for future operations. The Qasim contingent sent to recover the place was crushingly defeated; and Ibn Rashid proceeded to teach the citizens of Rass a lesson in frightfulness, as he had done after Sarif to those of Washm and Sudair. The experiences of their neighbours were not lost on the inhabitants of 'Anaiza and Buraida, where even the supporters of Ibn Rashid could not approve of his irresponsible swashbuckling. With one voice the citizens of the Qasim now clamoured for the return of Ibn Sa'ud; and their plea was supported at their urgent request by Shaikh Mubarak who also wrote to Ibn Rashid urging him to resist such a development! Ibn Sa'ud, having successfully relieved his friend Qasim ibn Thani from the dangers that beset him, was back at Riyadh, reorganising his forces and his administration. All he could do at the moment was to send his brother Muhammad to raid the Harb tribe in Shammar territory, while Ibn Rashid kept the ball in play by raiding the Mutair. It was not until the autumn of 1905 that Ibn Sa'ud came up in person to camp in the Asyah district in company with a strong contingent from Buraida under its governor, Salih ibn Muhanna. A suspicion of the latter's lukewarmness, not to say his treacherous designs, led him to move his camp to Zilfi, where his rear was covered by the loyal provinces of Washm and Sudair; and there he received confirmation of Mubarak's intrigues with both Ibn Rashid and the governor of Buraida. The Buraida contingent was accordingly invited to go home, while their place was taken by the Mutair tribe in force under its redoubtable chief, Faisal al Duwish.

The early months of 1906 were spent in desultory sparring, with Ibn Sa'ud seeking and Ibn Rashid evading a decisive encounter. In April, however, the latter lay at Raudhat al Muhanna within a few hours' march of Ibn Sa'ud's position, intending to join the Buraida forces at Shiqqa. Now was Ibn Sa'ud's chance; and, to avoid

alarming the enemy in advance, he led his troops on foot over the intervening distance. The surprise was not complete, but the Wahhabis attacked and occupied the main camp, while Ibn Rashid raced round to collect and bring up his scattered contingents. A desperate battle then ensued: the Shammar giving ground before the vigorous attacks of the enemy, while 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Rashid himself was killed as he tried to rally them. That ended the fight, and settled the issue between the rival Arabian dynasties for some time to come, though Ibn Sa'ud was not in a position to march on Hail for a final settlement. The surviving members of Ibn Rashid's family raced from the battlefield to the capital to scramble for the empty throne, while the Turks renewed their intrigues to get a footing in central Arabia: at first with the governor of Buraida and Faisal al Duwish, and later with Mit'ab, the son and heir of 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Rashid, who had managed to establish himself in Hail as his successor: the first of no fewer than five occupants of the throne in the space of two years after the battle of Raudhat al Muhamma. Ibn Sa'ud could afford to leave Hail to its dynastic quarrels, while in rapid succession he dealt effectively with Buraida and the Mutair. Salih ibn Muhamma was seized and sent in custody to Riyadh, while Faisal al Duwish was brought to heel by a series of raids on the encampments of his tribe. Meanwhile Sami Pasha had been sent from Madina by the Turks to intrigue with the new ruler of Hail, who readily agreed, that the Qasim should be a Turkish province. It was not, however, his to dispose of; and Ibn Sa'ud made it abundantly clear that he would have no Turkish interference in this area. Sami even tried to bribe him into acquiescence, and was surprised to have his good money scornfully refused. His departure in response to Ibn Sa'ud's ultimatum marked the end of three years of Turkish efforts to establish a footing in the desert; and an exchange of polite correspondence between Ibn Sa'ud and the Sublime Porte left the former in effective control of all desert Arabia, outside the confines of the Turkish province of Hasa. Thither Saiyid Talib al Naqib, an outstanding personality in the politics of Basra, was now sent as *Mutasarrif*, or district governor, to keep Ibn Sa'ud at arm's length by guile and such force as he could command.

Ibn Sa'ud rested for the moment on his laurels, thinking more of the reorganisation and stabilisation of his administration than of expansion. In these tasks he had the valuable co-operation of his father and of the ecclesiastical leaders of Riyadh; and it was at about this stage that his policy of basing the political regeneration of the

country on a religious revival began to take practical shape.* The history of his ancestors had shown that religious zeal, always endemic in the Arabian desert, could, if properly organised, galvanise the yeomen and Badawin of Najd into a fighting force of formidable potentialities: but that the maintenance of religious fanaticism at white heat for an indefinite period was impossible in the volatile and centrifugal society of Arabia. The gains of religious war had always been dissipated by tribal faction. At the same time the career of Muhammad ibn Rashid had shown that political genius could also hold the country together in war and peace, while its achievements could be wrecked by strife on the disappearance of the responsible personal factor. One had to go a long way back in Arabian history to find a combination of political genius and religious zeal in the person of the Prophet Muhammad, who had created in the desert a nucleus of Empire extending far beyond the limits of Arabia. Yet even that empire had fallen to pieces through the sapping of its religious foundations by political intrigue and foreign influences, to which the wild men of the desert are peculiarly susceptible, as indeed we have seen in our own times: an important contributory cause of its eventual collapse being the inevitable failure of any dynastic system to produce competent leaders at all times of crisis.

Now Ibn Sa'ud, brought up as he had been in all the simple austerity of the Prophet's faith, as set forth in his authentic sayings and, above all, in the Quran, has all through his life modelled his conduct quite consciously on that of Muhammad himself. Islam in the course of its long history has inevitably been subject to the infiltration of "innovations"; but at intervals it has been purified and restored to its essential form by such men as Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ibn Taimiya and Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab, whose doctrines revived those of the *Salaf al Salih*, or the "Upright Ancients", by whom are understood the successors and companions of the Prophet, on whose memories of the revelation itself and the *obiter dicta* of the master the religion of Islam has been built up. Thus Ibn Sa'ud's objective was clear from the beginning. The restoration of the true faith was to be the foundation of his temporal power, which would be used for the eradication of the inherent weaknesses of Arabian society as a step in the establishment of a permanent régime, which would not break up on the removal of the firm hand at the helm. This meant in effect an attempt to reform the Badawin elements of the country and to bring them into line with the settled towns and

* See below, p. 39 and also pp. 94-5.

villages, whose stake in the land assured their general loyalty to any effective central administration. This in turn involved a partial settlement of the Badawin on the land to give them a similar interest in peace, subject to the corollary that such settlement should be on a mixed rather than a tribal basis. The first step was to instil the fear of God into the tribes, for which purpose missionaries were trained and sent forth to preach the true faith and the unpleasant consequences of infidelity. And this was followed by a search for suitable sites for settlement and agricultural development. The education of the Badawin, who actually learned to read and write at this time, was of course not effected overnight; and it was not until 1912 that the first settlement of "brothers" was planted at the desert wells of Artawiya: to be the prototype of scores of cantonment colonies, destined to be pillars of the faith and to provide the Wahhabi army with its most fanatical troops. Ibn Sa'ud, out of his exiguous resources, provided the necessary funds for the building of mosques and for the maintenance of suitable ecclesiastical establishments, for the digging and equipment of wells and for other agricultural needs, and, above all, arms and ammunition to be used in the service of God. Artawiya and Ghatghat rapidly grew into considerable towns, with populations of about 10,000 souls, while the colonies of village status must have numbered about 200 at the peak of the movement. The total *Ikhwan* muster for military purposes must have been something like 25,000 men, though it is unlikely that more than 5,000 of them were ever called out for any particular expedition. Arabian conditions precluded the use of large numbers of men in those days; and the largest raiding parties, such as those which visited Trans-Jordan in 1922 and 1924, were seldom more than a thousand strong. For more ambitious projects, like the conquest of the Hijaz, the backbone of the Wahhabi armies was formed by the contingents of yeomen from the older towns, whose steadiness was a valuable asset in combination with the impetuousness of the *Ikhwan*, always less amenable to discipline in victory as in defeat.

The years immediately following the victory of Raudhat al Muhanna were thus spent mainly in the task of reorganisation and reconstruction; but from time to time Ibn Sa'ud had to concern himself with what may fairly be called mopping-up operations in various parts of the country. The new governor of Buraida, Muhammad abal Khail, was scarcely less untrustworthy than his predecessor, and was soon intriguing with Faisal al Duwish to restore the independence of the Qasim. Ibn Sa'ud came up in all haste to deal with

the situation, but found the gates of Buraida closed against him. Forcing an entrance with the connivance of friends in the town, he soon had the governor at his mercy: forgave him, warned him against a repetition of his disloyalty, and reinstated him in office—to continue his intrigues! Ibn Sa'ud, having dealt next with the Mutair for their share in the trouble, had barely reached Riyadh when news reached him of new developments in the Qasim. Under the active instigation of Shaikh Mubarak, the governor of Buraida and the Mutair, smarting under their recent punishment, had appealed for help to Hail, where Sultan ibn Hamud, having murdered Mit'ab ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz and two of his three brothers, had seized the throne. Ibn Sa'ud came up posthaste to 'Anaiza to find the confederates in force between him and Buraida, on which he marched without delay. In the course of a brisk but inconclusive action at Sabakh he himself suffered a broken collar-bone when his horse fell and rolled on him. In spite of that he continued his march to Tarafiya to deal with the Mutair, whom he defeated decisively in the open and whose main camp he occupied. Ibn Rashid had, however, followed in his tracks, and a vigorous battle lasted through the night till dawn, when the enemy, having lost many men and failed to dislodge the Wahhabis, retired to Hail. Ibn Sa'ud was not to be drawn in pursuit, as a Shammar garrison had been left behind to defend Buraida, whither he now bent his steps for a final settlement of accounts. This time the town was held against him, and he turned his attention to the surrounding villages, looting them unmercifully and taking their grazing cattle. Sultan ibn Hamud came back to relieve the situation, and the winter months were spent in the weary routine of Arab warfare, until, early in 1908, Ibn Rashid opened negotiations for peace, which was arranged on the basis of the *status quo ante*. In the same month (January) Sultan was murdered by his own brothers, Sa'ud and Faisal, the former seizing the throne, while the latter went to Jauf as governor. Meanwhile Ibn Sa'ud was free to deal with Buraida, whose gates were opened to him at night by citizens weary of continual conflict. Muhammad abal Khail surrendered on a guarantee of personal immunity, and left the town for ever for exile in 'Iraq. The victor, convinced that no citizen of Buraida could be trusted with power in the district, appointed his own cousin and loyal supporter, 'Abdullah ibn Jiluwi, as Governor-General of the Qasim; and the province never again troubled the central government.

Meanwhile Hail continued to be plagued with strife, and in September, 1908, a movement to restore Sa'ud, the youngest son of

'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Rashid, to the throne was organised by the Subhan cousins, Hamud and Zamil, members of one of the principal families of the town, who had been instrumental in saving the boy from Sultan's holocaust. Their appearance at the gate with a considerable force was welcomed by an important section of the people, who rose against the usurper. In the fighting which followed Sa'ud ibn Hamud was killed; other members of his family were put to death, while those who survived, including Faisal and Dhari, sought refuge at Riyadh. Sa'ud was proclaimed Amir under the regency of Hamud ibn Subhan who, on his death by poison shortly afterwards, was succeeded in the regency by Zamil. All this time Ibn Sa'ud had not been tempted to intervene in the affairs of Hail; and now under the auspices of the new regent the earlier territorial agreement was renewed with a reasonable prospect of prolonged peace between the two States.

It was now the turn of the south to give trouble. At Hariq near the head of the Hauta valley family quarrels had developed into civil war; and Ibn Sa'ud hastened to the scene to restore order. Unable with his small force to carry the town by assault, he drove a mine under the main fort; and his threat to blow it up compelled the Hazzani leaders to surrender. They were duly sent to Riyadh to reside there as guests of the Government.

But there was still to be no peace for Ibn Sa'ud. The failure of the rains in the winter and spring of 1909/10 and the ensuing drought had given rise to a recrudescence of tribal raiding; and the 'Ajman tribe had led off with an attack on the tribes of Kuwait with the cognisance and encouragement of the 'Araif "pretenders". Shaikh Mubarak's complaints reached Ibn Sa'ud at the same time as news of fresh activities on the part of the Shammar in pursuance of an understanding negotiated by Zamil ibn Subhan with Sa'dun Pasha of the Muntafiq. To keep Ibn Sa'ud at a distance the former was encouraging the 'Ajman to maintain their pressure on Kuwait in defiance of any orders they might receive from Riyadh, while Ibn Sa'ud himself was in correspondence with Nuri Sha'lan of the Ruwala and Fahad ibn Hadhdhal of the 'Amarat with a view to a concerted attack on Jabal Shammar, or on the camp of Ibn Subhan in the eastern desert. These political activities had but little military significance. The Wahhabis had a brush with the Muntafiq forces at Ghuraibiya near the 'Iraq frontier, while the 'Amarat camp was overrun and captured by a large raiding party of the Shammar. In the end it was Mubarak who took the lead in negotiating a peaceful arrangement between

all the parties concerned. He had now ceased to be interested in the Arabian balance of power of which he had so long dreamed, as the Turkish revolution of 1908 had created an Arab nationalist movement, of which he now posed as a champion together with Shaikh Khaz'al of Muhammara and Saiyid Talib of Basra, while Sa'dun Pasha stood forth as the local champion of the Committee of Union and Progress.

Somewhat unaccountably Ibn Sa'ud seemed now to be on the defensive in the midst of disturbing elements, which had little or nothing to lose and perhaps something to gain at his expense. His financial situation was none too good; and at this moment a new danger to his stability made its appearance in an unexpected quarter. In spite of opposition from the Badawin tribes and the Amirs of Mecca, the Hijaz railway had reached Madina in 1908; and in the same year Sultan 'Abdul-Hamid had nominated Sharif Husain ibn 'Ali to the vacant Amirate of Mecca. In that office he was of course the servant of the Turkish Government; and, while he successfully resisted the advance of the railway on Mecca, he showed himself loyal enough. It was not till 1911, however, that he had a chance of rendering distinguished service to the Turks in suppressing the Idrisi rising in the 'Asir province. This success, followed by his triumphal march from Abha, *via* Bisha, Ranya and Turaba to Taïf, marked him out as the ideal instrument for Turkish expansionism into the Arabian desert, in place of the now discredited Ibn Rashid. And Husain was soon showing what he could do in that direction. The 'Araif pretenders were now beginning to come out in the open as challengers for the Wahhabi throne, encouraged by the apparent stalemate in the general Arabian situation. Sa'ud al 'Arafa had taken the lead as the senior surviving representative of the family of Sa'ud ibn Faisal, and had gone down to the southern provinces, where friendly memories of his grandfather were most likely to rally some support for his cause. Ibn Sa'ud had followed him towards Hariq to deal the movement a decisive blow before it could develop; but his force was not strong enough to achieve that purpose. He accordingly sent his brother Sa'd to recruit levies among the 'Ataiba just at the moment when Sharif Husain had arrived at Quai'iya on a roving mission to bring the same 'Ataiba to the Turkish heel. Sa'd walked straight into his arms, and Husain made tracks for home with his precious booty. Ibn Sa'ud went in pursuit, not to fight but to bargain for the release of his favourite brother; and Husain met him more than half-way with a conciliatory message. He had only come to

show the Turkish flag in what was Turkish territory, and he had no hostile intentions towards Ibn Sa'ud who ruled that territory as a Turkish vassal. The latter had only to acknowledge Turkish suzerainty at least over the Qasim province, which was all that the Turks wanted in the desert, and to agree to pay a nominal tribute in respect of that area. If he agreed to these terms, well and good: his brother would be released instantly. Otherwise Sa'd would accompany him to the Hijaz to be handed over to the Turks as tangible evidence of Ibn Sa'ud's intransigence. So the Ottoman Empire had gained by the wit of Husain the position for which they had striven for years in arms and in alliance with Ibn Rashid. Ibn Sa'ud was in no position to bargain. He accepted the humiliating terms, and rejoiced at the return of the prodigal, with whom he returned to the scene of his cousins' activities. Husain went home rejoicing.

Ibn Sa'ud was now free to return to Hariq with a sizeable force. The Hazzani chiefs, having returned home after a short period of residence at Riyadh, had soon resumed their bickering with their rivals with the support of the 'Araif pretenders, who had been thwarted in an attempt to set up a shadow government in the province of Kharj by the local governor, Fahad ibn Mu'ammar. Ibn Sa'ud took the confederates by surprise; and the leaders of the latter, having no time to organise an effective defence of their position, retreated down the valley. The dour town of Hauta refused them asylum, and they fled southward to the Aflaj province, where one of the 'Araif, Faisal ibn Sa'd, had already found some support in Saih and had opened hostilities against the capital, Laila, the seat of the governor, Ahmad al Sudairi. Ibn Sa'ud pursued in leisurely fashion, showing the flag at Hauta where he was assured of the complete loyalty of the town; and by the time that he reached the Aflaj the seditious movement had already been stamped out by the governor, who had succeeded in capturing the 'Araif ringleader, Sa'ud ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz, and several of the Hazzani chiefs. The remainder had fled to Mecca, where they received an affectionate welcome from Sharif Husain, while one of the 'Araif, Turki, the brother of Sa'ud,* went down to the Hasa to raise the 'Ajman and other friendly tribes. The prisoners were paraded before Ibn Sa'ud at a public assembly, with halters round their necks. The chief rebel, Sa'ud, the husband of his sister Nura, received a free pardon for his treason, and was given the choice between remaining in Ibn Sa'ud's service and joining his refugee relatives at Mecca. He chose the former, and for

* See above, p. 15.

nearly forty years has vindicated the lenience of his cousin and sovereign by the staunchest loyalty in fair weather and foul. The Hazzani chiefs met with no such generosity; they had sinned once before and been forgiven; for them there could be no more clemency, and they were executed on the spot: apparently the sole exception of his career to his universal rule of generosity in the hour of victory.

Ibn Sa'ud remained awhile in the Aflaj to restore calm and confidence after these disturbances in the general area of the Dawasir tribe. He then proceeded to the Hasa to neutralise the efforts of Turki ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz to rouse the 'Ajman; but he had no sooner reached the province than an urgent appeal from Shaikh Mubarak for help against the increasing pressure of Sa'dun Pasha caused him to divert his march northwards to Hafar al Batin. In alliance with the Dhafir tribe under Mubarak ibn Suwait, he raided the Muntafiq camps at Kabda and near Zubair, until requested by the Turks to desist from hostilities so near the frontiers of Basra. So he turned southward into the Hasa hinterland to deal with the 'Ajman in earnest only to be baulked again by Turkish protests.

Back at Riyadh, with the question of the legitimacy of his position settled once and for all time by the ordeal of battle, he set himself seriously to consummate the programme of religious revival at which he had now been working spasmodically for some years. The settlement of Artawiya took practical shape in 1912, while the *Ikhwān* movement as a whole had developed sufficiently to place in his hands a powerful military instrument both for defence and for offence. And, the collapse of the 'Araīf movement having in effect reduced to a negligible minimum the danger of serious trouble in his own territories, it was clear that Ibn Sa'ud was now thinking in terms of aggression and expansion at the expense of his neighbours. How far he thought he could go on these lines raises a question to which he himself probably never sought an answer. He was content to feel his way forward without any specific limit to his ambitions.

It is curious that in these circumstances he seemed to ignore Hail and the northern part of Arabia, which was not only an integral part of his ancestors' dominions and of the desert economy, but which was always liable to form a bridgehead for Turkish imperialism: or, at least, for a Turkish advance into the Qasim province, which he had so recently signed away as the price of his brother's freedom. It is scarcely less strange perhaps that at this stage he was not taking very seriously the potential new danger from the west, to which the same act had opened the door. He may well have felt confident of

his capacity to deal with any Arab encroachment on his territories, short of active military support thereof by the Turks, who were scarcely likely to intervene themselves after their unhappy experiences of the Bukairiya campaign. He was, of course, not too well supplied with funds or ammunition; and he may well have thought it best to let sleeping dogs lie, while keeping his own powder dry for more serious business. He must indeed at this time have had a pretty fair idea of what that business might be, as it was he that was to take the initiative in the matter.

The Turks had now been solidly established in the Hasa province for forty years; and Captain G. E. Leachman, in the course of a long journey from Baghdad, *via* the Qasim and Riyadh, where he had met Ibn Sa'ud just before his expedition to Hariq, had found the Turkish garrison at Hufshuf happy and full of easy confidence at the beginning of 1913. Within four months of his visit that garrison and its satellite outposts in various other places in the Hasa had left Arabia for good, and the Turkish occupation had ended! Actually the Turks had never been any more comfortable in the Hasa than they were in the outlying parts of 'Iraq, like Suq al Shuyukh for instance. They kept to the towns and roads for safety; and on the latter they had fortified posts at frequent intervals to ensure the passage of their supply caravans and messengers. The troops did not like service in the Arabian provinces; and the utmost that can be said of them is that they tried to make the best of a bad job. In the Yaman and 'Asir they often took wives locally and reared their families in such comfort as was obtainable; but the mortality rate in their ranks was high. Service in Arábia generally meant a life sentence.

Ibn Sa'ud had doubtless had his plans ready for some time, to put to the test of action; nevertheless it was the Turks who volunteered the necessary provocation. With good reason they regarded Ibn Sa'ud as an enemy, unamenable to reason or other inducements; and they did not believe in leaving enemies alone to become strong. Thus at the beginning of 1913 they had spread a wide net of intrigue and unrest round the fringes of Wahhabi Arabia. Sharif Husain, with his guests the fugitive 'Araif, was perhaps at this time the principal factor in their efforts to keep the desert in a ferment; the 'Ajman were a perennial source of annoyance to Ibn Sa'ud, while Faisal al Duwish, with his Mutair tribesmen, was easily suborned to disturb the peace with sporadic raids; Sa'dun Pasha had now been succeeded by his son 'Ajaimi, who was nothing loth to fly the flag of the Committee; Ibn Rashid, or rather Zamil ibn Subhan, was always a potential

instrument of provocation, though for some reason quiescent at the moment, while Mubarak, as a leader of Arab nationalism, was quite out of favour.

Ibn Sa'ud was not blind to what was happening all round him, but deliberately ignored the pin-pricks of a foe who was clearly not disposed to attack in earnest. He had gone out to his annual spring camp on the pools of Khafs in February, to graze his camels and horses on the rich pastures of the neighbourhood; and he had kept his hand in with the usual minor raids against Mutair and 'Ajman elements in the surrounding desert. There was nothing to suggest that he was contemplating any extraordinary activity. Yet at the beginning of May he arrived after sunset with a striking force of 600 men at some wells within a few miles of Hufhuf. He had, through friends in the town, secured all the information he needed about the defences of the fort and the habits of the defenders. When darkness set in, having meanwhile fashioned a few rough scaling ladders out of palm-trunks, he approached the walls of the great fort of Kut on three sides. The sleeping sentries were cut down, and the rest of the garrison fled panic-stricken to the great mosque; leaving the fort to the invaders, who proclaimed their advent to the astonished towns-folk from its walls. A messenger was sent to the local governor and military commandant, demanding the surrender of the garrison on the understanding that it would be allowed to depart in peace to the coast. In the event of refusal the attack would be resumed, while a mine driven under the mosque would be exploded. His terms were accepted, and on May 5th, 1913, the Turks marched out of the Hasa capital on their last journey to the coast, with a representative of Ibn Sa'ud, his cousin Ahmad ibn Thunaian, to see that they got there unmolested by the Arab tribes on the way. The small garrison at 'Uqair also surrendered to Ahmad ibn Thunaian, who lost no time in embarking some of the troops in sailing boats for Bahrain: the remainder being taken off some days later by a small British steamer called "John-O-Scott". Bimbashi Nuris Bey was sent from Basra to assume command of the evacuated troops, but found them unwilling to accompany him back to the scene of their discomfiture. An expedition was, however, sent to save Qatif from the Wahhabis: only to find that it had been forestalled by 'Abdul-Rahman ibn Suwailim, who had occupied the town and installed himself as its governor. The garrison was brought back to Bahrain, where Qa'im-maqam 'Abdul-Jabbar Bey had meanwhile arrived to take command; and on May 26th, Nuris Bey was sent with a force to reoccupy 'Uqair.

On the approach of a Wahhabi force, however, most of the troops took to the boats, leaving an officer and sixty men in the fort, which soon surrendered to Ibn Sa'ud when he appeared in person on the scene. This contingent was disarmed and sent by boat to Bahrain, where it arrived on May 30th. Thus in less than a month Ibn Sa'ud had cleared the Turks out of the Hasa province for good. And it was perhaps as well for him that he had struck when he did, for there can be little doubt that eighteen months later the British would have occupied the province, to complete their control of the whole of the Arabian littoral of the Persian Gulf!

CHAPTER III

EARLY CONTACTS WITH BRITAIN

"**Y**ES," said the king, "those were after all the best days of my life: the decisive phase, in comparison with which the rest has been easy going: the years of struggle in the desert, with hunger and thirst ever present in company with danger: not a long period, ten years perhaps, or a dozen, in all; but every day of it full of enjoyment and good companionship, never to be forgotten."

The king was in reminiscent mood. He had been making an unusually long sojourn at Jidda in January, 1949, before returning to Riyadh after his pilgrimage visitation. And, according to the daily custom of the court on such occasions, the notables of Jidda had been dining with His Majesty. Over the coffee, served after dinner in the great chamber of the Khizam Palace, some trivial remark had stirred his memory of days of yore and times long gone before. The years fell away; and the guests of the old king listened in rapturous silence, as the young Ibn Sa'ud sat once more over those desert camp-fires among the doughty companions of his adventures, recounting the thrilling details of that old-fashioned warfare with all the inimitable eloquence of the wilderness. Then, as suddenly as he had begun, he desisted from his soliloquy with the half-apologetic peroration which I have quoted at the beginning of this chapter. And the assembled company rose to join him at the evening prayer before scattering to its homes.

If Ibn Sa'ud was born in the purple, it was not to any expectation of greatness in the ordinary course; and certainly greatness has never been thrust on him. But he achieved greatness by his own merit, and by virtue of a strong personality which is almost without parallel in the history of the Arabs. Yet it came with something of a shock to realise that the period which he himself regards as the peak of his career left virtually no mark on contemporary history. It had come to an end some years before I first met Ibn Sa'ud in 1917; and it was nearing its end when Captain Shakespear, then British Political Agent at Kuwait, met him for the first time by chance at his spring



H.R.H. the Amir Sa'ud and his brother
Fahd at Buraidah in 1948



H.R.H. the Amir Sa'ud, Crown Prince of
Saudi Arabia, in 1948



The King (standing in centre), with some of his children and Ziqirt, inspecting a quarry in
Wadi Sharif in 1938

camp in the eastern desert in 1911. And that, so far as I know, was the first time that any Englishman had ever actually met him. In fact, the British Government, long since committed to responsibility for the policing of the Persian Gulf and to the maintenance of a privileged position at key points on both its shores, had laid it down in 1897 as a cardinal principle of its policy that it "was not disposed to interfere [in Arabia] more than was necessary for the maintenance of general peace in the Persian Gulf". Nevertheless it was at that time becoming involved in the local politics of Kuwait, whose astute ruler, Shaikh Mubarak ibn Sabah, was firmly though unostentatiously resisting the centralising policy of the Sublime Porte, which claimed the town and a wide though vaguely conceived area of its hinterland as integral parts of the Ottoman Empire. And in 1899 the British Government had gone to the length of establishing a friendly understanding with Shaikh Mubarak, whom it promised to support against Turkish aggression! As already noted, it was at about this time that Turkey and Germany were actively discussing the famous project of a "Berlin-Baghdad" railway, whose sea terminal was envisaged as being in the neighbourhood of Kuwait.

At this juncture the principal members of the Sa'ud family were in residence at Kuwait as guests of the Shaikh during the occupation of their homeland by the rival dynasty of Ibn Rashid. Shaikh Mubarak was inevitably interested in the politics of the desert hinterland, where Turkish support of Ibn Rashid represented a menace to his own security and "independence". It was natural enough that he should regard the presence of the Sa'ud family within his gates as an asset in his feud with Ibn Rashid, while subsequent events automatically created a balance of power in the desert, which relieved him of much of his anxiety. It was in these circumstances that the British Government used all its influence with him to discourage his embroilment in desert politics, lest it should revive Turkish interest in Kuwait itself, and thus precipitate the honouring of the pledge to protect its independence against Turkish encroachment.

At the same time Ibn Sa'ud, while mainly preoccupied with the task of settling accounts with Ibn Rashid, had been long enough in Kuwait to realise that it was with the Turks that he would ultimately have to reckon: more especially as they were at the time in solid occupation of the Hasa province, and its seaports so essential to the well-being of Najd. It is certain that at a very early period after his restoration to his ancestral territories he became convinced of the need of an understanding with Great Britain on lines similar to those already

achieved by Kuwait. And it was in 1904, when a British Agent* was appointed to Kuwait for the first time, that he initiated a tentative move in this direction, and made overtures to the British through his father, the Imam 'Abdul-Rahman. This initiative was politely parried, as the British Government was at least outwardly on friendly terms with the Turks, and had no desire to create the impression that it was intriguing against their interests in Arabia.

Having deliberately adopted this policy, the British authorities in the Gulf proceeded equally deliberately to ignore the important developments which were taking place in the Arabian desert. And Ibn Sa'ud was already fully established as one of the biggest, if not the biggest, factors in Arabian politics, when Captain Shakespear met him in camp in 1911. Here again it was the Wahhabi chief who took the initiative in pressing for the reconsideration of the British position. He reminded Shakespear of his father's overtures to Major Knox in 1904, and of the treaty (*sic*) entered into by his grandfather, Faisal ibn Sa'ud, with Colonel Lewis Pelly in 1865. He told him how much he disliked the Turks in general, and their new régime in particular with its declared policy of ottomanising Arabia. He explained how irksome to Najd was their occupation of the Hasa and its ports; and he made the specific proposition that, if this situation could be remedied (with British assistance), he would welcome a British agent at one of the ports in question. This would be of real benefit to British trade with the interior, where the greater security now assured on the caravan routes would obviate the risks inherent in Turkish control of the coast.

To all this Shakespear could only give the stereotyped reply that Britain's interests were strictly confined to the coast, and that she recognised the right of Turkey to order the affairs of Central Arabia, with which she had no concern. He added that we were on friendly terms with Turkey, and had no desire to be regarded as poaching on her preserves. It is difficult to believe that this was all that passed between Shakespear and Ibn Sa'ud on this occasion, while it is a fact that Sir Percy Cox, in passing his subordinate's report on to higher authority, commented on the intractability of the Turks in matters affecting British interests in the Gulf, and advised that Ibn Sa'ud's clearly stated attitude should be noted for future attention in case of need. While emphasising the greatly increased authority of the Wahhabi chief, he recommended that his friendship should be cultivated, even if at a distance. This found little favour at the Foreign

* See above, p. 16.

Office, which accordingly decreed the maintenance of a policy of strict non-intervention in the affairs of the desert.

Ibn Sa'ud was thus left to his own resources; and two years later, without the British help he had solicited, he attacked the Hasa and drove the Turkish garrisons out of eastern Arabia for ever. The Sublime Porte reacted but feebly to this sensational challenge, and made no serious effort to recover the lost province. But Ibn Sa'ud himself was by no means over-confident of his ability to hold his new position single-handed.

During these first few months in the Hasa his administrative preoccupations were accordingly interspersed with diplomatic or political activities. The British Political Agent in Bahrain paid him a visit of courtesy at 'Uqair, during which an exchange of views no doubt took place on the general implications of the new situation, in which Ibn Sa'ud might well be a powerful influence for combating German penetration beyond the now restricted limits of the Turkish Empire. The Turks themselves, seemingly resigned to the loss of the Hasa, nevertheless sought to restore by diplomacy a situation which could not be re-established with the military resources at their disposal. They lost no time in sending Saiyid Talid to negotiate a settlement of all outstanding issues with Ibn Sa'ud, who met him at Subaihiya in Kuwait territory, while at the same time Sulaiman Shafiq Kamali Pasha, the *Wali* of Basra, was promising Ibn Rashid all the arms and ammunition he might need for an attack on his rival! The Subaihiya conversations resulted in a verbal understanding that Ibn Sa'ud should formally recognise Turkish suzerainty, however vague and ineffectual, over his territories, while the Turks should provide him with money and arms sufficient to maintain his position. There does not, however, seem to be anything on record regarding any steps taken by either party to implement the terms of this agreement.

And towards the end of the year Ibn Sa'ud was again in unofficial contact with Captain Shakespear, when the latter passed through Riyadh in the course of his great journey across Arabia from Kuwait to the Suez Canal. His visit provided an opportunity for a general review of the whole situation arising out of the extrusion of the Turks from the Arabian desert.

The general object of these conversations was to pave the way for an understanding, for which Ibn Sa'ud was very anxious, while Shakespear was unable to commit himself to a show of similar zeal for a reason which he did not communicate to the Wahhabi prince.

The British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, and a Turkish Envoy in London, Ibrahim Haqqi Pasha, had for some time been in negotiation for the clarification of the position of their respective countries in respect of the various territories along the Persian Gulf littoral, where there might be a conflict of interests. A treaty dealing with Kuwait, Bahrain and the Trucial Coast States, but significantly omitting all reference to the Hasa, which was apparently tacitly assumed to be still Turkish territory, had been actually signed on July 29th, 1913, with provision for its ratification within three months, though this period was somewhat prophetically extended to October 31st, 1914, the day on which Britain declared war on Turkey! Simultaneously, or very soon after, and in spite of the fact that Turkey had lost its *locus standi* in respect of all central and eastern Arabia, negotiations were proceeding between the same plenipotentiaries for a settlement of a much wider character in respect of the rest of the peninsula. These talks would, of course, have greatly interested Ibn Sa'ud in that, in effect, they sought to delimit his southern frontier without his consent or even knowledge. Be that as it may, the negotiations were brought to a satisfactory conclusion in a treaty signed on March 9th, 1914, and ratified on June 3rd, 1914, whereby the whole of southern Arabia, south of a line running from the base of the Qatar peninsula to the westernmost point of the agreed and demarcated boundary between the Aden Protectorate and the Turkish province of the Yaman, was gaily signed away to the British Empire by the envoy of a government which at no time had, nor ever would have, shown its nose in any part of the territory concerned. The reasons for the British jumping of potential claims in this area are clear enough, for the old-fashioned imperialism was still in full swing in those days; but it is more difficult to understand the attitude of the Ottoman Government in the matter, unless it simply arose from a desire to spite Ibn Sa'ud for his refusal to come quietly to heel. Airy and meaningless references to "the Ottoman *sanjak* of Nejd" and "the Nejd *sanjak*" did little to conceal the effrontery of these proceedings; and it is not surprising that the British Government, actively concerned though it was to consider and discuss the frontiers of Ibn Sa'ud's dominions at various times during the following ten or fifteen years, never alluded to the existence of these treaties until after 1930, when it was beginning to take an interest in the Hadhramaut area. Ibn Sa'ud has, of course, always refused to discuss the matter on the basis of these treaties with the Turks; and the southern boundary of Sa'udi Arabia

remains undefined to this day, when the suspected presence of oil makes the problem much more acute and difficult than it would have been many years ago. The matter has for some years now been under active discussion between the two governments.*

Soon after the signature of the second treaty, and after the refusal by the Turks of a British offer of mediation between them and Ibn Sa'ud, Colonel W. G. Grey, then Political Agent at Kuwait, informed the latter that the British Government could not hold out to him any hope of assistance in his difficulties with the Sublime Porte, as it had already concluded with the Ottoman Government a comprehensive treaty dealing with all matters of mutual concern to both countries. Ibn Sa'ud immediately sought an understanding with the Turks through Sulaiman Shafiq Kamali Pasha, with whom he had had some correspondence three years earlier in curious circumstances. The *Wali* of Basra had been instructed to ascertain his views regarding the line of policy most appropriate for adoption by the Turks in respect of Arabia in general, and at that time in respect of the 'Asir and Yaman provinces in particular. The opinion he expressed sounds in retrospect like a pre-echo of views advanced some years later by another ambitious Arabian potentate for British approval. After criticising the policy of disintegration hitherto pursued in Arabia by the Ottoman Government, Ibn Sa'ud had suggested the convening of a conference of all interested parties on neutral ground with a view to an agreed unification of the whole country under a single ruler, in which rôle he could scarcely have envisaged anyone but himself! He had, however, put forward as an alternative the recognition of all the existing elements, each under its own natural chief, as self-governing entities under the general suzerainty of the Sublime Porte. In either case Turkey would be assured of loyal Arab co-operation in any trouble arising with a foreign Power. The essential point was the recognition of Arab independence. His advice, of course, fell on deaf ears; and his present approach to the *Wali* of Basra was therefore in his own particular interests. The Turks appear to have informed the British Government that a secret treaty had eventuated from these talks; but the archives of Sa'udi Arabia have no record of any such formal agreement. Ibn Sa'ud, however, expressed his general readiness to consider himself as the *Wali* of Najd, to fly the Turkish flag on appropriate occasions, and generally to administer his territories as a vassal of the Sultan, while keeping its revenues for himself and

* Discussions in London in August, 1951, between the Foreign Office and the Amir Faisal failed to bring this problem any nearer to a final solution.

conducting the government without any interference from Istanbul. No question arose of even a nominal tribute, as in the case of Sharif Husain's earlier agreement in respect of the Qasim. Much less was there any question of the realisation of Turkish aims, as confided by Tal 'at Pasha to the British Ambassador at Constantinople. Even at this stage they envisaged bringing the northern and southern sections of central Arabia under some form of indirect control. The respective spheres of Ibn Sa'ud and Ibn Rashid were to be delimited; and representatives of the Ottoman Government were to be stationed at Riyadh and Hail to watch and control the activities of the rival chiefs. Ibn Sa'ud was to be appointed *Mutasarrif* of the Hasa province; but Turkish garrisons were to be stationed in its ports as before, while Turkish officials would collect customs dues. The *Wali* of Basra was briefed accordingly for the negotiations to be conducted with Ibn Sa'ud, who, as already mentioned, had taken the initiative in suggesting them. Without hope of any British support, he was not in a position to be truculent with the offended Porte; but in the conversations that ensued he proved an astute bargainer: holding his ground firmly on all essential points. The utmost he was prepared to concede was a face-saving arrangement with the Porte on the lines above indicated. While acknowledging the vague suzerainty of the Sultan, and agreeing to fly the Turkish flag, he was to be hereditary *Wali* and Commander-in-Chief of Najd instead of a mere *Mutasarrif* of the Hasa. Instead of admitting Turkish troops and customs officials into the ports on his coast, he was to provide their garrisons and civil staff himself. And he was to collect the taxes for the benefit of his own country, on the understanding that, in the very unlikely event of a surplus of revenue over expenditure, the balance would be remitted to Constantinople. He did, however, agree to conduct all correspondence with foreign Powers through the Sublime Porte, and to support the Turks in the event of war.

In actual fact this agreement, like the previous one made with Saiyid Talib, never reached the stage of implementation so far as the concessions made to Ottoman susceptibilities were concerned. The administration of the Hasa remained firmly in Ibn Sa'ud's hands; and some months later, after the outbreak of war between Britain and Turkey, he explained to Shakespear that he had only agreed to this measure of accommodation in the conviction that the suzerain rights accorded to Turkey would never become operative in his territory. And, as will appear later, he was quite firm in his refusal to co-operate with the Turks when they became involved in the war.

Meanwhile, during these latter years, Ibn Sa'ud had not neglected the need of strengthening his military position in central Arabia, where he could not afford to ignore the possibility of a come-back on the part of Ibn Rashid. Shaikh Mubarak of Kuwait is alleged to have had a poor opinion of Ibn Sa'ud as a tactician and as a leader in battle. However strange such an opinion may seem in view of the two remarkable exploits by which he captured Riyadh and Hufuf, it can scarcely be questioned that he was a strategist of a high order. He had at any rate evaluated the weaknesses of the society of which he was now the acknowledged leader. And he had taken steps to rectify its shortcomings from the military point of view by initiating an organisation of which little was heard at the time, though in later years it was destined to become world-famous as the lynch-pin of his subsequent expansion and consolidation. This was the *Ikhwan* movement, launched by him in 1912 with the establishment of a small colony of soldier-saints at the desert wells of Artawiya, some distance to the east of Zilfi on the main track from Kuwait to the Qasim. I have had occasion to discuss this development in the preceding chapter,* but I refer to it again here because the Dutch traveller, Barclay Raunkiaer, visited the locality in the course of a journey from Kuwait to Buraida some months before the foundation of the colony, and appears to have been unaware of the plan for the conversion of the well area into a militant religious cantonment. Not many months later a famous English traveller, Captain G. E. Leachman,† went down from Baghdad through Buraida to Riyadh, where he made a fleeting contact with Ibn Sa'ud: continuing his journey eastwards to the Hasa, which was still in Turkish occupation, though soon to change hands. He also failed to sense the atmosphere of change which was beginning to pervade the desert in consequence of the still incipient *Ikhwan* movement. Nor did Shakespear, when travelling across Arabia in the winter of 1913/14, appreciate the potentialities of an idea which was already beginning to galvanise the nomad tribes of the desert into the semblance of a viable State.

To return from this digression: it soon became manifest that Turkey was sliding into an accommodation with Germany; and the British Government was forced to consider measures for meeting the contingency of war with the former. In reckoning up our potential assets in the Persian Gulf area, the possibility, or desirability, of an understanding with Ibn Sa'ud could not be ignored. And it was thus that Captain Shakespear, then in England on leave, was ordered to

* See above, p. 22.

† See above, p. 29.

return at once to the Gulf with a view to getting into touch with Ibn Sa'ud. Meanwhile a message was sent to the latter, informing him of this arrangement, and offering him in advance full British recognition of his position in Najd and the Hasa, and a guarantee of protection against Turkish attacks by land or sea, if he would commit himself to the allied cause. A great change had come over the scene since April; and it was now the British Government that was doing all the soliciting. The Turks were, of course, doing the same in an effort to harness the rival Arab chieftains to their cause. Ibn Rashid was to assist in the projected invasion of Egypt, while Ibn Sa'ud was to harry the British advance into Mesopotamia. Meanwhile Ibn Sa'ud himself was more concerned to attack Ibn Rashid, and unwilling to commit himself either way on the major issue. Enver Pasha sent him funds to equip himself for co-operation with the Turkish forces; and Saiyid Talib was sent to encourage him in the right direction. To these blandishments he replied evasively that he could spare no troops for co-operation with the Turks until he had settled accounts with Ibn Rashid, while his reply to the British message was on somewhat different lines. He had long been, and still was, desirous of closer relations with Great Britain; but he could scarcely be expected to declare outright for our cause unless assured of the permanence of our change of policy towards him. Nevertheless, though with some hesitancy, he agreed to Shakespear's visit; and the meeting took place in his war-camp—he was manœuvring to come to grips with Ibn Rashid—at Khufaisa, some twenty miles south of Artawiya.

With characteristic directness Ibn Sa'ud demanded that any assurances of support we were prepared to give, as a *quid pro quo* for his adhesion to our cause, should be embodied in a formal treaty, the terms of which were drafted on the spot. Britain was to recognise and guarantee his complete independence, while Ibn Sa'ud was to refrain from all dealings with other Powers without prior reference to the British authorities. Other clauses dealt with the financial and military assistance which Britain would be expected to provide for Ibn Sa'ud's operations against the enemy, namely Ibn Rashid, who was already committed to co-operation with the Turks.

Shakespear reported these proceedings to Sir Percy Cox, and remained with Ibn Sa'ud pending the receipt of an answer. He was informed by his host that an understanding already existed between himself and the Sharif of Mecca and the chiefs of the northern 'Anaza tribes to stand together on the issues raised by the state of war. At the

same time Ibn Sa'ud sought his advice regarding a party of four emissaries of the Turks who had visited him to urge his co-operation with Ibn Rashid in a *Jihad* against the infidel enemy, and whom he had detained pending a decision as to their future. These men were now dismissed with a message to the effect that, as Ibn Rashid was actually engaged in hostilities with him at that moment, no co-operation with him was possible. But the proposal for a *Jihad* was raised again from a different direction during Shakespear's stay in the camp. A letter was received by Ibn Sa'ud on January 17th from Mecca, in which 'Abdullah, the Sharif's second son, informed him that his father had been called upon by the Turks to proclaim a holy war, but was temporising until he could ascertain the attitude of Ibn Sa'ud towards such a proposition. The latter replied that he had already dismissed a deputation sent to him with a similar proposition, and that he saw no advantage to the Arabs in joining the Turks.

Meanwhile the rival armies were playing for position; and on January 24th battle was actually joined at Jarrab about half-way between Artawiya and Zilfi. Ibn Rashid had the advantage in cavalry, and used it effectively at a critical stage of the struggle, when the Wahhabi infantry seemed to have won the day in reaching the enemy camp, which, with typical Arab fecklessness, they proceeded to loot instead of making sure of victory. In particular the 'Ajman tribe, whose loyalty to Ibn Sa'ud was very doubtful, retired from the scene of combat with their spoils; and the decisive cavalry charge at the end of the day met with but feeble resistance. Shakespear, a conspicuous figure in British military uniform, had taken up a position near the two field-pieces of the Wahhabis, whose fire he was directing when the cavalry charged. And in the *sauve qui peut* which ensued he was killed in circumstances which could never be precisely ascertained. On the whole the battle had gone in favour of Ibn Rashid, although the loss of his tents and impedimenta made it impossible for him to continue in the field, while the defection of his Badawin auxiliaries forced Ibn Sa'ud to withdraw from the scene. So far as the British were concerned, the danger of any immediate intervention by Ibn Rashid on the flank of the advance into Mesopotamia could now be discounted.

Meanwhile Sir Percy Cox had received authorisation from home to proceed on the lines of the draft treaty of Khufaisa, though the loss of Shakespear seems to have discouraged him from any immediate action in the matter. Ibn Sa'ud, on the other hand, lost no time in asking for the appointment of another officer to take

Shakespear's place to complete the negotiation of the treaty, and instructed his local agent at Basra, 'Abdul-Latif ibn Mandil, to keep in touch with the Chief Political Officer. The latter replied that no suitable officer was available for service in Najd; and at the same time suggested that Ibn Sa'ud should sign a preliminary agreement on the lines of the Khufaisa draft, leaving the final treaty to be completed and signed at a later date. The new draft accompanying this letter was duly signed and returned by Ibn Sa'ud, though with a number of alterations and reservations regarding which further discussion would be necessary: preferably at a personal meeting between himself and Sir Percy Cox. The conclusion of the treaty was therefore deferred to a more convenient occasion; and it was not until towards the end of the year that contact was resumed between the parties.

Meanwhile Ibn Sa'ud was kept busy with domestic troubles. No attempt was made to renew operations against Ibn Rashid after the mutually unsatisfactory affair of Jarrab; and in June the rival chieftains, after some correspondence through intermediaries, agreed to bury the hatchet. Rather surprisingly Ibn Rashid acceded to all the territorial demands of Ibn Sa'ud, though he refused to recognise the latter's pretensions to overlordship in respect of Jabal Shammar, the effective boundary between which and Najd proper was to be a line running through Kahafa on the northern frontier of the Qasim. He also agreed to correlate his external policy with that of Ibn Sa'ud, and in particular to refrain from intrigues with the Turks. This agreement did not, however, restrain Ibn Rashid from an attempt to encroach on the Qasim province later in the year, when Ibn Sa'ud was fully occupied in the suppression of a serious rebellion against his authority in the Hasa, where the 'Ajman* tribe rose in support of the pretensions of certain members of the senior branch of the Sa'ud family. At this time Ibn Sa'ud found himself short of money and arms, and was not in a position to operate freely at a distance from his headquarters at Hufshuf; but the British authorities at Bahrain, in response to his appeals, facilitated the despatch of ammunition for his use. In due course he recovered the initiative against the 'Ajman and, with the assistance of a force sent to his aid by Shaikh Mubarak of Kuwait, routed the rebel tribe, which sought refuge in Kuwait territory, in September. British goodwill towards him was now manifested in practical form by the presentation of a gift of 1,000 rifles, together with a "loan" of £20,000, to enable him to keep the refractory tribes in order. And on December 26th, 1915, the long-

* See below, pp. 61-63.

deferred meeting between him and Sir Percy Cox took place at Qatif, where the treaty was duly signed and sealed. In it Ibn Sa'ud was referred to as "Ruler (*Hakim?*) of Najd, al Hasa, Qatif and Jubail, and the towns and ports belonging to them". In clause I he was recognised by the British Government as "the independent ruler thereof and absolute chief of their tribes" with reversion to his sons and descendants, subject to the proviso that his successor (or successors) should not be antagonistic to Britain; and the same clause also provided for the discussion and determination in due course of the dependencies and territories of the Wahhabi chief. Clause II promised all suitable aid in the event of aggression by a foreign Power against Ibn Sa'ud; and in the next clause the latter agreed to refrain from any kind of relations with other foreign Powers. Clause IV provided against the possibility of the alienation in any way of any part of his territories or the grant of concessions therein, without the consent of the British Government, to any foreign Power or to the nationals of any such Power. In the following clause Ibn Sa'ud undertook to keep open the pilgrim road to the Hijaz and to protect pilgrims thereon; while in clause VI he undertook absolutely to refrain from any interference in the territories of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the Oman coast, "who are under the protection of the British Government and who have treaty relations with the said Government": the limits of the territories in question being left over for later determination.

It is somewhat significant that, while Sir Percy Cox was at considerable pains to protect all the Persian Gulf *protégés* of great Britain from possible aggression by Ibn Sa'ud, not a word was said regarding the obligations of either party in respect of the western frontier of the Wahhabi domain. Clause II of the treaty might, perhaps, have been regarded as covering the very unlikely contingency of a Turkish advance into Najd from the Hijaz, where the Ottoman Government was, of course, at this time still in control. But the real reason for the omission of any reference to the west from the treaty was, doubtless, that negotiations were already well advanced between Sir Henry Macmahon and Sharif Husain of Mecca for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab problem as a *quid pro quo* for the latter's rebellion against the Turks. Sir Percy Cox did not, therefore, consider it necessary or expedient to enlighten Ibn Sa'ud on the fact or nature of such negotiations, which, in view of past manifestations of Sharifian interest in the Hijaz hinterland, would have caused Ibn Sa'ud far more perturbation than a problematic

Turkish attack on his western confines. In fact, since the outbreak of war, relations between Sharif Husain and Ibn Sa'ud had been correct enough in face of a common enemy, with whom neither wished the other to be on good terms. But the preferential treatment received by Husain in contrast with the meagre treaty he himself had been induced to sign, coupled with unmistakable manifestations of the Sharif's far-reaching ambitions, produced a profound change in Ibn Sa'ud's attitude. When informed by Sir Percy Cox in June, 1916, of the Sharif's rebellion against the Turks and its first results in Mecca and Jidda, he offered his congratulations on the discomfiture of the enemy, while expressing his anxiety lest the pretensions of Husain to the leadership of the Arabs might create a situation totally unacceptable to himself.

Meanwhile Husain himself had written to Ibn Sa'ud, notifying him of the expulsion of the Turks from Mecca and asking for his co-operation; and he had replied that, while he was ready to give the Sharif all the assistance in his power, he would be glad of a written assurance that the latter would not encroach on his preserves or interfere with his subjects. In communicating the news of this exchange of letters to Sir Percy Cox, Ibn Sa'ud specifically enquired whether, in the British Government's view, the future relations between Najd and the Hijaz were a matter for settlement between the two parties concerned, or whether British interests were involved, in which case he was ready to be guided by our wishes. Meanwhile Husain had replied to his letter with considerable frankness, returning the draft assurance with the remark that such a letter could only have been "penned by a madman or a man in his cups". The stage was thus set for a long conflict with the odds in all appearance heavily against Ibn Sa'ud; but, apart from sending a copy of the Sharif's letter to Basra for information, he kept his head and refused to flirt with the enemy in response to a letter received about the same time from Sharif 'Ali Haidar, who had been appointed Amir of Mecca by the Turks in supersession of the rebel Husain, and had arrived at Madina to assume office.

From the British point of view the widening breach between the two Arab leaders was regrettable; but, in view of the greater probability of positive action in support of the British war effort developing in western rather than in central Arabia, British policy tended from this time onwards to concentrate on the encouragement of Husain at all costs. It was thus left to Sir Percy Cox to conform with this policy by keeping Ibn Sa'ud in play with conciliatory

gestures and assurances. And in the latter part of October he wrote to Ibn Sa'ud, reviewing developments in the Hijaz at length and pointing out the urgent need of co-operation among all Arab leaders in matters vital to the Arab cause itself, which enjoyed the full support of the British Government. At the same time he sought to remove the misgivings of Ibn Sa'ud by assuring him that the Sharif had no hostile intentions towards Najd, and must of necessity recognise the validity of the Qatif treaty and its assurance of Ibn Sa'ud's independence.

Be that as it may, the latter's efforts to harry Ibn Rashid in accordance with an undertaking given by him at Qatif became somewhat perfunctory: the rebellious activities of the 'Ajman and Murra tribes being made the excuse for the limitation of his campaign against Jabal Shammar to two small and ineffectual raids during the summer and autumn of 1916. In fact Ibn Sa'ud had some ground for complaint, not only in the manifest priority of consideration accorded to the Sharif, but also in British acquiescence in the settlement of the 'Ajman on the confines of 'Iraq with personal allowances to their chiefs subject to good behaviour. It must have seemed to him that the recognition of his independence was being whittled down by *ad hoc* reservations on matters of vital import to him, including the levying at Kuwait of transit dues on goods booked through that port for Najd. Indeed the growing estrangement between Najd and Kuwait was now becoming a source of considerable anxiety to the British authorities. Shaikh Mubarak himself, who died in December, 1915, had become increasingly critical and jealous of Ibn Sa'ud towards the end of his life; and his son and successor, Jabir, though inclined to be friendly and conciliatory, was unable in his short reign of little more than a year to do anything to lessen the tension, while Salim, his brother and successor, was definitely hostile to Ibn Sa'ud.

Meanwhile the Turks, spurred into activity by the Hijaz rebellion, were making a desperate bid for the favour of central Arabia. A deputation, including some German officers with gifts of guns and arms, visited Hail, while a less ostentatious mission was sent to buy camels in Ibn Sa'ud's country, where its personnel was detained, and its 700 camels confiscated and, in due course, handed over to the British at Kuwait. Ibn Sa'ud indeed was again making all the running for a real understanding with Britain, though he was receiving but little encouragement. In September, 1916, he wrote to Sir Percy Cox, requesting a personal meeting to discuss ways and means of co-operating with the Sharif and of developing the desired campaign

against Ibn Rashid. In the following month, having received no reply, he repeated his request urgently; and Sir Percy Cox, somewhat unwillingly, went down to 'Uqair for the proposed meeting in November. Ibn Sa'ud stressed the losses he had incurred in the campaign against Ibn Rashid, and the troubles he was having with his tribes—particularly the 'Ajman and Murra—who were considerably disgruntled with his policy of co-operation with an infidel State on the basis of inhibiting them from taking advantage of the profitable advantages of trade with the Turks, who were paying high prices for everything they could buy. Inevitably also he wanted enlightenment on the real implications of our policy towards the Sharif. On this subject Sir Percy Cox was not able to be quite frank. He knew, though his host did not, that the Sharif had recently been "crowned" in circumstances suggesting that he regarded himself, with tacit British acquiescence, as the destined ruler of all the Arabs. This interesting circumstance was not even mentioned at 'Uqair, though Sir Percy Cox assured Ibn Sa'ud that he had nothing to fear, as the Sharif had given formal assurances that he had no designs on the integrity and independence of other Arab chiefs.

Meanwhile arrangements had been made for a *Durbar* at Kuwait on November 20th, for the purpose of presenting British decorations to Ibn Sa'ud and Shaikh Jabir. The ceremony was graced by the presence of Shaikh Khaz'al of Muhammara and many Badawin chiefs from the hinterland; and Sir Percy Cox, in presenting the marks of British appreciation of the services of the chiefs thus honoured, congratulated those present on the manifest signs of Arab unity in support of the British war effort. Ibn Sa'ud uttered some graceful sentiments appreciative of the Sharif's action in rising against the Turks, and called upon all Arabs to co-operate with Britain and the Sharif in what was their common cause. The proceedings had been eminently satisfactory; and on the termination of the Durbar Ibn Sa'ud had his first experience of overseas travel in a visit to Muhammara as the guest of Shaikh Khaz'al. This provided an opportunity of a visit to Basra on November 26th, during which Ibn Sa'ud again met most of the neighbouring Badawin chiefs and, under the guidance of Sir Percy Cox, saw much of the organisation and paraphernalia of a British army in the field—including aircraft, which he had never seen before. The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Stanley Maude, sent him a message of welcome and a sword of honour from the front, where, after a long aestivation since the fall of Kut in April, he was busy making his final preparations for the

resumption of hostilities destined to carry him triumphantly into Baghdad about three months later. But perhaps the Wahhabi chieftain's most vivid memory of this sojourn in strange surroundings was the fact that one of his most assiduous companions on his various tours of the military establishments was a very loquacious and very well-informed woman, whose attentions he found somewhat embarrassing. The woman was Gertrude Bell! She had dominated the proceedings, both in the conferences held for the discussion of Arabian politics and in the social functions staged for his benefit. And he certainly did not like her, while the fact that she was accorded precedence, not only over himself but also over all the British civil and military chiefs, did not seem to him in keeping with the dignity of man. And many a Najdi audience has he tickled to uproarious merriment by his mimicking of her shrill voice and feminine patter: " 'Abdul-'Aziz! 'Abdul-'Aziz! look at this, and what do you think of that?" and so forth. He was certainly not amused, while his suite must have gasped with amazement, to see the great man shepherded from pillar to post by an infidel Amazon!

This month of almost continuous intercourse between Ibn Sa'ud on the one hand and Sir Percy Cox, his principal officials and the pro-British chiefs and Shaikhs of Mesopotamia and its hinterland on the other, did much to remove the impression from the Wahhabi leader's mind that his constant efforts, extending now over a dozen years, to achieve a cordial understanding with Britain had on the whole been more embarrassing than welcome to the latter in view of her multifarious commitments in other directions. At the same time it should not be forgotten that the exchange of compliments and polite speech-making, inevitable on such occasions, did not represent any effort on either side to get at the root of the matters in suspense between them. An undercurrent of suspicion and misunderstanding persisted: particularly in regard to British commitments to the Sharif, the ultimate implications of which Sir Percy Cox was not in a position to discuss. At the same time he was certainly anxious to divert Ibn Sa'ud's attention from such speculations by securing his co-operation in a direction which would not adversely affect the development of the Sharifian campaign in the west. His policy was therefore to encourage Ibn Sa'ud to attack Ibn Rashid, who was still in a position to be a nuisance on the flank of the British advance in Mesopotamia; and to this end he was able to offer substantial financial and military assistance to the Wahhabi chief as a *quid pro quo* for his activity in the desired direction. An agreement was

accordingly reached during the month, under which Ibn Sa'ud undertook to maintain a force of 4,000 men in the field and to keep up constant pressure against his rival, including an attack on Hail, while he was to receive a monthly subsidy of £5,000, as well as four machine-guns and 3,000 rifles with an adequate supply of ammunition.

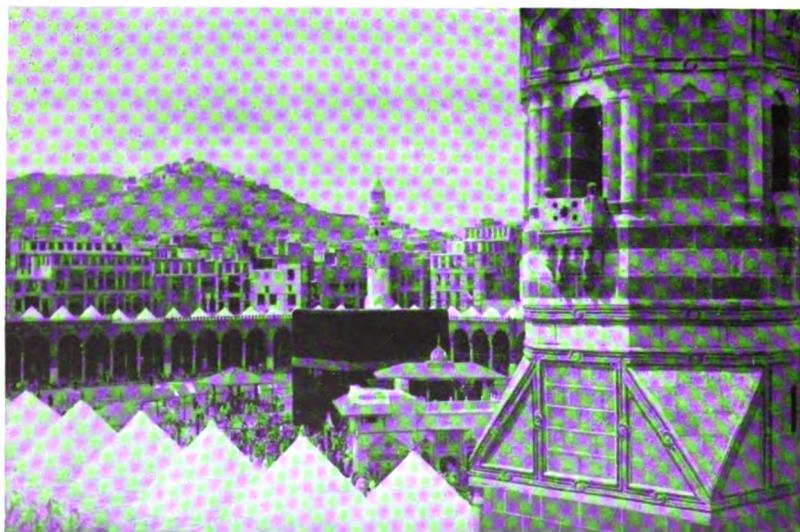
While this was the most important practical result of the November meetings, Sir Percy Cox would seem to have been too optimistic in his appreciation of the political results achieved. It is true that all the chiefs concerned were genuinely desirous of co-operation with the British in their struggle with the Turks. But subsequent developments were to show that, under a thin veneer of apparent harmony and cordiality, the old strains and stresses of ancient jealousies and enmities persisted unchanged. It was certainly not true that, as Sir Percy Cox claimed, "the chiefs of eastern and western Arabia have united at the instance of the British Government". Much less was it true that "the dream of Arab unity which engaged the imagination of the Liberals of Damascus during the years before the war has been brought nearer fulfilment than dreams are wont to come". Within the year the first shots had been fired in a struggle between east and west, destined to end in the discomfiture of the odds-on favourite of Whitehall.



H.R.H. the Amir Sa'ud, the Crown Prince (on left), in camp in 1933



The author (centre) with Bandar al Duwish (right) and Fahd,
the young son of the Crown Prince, in 1933



The Ka'ba and Great Mosque of Mecca in 1933

CHAPTER IV

WAR AND AFTERMATH

IN 1913 the Great War was yet to come, but the presage of its coming was clear enough even to those who looked out to sea from the shores of Arabia. And Ibn Sa'ud, now occupying a long strip of the Persian Gulf coast, was obviously exposed for the first time to the full blast of the storm, should it break. He had much yet to do to set his house in order before such an event; and it was natural that he should spend a considerable time in the newly won province of Hasa, where he remained till the end of August, personally attending to the reorganisation of the administration. His cousin, 'Abdullah ibn Jiluwi, was brought down from the Qasim to be its Governor-General, being replaced at Buraida by Fahad ibn Mu'ammar, now promoted from the charge of Kharj. 'Abdul-Rahman ibn Suwailim remained as governor of Qatif, which was visited by Ibn Sa'ud at the end of June, to receive the formal allegiance of its citizens and contributions to his commissariat from those in a position to supply his needs, which were not exorbitant and provide an interesting commentary on the economy of the country in those days. The total contribution of the town amounted to not more than 150 sheep, 150 bags of rice and 100 four-gallon tins of clarified butter for cooking; whereas, in 1948 on the occasion of the Crown Prince's visit to the Hasa coast to meet and entertain the American aircraft-carrier "Valley Forge", the guests sat down to a banquet, at which the *pièces de résistance* comprised 300 whole sheep mounted on 300 huge platters of rice! And incidentally the money contribution levied from the people of the Hasa in celebration of their liberation was only 40,000 Maria Theresa dollars, say £4,000 (gold of course, in those days), which is roughly the equivalent of a quarter of one day's revenue from the oil royalties today! In those good old times Ibn Sa'ud could carry the whole of the financial assets of the State about with him in the saddlebags of his camel; and in a sense he was richer then than he is now, while his massive liberality has always kept pace with his income. Even in much later days the

Finance Minister of the realm normally used his bedroom as the State Treasury, though once the large amount at risk caused him some anxiety: the sum in question was £10,000 in gold! All that is, of course, changed now.

Ibn Sa'ud had returned to Riyadh towards the end of 1913 for what was to prove the quietest winter of his active career so far. The usual summer armistice which followed was disturbed by the news of the outbreak of war between Britain and Germany early in August. And, while British diplomacy busied itself at Constantinople with efforts to keep Turkey out of the war, it was generally assumed in Arabia that she would in due course enter the lists on the side of Germany. The various elements of the desert realised that complete neutrality would not be possible in such an event, while it was certain that Ibn Rashid was fully committed in advance to loyal co-operation with his suzerain Power. The same was true of 'Ajaimi al Sa'dun and his Muntafiq following, while the attitude of Sharif Husain in the west was problematical and entirely dependent on circumstances. Shaikh Mubarak of Kuwait was solidly committed to the British cause as the only hope for the maintenance of his independence; and the only question that could arise in his case was whether the British would come to his succour in time to prevent an inevitable Turkish attempt to seize his territory.

Thus Ibn Sa'ud found himself in a position of isolation, though free to choose his course amid the dangers ahead. He knew well enough what he wanted, but he was by no means certain whether he could get it in view of the rather vacillating course of British policy, which in fact remained suspended between two choices until the actual entry of Turkey into the war left no alternative but an accommodation with Ibn Sa'ud, as little embarrassing as possible to the other commitments and designs of the British Government.

The early phases of this war-time process have been sufficiently dealt with in the preceding chapter, bringing us down to the end of 1915. So far as the Arabian situation was concerned, everything seemed to be going very nicely. The friends of Britain had paid lip-service to the ideal of Arab unity and co-operation, though with mental reservations in respect of the future, just in case the British authorities might have read into their words and gestures a greater measure of subservience to and compliance with British wishes than they had intended to convey. Ibn Sa'ud in particular had done very well out of the business, from which he had emerged with a solid monthly allowance of £5,000 (gold) and a very welcome supply of

arms and ammunition. In return he was expected to keep up pressure on Ibn Rashid's territory to prevent activities from that quarter against the 'Iraq frontier and smuggling by the Shammar from the 'Iraq markets to the Turks. This obligation was obviously open to interpretation according to circumstances, while the limitation of his commitments to the purely Arabian sphere represented an important advantage gained. Up to this point he had not even contemplated a declaration of war against Turkey, much less Germany, or any equivalent manifestation of solidarity with Britain and her allies. In the November negotiations, while showing the utmost goodwill towards Britain, he had skilfully stymied any suggestion that he should go further. And this position he maintained till the end of the war, being indeed at intervals in friendly though guarded correspondence with Fakhri Pasha, the Turkish commandant at Madina, who was actively and successfully resisting the efforts of Britain's Sharifian allies to bring the war in the Hijaz to a victorious conclusion. And the fact that he had vicariously to defend his territories from the encroachments of those same allies often gave him a plausible excuse for slowing down his operations against his ostensible enemy, whom indeed he often seemed strangely unwilling to attack when it was in his own interests to do so. It must have been clear to him that the survival of Ibn Rashid into the post-war period as a live factor in desert politics would be a serious matter for him; but his eyes were always on the much more serious danger of being left alone without friends to face the pretensions of a Sharifian king backed by all the moral and material support of Great Britain. He desperately wanted, and frequently tried to get, a British guarantee against such a development; but that was more than the British Government was prepared to give. It cannot be denied that his apprehensions were justified by subsequent events. He had to meet that danger alone, with a potentially hostile Ibn Rashid on his flank; and he had no one to thank for his successful emergence from the ordeal but himself. His far-sighted appreciation of the situation and the steps he took to meet it were the measure of his outstanding genius as a military and political leader.

By the beginning of 1917 the first phase of the Arab Revolt had been followed by an ominous pause, when it seemed more than possible that vigorous action on the part of the Turks might yet restore the situation. And "Colonel" T. E. Lawrence had gone down to Jidda to revive the drooping spirits of the Sharifians, who were soon reorganised, refitted and rearmed for the long march northward,

which began at Rabigh on January 3rd and ended at 'Aqaba in August. Meanwhile on the other side of Arabia Ibn Sa'ud and the British cause had suffered something of a setback at Kuwait, where Salim ibn Mubarak, who had succeeded to the principality in 1916 and had begun his reign mildly enough, now began to reveal his true colours in an attitude of general hostility towards Ibn Sa'ud and in marked sympathy with the Turks, which he showed by encouraging, if not organising, the recrudescence of smuggling from Kuwait through Ibn Rashid's territory to Syria.

This circumvention of the British blockade in Mesopotamia—in which, it must be admitted, the merchants of the Qasim were playing an active part—and the urgent necessity of doing all that was possible to deflect Ibn Sa'ud's attention from the west, where activities of high promise were in progress, served to focus attention on the Arabian desert, where Ibn Sa'ud was not being as active as we had hoped in prosecuting hostilities against his northern rival. Meanwhile British fortunes were again in the ascendant on the Tigris; and the occupation of Baghdad on March 11th released Sir Percy Cox from active attendance on the army. His hands were full enough in all conscience with political and administrative questions nearer home; but he had always had a soft spot for Arabia, while the pressure of Sir Reginald Wingate and the Arab Bureau at Cairo for urgent action to prevent the jealousy of Ibn Sa'ud flaring up into acts of hostility on the borders of the Hijaz to the detriment of the military operations in that theatre forced him to reconsider the possibility of working more closely with Ibn Sa'ud. To help him understand the Arab Bureau point of view Mr Ronald Storrs, then Oriental Secretary to the High Commissioner in Egypt, arrived at Baghdad on a mission of consultation; and it was not long before a decision was arrived at to utilise his services and his special knowledge of the problems involved in a visit to Ibn Sa'ud. He was to go as the representative of Sir Percy Cox, but the fact that he came from the other side of the desert curtain would enable him to speak with a single voice on behalf of two often conflicting interests. It had all the makings of an ideal appointment; but the desert heat proved too much for the envoy, who had to return hastily to Kuwait with a bad attack of sunstroke. This disaster produced a temporary *détente* in Baghdad, as the worse disaster of Shakespear's death in action had produced at Basra earlier in the war. But Sir Percy Cox was not disengaged; and when Colonel R. E. A. Hamilton (subsequently Lord Belhaven and Stenton), the Political Agent at Kuwait, came up in

July to discuss blockade matters, he was selected to head a British politico-military mission to Ibn Sa'ud. Hamilton was a hardened soldier with a taste for adventure and rough living; and all seemed well set for a resumption of active relations with the Wahhabi ruler, who was sulking in his tents, while the limelight shone on his ambitious rival in the west.

Pending the selection and equipment of suitable personnel to accompany him to Riyadh, Hamilton returned to Kuwait to give effect to the decisions arrived at in respect of local affairs. While so engaged he received information about some smuggling to the Qasim, and impatient as he was in any case to get off on his mission, he started off in pursuit and went down from Buraida to Riyadh, where he was quite content to await indefinitely the arrival of the other members of the mission. Unfortunately for him, he had not been fully briefed before leaving Baghdad; and much correspondence of an extremely confidential nature passed for some weeks after his departure between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Among other things Storrs was to join the mission, coming across country from Jidda, while a representative of the Army Commander was also to be included, and a doctor, and perhaps others. Sir Percy Cox was particularly anxious that the work of the mission, on which he had spent so much time and thought, should be conducted under his own control, and at the same time that its principal objective should be to give full reasonable protection to the interests of Ibn Sa'ud, towards whom he felt a sense of personal responsibility. In these circumstances, and in view of the fact that every member of the proposed party except the doctor was specifically identified with some local interest, he considered it necessary that the leader of the mission should be a personal representative of himself without any parochial prejudices. And his choice fell upon me.

Throughout the preceding months I had worked as his personal secretary, devilling the mountains of paper on every conceivable subject which had to receive his personal attention: including all the files and despatches relative to the problems on which the mission was to be engaged. Certain other extraneous considerations were also involved; and as Colonel A. T. Wilson, at that time his deputy at Basra, was coming up to Baghdad to take over the work that I had been doing, I would be available for the new work without disturbing the staff arrangements in the Chief Political Office. Needless to say, I was more than willing to go; and so it was that I got my chance of embarking on the nearly forty years of wandering

in the wilderness which have fallen to my lot. I was soon on my way to Arabia, accompanied by Colonel Cunliffe-Owen, the Army Commander's representative, and his batman. And on November 30th I had the honour of meeting Ibn Sa'ud for the first time.

Those first ten days at Riyadh, before I continued my journey to the Hijaz, were an unforgettable experience. My brief was to discuss with Ibn Sa'ud: (a) the urgency of action on his part against Ibn Rashid, to prevent the latter from queering the pitch of the Sharifian operations in the west, and to put a stop to the smuggling of goods across his territory to the Turks; (b) to clear the atmosphere pervading the relations of the Wahhabи ruler with his neighbours, Sharif Husain (now king of the Hijaz and claiming to be king of the Arabs) and Shaikh Salim of Kuwait; (c) to arrange a permanent solution to the perennial 'Ajman problem; (d) to discuss with Ibn Sa'ud his project of issuing a copper coinage for Najd; and (e) to discuss the desirability of the appointment of a permanent British Political Agent to his court. The last two items proved to be somewhat academic, and were tacitly relegated for discussion in a quite indefinite future.

On the other three issues we got down to business immediately; and out of the first 132 hours after my arrival I spent no fewer than 34 in personal interviews with Ibn Sa'ud, to say nothing of subsidiary discussions of a preparatory nature with his cousin and, at this time, political right-hand man, Ahmad ibn Thunaian, already mentioned in connection with the conquest of the Hasa. To quote from my official report on the proceedings of the Mission:

"In Ibn Sa'ud I found an indefatigable worker and, in spite of a tendency to be carried away from the point of his argument by the waves of his Quranic eloquence, a man of good business capacity, moderately well versed in the affairs of the world, fully conversant with but by no means a disinterested spectator of the intricacies of Arab politics, and above all genuinely convinced of the necessity of the British alliance as the only secure safeguard of the interests of his country and people both now and hereafter."

That description holds good of him today. Perhaps he has lost something of the old eloquence, as the occasions for its employment have grown rarer, and the sword has been allowed to rest and rust in its scabbard. But every now and then, in a suitable setting, one can see that the fire is still there, ready to flame up from the smouldering embers. Perhaps too the burden he has carried so long has grown too heavy for his ageing shoulders: with the new strains and stresses

imposed by the unfamiliar problems of a changing world. Otherwise, apart from the invalid-chair which proclaims his surrender to a physical weakness, the great qualities of the penniless young prince who went forth to seek his fortune half a century ago are easily recognisable in the old man who is today the king of Sa'udi Arabia.

Be that as it may, and to return to the circumstances of more than thirty years ago, the rather ambitious ideas of Sir Percy Cox regarding the size of the mission of which I was in charge were doomed to disappointment. Storrs, who was to have joined the party at Riyadh, was refused permission by King Husain to make the journey overland on the pretext of the danger involved in the then state of the desert: so we had to get on as best we could without any assistance from Egypt. Colonel Hamilton elected to return to Kuwait as soon as we had disposed of the matters relating to Shaikh Salim. Colonel Cunliffe-Owen and his batman returned to 'Iraq in February, while the doctor, who would have been a very valuable asset in a country so passionately attached to its ailments and their cures, never materialised. So I was alone in Wahhabi Arabia for practically the whole period of the "mission's" operations, which only ended with the war: and that without a clerk or a servant. Yet I look back affectionately to that first year among the dour, fanatical people of the country as the best year of my life. When I came back after a few years in 'Iraq and Trans-Jordan, the process of transformation had already begun, slowly at first but steadily gaining momentum. The fanatical Wahhabi had been sipping at the sweets of the infidel, and finding them not so bad as he thought. "Verily God changeth not that which is in people until they change that which is in themselves."

Before my arrival in Arabia Ibn Sa'ud had, during the spring and early summer of 1917, been presiding over a somewhat desultory campaign in the neighbourhood of the Shammar marches, in ostensible fulfilment of the obligations entered into by him in return for British assistance in arms and money. At the beginning of June, however, he had left his son, Turki, in charge of the operations, and returned to Riyadh for the Ramdhan fast, falling that year in mid-summer, as it did again in the present year of jubilee. Nothing had been achieved in the course of these activities; and Ibn Rashid himself, confident that there was little danger to his capital, had left it in charge of a trusted slave and gone off to join the Turks in the neighbourhood of Mada'in Salih on the Hijaz railway. At the same time his confidential agent, Rushaid al Laila, had been despatched to Damascus to discuss his master's needs with the Turkish

authorities. The stalemate in the desert had, however, given Sharif Husain ample justification for renewing his complaints of Ibn Sa'ud's lukewarmness in the common cause; and the High Commissioner in Egypt had expressed the hope that my mission's activities, "resulting, it is hoped, in active aggression against the Turks (*sic*) on the part of Ibn Sa'ud, would prove to the king the folly of his present policy of suspicion and the wisdom of effecting a reconciliation with his nearest powerful neighbour".

Our main objective was therefore to arrange for the resumption of hostilities against Hail; and we found Ibn Sa'ud ready to press the campaign in that direction more actively, provided that we were willing to place him in an effective position to do so. Nevertheless we were somewhat shocked to find that all the machine-guns and most of the ammunition supplied to him under the arrangements agreed to in the previous November were still in cold storage at Hufhuf a year later, while three of the four men trained at Basra to operate the four guns were dead, and the fourth had forgotten all he had learned for want of practice! Ibn Sa'ud, however, made it clear to us that for serious operations against Hail he would need more arms and money; and we were inclined to agree that that was true enough. Ibn Rashid, with a relatively small territory to protect and only one vital spot, namely Hail itself, was certainly much better equipped than his rival, who had not only a vast area to control but also many pressing dangers to face, such as the tribal situation in the eastern desert, where the 'Ajman were still openly disaffected.

After considering all available information, Colonel Cuncliffe-Owen and I estimated the effective strength of Ibn Rashid at some 12,000 men armed with modern rifles and well supplied with ammunition, to say nothing of five Turkish guns for defence of his capital, whose walls were in a good state of repair. It became known later that Rushaid al Laila had returned from Damascus with substantial additions to this armament. Against this our estimate of Ibn Sa'ud's military resources comprised some 8,000 modern rifles, the four modern machine-guns, and perhaps a dozen Turkish seven-pounders in serviceable condition, though without any trained personnel to operate them. In addition there were doubtless some thousands of rifles of older and inferior vintages, with modest supplies of ammunition, in the hands of the *Ikhwan* and other available territorial troops. It was obvious that something would have to be done to equip him more adequately, if we really expected him to eliminate Ibn Rashid. But the question of adequate finance for such

operations was not less important than that of armaments. His own revenues were derived from the customs duties levied at the Hasa ports, from land-taxes on palm-groves and areas under cereal cultivation, and from animal taxes. These did not amount annually to more than £100,000 all told, and in addition he had his British subsidy of £60,000 a year. Out of this income he had to subsidise the tribal chiefs and maintain the *Ikhwan* colonies, while the balance barely sufficed for his own needs and a very modest administrative staff. It was clear that he would need money to provide himself with transport camels for any serious operations and with provisions for the army, to say nothing of the payment of family allowances to the dependants of those serving in the field, and pay for themselves.

We reckoned that he would need: (a) four siege or field guns, with an adequate supply of ammunition and trained personnel, preferably Arab prisoners of war taken from the Turkish armies in Mesopotamia and Palestine; (b) 10,000 modern rifles with ample ammunition; and (c) an initial grant of £20,000 for the purchase of transport animals, and a monthly contribution of £50,000 for the three months which would be required to bring such a campaign to a successful conclusion. There was, of course, no comparison between this modest proposal of help for Ibn Sa'ud and the lavish scale on which the Sharifian operations were being financed; but there was equally no comparison between the results hoped for in the two cases. Before making these recommendations to Baghdad, however, I thought it wise to get from Ibn Sa'ud an undertaking that, in the event of my proposals being approved and implemented, he would embark seriously on the desired campaign against Ibn Rashid. He was obviously a little disappointed at the meagreness of my demands on his behalf; but he gave me the undertaking required, and my proposals duly went forward to Baghdad. While awaiting the reply, which would obviously take some time to reach Riyadh, I went off to the Hijaz to discuss the situation with King Husain and Dr D. G. Hogarth, who came down to Jidda for the purpose as the representative of the High Commissioner in Egypt. I left Riyadh on December 9th, expecting to be back within a month; but it was not till the middle of April that I was able to rejoin Ibn Sa'ud in his spring camp in Sha'ib Shauki.

By this time the military situation had changed out of all recognition. Jerusalem had fallen long since; and, although the Turks still held the Hijaz railway in the Arabian section down to Madina, it was of little use to them after the damage done to the track and bridges

by Lawrence's dynamiting operations. The importance of harrying Ibn Rashid had ceased to figure in the calculations of the British Government; and it was not surprising that my modest proposals of December appeared altogether exorbitant in April. In fact they had already been turned down in spite of Sir Percy Cox's efforts to get the matter reconsidered. The British Government agreed that a loan of £10,000, made by me to Ibn Sa'ud before leaving Riyadh, should be written off as a gift; and it was prepared to give him 1,000 rifles with 100,000 rounds of ammunition therefor. For the rest it was unwilling to do more than promise Ibn Sa'ud a gift of £50,000 and the increase of his monthly subsidy to £10,000 in the event of his capturing Hail with the resources at his disposal.

Little did I relish the prospect of conveying these unpleasant tidings to Ibn Sa'ud, who would certainly see in it the result of the machinations of King Husain, and would almost certainly abandon the Hail operations: perhaps in favour of activities in the neighbourhood of the Hijaz frontier. His attitude was in fact very much what I had expected. He scoffed at the idea of a bribe conditional on an achievement which he could not even attempt. And he railed at the Sharif. As for the British Government, he could only bow to their decision, regretting his inability to be of any further service to them. My mission appeared to be at an end, with the manifest impracticability of its main object and the prospect of a rapid and violent deterioration of the relations between Ibn Sa'ud and King Husain, which I had been briefed to improve if possible. To prevent this second disaster, I was determined to maintain my position at the elbow of the disgruntled chief; and to do this I took the responsibility of offering him a loan of the money lying idle at my disposal in the Hasa, about £20,000, on the express condition that he would mobilise for an attack on Hail. He accepted the money, of which he was desperately in need, and the terms attached to the loan: promising to get everything ready for a campaign after the Ramdhan fast. In the interval he had much to complain of against the Sharif and his pretensions to the oasis of Khurma, against the 'Ajman and their constant raids into his territory from their asylum in Kuwait and 'Iraq, and in respect of recurrent difficulties in connection with the blockade and its resultant smuggling. My only answer was to preach the Hail offensive as a panacea for all his woes; and he certainly realised that to earn any further assistance he must take action.

His activities in this direction served to keep his mind off his

grievances against King Husain; and in July Turki was sent forward to the wells of Ajibba near the Shammar frontier to open the offensive, before which the enemy outposts withdrew out of reach. The main body of the Wahhabi troops under Ibn Sa'ud himself marched out from Riyadh early in August. By the middle of September he had reached Buraida; and towards the end of the month he was before the walls of Hail, the first member of his house ever to see Hail as an enemy. The town itself could not be assaulted; and Ibn Rashid withdrew to the security of Baq'a, declining a fight in the open against superior forces. Ibn Sa'ud attacked such Shammar elements as he could find in the vicinity of Hail, inflicting some casualties and capturing a rich booty, including 1,500 camels, 10,000 rounds of small-arms ammunition, much camp furniture and thousands of sheep. With his spoil he returned to Qusaiba, and thence *via* Tarafiya to Buraida, where I found a mail awaiting me with news and instructions which spelled the end of my mission. In view of the imminent collapse of the Turkish forces, the British Government was no longer interested in the fate of Hail, and would provide no further funds or arms for the campaign against Ibn Rashid. Ibn Sa'ud was naturally furious, and talked wildly of presenting the British Government with an ultimatum. After much discussion we came to an agreement that I should return to the coast in an endeavour to secure a reconsideration of the position by the British authorities. "If you don't succeed," he said at parting, "you need not come back." On arrival at Kuwait I heard the news that the war was over so far as Turkey was concerned, and I did not go back. When I did rejoin* him some years later, it was not as a British official, but against the specific orders of the British Government!

So much for the Hail campaign for the time being. During the ten days I spent at Riyadh before going to the Hijaz, my attention was arrested one afternoon by the sound of shots in the palace yard. They announced the arrival of "good tidings", in this case the news of the successful resistance of the people of Khurma to the first attempt of King Husain's forces to occupy the oasis. Twice more, during the ensuing summer, I heard the same ominous sounds, announcing further attacks on an increasing scale, and warning Ibn Sa'ud on the third occasion that, if he was content to let his subjects be attacked without doing anything to protect them, they would take the necessary steps to defend themselves and their homes. Khalid ibn Luwai's message ended with an assurance that, if a

* Apart from a brief meeting at 'Uqair in 1920: see p. 65.

satisfactory reply was not received at once, he would send out a virgin of Khurma, unveiled and bareheaded, to rouse the tribes of Arabia for an attack on Sharif Husain. Ibn Sa'ud, who had protested to me against these attacks on the first two occasions, now warned me frankly that the next attack on Khurma would mean war between him and King Husain. He had given the messengers that assurance to take back with them to their people, and he had every intention of keeping his word. It was now up to us to keep ours, long since given to him, and restrain our *protégé* from provocation that would get him into trouble.

Ibn Sa'ud at this time was in a peevish mood, exacerbated by the obvious fact that British interest in his welfare was based solely on a desire to discourage encroachment by him on what they already regarded *ex parte* as the preserves of Husain. Khurma itself was a locality of little importance, economically or politically, though it occupied a strategic position as the back-door of Najd. Its real significance was as a symbol of the struggle for Arabian hegemony, which had now been transferred from the old cockpit of the Qasim to the frontiers of the Hijaz. Its economic links were undoubtedly with the latter, though geographically and politically it belonged to the desert, where its tribes wandered as far afield as Wadi Hanifa and the neighbourhood of Riyadh, though the ruling family of the oasis was of the Ashraf, or descendants of the Prophet.

Be that as it may, the British authorities took Ibn Sa'ud's warning seriously enough for the moment to discourage Husain from any further forward action in that direction, until the termination of the war released them from any but a moral obligation to adjudicate on the issues dividing their two principal allies in Arabia. And those issues were, a few months after the end of the war, decided at Whitehall, not on the juridical merits of the case, nor even on the basis of self-determination, but on an expert assessment of the probable issue of a conflict between the two rivals. On the advice of all the military experts the decision went in favour of Husain, who was authorised to occupy the disputed territory with the blessing of his Britannic Majesty, while Ibn Sa'ud was sternly warned to refrain from any action likely to disturb the friendly relations obtaining between him and Great Britain. The king's second son, Sharif 'Abdullah, moved up with a strong force to implement the decision; and Ibn Sa'ud, as good as his word pledged to the people of Khurma, mobilised his forces to defend their honour and independence. Within two months the verdict of Whitehall was reversed by the

arbitrament of the sword; and the Sharifian army was annihilated at Turaba, while Sharif 'Abdullah and his staff escaped from the battle-field. The reverberations of the Wahhabi victory extended as far as Mecca and Jidda, where there was panic at the prospect of a massacre of the innocents. And the disgruntled experts of Whitehall reassembled to reconsider the decision which had precipitated the disaster, while Ibn Sa'ud returned to Riyadh to rest on his laurels, having added to his realm by conquest the oasis of Turaba and the Buqum district of which it was the centre.

So ended the first round of a contest which was to culminate in the Wahhabi conquest of the Hijaz six years later. The British Government duly recognised the *fait accompli* of Ibn Sa'ud's jurisdiction over Khurma and Turaba, and gratefully continued the financial subsidy, which was to prove the vital factor in saving the Hijaz for the time being from the further attentions of the Wahhabis. The youthful Amir Faisal was sent with a suitable deputation to England to congratulate the British Government on the victorious outcome of the Great War, and incidentally to discuss the future of his father's country in relation to British interests in the Middle East and Arabia. The visit was an outstanding success from every point of view; and it seemed at the time that nothing more could occur to cloud the pleasant relations of the two countries. But the rebellion of 1920 in Iraq and its aftermath were all too soon to place a branch of the Hashimite family on another frontier of the Wahhabi realm, while events in the north were to complete the encirclement of Ibn Sa'ud with the setting up under British auspices of yet another Sharifian administration in Trans-Jordan. Ibn Sa'ud reacted in characteristic fashion by a series of outward thrusts, resulting in the annexation to his realm in quick succession of highland 'Asir (1920), Hail itself at long last (1921), and Jauf and the Wadi Sirhan district (1922), to say nothing of a long-distance raid in force into the heart of Trans-Jordan in the summer of 1922, which was driven off by the planes and armoured cars of the Royal Air Force detachment at 'Amman. Desert Arabia was again in ferment; and "Wahab's rebel horde . . . would wind its path of blood along the west". *Hinc illae lacrimae!*

But those tears were still for the future to shed. Meanwhile Ibn Sa'ud was confronted by a serious domestic danger on his eastern marches, where the irreconcilable 'Ajman tribe were a constant stumbling-block to his efforts to remain on friendly terms with the principality of Kuwait and the British administration in Iraq. Enough has already been said of the earlier troubles of Ibn Sa'ud

with this tribe, which, with his conquest of the Hasa, had definitely come under his jurisdiction. A large contingent of the tribe had actually joined him for the campaign against Ibn Rashid, which ended with the indecisive battle of Jarrab in January, 1915; and he had attributed his failure on that occasion to the treacherous desertion of that contingent at a critical stage. To punish the tribe and settle accounts with it in decisive fashion, he had embarked on a campaign in the Hasa during the spring of 1916.* Confronted by overwhelming force the 'Ajman sued for peace; and Ibn Sa'ud generously enough agreed to negotiate a final settlement at a meeting to be held on the morrow. Meanwhile his brother, Sa'd, who had been absent at the time, had returned to camp. Furious at the leniency of his brother, he had begged to be allowed to attack the 'Ajman that night; and Ibn Sa'ud had yielded to his pressure much against his own better judgment. Surprised and outnumbered, the 'Ajman had fought desperately; and not only did they repel the assault of Ibn Sa'ud's best troops, but Sa'd himself paid for his treachery with his life, while Ibn Sa'ud was wounded. The 'Ajman made off with all speed to the safety of Kuwait territory, where they came automatically under British protection. Meanwhile Ibn Sa'ud had returned to Riyadh, determined in due course to avenge his brother's death, though realising that he could not attack them where they were without coming into conflict with the British. For the moment he had to content himself with protests against the giving of asylum to his own rebellious subjects in a position from which they might well operate to the detriment of his territories. And it was not till November, 1916, that the whole question was fully discussed between Sir Percy Cox, the Shaikh of Kuwait and Ibn Sa'ud as a part of the arrangements made for the general co-operation of all Britain's Arabian friends in her war effort. The *de facto* situation was now confirmed, subject to an undertaking on the part of the 'Ajman, under British and Kuwaiti guarantees, to refrain from all hostile acts against Ibn Sa'ud, while the latter withdrew his objection to their remaining in Kuwait territory.

This agreement was intended to remain in force until the end of the war. But it was not long before the restless nomad spirit reasserted itself; and it so happened, whether by accident or by design, that the whole tribe began a move into the desert westward just at the moment when Ibn Sa'ud was on the move north to harry Ibn Rashid. The presence of the 'Ajman on his flank was enough to

* See above, p. 42.

deter him from the prosecution of his design, while the return of the chief Shaikh of the tribe, who had been specifically proscribed by the November agreement on account of his resort to the Turks after the Hasa incident, constituted another breach of the arrangement, for which both the British and Shaikh Salim were at least morally responsible.

After various attempts to dispose of this irritating problem, it was decided that the tribe should move up to Zubair in 'Iraq occupied territory, and be denied further access to Kuwait, which thus became a buffer between them and Najd. This arrangement was no more successful than its predecessors, and the 'Ajman resumed their raiding from the safety of their base in British territory against the tribes of Najd and the Hasa: using Kuwait as their corridor of approach with the tacit connivance of Salim, and the Kuwait tribe of 'Awazim, which had a prescriptive right to graze in the eastern desert without paying animal taxes to Ibn Sa'ud, as a screen for their movements. Their activities were, of course, countered by the Najdi tribes, Mutair, Subai' and others, with raids into Kuwait territory; and the eastern desert was in a ferment throughout the period of my mission in Arabia.

Ibn Sa'ud retaliated by asserting his right to tax the 'Awazim, who thus became the innocent victims of the growing hostility between Kuwait and Najd. The satisfactory settlement of the 'Ajman problem by the expulsion of the tribe from Kuwait territory was made by him a *sine qua non* condition for reconsideration of the 'Awazim position, while he assured us that, if Shaikh Salim wrote him a friendly letter asking for a reversion to the old arrangement in respect of this tribe, he would meet him half-way in the matter. Actually neither condition materialised, while Ibn Sa'ud, unwilling to make a right of two wrongs at the expense of an innocent third party, solved the problem himself by discontinuing the collection of these grazing taxes. And in the end the British Government, thinking less of the merits of the case than of the expediency of conciliating Ibn Sa'ud to keep his mind off his grievances against King Husain, adopted the proposals made by the mission nearly a year before. The 'Ajman were warned that, in the event of their raids continuing, their subsidies would be stopped and the markets of 'Iraq closed to them, while Ibn Sa'ud would be given a free hand to deal with them at his discretion, provided that the safety of the Euphrates valley railway was not prejudiced. The problem solved itself with the end of the war; for the 'Ajman, no longer subsidised by Great Britain or

protected by Ahmad ibn Jabir, who succeeded Salim as ruler of Kuwait in 1921, had little choice but to come to heel, and make terms with Ibn Sa'ud, who had by then eliminated Ibn Rashid and become the undisputed lord of all desert Arabia from the marches of Syria and Trans-Jordan to the uttermost ends of the Empty Quarter, and from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea. And it was not long before the very character of Badawin society, graduating through the religious and military controls of the *Ikhwan* movement, was profoundly influenced by a very different factor: the industrialisation of the eastern desert. To this day the Badawin still graze their flocks and herds in the desert pastures: suffering their seasons of drought and plenty as of old; but the prosperity of Arabia is no longer measured in terms of their ancient industry.



H.R.H. the Amir Mish'al, son of the King,
with a young niece, at Riyadh in 1947



H.R.H. the Amir Turk, eldest son of the
King, at Buraidah in 1918. He died in 1919



H.R.H. the Amir Faisal, Viceroy of the Hijaz and Foreign Minister, with
‘Abdullah Damluji (left) and Fuad Hamza in 1929

CHAPTER V

CONFERENCE OF 'UQAIR

AFTER the meetings of November, 1916, Sir Percy Cox had no further personal contacts with Ibn Sa'ud until the autumn of 1920. During the previous two years he had been serving as British Minister at Teheran, whence he had been summoned home urgently in June, 1920, in consequence of the serious situation created by the 'Iraq rebellion. British policy in regard to 'Iraq was drastically reconsidered; and Sir Percy Cox was appointed High Commissioner to inaugurate the new régime decided upon. I had the good fortune to be one of the assistants selected by him to help in the task; and the first question which came up for serious consideration before our departure was whether or not the Amir Faisal, third son of King Husain, who had been dismissed from the throne of Syria by the French, should be earmarked from the beginning as the prospective king of 'Iraq. His powerful friends, under the lead of Lawrence, used all their influence in favour of this course; while I advocated that, in view of the general principle laid down in the Government's policy that the people of 'Iraq should themselves determine the form of their future constitution as an independent State, the High Commissioner would be well advised to go out with no prearranged commitments. This suggestion commended itself to him, particularly as he had no liking for Lawrence, and regarded his intrigues on behalf of Faisal as a principal contributory cause of the 'Iraq rebellion.

On the way out to Mesopotamia Sir Percy Cox revisited 'Uqair for two days to discuss things in general with Ibn Sa'ud, who had come down from Riyadh to meet him. And naturally enough he found that the matter uppermost in his host's mind was the rumoured possibility, or certainty, as some of the Hashimite propagandists suggested, of Faisal securing the throne of 'Iraq, which would not have been at all to his liking. Cox was quite honestly able to give him the assurance asked for that such a step was not included in the programme laid down for him; and it is more than probable that at this

time he was not himself in favour of such an arrangement. Ibn Sa'ud was infinitely relieved to have this assurance; but he did not perhaps fully realise at the time that certain other factors were coming into play in Arabian politics now that the war was over. Chief among these was the part to be played by Ibn Rashid in the future; and King Husain was already looking to him as a balancing factor in central Arabia in his own favour, while Gertrude Bell and others among the British officials in 'Iraq were definitely inclined towards Ibn Rashid's restoration to British favour and his old position in desert Arabia for the same reason, in spite of the part he had played as an ally of the Turks during the war. I did not share these views at all, though I had never been able to understand the all too obvious lukewarmness of Ibn Sa'ud's efforts to eliminate his rival when we wanted him to do so in our own war-time interests. Perhaps he had been suspicious of our post-war intentions, admittedly with good reason, as the Khurma affair had shown. Yet such suspicions were irrelevant to the situation in the desert, where the survival of Ibn Rashid as a considerable force in local politics could only react in favour of the Sharif's ambitions. At any rate, in a number of private meetings with Ibn Sa'ud and his principal officials during our short sojourn at 'Uqair, I warned them of the situation likely to arise in the immediate future, unless immediate steps were taken to eliminate Ibn Rashid as a political factor in Arabia. Within twelve months the Ibn Rashid dynasty had ceased to exist; and Ibn Sa'ud ruled unchallenged in desert Arabia, as his ancestors had done a century before.

A curious concatenation of events had contributed to this result. Soon after our 'Uqair meeting Fate intervened to eliminate Sa'ud, the ruling prince of the Rashid line, by assassination at the hands of a cousin. The latter was immediately cut down by loyal slaves, while his brother, Muhammad ibn Talal (incidentally one of Ibn Sa'ud's many fathers-in-law and now for nearly thirty years an honoured guest at his court), was thrown into prison by Sa'ud's nephew and successor, 'Abdullah ibn Mit'ab, a youngster of only eighteen, whose inexperience augured ill for the stability of his realm and inspired many of the leading citizens of Ha'il to seek active intervention by Ibn Sa'ud. Meanwhile in April, 1921, Mr Winston Churchill, at his Cairo conference of Middle East experts, had decided that the Sharif Faisal should after all become king of 'Iraq, and Sir Percy Cox had acquiesced in that decision. Faisal himself arrived in 'Iraq as a favoured candidate for the throne in June, and lost little time in

interesting himself in the affairs of Jabal Shammar, as was duly reported back to Ibn Sa'ud by the delegates he had sent to Baghdad to discuss his frontiers with 'Iraq and Kuwait. It must now have been clear to him that not a moment was to be lost. He had actually sent up patrolling parties into the Jabal Shammar country under his brother Muhammad in the spring, with the *Ikhwan* levies of the formidable Faisal al Duwish in support, while, to improve and consolidate his personal position in Arabia, he had convened a meeting of leading ecclesiastics and tribal chiefs at Riyadh to proclaim him Sultan of Najd and its dependencies. This done, he took the field in person in July, setting up his headquarters in the Qasim and despatching strong forces under his brother Muhammad and his eldest son Sa'ud to encircle Hail and screen the desert east of it against possible attempts at relief by Shammar elements which had gone down to 'Iraq to seek help from Faisal. Meanwhile the Ruwala tribe under Nuri al Sha'lan, taking advantage of the weak state of Hail, had seized Jauf and the Wadi Sirhan settlements in the north; and 'Abdullah ibn Mit'ab* in despair released Muhammad ibn Talal from prison to take command of his forces in that sector. The latter turned upon his benefactor, who fled from Hail to throw himself on the mercy of Ibn Sa'ud; while Muhammad, destined to be the last ruler of Hail, opened a bold offensive against the Wahhabi forces in the Baqa'a district to the east of the capital, where a big and indecisive battle was fought in the first week of September. Ibn Sa'ud himself arrived on the scene with some artillery pieces just after the battle, forced the enemy out of the forts to which they had retired, and followed them up to the gates of Hail. Muhammad offered now to surrender on terms which were flatly refused; and Ibn Sa'ud, anxious to spare the people of the town a bombardment, paused to give them time to reconsider the situation. Three weeks later he sent them word that his patience was exhausted; and the gates were opened to the conqueror: only Muhammad ibn Talal and his body-guard refusing to surrender and taking up their posts in the great fort to fight it out to the bitter end. There they held out for a month before surrendering on November 2nd, 1921.

With the occupation of the 'Asir highland district and its capital Abha in the summer of 1920, with the elimination of the Ibn Rashid dynasty from central Arabia by the capture of Hail in the following year, and with the occupation of Jauf and Wadi Sirhan, to say nothing of a long-distance raid to the confines of 'Amman, in the

* He died at Riyadh in 1947

summer of 1922, Ibn Sa'ud had confirmed the impression of vigour and strength created by his easy defeat of the Sharifian army at Turaba in the spring of 1919, and definitely established a legend of invincibility. His personality and his record seemed indeed to mark him out as Arabia's "man of destiny", though none was more conscious than he of the dangers and difficulties which lay ahead of him. On three sides he was confronted by the ill-concealed hostility of Sharifian rivals for Arabian hegemony, behind whom stood Great Britain with military resources, about which he had no illusions whatever, and with political ambitions, with which he could have no truck in so far as they might affect his own independence. At home, with an empty larder and an empty purse, the situation was almost desperate; to maintain the new *Ikhwan* colonies and keep the Badawin from raiding each other, he needed funds to provide them with food, clothing, religious instruction, and ammunition and arms to be used in his service. His total revenue from all the exiguous sources of his desert realm can at this time scarcely have exceeded £150,000 in addition to which he was still drawing a modest subsidy of £60,000 a year from the British Treasury, subject to discontinuance at any moment at the discretion of the British Government. It was quite clear to him that, to make both ends meet, he must increase his annual income; and there were only two directions in which he could look to this end: first, the ample and tempting revenues of the Meccan pilgrimage! and, secondly, economic development in his own territories, a very bleak prospect. The British Government had every sympathy with this second objective, but none with the first, which it might be expected to resist with all the resources at its command.

It was against this general background that the last meeting of Sir Percy Cox and Ibn Sa'ud took place in the winter of 1922/23 at 'Uqair. It developed into a full-dress conference, with many conflicting issues at stake, and the emphasis on economic rather than political matters. The City of London, in the person of Major Frank Holmes representing Mr Edmond Davis's Eastern General Syndicate, was interested in the possibility of exploiting oil in Arabia. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company, largely owned by the British Government and vigorously supported by Sir Percy Cox in the ensuing negotiations, was interested in securing a concession, though sceptical regarding the chances of finding oil in Ibn Sa'ud's country and, therefore, bidding somewhat cautiously. Ibn Sa'ud himself, neither believing in the oil nor desiring foreign exploitation of his

country, was desperately in need of ready money, and was only concerned to hold out for the highest possible price. The bidding was far from brisk; and an amusing, if cynical, account of the long-drawn-out proceedings was included in his book *Ibn Sa'oud of Arabia* by Amin Rihani, an American citizen of Lebanese extraction, who attended the conference in the course of his Arabian tour. Ibn Sa'ud was in a somewhat delicate position between the British Government and a private British company; but his right to give the concession to whomsoever he liked was never disputed; and in the end it was Major Holmes who secured the concession on terms which, in the light of recent oil developments in Arabia, can only be regarded as ludicrous. The vital conditions involved were two: first, that for an area roughly the same as that now being operated by the Arabian-American Oil Company in eastern Arabia he should pay in advance a rental of £2,000 a year in respect of prospecting rights, with a lien on a concession to be negotiated in the event of the discovery of oil; and, secondly, that the concessionnaire should take immediate steps to implement his concession by active and continuous exploration of the area concerned. It was stipulated that non-payment of the rental by due date, or the discontinuance of exploratory work for a period of eighteen months, would entitle the Government to cancel the concession. The first year's rental was duly paid, and Belgian geologists spent the winter of 1923/24 exploring the Hasa desert. The second year's rental was paid, and the prospectors spent the following winter in Arabia without result. The concessionnaire then defaulted on the payment of the third year's rental, and the Belgians did not reappear in the winter; and that, to all intents and purposes, was the end of the matter. But Ibn Sa'ud was in no hurry to exercise his right of cancellation; and it was not until 1927 or 1928 that he took steps to warn the concessionnaire that, unless the arrears of rent, then amounting to £6,000, were paid immediately, and exploratory work resumed, he would have no alternative to cancelling the concession. The concessionnaire let it go at that without replying, and the concession was terminated. Meanwhile Major Holmes had secured a similar concession on the island of Bahrain, which, ultimately in the hands of the Standard Oil Company of California, had a happier issue; but that is another story.

So far as the results of the conference of 'Uqair are concerned, Ibn Sa'ud had from the beginning discounted his hopes of a fantastic solution of his economic difficulties; and he was perhaps rather glad

of so easy a release from the dangers inherent in foreign exploitation of his country. He probably realised that the independence of desert Arabia was safe only because none of the Great Powers coveted it. But security in itself did not solve his financial problem; and, if Arabia was devoid of mineral resources, one part of it had an assured source of revenue in the Meccan pilgrimage. It is impossible to say whether he ever formulated to himself in specific terms the idea of occupying the Hijaz. It was actually quite unnecessary for him to do so, as King Husain himself was doing all the riding for the fall that awaited him. Be that as it may, the political results of the 'Uqair conference proved very soon to be almost as disappointing as its economic outcome. Indeed Sir Percy Cox, with King Faisal of 'Iraq behind him, had been more concerned to arrive at a working arrangement between Ibn Sa'ud on the one hand and the territories of 'Iraq and Kuwait on the other than to attempt a solution of the major political problem of Arabia: the quarrel between Ibn Sa'ud and King Husain. Neither the latter nor indeed the British Government had ever really accepted the arbitrament of Turaba as final, or Ibn Sa'ud's occupation of Jauf and Wadi Sirhan as definitive. But the British Government was anxious for a peaceful and agreed disposal of these matters; and the opportunity for such a settlement seemed to have arrived when, soon after the 'Uqair conference, it was reported that Ibn Sa'ud had died at Hufhuf as the result of an infection of the eyes. The report was, of course, false, though Ibn Sa'ud had had some serious trouble in one of his eyes; but the British Government had apparently accepted the report at its face value, and lost no time in circularising its officers on the spot for an appreciation of the situation arising out of the Sultan's unfortunate demise. I was one of those officers, being at the time at 'Amman as Chief British Representative with the Amir 'Abdullah of Trans-Jordan; and my reply was that, as Ibn Sa'ud was, to my knowledge, very much alive, it seemed unnecessary to discuss the consequences of his death. I had in fact received a letter from Hufhuf, with news of the 'Uqair conference, which made it abundantly clear that he was alive after the date of the British Government's enquiry.

So, without any actual disturbance of the peace, the situation grew more tense as the year advanced, until, in the autumn, the British Government, actuated partly by a desire to remove the causes of friction and partly by the necessity of terminating the wartime subsidies to the various Arab chiefs, decided to make a final effort to secure a satisfactory settlement in Arabia. To this end it was

proposed that representatives of all the Arab States concerned should meet in conference at Kuwait in November under a British chairman, to discuss their differences and try to arrive at an agreed settlement of all outstanding matters. The chairman appointed by the British Government was Colonel S. G. Knox,* who was about to retire from the post of Senior Judicial Officer in 'Iraq, and was an excellent Arabist, who had at one time been British Political Agent at Kuwait. The Arab States, including Ibn Sa'ud, agreed to co-operate; and the conference duly took place. On its deliberations depended the future of Arabia; and there was ground for cautious optimism as to its outcome, provided that the parties were left to hammer out a *modus vivendi* among themselves without any intervention by the convening Power. Unfortunately that was too much to hope for, as will appear in the next chapter.

* See above, p. 16.

CHAPTER VI

CONQUEST OF THE HIJAZ

THE British chairman-elect of the Kuwait conference was briefed by his sponsors in the greatest detail regarding the settlement into which he was expected to steer the contending parties. And to make it clear to all concerned that the British Government had no intention of continuing its former policy of subsidising them indefinitely to keep the peace among themselves, it was announced that all existing subsidies would end on March 31st, 1924: lump-sum payments representing the amounts due up to that date being paid forthwith in final liquidation of all such claims on the British Exchequer. But, as a preliminary to the confirmation of the draft instructions prepared in London for the chairman, all officers with knowledge of the issues involved were again asked to state their views regarding the outcome of the conference on the suggested basis. I suppose that most of the officers consulted expressed general approval of the proposed instructions, as they were in due course confirmed. But I struck a strongly dissentient note. I pointed out in particular that the proposal to insist on Ibn Sa'ud relinquishing the districts of Khurma and Turaba to the Sharif in return for British acquiescence in his occupation of the Wadi Sirhan settlements was enough to condemn the conference to failure in advance. Not only, in my opinion, would Ibn Sa'ud never consent to the abandonment of the districts in question, but he was in a position to occupy the "Salt Villages" as and when he liked with or without British acquiescence. I stated my opinion categorically that, if the proposal was pressed, the conference would fail; and that, if it failed, Ibn Sa'ud, having no longer any subsidy to consider as an argument against action, would mobilise his forces and march on the Hijaz within six months of the failure.

Fortunately perhaps my warning fell on ears that would not hear. The conference proceeded to beat about the bush for the next few months without any real hope of arriving at a settlement; and in February, 1924, an event occurred which threw the door wide open

to conflict, not only in Arabia but in the Islamic world. Mustafa Kamal announced the abolition of the Caliphate, and King Husain grasped wildly at the Prophet's mantle: confronting Ibn Sa'ud, Islam and the world with a challenge which could scarcely be ignored. In other circumstances the return of the Caliphate to a member of the Prophet's own family would have been a matter for rejoicing in Islam, but Husain had antagonised most of the Islamic countries by his megalomania and his high-handed treatment of the pilgrims; and it was only in Trans-Jordan, Syria and 'Iraq that his sons were able to collect some vicarious support for his pretensions. Be that as it may, the new "Calif" prospective had arrived at 'Amman on a State visit to Trans-Jordan in January for a sojourn lasting till the middle of March, during which he made it abundantly clear that he regarded 'Abdullah and Faisal as his viceroys rather than as rulers in their own right. And, as for Ibn Sa'ud, he referred to him in terms of almost paternal benevolence in conversation with me, dismissing the matter of the boundary dispute between them with the remark: "You shall be my agent plenipotentiary to settle the question with your friend!" He was evidently in the best of spirits in his new-found dignity, the assumption of which was officially communicated to me by the Amir 'Abdullah on March 6th, and formally proclaimed to the Friday congregation in the 'Amman basilica on the 14th. This had already been done in the Great Mosque at Damascus a week earlier.

This outward show of magnanimity and goodwill was not, however, reflected in the arguments of his representative at Kuwait, where the negotiations dragged on without result until, early in April, the British Government decided to call the conference off. And the summer heat imposed the customary truce on military activities in the desert. It was the lull before the storm.

In August another long-distance raid by the *Ikhwan* reached the railway at Ziza, a little south of 'Amman, and the inhabitants of the village of Umm al 'Amad were butchered before the raiders were chased out of Trans-Jordan by British planes and armoured cars as in 1922. About the same time a large body of *Ikhwan* under the redoubtable Faisal al Duwish appeared on the 'Iraq frontier, but withdrew after attracting the attention of the authorities. Then, with devastating suddenness, the real blow fell on September 3rd. A large Wahhabi force under Sultan ibn Bijad appeared in the environs of Taif, the summer capital of the Hijaz. The Amir 'Ali, the king's eldest son, withdrew hastily with the troops under his command to the edge of the great scarp on the Mecca track, leaving

Taïf to its fate. The town surrendered without opposition, while many of its citizens, fleeing for safety towards Mecca, were followed up and slaughtered by the Wahhabis. The total number of people killed at Taïf and in its environs did not exceed 300, but exaggerated accounts of the "massacre" were soon to reach the European press. Meanwhile Sultan ibn Bijad had little difficulty in disposing of 'Ali and his troops in a battle at Hadda, whence they streamed down towards Mecca and Jidda in disorderly flight with the civilian refugees from Taïf.

The news of these events soon reached Ibn Sa'ud at Riyadh. Surprised and even alarmed by the easy and rapid success of this preliminary probing at the defences of the Hijaz, he was now mainly concerned to obviate a battle for Mecca, and to check the excesses of his fanatical lieutenant and his even more fanatical troops. Urgent orders were accordingly despatched to the front, forbidding any attempt to occupy Mecca by force and urging all restraint on the Wahhabis until Ibn Sa'ud himself could reach the scene. In fact 'Ali had already by-passed Mecca in his flight to Jidda, and King Husain, rather reluctantly, decided to evacuate the capital to avoid the scandal of fighting in its streets. So Sultan ibn Bijad had the honour of occupying Mecca without opposition; and its citizens were not molested, though some of the domed tombs in the Ma'la cemetery and other "idolatrous" monuments were destroyed, and there was some looting of Sharifian property.

At Jidda King Husain yielded to the pressure of public opinion, which demanded his abdication in favour of his son 'Ali, and took ship with his family and his treasure for 'Aqaba, where only seven months earlier he had landed, to receive soon afterwards the acclamations of Trans-Jordan on his accession to the Caliphate. Meanwhile 'Ali was confronted by the far from easy task of organising the defence of Jidda against the expected Wahhabi attack, though Ibn Sa'ud, fearing an international incident in the event of any European being killed or molested in an assault on the town, had definitely forbidden Sultan ibn Bijad to advance beyond Mecca pending his own arrival. This did not materialise until December, by which time I had arrived at Jidda by arrangement with King 'Ali's agent in London with a vague idea of doing what might be possible to help the contending parties to a mutually satisfactory settlement. Among others who came to Jidda about the same time, and for the same purpose, were Amin Rihani and Saiyid Talib; but it was clear from the beginning that the military situation of 'Ali was quite hopeless; and I

frankly advised him that his best course now was to meet Ibn Sa'ud in Mecca on his arrival there and throw himself upon his mercy. His military advisers, however, urged him to carry on the fight in confidence that their superior military training and skill would suffice to drive the Wahhabis back into their deserts within a few months, as soon as the expected volunteers from Syria and Trans-Jordan should arrive and be equipped and trained for their task. Accordingly a couple of planes were sent out to make a demonstration over Mecca on the day of Ibn Sa'ud's arrival; and the latter countered by demanding the unconditional surrender of the Hijaz. Unfortunately an attack of dysentery necessitated my departure from Jidda to Aden on January 2nd; and so I missed being present at the opening of the Wahhabi bombardment of the town on the following day. The subsequent proceedings were of a very desultory character, and in due course the siege of Jidda was raised for the usual summer recess, while both sides prepared for the resumption of active hostilities in the late autumn or winter.

It was not until October that I returned to Jidda in time to witness the final stages of the collapse of the Hashimite kingdom of the Hijaz. But another Englishman, Eldon Rutter, had spent the whole of the summer and autumn of 1925 as a pilgrim in Mecca, and later published an admirable account of his experiences during Ibn Sa'ud's first year as ruler of the greater part of the Hijaz. His picture of the tall, well-built Arab prince, simply clad in a straw-coloured mantle, white linen shift and mottled red-and-white head-kerchief under an '*Aqal*' of black wool, sitting bare foot on the ground among his retainers, and rising to receive each batch of visitors entering his large tent to offer greetings on the successful termination of the pilgrimage ceremonies, celebrated for the first time under his auspices, takes one back with nostalgic feelings to the good old days before the introduction of sophisticated notions and other complexities into the ceremonial curriculum of the Arabian court, in the midst of which, it must be admitted in fairness to the hero of that occasion, he alone retains all the essentials of the old simplicity, while lesser spirits strut and prance about his court with all the trappings of majesty. Even at that time, as Rutter shrewdly remarks,

"His personal ambition is boundless, but is tempered by great discretion and caution. He is a relentless enemy while opposition lasts, but in the hour of victory is one of the most humane Arabs in history. As for his system of rule . . . he keeps his own counsel even among his relatives, and essentially his rule is absolute."

Humanity, discretion and caution still remain the outstanding characteristics of Ibn Sa'ud after half a century of absolute rule; and, as for counsel, it was but a few months ago that I heard him quote in public assembly a sentence which is worth remembering as a motto of his long reign. "Take counsel among yourselves," he quoted, "and, if you agree, well and good; but, if they do not agree with you, then put your trust in God, and do what seems to you best."

The preoccupations of his first Ramdhan in the holy city and, after that, of his first pilgrimage, for which driblets of pilgrims from overseas began arriving early in the summer at the various ports under Wahhabi control, shared Ibn Sa'ud's attention with military preparations for the autumn campaign, which envisaged the capture of Jidda and Madina, and the mopping up of the rest of the Hijaz. Meanwhile the British, realising that the presence of ex-King Husain at 'Aqaba would inevitably bring the Wahhabi army to the frontiers of Trans-Jordan and Palestine, had taken steps to remove the refugee king to Cyprus, and to occupy 'Aqaba itself with a contingent of armoured cars. On this step Ibn Sa'ud had some acid comments to make to Eldon Rutter; and from it arose an Anglo-Arabian controversy which will be referred to later.*

On my return to Jidda, accidentally in company with a Persian mission concerned to examine and report on the damage to tombs and other buildings alleged to have been done by the Wahhabis during the period of hostilities, I was able to send a message to Ibn Sa'ud through one of the members of the mission; and in due course I received an invitation to meet the Sultan outside Mecca by way of the port of Rabigh, then in effective Wahhabi occupation. Our meeting took place at Shumaisi, on the edge of the sacred territory, soon after the desultory resumption of hostilities; an aeroplane had dropped a bomb on Rabigh while I was there; and another, on reconnaissance, passed over the tent in which Ibn Sa'ud and I were discussing the situation. He was awaiting the arrival of his son, Faisal, with his main army from Najd, before marching on Jidda; and I was able to assure him that the prospect of his now coming up against any serious opposition was exceedingly remote, as most of the people of Jidda, who had already suffered severely from hunger and disease, were only desirous of a speedy end to the war. I returned to Rabigh to see the army of the Amir Muhammad, the third son of the king, march up on its way to Madina, where the *Ikhwan* of

* See below, p. 83.

Faisal al Duwish were already menacing the defenders so strongly that they had offered to surrender, provided that the *Ikhwan* themselves were not allowed to enter the city. It was for this reason that Ibn Sa'ud had deputed his son to ensure proper treatment of the holy places and the citizens; and it was not long after Muhammad's arrival that Madina surrendered on December 5th, 1925. Meanwhile I had left Rabigh by *Sanbak* for Port Sudan, where I remained until after the fall of Jidda, which took place, without further fighting and through the good offices of the British Political Agent, on December 23rd, after the departure of King 'Ali and his entourage by arrangement on the previous day.

It did not take Ibn Sa'ud long to demonstrate to the people of the Hijaz, by the judicious handling of one or two test cases, that he intended to be master in his own house, and that no loyal citizen had anything to fear either from him or from the terrible Wahhabis. A challenge to the new order by the predatory tribe of Harb in the hilly country round 'Usfan was rapidly met, with disastrous effects on the rebels. Another section of the same tribe rose in the area to the south of Jidda, and was very soon shown who was master. And at Jidda itself the Sultan showed another facet of his character, which may have surprised many people who had resigned themselves to a period of fanatical reaction. A deputation of the local tobacconists waited on him to protest against the new embargo on the sale of tobacco; wisely they confined themselves to pointing out only the financial loss to which they would fall victims if the order became effective immediately. The value of tobacco stocks in the town, they explained, was close on £100,000; and all they asked for was a respite until they could dispose of those stocks. Ibn Sa'ud was certainly astonished at this revelation of the iniquity of Jidda; but it was not in him to be unjust to the self-confessed purveyors of the forbidden weed. They were given the respite asked for, subject to a ban on the actual exposure of tobacco and cigarettes to the public eye; and the respite prolonged itself indefinitely without more said, even to the extent of the continuance of imports paying customs duty to the Government, until the ban on smoking disappeared in due course from the schedule of Wahhabi prohibitions.

For the first time the Wahhabi flag flew from the poles of the Government buildings of Jidda in company with the banners of the nations. The foreign community had been expecting and predicting a reign of reaction, if not of terror; but from the beginning everything suggested that its fears had been imaginary. And the foreign

firms operating at Jidda soon began to receive enquiries for motor-cars, machines and other "inventions of the devil". It soon became widely known that the new Government intended to do everything possible to ensure the safety and comfort of the pilgrims, including the encouragement of motor-transport, in spite of the piteous protests of the camel-owning Badawin against being deprived of their principal means of livelihood. Their protests were ill-founded, as the future was to show; but it was made clear that in the holy land of Islam the well-being of God's visitors and the Prophet's was to have priority over all other considerations.

The first reactions of the Wahhabî Government to its new responsibilities certainly created a favourable impression, and did much to dispel the apprehensions which had anticipated its victory. But the fall of the thoroughly unpopular régime of King Husain had set speculation running high in most of the Muslim lands, notably India and Egypt, as to the possibility of securing some representative Muslim authority to ensure the proper governance of the holy land. And it was naturally enough from these Muslim countries, long nursed, despite themselves, in the ideals and slogans of European democracy, that Ibn Sa'ud had most to fear in the way of direct or indirect intervention in the supposed interests of pilgrims. He had already made known his concern for the comfort of the pilgrims within the limits of the country's financial and economic capacity to cater for it. But the consideration uppermost in his mind at this time was the need of ensuring absolute peace and security in the land; and he realised full well that he must bear that burden alone. His reaction was characteristic. Representatives of all the Muslim lands, which had bombarded him with advice as to how the Hijaz should be administered, were duly invited to meet him in conference during the ensuing summer (1926) before the pilgrimage. And meanwhile, to show the world that he had no intention of shirking any part of his own responsibility, he arranged in consultation with the principal citizens of Mecca, Madina and Jidda, and the tribal leaders, to be proclaimed king of the Hijaz in natural succession to the late Hashimite dynasty. The ceremony of acclamation by his new subjects duly took place in the Great Mosque of Mecca after the Friday prayers of January 8th, 1926, a little more than a fortnight after the completion of his conquest by the surrender of Jidda. Eldon Rutter had the good fortune of being an eyewitness of this great occasion, of which the silver jubilee almost coincided with the lunar golden jubilee of the king's reign in Arabia.

CHAPTER VII

GROWING PAINS

It would be idle to pretend that the new administration of the Hijaz settled down to a comfortable stroke from the beginning. That would have been too much to expect in the circumstances, though in one respect Ibn Sa'ud did not disappoint the expectations of his friends. It was made quite clear from the outset that no menace to the security of person and property would be tolerated for an instant. The Badawin were placed out of reach of temptation by a prohibition against their camping in the neighbourhood of the main roads, on which unarmed pedestrians were now frequently to be seen, singly or in small groups. It is indeed difficult to think of a single case of the molestation of travellers on the roads of the Hijaz during the past twenty-five years; and, for that, credit must be given where credit is due: to Ibn Sa'ud alone. It was certainly not due to the taking of any special precautions for the discouragement of the evil-doer; on the contrary, it was rare in those early days to see a policeman or any other kind of guardian of the peace on the highways; and the numerous forts and road-posts of the Turkish and Sharifian régimes were not only never manned under the new dispensation, but were deliberately left to disintegrate of themselves or, in some cases, to provide metal for the new roads.

The simple truth is that Ibn Sa'ud had come to the country with a reputation which nobody was prepared to put to the test! And, confident in that reputation, he himself had been able to dispense with the physical presence of the dreaded *Ikhwan*, whom he sent back to the desert on the completion of their task in the Hijaz, or re-deployed for service with one or another of the expeditions organised to discourage the Yaman from any forward action, and to occupy and pacify the southern districts of the Hijaz down to Jizan and the frontier, where the Idrisi principality of lowland 'Asir acknowledged the suzerainty of Ibn Sa'ud, and retained a sort of mediatised independence until it was absorbed into his realm a few years later. Similar expeditions to the northern districts occupied the *Ikhwan*

contingents which had been employed in the Madina area, and resulted in the almost bloodless occupation of the ports of Yanbu' and Wajh and the contiguous areas up to the 'Aqaba-Ma'an border.

But, while success attended the Wahhabi monarch's activities in connection with the extension of his control over all parts of the Hijaz and the imposition of peace on populations little accustomed to such a luxury in the past, he was confronted at headquarters by problems of a novel character for whose solution his previous experience provided no clue. With judicious borrowing from friendly merchants on the sole security of his honour, and by the periodical deferment of stipends, subsidies and other payments due to those who served him in one way or another, it had been easy enough to make both ends meet (or seem to meet) in the desert on an annual income of something like £150,000 a year. But this playing with millions in a land long versed in all the refinements of chicanery and peculation, and that before the eyes of a world represented at Jidda by numerous foreign envoys, all of them critical and many of them not too friendly, was a very different matter. Ibn Sa'ud could no longer be his own Finance Minister, much less administer personally the many other departments of state required to carry on the administration of a relatively "civilised" country. He was desperately in need of half a dozen honest men of capacity to assist him in the task; but there was not one to be found. Most of the ablest officials of the fallen régime were inevitably taboo pending proof of their loyalty to the new dispensation, while the new men who came in with the conqueror, mostly refugees from Arab lands under British or French control, were scarcely of the calibre needed for the important work of which they were put in charge during the early months of the new régime.

This encouraged Ibn Sa'ud's innate tendency to centralise all administrative controls in his own person. No matter was too small for his personal attention; and his tireless energy enable him to cope on opportunistic lines with a mass of detailed work which had better been left to underlings working to a general plan. It was only by slow degrees that some measure of method began to emerge from this chaotic foundation, though even today it may be doubted whether such devolution of authority as has imposed itself during the past twenty years, mainly in financial and economic matters, has not been due rather to the weakness of the flesh than the willingness of an indomitable spirit. The increasing pressure of an ever-growing volume of urgent work of an unfamiliar kind has imposed the need



Amir 'Abdullah ibn Jiluwi (seated in centre) and his staff at Hufuf in 1917



Ahmad al Ghazzawi, the Poet Laureate, in 1946



Shaikh Fuad Hamza at Mecca in 1932

of a safety-valve; and it was fortunate for the king that the right man for the job emerged at the right moment to relieve him of much of the strain of these highly critical years: a man who combined natural genius for the work involved with enjoyment of the king's absolute confidence.

'Abdullah al Sulaiman al Hamdan,* a native of 'Anaiza in the Qasim, had been cast for a business career, like so many of his fellow-citizens, and had spent some years in India gathering the experience which has since stood him in good stead. His elder brother Muhammad had entered the service of Ibn Sa'ud on the clerical side and served for several years as his sovereign's personal secretary until his death. It was in that capacity that the younger brother attended Ibn Sa'ud during the Hijaz campaign and remained for three or four years, until his proved capacity earned him promotion to the post of Finance Minister, which he has now occupied for more than twenty years, and in which he has played to perfection the part of Ja'far al Barmaki to the king's Harun al Rashid. In all essential respects the parallel between the two régimes, separated by an interval of over eleven centuries, is remarkable, though it has probably never occurred to either of the two great protagonists of the Wahhabi régime that their rôles have been played long since with such distinction on the Baghdad stage! Like his famous predecessor, 'Abdullah al Sulaiman has developed the financial administration of the country on the lines of an immense family business concern, with ramifications probing into every facet of the national life. Like him, he has ever been the devoted servant of his master and, under him, the undisputed arbiter of his country's destiny. And, by and large, it can scarcely be disputed that the country has prospered under his able guidance, though on points of detail his administrative methods may have been open to criticism.

But I am anticipating developments that were yet in the womb of the future during the early days of the Wahhabi dispensation in the Hijaz. Meanwhile the main concern of Ibn Sa'ud was to create an *ad hoc* system of administration which would bear the strains of the new responsibility which he had courted by conquest. With only occasional brief visits to Jidda, most of his own time had necessarily to be spent in Mecca, where much reorganising was needed in connection with the coming pilgrimage, to say nothing of the recasting of the central governmental machine and of the preparations for the Islamic conference in the summer. Accordingly, in order to keep

* See below, pp. 226-7 and 230-231.

touch with the foreign consular missions and the commercial community at Jidda, the king, while retaining in office for all ordinary administrative purposes the former incumbent of the *Qaimmaqamate* or local governorship, Hajji 'Abdullah 'Ali-Ridha, a much-respected and wealthy merchant of the town, found it necessary to be represented in a more personal manner. The person he selected for this somewhat delicate task was Dr 'Abdullah al Damluji, a native of Mosul in 'Iraq, who had followed his fortunes from the earliest days of the Great War: at first in the capacity of family physician and later as general political adviser. Damluji was a man of imagination and possessed of considerable ability; but the characteristic lack of any precise definition of his functions soon brought him into conflict with the titular governor. And the result was a general sense of frustration, which did not contribute to the solution of the economic problems of the transition period, and which opened the door to much veiled, though none the less bitter, criticism in many quarters, notably among the many unemployed officials of the old régime, who saw with natural chagrin their own former juniors in charge of the customs and other departments of profitable memory.

Yet some things did get done despite the general muddle. A contract was placed with the Royal Mint in England for the supply of some millions of nickel coins to meet the pressing demand for small change among the poorer classes. Another contract went to Egypt for the printing of a new set of postage stamps for the Wahhabî régime. Negotiations were initiated for the purchase of a new sea-water condenser to increase the supply of good drinking-water for a population which had experienced the pangs of thirst during the siege of Jidda. Motor-cars began to come in in steadily increasing numbers, both on Government account and for the benefit of speculators taking advantage of the new freedom to cater for the comfort of the pilgrims. And a wireless installation was ordered from the Marconi Company for the port of Qunfidha to maintain contact with the forces now deployed to control the 'Asir Tihama and watch the Yaman border. At the same time every encouragement was given for the return to Jidda and Mecca of those of their citizens and their families who had fled into temporary exile in the Sudan, at Asmarra, in India and elsewhere, to avoid the discomfort and dangers of residence in the Hijaz during the period of hostilities. For their benefit the usual entry tax was forgone by the Government; and it was not long before the whole complement of some 5,000 refugees was back at home, hoping for the best from the new régime.

So far as Great Britain was concerned, the diplomatic position regarding the Wahhabi frontiers with those countries in which she had special interests, namely 'Iraq and Trans-Jordan, had already been regularised before the fall of Jidda by the treaties of Bahra and Hadda respectively: negotiated by Ibn Sa'ud with a British mission headed by Sir Gilbert Clayton. But these treaties were admittedly of a provisional character; and the first two years of Wahhabi rule in the Hijaz were to see the resumption of negotiations between the two countries in a mutually desired attempt to place their relations on a definite and friendly footing. Meanwhile Ibn Sa'ud had been profoundly shocked and greatly perturbed by the British occupation of the Ma'an and 'Aqaba* districts in July, 1925, in the interests of the mandated territory of Trans-Jordan. He has indeed never been able to recognise this annexation by force of districts which unquestionably formed part of the Hijaz at the time; and the controversy remains in being to this day, as is shown by the fact that the southern frontier of Trans-Jordan, unilaterally fixed by Great Britain, is not officially recognised by the Sa'udi Arabian Government.

Ibn Sa'ud has never allowed this source of potential conflict to poison his relations with a government which he has throughout his life regarded as the traditional friend of the Arabs. But there were other minor matters, mainly survivals from the already outmoded régime of the Capitulations, which Ibn Sa'ud has never recognised, which caused a certain amount of friction between a somewhat inexperienced British Consular Agency and the Wahhabi authorities. In the main Ibn Sa'ud, by a characteristic mixture of patience and persistence, was able to resist all encroachments on the prerogatives of his government in such matters as the control of slavery and the regulation of the pilgrimage, to say nothing of the application of the law of the land to all persons residing in or visiting the country: with special emphasis on the enforcement of *Shar'* law in all cases where the parties involved were Muslims.

By the end of 1926 the king, being then on a visit to Madina, agreed to further conversations with the British Government with a view to arriving at a permanent settlement of all matters of mutual interest to the two countries. The British Agent, Mr S. R. Jordan, was deputed to conduct the negotiations on behalf of his government; and Ibn Sa'ud met him in camp outside the limits of the sacred territory. But it soon became apparent that the attitude or instructions of the British negotiator held out little hope of a successful

* See above, p. 76.

outcome of the conversations, which were soon adjourned indefinitely. They were not resumed until Sir Gilbert Clayton revisited Jidda in the summer of 1927; and even then the negotiations produced a serious, though only temporary, deadlock, which was later resolved by a substantial modification of the British position, obtained by Sir Gilbert Clayton on a short visit home to report on his talks with the king. Meanwhile the latter had resigned himself to the abandonment of the negotiations for a treaty, and had had a voluminous "Green Book" prepared to explain in detail the reasons for his inability to yield to some of the more extreme demands of the British Government. Fortunately it proved unnecessary to publish this document, as Sir Gilbert Clayton returned in the autumn with new and more reasonable proposals which facilitated the conclusion of the Treaty of Jidda, by which the relations between the two countries were finally adjusted.

To return to the early months of the new régime, Ibn Sa'ud's decision to convene an Islamic Conference to discuss the future of the Hijaz, while it served to postpone the controversy inherent in the general subject billed for discussion, did little to create an atmosphere of cordiality between himself and other Islamic States. The report of the Persian Mission already mentioned, though mildly worded and not unfriendly on the whole, could not conceal the fact that a number of tombs and shrines, widely regarded as being particularly sacred, had in fact been demolished in deference to Wahhabism. The imminent controversy on the status of the Egyptian *Mahmal*, complicated by the known ambition of King Fuad to secure election or recognition as Calif, was already throwing long shadows before it. But perhaps the most serious potential cause of trouble was the attitude of Indian Islam, which, curiously enough, seemed to be fired with enthusiasm for the British parliamentary type of democracy as being the most suitable form of government to be imposed on the holy land of Islam! This section of Islamic opinion was certainly shocked to the core by Ibn Sa'ud's assumption of the title of king, which seemed to knock the ground from under the feet of the champions of democracy. The Indian Caliphate Society's delegation to the Hijaz was inevitably the principal exponent of these views, and was left cold by the argument that, in form at least, the acclamation of Ibn Sa'ud as king by the people of the Hijaz was in accord with the principle of self-determination, which had been guaranteed to them in advance by the new king. The short sojourn of its members (Zafar 'Ali Khan of the *Zamindar* newspaper, Shu'aib

Quraishi and Maulana 'Irfan) prior to and since the fall of Jidda had indeed convinced them that Ibn Sa'ud "must in some way be very closely associated with the future government of the Hijaz"! To be more precise, they envisaged him as being the supreme controller of the Hijaz in respect of foreign, defence and economic policy, while under his general supervision the internal administration of the State should be conducted by a democratic body on which all the Islamic States and communities of the world would be represented.

This was before the assumption of the royal title by Ibn Sa'ud, while the slow progress of the administration in the direction of stability inevitably encouraged its critics to harp on the need of some more drastic reform in the government of the holy land. The Indians naturally took full advantage of a good bowler's wicket, while Ibn Sa'ud with great patience and persistence missed no opportunity of arguing with them on their own ground: insisting on his own religious orthodoxy (which was more than once called in question by critics of his régime), and assuring them of his determination to preserve the independence of the Hijaz from any kind of foreign influence or control, political or economic. In the end the Indian deputation departed towards the latter part of January, only half convinced that the future of the Hijaz was in good hands. Its place was, however, immediately taken by another deputation from India, representing the Society of the Servants of the two Holy Cities, and bringing a sum of some Rs60,000 for the relief of the "victims" of Madina! The attitude of this mission was openly hostile from the beginning; and it was not long before Ibn Sa'ud, having borne with them as patiently as possible in spite of much provocation, was constrained to request them to leave the country. To ensure prompt compliance on their part they were sent down to Jidda from Mecca under police guard, and placed on a ship bound for Suez on March 1st after little more than a month in the Hijaz. Their criticism of the régime in the Hijaz centred for the most part round vague allegations of Ibn Sa'ud's susceptibility to British influence, as evidenced by the Hadda and Bahra treaties, of which they demanded to see the signed originals, because they suspected the existence of secret clauses! Next in order, in their arraignment of the Wahhabi administration, came the "atrocities" at Taif, Madina and other places, of which they demanded an explanation. And, lastly, they took strong objection to Ibn Sa'ud's circumvention of Islamic opinion by his unilateral assumption of the throne.

Anxious as the king was to conciliate world, and especially Muslim,

sentiment, he was not the man to brook obstruction of this kind. In the end the much advertised Islamic Conference of 1926 petered out in frustration; and no further attempt was made by the Islamic world to influence the evolution of the Hijaz administration on the lines suggested by year-to-year experience of the requirements of the pilgrimage. The four years from 1926 inclusive produced bumper crops of overseas visitors, well over the 100,000 mark; and it was the world economic slump at the turn of the decade, rather than any administrative shortcomings on the part of the Government, that ushered in the ten lean years of the thirties, and the disastrous drought of the Second World War, when access to the ports of Arabia was severely restricted by causes beyond the control of the Sa'udi Government.

The economic slump could scarcely have been, and was certainly not, foreseen amidst the plenty that flowed into the lap of Arabia during the early years of the Wahhabi régime. Unwonted wealth set the fashion of extravagance which the king himself, with his old-fashioned ideas of hospitality and charity, did little to check. Money poured into and out of the Exchequer, which was at this time presided over by Sharif Sharaf Ridha, a survival of the fallen Sharifian régime. An Appointments Board, created *ad hoc* to select suitable candidates for Government posts, did its best to conform to the royal ideas about suitable salaries for those selected. A Budgetary Committee did its best to prune the Civil List and other departments under the king's personal control, like Defence and Public Security; and had to be sharply reminded that the country had been conquered by the king's sword, which had to be kept sharp to impose and preserve the king's peace. A shadow Parliament, comprising suitable representatives of the three large towns, was convened at Mecca, but never looked like being anything more than a rump in spite of occasional indiscretions, though it provided a foundation for the eventual Advisory Council, which during recent years has done much useful, though scarcely distinguished, work and has acted as a safety-valve against too hasty legislation on many important issues.

Apart from the outstanding fact that the direction of affairs was highly centralised in the person of the king himself, it was difficult in these early years to form any idea of the shape of things likely to emerge from these experiments in constitutional government. The experiments themselves were not by any means mere bluff to deceive the critics, but represented rather an honest attempt to sift and probe the elements locally available for the creation of an efficient

administration. The results were rather disappointing; and in many quarters it began to be whispered that, without foreign guidance or advice, there was little hope for the future. Some went back nostalgically to the old Turkish régime, admittedly corrupt but not inefficient; others thought that the Sharifian administration was not as bad as they had imagined; few could honestly say much good of the Wahhabi régime in being, except that there was peace and security thanks to the king. Meanwhile the merchants made fortunes out of the Government; speculators grew rich rapidly on the new motor traffic, and as rapidly went bankrupt for want of spare parts and efficient service; and Government officials knew how to lay by a reserve against bad times without being positively dishonest.

Quite suddenly, and almost without warning, the lean years set in. The record pilgrimage of 1929 was followed by one of the worst pilgrimages on record. The economic blizzard struck the country like a bolt from the blue, and continued for years. But it proved to be a blessing in disguise.

CHAPTER VIII

MURMURS AND MUTINY

DURING and immediately after the conquest of the Hijaz Ibn Sa'ud had found himself confronted by the necessity of reconsidering his position as the leader of a crusade against the infidel: a term which, in Wahhabi parlance, comprised not only the whole of the non-Muslim world but also those communities of Islam itself which did not conform to the requirements of his puritan creed. We have seen how the "massacre" of the "unbelievers" at Taif had forced him to assert his authority over such zealous lieutenants as Sultan ibn Bijad, whom he had peremptorily ordered not to attack Mecca on any account. The risk of complications with European Powers, in the event of European casualties in a fight for Jidda, had similarly forced him to defer the attack on that town until he himself could take charge of the operations. And he had ordered Faisal al Duwish and his fanatical following not to assault Madina, which in due course surrendered in an orderly manner to the young prince Muhammad. Even so there had been some demolition of traditional sacred places both in Mecca and Madina, which had aroused the indignation of Persia and other Muslim countries. At Jidda, however, the very doubtful tomb of Eve was allowed to stand for some years, until its idolatrous associations had been sufficiently canvassed to permit of its demolition in 1928 without public demur.

Ibn Sa'ud had thus shown not only his capacity to control his fanatical followers but his own possession of statesmanlike qualities, permitting of compromise with ignorance, superstition and other worldly weaknesses in the interests of a new dispensation, which it was his purpose to establish in the countries brought under his control by conquest. His magnanimous concession to the tobacconists of the holy land was a good example of his readiness to temporise with ungodliness for temporal ends. At the same time his attitude towards the foreign Powers, with whom he now came into contact on a large scale, was firm but friendly. He would have nothing to do with the Capitulations of the old Turkish régime; and made it quite clear

from the beginning, in spite of certain controversies thereby engendered, that in matters such as slavery and the administration of the criminal law, regardless of the nationality claimed by the criminal, his Government and his courts alone exercised jurisdiction. On the other hand his attitude towards the foreign mercantile community was cordial in the extreme; and it was manifest from the outset that a new era of trading prosperity was being inaugurated, in strong contrast with the régime of pettifogging controls and interference that had marked the short incumbency of the Sharifian dynasty. Finally, in his dealings with foreign Muslim States and communities, he was on strong ground in insisting on the punctual observance of the *Shar'* law by their nationals or members residing in or visiting the holy land. He would brook no interference with his administration of that law, while he was at all times ready to discuss measures for the improvement of conditions in the Hijaz in the interests of the pilgrims. His disposal of the hypercritical animadversions of visiting Indian missions has already been discussed; but it was with Egypt that his real test of strength was to come almost immediately over the holy carpet issue. For years past that country had had the honour of supplying the covering for the Ka'ba, and had been accustomed to send its annual gift to the Hijaz with much pomp and ceremony. This included the provision of a specially selected camel to carry the *Mahmal* or litter, which was in effect a sort of cenotaph of Egyptian sovereignty, from Jidda to Mecca and 'Arafat, where it was assigned a special station of honour: to be the cynosure of pilgrim eyes, which should more properly be turned towards Mecca. With the camel and its burden came a contingent of Egyptian troops, with brass band complete, to escort it on its journeys. What was the Wahhabi king to do about this pompous adjunct to the most solemn ceremony of the Islamic year? In fact he adopted an attitude of masterly inactivity; and the *Mahmal* duly made its accustomed journey to the field of pilgrimage for the last time. At Muna, during the traditional holiday, the sight of the gaudy litter in the Egyptian enclosure was too much for the more fanatical section of the Wahhabi pilgrims from Najd. An attack was launched on it, and in the ensuing mêlée some lives were lost and wounds incurred before the king in person intervened to part the combatants. The ensuing diplomatic argument between the courts concerned ended in a Wahhabi ban on the progress of the *Mahmal* beyond the limits of the comparatively heathen town of Jidda; and this in turn resulted in the stoppage of Egyptian gifts. A long period of diplomatic

rupture between the two governments ensued: lasting till the death of King Fuad in 1936 and the advent of a Wafdist Government to power under Mustafa Nahas Pasha, who negotiated the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The occasion was celebrated by the sending of the *Mahmal* to Jidda as a token of the newly cemented friendship; and since then the gifts of Egypt have been sent in less ostentatious fashion. It should be remarked that during the period of coolness the holy carpet had been made in Mecca by local labour under the supervision of skilled craftsmen from India.

Enough has been said to show how, under these contacts with the Hijaz and the west, the innate tolerance of Ibn Sa'ud had progressively tended to temper the fierce sirocco of Wahhabi puritanism to the shorn lamb of the Hijaz, on whose commercial and other activities he depended so largely for much-needed contributions to his Treasury. No sooner had the Wahhabis done what was required of them in war, than they were packed off home to brood on the iniquity of the world at large, and to await their next summons to do such work as God might require of them. Some of their leaders may already have begun to wonder whether the chief whom they had served so faithfully was not slackening in his zeal for the service of God, while they themselves were burning to teach in 'Iraq and Syria the lessons they had taught among the people of the Hijaz. Of course, they themselves had relaxed a bit among the flesh-pots of the holy land, but that was only a temporary lapse from virtue. And now that the temptation to backslide was too distant to be irresistible, they could afford to direct their righteous wrath at those of their fellows who were still making hay in the sunshine. Something seemed to have gone wrong with their world; and the prelates and zealots of Riyadh, to say nothing of the simpler souls of the *Ikhwan* colonies, which Ibn Sa'ud had himself created for the glory of God, lost little time in discussing and condemning the new look of things.

Meanwhile Ibn Sa'ud had necessarily to devote a great part of his time to the affairs of the Hijaz, though he was by no means unaware of the searchings of heart going on in his absence from Najd. His father, the Imam 'Abdul-Rahman, was still alive at this time (he died in 1928 at the age of seventy-eight), and doubtless kept his son abreast of developments at home. During the summer of 1927 the negotiations with Sir Gilbert Clayton had shown signs of detaining him indefinitely in the Hijaz; but their breakdown in circumstances which necessitated Clayton's departure to consult the Government

in London at last released Ibn Sa'ud for a short visit to the heart of Arabia. He knew full well that he would be expected to explain some of the more recondite aspects of his recent policy *vis-à-vis* the infidel and his inventions. And, characteristically, he took the bull by the horns in summoning all the secular and ecclesiastical chiefs of his realm to a conference at the capital. For the first time in his career, and that on the morrow of an outstanding victory, he found himself confronted by murmuring and suspicion on the part of the stalwarts who had stood by him unflinchingly in the hour of trial. But he knew the inherent weakness of their murky souls, the love of filthy lucre which had lured them into battle with the enemies of God. Like Jeremiah he might have said: "For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely." And at least he had come to them amply supplied with funds from the conquered territory: to distribute in liberal gifts to the deserving and the complaisant. The argument was vigorous enough, but the most cogent one was in his hands; and it did not prove difficult to divert the controversy into sterile channels. Much of the time of the conference was taken up with a full-dress debate on the religious admissibility of the telephone; and that issue was in due course settled by an ecclesiastical bull on the harmlessness of a queer adjunct to conversational convenience. Years later the radio was subjected to a similar, though less formal, inquest, and admitted to the amenities of the country because the words of the Quran could be heard recited by the divines of Egypt and elsewhere.

The hypercritical criticisms of the new régime having been disposed of in this way, the meeting turned to more important matters of policy. It was agreed that the attitude of the king and his people towards the wicked pretensions of 'Iraq was identical; but here the king (incidentally he was not that yet so far as Najd was concerned, but only Sultan) was able to insist that the tackling of that problem, full of snares and pitfalls in view of the attitude of a certain foreign Power, must be left to his discretion on the understanding that in due course the *Ikhwan* would have the honour of subjecting that erring country to the law of God. Meanwhile the hands of the Sultan must be strengthened for his dealings with the infidel, who seemed to attach exaggerated importance to mere verbal distinctions. A rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but somehow a mere sultan was regarded in certain quarters as being of lower status than a king. Anyway Faisal had been proclaimed king by the British,

like his father Husain before him; and the only way of levelling things up was obviously that Ibn Sa'ud should be proclaimed king. So this was done; and the new king of Najd and its dependencies, having settled accounts with his own subjects, was able to return to the Hijaz to resume his interrupted negotiations with Clayton.

Their discussions centred largely round the question of the future attitude of Ibn Sa'ud towards the two principal *protégés* of the British Government, namely the States of 'Iraq and Trans-Jordan, and their agreed or *de facto* frontiers with Sa'udi Arabia: a designation which did not come into use till some years later. On this issue Ibn Sa'ud deferred generally to the British position, and undertook to respect the boundaries in question, while agreeing to submit all disputes arising out of infringements thereof to peaceful negotiation between the representatives of the governments involved.

Thus a satisfactory *modus vivendi* was duly reached on paper. But, what with smugglers, graziers, refugees, fugitives from justice, and raiders on occasion, crossing the long and scarcely distinguishable frontier in this direction or that, it was inevitable that frontier incidents should be of common occurrence. On the whole, however, they were settled without serious friction, as they occurred, by the *ad hoc* boundary commissions appointed by the governments involved; and it was not till a year or more later that the uneasy peace of the frontier was disturbed by a serious incident. One of the points agreed on by the parties had been that no permanent buildings or forts should be constructed by either within a given distance of the boundary. But, in 1928, when the Mutair tribe was grazing according to custom in the frontier area, it became known that the 'Iraqi frontier force was building a fort at the wells of Busaiya, which were within the forbidden area. This was too much for the redoubtable Faisal al Duwish, who was doubtless already chafing under the treaty restraints placed upon his militant ardour in face of the infidel 'Iraqis. Without troubling to report the offence to his distant master, he launched an immediate attack on the offending fort, and was chased back into his desert pastures by the British Air Force, which proceeded to bomb the Mutair camps in Sa'udi territory. Duwish summoned his clans to avenge the losses sustained; and Ibn Sa'ud was compelled to take drastic action to bring the tribe to heel, while protesting to the British authorities against the violation of his territory. From the latter he obtained no redress, as the initiative of attack could be clearly imputed to the Mutair, while it was main-

tained, rightly or wrongly, that the construction of the Busaiya fort was not an infringement of the frontier agreement. In normal circumstances the incident would soon have been forgotten; but the circumstances were not then normal. Ever since the Riyadh conference of 1927 Duwish and other leaders of the *Ikhwan* had been labouring under a sense of grievance at the apparently *laissez-faire* policy of the king, and his general subservience to British interests. They began to regard themselves as the chosen instruments of the Almighty for resistance to the growing tendency towards the secularisation of the country; and above all they were chafing against the restraints placed on their natural penchant for fighting and raiding as a means to the betterment of their economic situation, while legitimate objects of their hostility were available among the godless folk beyond the limits of Wahhabi territory.

The Busaiya incident in effect fanned the smouldering embers of this discontent into active mutiny. And the next two years found Ibn Sa'ud engaged in a weary and desultory fight to assert his own authority at all costs against the mutineers. The latter were led by Faisal al Duwish himself and Sultan ibn Bijad, the conqueror of Taif and Mecca, and the chief of the notorious *Ikhwan* colony of Ghat-ghat. After months of the customary skirmishing of desert warfare, the issue was ultimately joined in the spring of 1929 on the battle-field of Sibila, between Artawiya and Zilfi. The fanatical courage of the *Ikhwan* availed naught against the cooler tactics and greater military might of Ibn Sa'ud, and Duwish himself was seriously wounded and captured. He was brought before the king on a litter, which seemed likely to be his deathbed, and was magnanimously forgiven and allowed to go free to his tribal tents. There he was nursed back into health by his womenfolk: only to take the field again against his master, though it was now clear that the odds were hopelessly against him. His eldest son, 'Abdul-'aziz, was killed in a desert encounter; and the old man himself, game to the end, avenged himself on the king by taking refuge in 'Iraq with King Faisal. Meanwhile the king had sent his younger brother 'Abdullah with a strong contingent to deal with Sultan ibn Bijad and the recalcitrant colony of Ghat-ghat. The former was duly captured alive and sent to eke out the rest of his days in the dungeon of Mismak at Riyadh, while the latter was rased to the ground, to remain a heap of ruins to this day. Others of the rebels, including Farhan ibn Mashhur, decamped to the safety of 'Iraq, while yet others surrendered to the king.

The latter's main preoccupation now was to deal with the situation created by the flight of Duwish to 'Iraq, where he represented a considerable political asset in the hands of Faisal. Ibn Sa'ud protested to the British against his being harboured in 'Iraq, on the ground that the action he had been forced to take against him had been due 'to his unauthorised aggression against 'Iraqi territory. On the other hand, under Arab rules of the war-game, Faisal could not honourably surrender a refugee unconditionally, as Ibn Sa'ud had demanded. In these circumstances a compromise was arrived at, under which Faisal and the British agreed to deliver up the person of Duwish unconditionally, while Ibn Sa'ud on his part announced that he had no intention of putting him to death. The surrender of Duwish duly took place at a camp in the Dibdiba desert, to which he was brought by a British aeroplane; and he was duly sent to Riyadh to join Ibn Bijad in the Mismak prison. The latter died there, while Duwish was, at the pleading of his womenfolk, released to die in his own tents. Thus did two of the leading champions of Wahhabism in its heyday disappear from the scene at a moment when it was becoming fairly clear that the movement to which they had devoted all their energies had begun to lose the fire which had enabled it to create an empire within a couple of decades for one whose unquestionable zeal for the faith had always been tempered with the discretion of a born statesman.

It seemed a far cry back to the days of 1912* when, under the auspices of a younger Ibn Sa'ud, the first lumps of clay were thrown together to form the nucleus of the great town of Artawiya, the prototype of some ten score of *Ikhwan* cantonments, destined to shake the traditional economy of Arabia to its foundations and, however accidentally, to prepare the way for a modern State, utterly incompatible with the survival of puritan xenophobia and fanaticism in the desert. Yet the *Ikhwan* movement of the twentieth century, in its latest form the invention and perhaps the greatest of all the achievements of Ibn Sa'ud, cannot be regarded as a failure on the ground that circumstances forced it ultimately into conformity with a more secular dispensation. History had taught Ibn Sa'ud that, while the Arabs of the desert could be galvanised into military activity from time to time by religious zeal, or could be held together for conquest by a great personality, the disappearance of such a personality or the cooling of the fanaticism evoked by an inspired teacher could only result in a reversion to type and a reappearance of

* See above, pp. 22 and 39.

the centrifugal tendencies so characteristic of desert life. It was to obviate this danger that Ibn Sa'ud had deliberately set out in his puritan revival to break down the tribal organisation of desert Arabia and to create in its place a sense of national cohesion in the service of God. The peculiar feature of the *Ikhwan* colonies which he established was therefore his settlement of Badawin elements on the land, not in tribal groups but in mixed communities drawn from different tribes and held together by a sense of religious brotherhood. With a fixed stake in agricultural land and an assured livelihood as territorial contingents of a standing army, these mixed colonies were in a strong position to deter or discourage the tribes from which they were drawn from raiding each other. Furthermore their fanaticism was calculated to enforce a certain amount of conformity to their religious ideals on the nomad elements of their tribes, whose interests in the matter of religious education were not neglected by the State. The outright banning of tribal wars and raids followed as a matter of course; and it may be claimed that, by about 1930, the internal pacification of Sa'udi Arabia had been completed, and the tribal raid had become a thing of the past. Only on the outskirts of the country, where it marched with foreign States or tribes under foreign control, did unrest continue, as it does, though perhaps on a reduced scale, to this day; but that is a somewhat different problem, with which we are not directly concerned in assessing the achievement of Ibn Sa'ud.

The great mistake made by most competent students of Arabian affairs, including Dr D. G. Hogarth, in the early days from the time of the First World War onwards was the assumption that the outcome of current developments in that country could only be gauged in the light of our knowledge of its past. Other empires had had their day in the desert, and dissolved into mirages. The same would happen again. Ibn Sa'ud had undoubtedly established effective control over his turbulent subjects for the time being, as some of his predecessors had done in their time. But the desert had always beaten them in the end, reverting to type in its immemorial way. So it would be with Ibn Sa'ud's achievement when he died, they argued. The parallel was too close to be ignored. And, so far as Britain was concerned, there was an unanswerable case for accepting the relatively civilised régime of the Sharifian dynasty as the most probable future arbiters of Arabian destinies, with a secure base in the Islamic holy land and a vague suzerainty over the troublesome hinterland under British guidance.

The answer was fairly obvious. Apart from the fact that the critics had failed to understand the true character of Ibn Sa'ud's achievement and had miscalculated his strength, the Wahhabi monarch was very much alive, and there was no reason to suppose that he would not attain the normal span of human life. Moreover, if he were spared, say, for twenty years or so, it was not unreasonable to assume, not only that he would by then have greatly enlarged the sphere of his effective influence, but that he would have so reorganised the whole country, particularly in the matter of the control and pacification of the tribes, that his successors, who could scarcely be expected to be of the same calibre as himself, would have relatively little trouble in maintaining his régime with little fear of any recrudescence of Badawin turbulence.

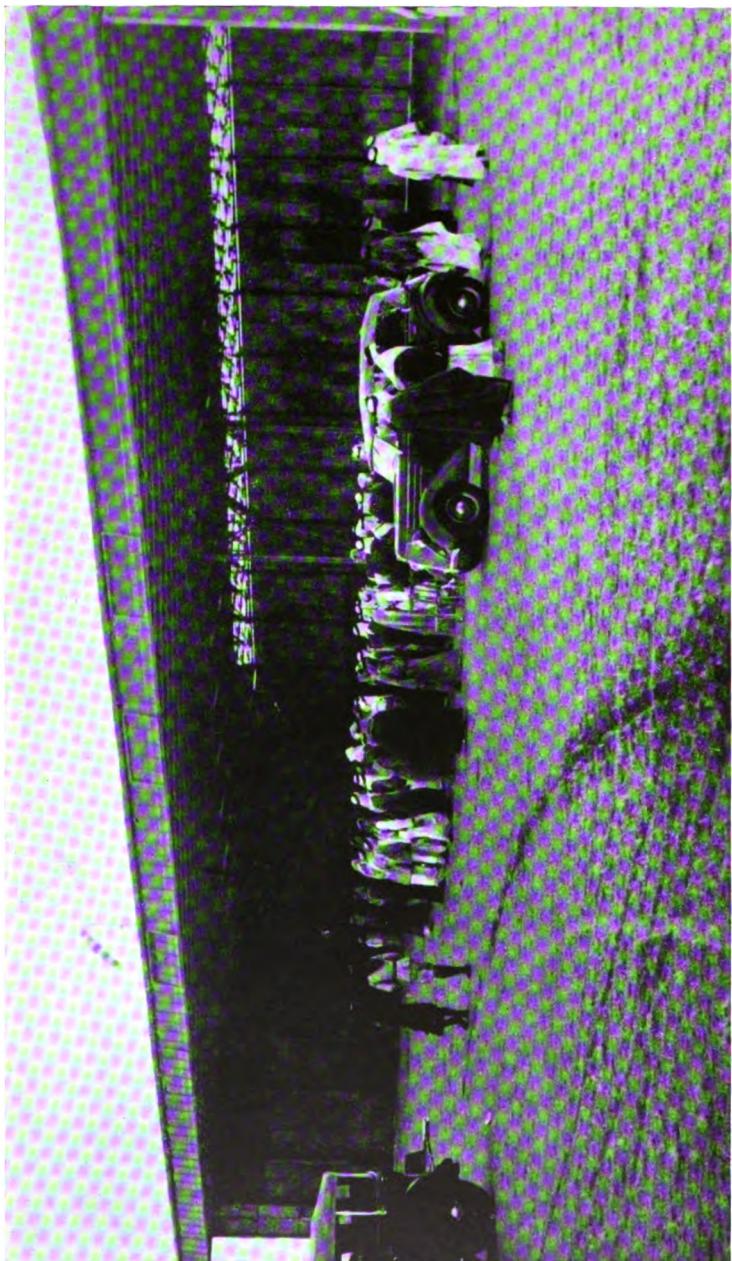
Thirty years have passed since such arguments were bandied about in Whitehall and elsewhere. At three-score years and ten Ibn Sa'ud is still in the saddle; and no one will deny that his country has been reorganised out of recognition. The Badawin problem has virtually ceased to exist in Sa'udi Arabia; and the once formidable janissaries of the *Ikhwan* colonies have, for all practical purposes, been disbanded, while their sons have turned their swords into ploughshares. Some of the colonies have been abandoned to the oasis fever which from time to time took its toll of the settlers. The once dreaded name of Ghat-ghat is heard no more in the land. Most of the old champions of a great cause have been gathered to their fathers: Khalid ibn Luwai and Faisal ibn Hashr in addition to Faisal al Duwish and Sultan ibn Bijad. And among others who have gone must be mentioned the king's father, the Imam 'Abdul-Rahman, who played an important though unostentatious rôle in the development of his son's career; and the formidable 'Abdullah ibn Jiluwi, one of the few who took part in the daring exploit of fifty years ago. Of that small band, indeed, only four* survive to celebrate the event with their leader; while it is only fitting to record in this roll of honour the passing, only a week before the jubilee, of one who heard the tidings of victory at Kuwait: the lady Nura, the full sister and constant companion of the king: in everything but the actual title queen of Najd for all but half a century.

The old xenophobia has disappeared, probably for ever, from the desert scene; and the strangers who have swarmed into a veritable land of promise from many parts of the world, from Europe and America, from the Levant and Egypt and elsewhere, have leavened

* See footnote, p. 11.



The sea-water condenser at Jidda in 1946



Hangar at Airport of Jidda in 1948

the Arabian lump, softening its asperities and taming its austerity to their exotic appetites and sophisticated weaknesses. Their influence, inevitable in the circumstances, has not been wholly good. Much that was admirable in the old fanaticism has yielded all too easily to the easy-going vices of modern "civilisation"; and the golden calf is firmly established in the new unitarianism, derived from the economic theories of the west.

At any rate Arabia has come to differ less from the rest of the world than it used to; and its future is assured on lines conforming to a worldwide pattern. The men who succeed to the direction of its destinies will inherit a relatively easy task in following the trails blazed by the giants of a generation now disappearing. Communications have been developed on a vast and undreamed-of scale, with motorable roads, a railway almost completed, and an admirable air-service, to say nothing of a network of wireless stations, and the radio to tap the news of the uttermost parts of the world. The economic resources of the country have been explored and developed to a high pitch of perfection. Agricultural expansion has been fostered on an impressive scale. Hospitals and schools have sprung up where they were unknown before. Extensive building operations have expanded villages into towns. And an attempt is being made to reorganise the army on European lines, though in this case the efforts made have been somewhat desultory and can scarcely be regarded as having produced any appreciable results so far. It may even be doubted whether, in this and certain other aspects, the tendency to imitate European models somewhat slavishly has not been carried too far: with the result that the flower of the old Arabian chivalry, which at any rate provided the manpower behind the great achievements of Ibn Sa'ud, has been discouraged from enrolment in the security forces of the country.

It may fairly be claimed, in concluding this brief summary of Ibn Sa'ud's administrative achievements, that he has indeed confounded his earlier critics by bringing his realm into line with what they considered the requirements of "civilisation". If, however, despite the circumstances attending his emergence as a leader, criticism of his achievement is permissible, the verdict of history may well be that, while he succeeded in the seemingly impossible task of bringing his people up out of the old world to the frontiers of the new, he has never seemed to realise the necessity of equipping them with the administrative machinery required for their guidance amid the pitfalls of the future. To the end, subject to minor reservations, the

shape of things in Arabia has remained patriarchal and, in the last resort, dependent on the intervention of the patriarch. It will be for his successors to introduce the amenities of "democracy": a task which, with the material actually available, will tax their capacity to the utmost, and which would have been easier had the experiment been tried under the guidance of a stronger hand.

CHAPTER IX

ONE DAY IN THY COURTS

It's like a thousand! That is certainly true of the court of Sa'udi Arabia. Day in, day out, the ritual and the routine are the same: conforming to a pattern of service to his country, based on the essentially democratic practice of the Arabs from of old, and imposed on himself by Ibn Sa'ud in circumstances which bear but little resemblance to the semi-patriarchal, semi-feudal conditions known to his ancestors. He has never swerved from his conviction that the duty of a monarch is to be freely accessible to his people, lest any man be wronged through inability to approach the highest court, or escape justice for wronging one who is similarly inhibited. All through his career he has never lost sight of the need for the utmost vigilance, lest the servants of the king should abuse their privilege and seek to be the masters of his people. And, as he said himself on one occasion during the period to which this chapter is devoted, "The despot who rules by the will of his people has nothing to fear, while he who rules despotically in their despite goes ever in dread."

By and large, over a long period of years, there has, of course, been a substantial transformation of the court routine and ceremonial; and it would be absurd to suggest that the simple organisation of thirty-three years ago, when I first had the privilege of seeing Ibn Sa'ud at work, would be capable of coping with the more complicated requirements of today. But the basic principles of accessibility to his subjects and personal attention to their needs and plaints have remained absolutely unchanged, while the actual routine of the court, modified progressively and at intervals by the changing character of the world around it, retains to this day something of the old day-to-day monotony which always struck me as its outstanding characteristic. Ibn Sa'ud is a man of rule and habit; and, apart from accidental lapses due to illness, happily rare, or utter weariness, he has always himself observed with punctuality and punctiliousness the regimen which he expects his courtiers, officials, boon-companions and myrmidons to follow in his service. I have often wondered,

indeed, how, with no obligation but his own free will to dictate his actions, he has been able to endure, day after day and night after night, the constant presence of the same people around him, with only the occasional diversion of a new face to enliven the proceedings of his sessions. Yet that is exactly what he seems to prefer; and there never has been a more loyal friend to those he has gathered around him and held through all the years: some of them old enemies reconciled by kindness; others the flotsam and jetsam of Arab insurgence against the creeping imperialism of former allies; yet others the faithful companions of his tilts with fate in leaner years.

They were remarkable gatherings, and perhaps at no period of the king's reign more so than in the summer of 1930, when the court was at Taif and when, by adhesion to Islam, I became a regular member of it, to remain such ever since. The king himself was then at the peak of his career, still in his physical prime, still uxorious if not indeed more so than in the days when he had more serious matters to attend to, still deeply religious as he always was and has always unswervingly remained, full of fun, quick to anger and as quickly appeased. The Yaman war was still to come, and was already throwing its shadows before; but its result could be discounted in advance, though it could scarcely be foreseen then that it would add nothing to the stature of the Wahhabi realm, while it would convert the last of Ibn Sa'ud's enemies into a lifelong friend. Meanwhile there was nothing but the gazelles of Rakba plain to engage the physical energies of a stalwart frame; and thither we would go on occasion to spend two or three nights at the Samuda wells, and scour the desert from dawn to dusk in search of a quarry which had already been decimated by the reckless hunting of princes. And it was an experience never to be forgotten to ride in the king's car on such occasions: a dare-devil Indian chauffeur at the wheel, with His Majesty on his right; a Badawin chief and myself behind on the two movable seats, with the spare guns (five-shooter shotguns with No 1 shot) to load and hand forward to the king as he emptied the magazines one after another; and finally the President of the Council, the Physician-in-Ordinary armed with a portable first-aid kit, and some other high official, all squeezed into the back seat of the seven-seater Mercedes-Benz touring-car. It was always a feather in one's cap to be the first to see a gazelle in the distance; and when one was seen, off we went at top speed through the jungle bushes, regardless of the nature of the terrain; and woe betide the driver if he slowed down

to negotiate a bad patch of sand or rock in the way! His business was to keep his eye on the quarry, not on the surface, and he might be reminded of this by a sudden cuff on the head from the royal hand. On one occasion I remember, when we were speeding through a patch of thorny acacias, a branch flung upwards by the bonnet of the car came down on my head like a sledge-hammer. It must have stunned me momentarily, for I felt nothing, though my head and face were like a pin-cushion. An alarmed exclamation of the President of the Council drew the king's attention to me, and he immediately stopped the car. "Oh, it is nothing," I pleaded shame-facedly; "I really feel no pain." "But you are bleeding," countered the king, "and blood is unclean (*najis*)."¹ There was, of course, no arguing against that; and the hunt was temporarily discontinued, while they picked the thorns out of my face and brought water to restore me to a state of ceremonial purity. On another occasion we disturbed a little herd of thirteen or fourteen gazelles, lying up among some bushes against the sun's heat. They jumped up and scattered in every direction, while we went swerving and jinking after them, the king laying them low one by one at point-blank range and leaving a following car to collect the kills. I timed the performance by my watch, and it had only taken fifteen minutes to wipe out the whole of that herd. Incidentally these gazelles of the Rakba plain turned out to be a new sub-species, which was duly christened *gazella saudiya* by the British Museum authorities, to whom I sent a selection of heads and skins. There must have been thousands of them in the old days before the advent of the motor-car; but it is seldom nowadays that one sees them in the more accessible parts of the desert, for they have withdrawn to its rocky fringes or into the sand-dunes of the Empty Quarter and similar areas. Incidentally, during these years, the ostrich, already long extinct in the south, has disappeared from northern Arabia owing to man's motorised depredations, while the same is true of the oryx in the north, though it still survives in considerable numbers in the Empty Quarter and its fringes. It is sad that the wild life of the Arabian desert should so have suffered from the march of progress; but there is no reason to believe that Arabia is unique in this respect, though in some countries belated attempts are being made to legislate for the preservation of the local fauna. That is not yet true of Sa'udi Arabia: more's the pity.

At Taif, as elsewhere in the realm of Ibn Sa'ud, the days are reckoned from sunset to sunset, from which it follows that the local civil time (i.e. standard time) of any point in Arabia is different

from that of any other point, and that, except for periods of about twenty days in June/July and ten days at the end of November, when each day is exactly twenty-four hours, every day of the year is approximately one minute (or fraction of a minute) shorter or longer than that amount according to the season: the longer days coming from the beginning of December to the middle of June, and the shorter ones in the other half of the year, with slight variations of these periods according to latitude. The point is of importance because the onus of determining the moment at which a day begins, i.e. sunset, is left on the inhabitants of each locality, who may have a wide or a narrow horizon according to the character of the country; and so far as I know no watch or clock has yet been devised to conform to the vagaries of Arabian days, of which a fixed sunset and a varying noon are the principal characteristics. Yet at Taif, in the days of which I am writing, a serious point of religious significance arose when some Badawin from the wider horizons of Najd, encamped near the precincts of the royal palace, intoned their call to the sunset prayer as the sun disappeared over the rim of the surrounding mountains a good five minutes before reaching the true horizon! They made matters worse when, in all innocence and having no watches to go by, the call to the evening prayer was a good half-hour before the proper time, which is one hour and a half after sunset. The royal ears heard their improper calls; and the king was genuinely disturbed, not because they had erred in ignorance but at the thought that the prayers they had said were invalid. So he sent for his chaplain, after having raised the matter in public assembly, and instructed him to proceed to the offending camp and lecture its occupants on the proper procedure for reckoning the hours of prayer. In those days, at any rate, though there is less punctiliousness in such matters now, the observance of exact hours for the prescribed prayers of each day was regarded as a *sine qua non* condition of orthodoxy after the Wahhabi manner; and the king regarded it as very much his own function, in co-operation with the prelates and zealots of the faith, to exact such observance from his lieges. And only yesterday, as it were, he was called upon to study and approve a new set of regulations requiring all shops and cafés and other places of entertainment and recreation to close punctually at the sound of the *Adhan*, whereat the functionaries of the Commission for the Encouragement of Virtue and Discouragement of Vice would come into operation, as of old, to herd reluctant steps into the mosques and other recognised places of devotion. The need

for the issue of such regulations is in itself a measure of the laxity which has slowly seeped back into the ordinary life of the community, as the vigilance of the Wahhabi administration has relaxed through the years under the influence of easier economic conditions. Even at Riyadh, always a model of orthodoxy and discipline, the strain has been somewhat eased; and at the hours of prayer one sees the crowds milling about the streets and shopping centres in indeterminate confusion instead of the old processions to the various mosques, shepherded by the zealots. The "foreign" element in the now swollen population of the desert capital is held to account for the change, while critics and questioners are assured that in the towns of the Qasim and other provinces the old pattern of virtuous life survives uncontaminated by modern influences.

The king himself, perhaps alone of the lay community, has never relaxed on this matter of religious punctiliousness. On most days of this summer sojourn at Taif, he would drive out an hour or so before sunset with his cronies and myrmidons to one or another of the valleys of the neighbourhood, where carpets would be spread and we would sit round chatting about everything on earth, while the servants poured out coffee, round after round, and prepared a collation of seasonable fruits (grapes, pomegranates, prickly pears, quinces and the like) to be consumed a little before the mystic hour. The sun would be watched as it sank to and behind the curtain of mountains, and the *Muadhdhin*, 'Id of the stentorian voice or some other member of the bodyguard, watch in hand, would allow a reasonable space for it to reach the invisible horizon, whereupon he would intone the formula of the call, and we would all line up in two or more rows, according to the numbers present on each occasion, with the king in the middle, and the chaplain in front of him. "Dress your ranks, dress your ranks," the latter would say, turning to right and left; and then he would intone the prayers, while the congregation took up the prescribed responses. The service over, the king would perform his private devotions, and the rest of the company would follow his example, or rather the example of the Prophet, who used to go through two or more movements of the prayer after the service proper. The king's devotions were generally prolonged, while the rest of us would gather in small groups to talk of secular things until he was done. The cars then came up and we returned to the palace, where the king retired immediately to his private apartments, while the rest of us scattered to our quarters or homes for an hour or two of leisure before the next function of the day.

At the third hour (9 p.m.) we would go back to the palace for the evening public session in the main audience chamber on the first floor. Incidentally the Shubra palace, which the king was occupying at this time, is a fine marble mansion, originally built for Sharif 'Ali, the immediate predecessor of Amir Husain (afterwards King Husain) ibn 'Ali as Amir of Mecca under the Turks. He had brought in Italian architects and craftsmen for the work, and the palace was named Shubra after the one in which Sharif 'Ali had lived on the outskirts of Cairo during a period of exile from his native land. The three floors of the mansion are laid out on a cruciform pattern, the four arms of the cross being spacious passages crossing each other at right angles, while each angle was occupied by one large chamber with several subsidiary ones: each block forming as it were a complete apartment to meet the requirements of a polygamic dispensation.

The top floor and roof were reserved for the ladies of the royal household, while the king's audience chamber and the governmental offices occupied the whole of the first floor: the ground floor, on a high plinth and approached by a flight of marble steps from the road, being given over to the servants and bodyguard, while the kitchen and subsidiary offices were in a separate less palatial building in the walled garden attached to the palace.

Facing the door of the audience chamber was a richly carpeted and becushioned bay window overlooking the palace garden and forming a sort of divan, divided by an arm-rest into two seats, on one of which sat the king, with a telephone and a bell-push by his side on the sill. The other half of this throne remained vacant for the use of any very specially distinguished guest or by any of the high-ranking ecclesiastics who might be present at a sitting or in conference with the king. One of these most in evidence at this time was the blind Shaikh 'Abdullah al 'Anqari,* then sixty years or so old and still alive and flourishing. Another, 'Abdullah ibn Bulaihid, visited us from his see at Hail, a ferocious-looking Barbarossa with the kindest of kind hearts, who has long since been gathered to his fathers. Yet another, 'Abdullah ibn Hasan, the archbishop of Mecca, was much in evidence at court during a short visit, a frail, sick-looking man of advanced age, though he too is still alive and in office. All these were champions of the Wahhabi revival of their prime, another of whom, Shaikh Sa'd ibn 'Atiq, died at Riyadh during this autumn at the age of eighty, and was prayed for after the

* He was appointed to his present post as *Qadhi* of Sudair in 1902.

Friday prayers at the Ibn 'Abbas mosque in the presence of a large congregation headed by the king.

On either side of the throne bay, and for two-thirds of the walls on either side, ran long benches, divided at intervals by arm-rests and draped with rich brocade. Common cane chairs filled the remaining space of the two side walls, while the back wall, on either side of the door, accommodated the *Ziqirt* or bodyguard, seated on the floor, armed to the teeth. At this period the king's sons, nephews and other junior relations had not been accorded the precedence at court which they now enjoy, and generally occupied the cane chairs, while the benches were reserved by custom for senior members of the royal family, high officials and visitors.

At the evening sessions the proceedings invariably began, as indeed they do to this day, with readings by the king's chaplain from books of a religious character: Traditions of the Prophet, exegesis, history and so forth. Two chapters (or parts of chapters) from different works were read, each being brought to an end at the discretion of the king, whose "God bless you!" was the equivalent of "That's enough for now." Late-comers to these sessions took their seats during the reading without saluting the king, but rose to their feet to do so at the end of the portion being read when they entered. Coffee was served round to those present at the beginning of each portion of the reading, but not during the reading itself. And it came round whenever the king pressed the bell at his side, itself a modern innovation since the days when the king called verbally for refreshment, and his call was echoed down the corridors to the coffee-hearth by the rough voices of the attendant *Ziqirt*. After the reading the chaplain would pick up his books and depart, while the king would generally raise some matter of lay interest for such discussion as there might be. The conversation generally resolved itself into a royal monologue, punctuated by murmurs of assent from all present; and the session would come to a quick or less quick end in proportion to the king's own interest in the subjects under review. The ordinary guests would then go home, but the evening's proceedings were by no means over, for the inner circle of high officials and other privileged folk would follow the king across the passage to a smaller room, where ordinary conversation would be kept up to a relatively late hour, when a supper of fruit was served on the floor for those present.

The king would then retire for the night, though he slept but little and was generally up well before dawn to pass the time reading

from what we would call a bedside book, containing a specially prepared selection of saws, proverbs and other words of wisdom, with which he would fortify himself against the coming day and from which he often quoted passages relevant to the occasions which might confront him. This book, in manuscript, is known as *Wird* (literally rosary) and is in fact a missal, such as was used by the sages of medieval Europe. The dawn prayer, for which in those days he generally joined the household staff, was followed by an hour of sleep or rest, after which he would receive Ministers in private audience to discuss any important business they might have for his consideration. He would then bathe and dress in readiness for the public business of the day.

At about 9 a.m. he would repair to the public audience chamber, where he sat for a couple of hours, receiving all who had complaints to make or petitions to present or any other business soever of concern to themselves. Sometimes a case would be called on, and the room would fill with the parties thereto and their witnesses, who would all start talking together, sometimes in high dudgeon, sometimes pleading cogently, while the king rapidly sifted the grain from the chaff, and sent them about their business with a decision on the matter in hand, or a recommendation for a further attempt at mutual agreement between the parties, or simply a reference of the case to the ecclesiastical courts when some point of law was clearly involved, for which the solution must be sought in the Book of the Law.

On such occasions, especially when the Badawin were involved, one saw the king at his very best, while his pithy utterances often revealed the inner light by which he was guided in all his acts. "The nature of the Badu," he once said, directing his remarks at one of the great shaikhs of the 'Ataiba, Imr ibn 'Abdul-Rahman ibn Rubai'an, "has always been the same; but I have brought to bear on them a method unknown to the rulers of Arabia before me. I have made it my aim to be patient with all men. Be patient with God, and be patient with the stiff-necked; for these will either repent and be cured, or come out in their true colours openly, when they can be struck down once and for all." And again, "Two things I will not stomach: firstly a rebel (*marij*); and secondly the feigned loyalty of two persons inwardly leagued against me." On another occasion, in connection with some trouble in the Bani Shahr tribe south of Taïf, which had been disturbing or threatening the peace for some years past, a deputation of eight shaikhs concerned was introduced into the king's presence to hear his considered judgment on certain

demands they had made. "You say," said he, "that the whole of your tribe supports your demands. Well, my proposals are for your good: get the whole tribe together to accept them, and all will be well. If they refuse and contemplate resistance I am ready. I have long realised the necessity of bringing you folk to heel; and that I will certainly do. But I have made these suggestions for your own good, and it is for you to consider your true interests. Why, from Wadi Sirhan to the Yaman border, from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, I rule the tribes of this land, and yours cannot expect to be treated differently from the rest." 'Abdullah ibn 'Askar, the governor of Abha, who was on a visit to Taif in this connection, intervened with the suggestion that he should try to persuade the tribe to accept the terms offered, but the king would have none of that. "Better," he said, "that they should accept them of their own free will, and bring me their bond signed by all the sectional shaikhs: or refuse them and feel the consequences of their contumacy." Incidentally two of the ring-leaders of the sedition were, as a precaution, being sent to Riyadh, where, as the king said with a smile, "I already have many guests from all over the country: the Rashids, for instance, and the Ashraf, and the Bani Aïdh, and others!"

After the public audience of the morning, the king would proceed to the Political Office, presided over by Yusuf Yasin, for half an hour or more before retiring to his private quarters at noon. Here any papers awaiting his attention or signature were dealt with, or letters dictated, or general business transacted, while there was always plenty of time for general conversation on a variety of subjects, varying from projects for the improvement of communications or the creation of an air force to the charms of women. At these sittings the inner circle of the court had the *entrée* as a matter of course, though the room could be cleared for the discussion of the more confidential matters needing disposal, in which case the king generally made his wishes known by saying: "I want so-and-so."

In those days the kingdom was yet young, and vigorously stretching out arms towards the future, with an optimism born of the consciousness of past achievement and not yet blunted by the first puffs of the coming economic storm. Arrangements had already been made through the British Government for the purchase of four D.H.9 planes, with British personnel to fly and maintain them; and these had arrived at Jidda about the middle of September. On the 18th the king and all the princes and notables of the land, and a huge concourse of the public, assembled at the aerodrome near the town

to witness the arrival of the planes at Taïf, the first to land there since 1924, when the unfortunate Bobroff, a White Russian pilot in the service of King Husain, was sent to reconnoitre the movements of the Wahhabi invaders and was shot dead when he descended on the landing-ground to find them in occupation of the town. The three British pilots on this occasion made perfect landings, though they complained of the smallness and roughness of the aerodrome, whose modern successor is located in more spacious surroundings about seventeen miles north of the town. They were graciously received by the king in the great marquee set up for the occasion, and later received again in private audience at the palace before their return to Jidda two days later, having meanwhile gratified many of the princes with joy-rides in the machines. Their visit gave a great impetus to the airmindedness, which is now an established feature of the country; and measures were immediately taken to open a public subscription for the expansion of the air force of Sa'udi Arabia.

A few weeks earlier the king had paid a short visit to Jidda to meet a Polish vessel bringing a consignment of rifles and machine-guns from Warsaw, ordered on behalf of the Government by Khalid al Qarqani, a Tripolitanian refugee in its service, and a Syrian notable named Hasan Wifqi, who had visited Poland in pursuance of arrangements made at Jidda with an official Polish deputation headed by Count Raczinski and the Muslim Mufti of Poland during the preceding winter. The king had intended to spend some days at Jidda to preside over trials of the weapons supplied; but he was back at Taïf within sixty hours of leaving it. The party had run into a particularly virulent spell of the damp heat, for which Jidda is famous at this time of year; and had contented itself with a very perfunctory inspection of the arms, before fleeing in all haste back to the more salubrious climate of the mountains. In Mecca on the way back the king and his companions had walked into the water reservoir in the suburb of Shuhada to keep cool; and when I asked him what the actual temperature had been during his visit to the plains, he said he didn't understand temperatures or that sort of thing, though it must have been about 6,000 degrees! He certainly did not like the experience, while he often complained that the climate of Taif did not suit him either. That was probably a matter of altitude, which has a curiously discomfiting effect on those unsuited to the rarefied atmosphere of mountain country. Even to this day, when the king travels by plane, as he almost invariably does now,

the pilot has instructions to fly as low as is consistent with actual safety. On the other hand most of the princes have taken to air-travel as to the manner born, though some of them and most of the princesses have a strong dislike of air travel.

Another project, in which I was personally interested on behalf of the Marconi Company, which my firm of Sharqieh was representing, was a scheme for the erection of a network of wireless stations throughout the country, with two large stations at Mecca and Riyadh respectively and smaller installations at all the provincial centres, together with some mobile sets for the use of the king and other high-ranking persons when in camp. A rival scheme, at a very much higher price than ours, was at the same time being sponsored by a syndicate of certain high officials; and the negotiations dragged on endlessly until, in due course, we got the contract and, in the course of the next two years, completed the installation of all the sets, which are still in active use, though the original network has been greatly expanded, particularly with American co-operation during the Second World War.

Such were some, though only a few out of many, of the more serious matters occupying the attention of the king at this period, either in the course of public sessions or in privy council. They were frequently, according to the royal mood of the moment, interlarded with discussions in a lighter, not to say frivolous, vein, of which the favourite topic was Woman in all her many manifestations. It must be remembered that the old men of today were then *sans peur et sans reproche* in all the fields of gallantry and chivalry; and that, if their conversation tended to be "broad", verging on the bawdy, their conduct was completely innocent within the generous limits of the humane Islamic code. Extra-marital relations were taboo and punishable with the extremest penalties, while other refinements of sexual irregularity were simply regarded with loathing and disgust. In general, of course, women were kept in their "proper place", but had their rights as well as their disabilities. "It is permissible," said the king on one occasion, "for women to read [actually meaning to listen to the reading of] the Quran and scriptural literature, but ordinary reading, and especially writing, is an accomplishment regarded as unsuitable in a woman, though not forbidden." Again there is no religious ban on a woman eating with her husband or with other men within the forbidden degrees; but the king stated categorically that he had never seen a woman eat in his presence, nor even have a sip of coffee or tea, though he regularly met all the ladies

of the royal family in what corresponded to his public sessions for men downstairs. It was just shocking to his ideas of propriety to sit down to meat with the ladies, though of course he has relaxed his orthodoxy in this respect in deference to the European ladies of diplomatic representatives and distinguished visitors to his court. But I think that Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, is the only woman, and certainly the first, who has had the honour of attending a State banquet. This was on the occasion of her visit to Sa'udi Arabia with her husband in the spring of 1938, when she had the further distinction, only enjoyed before her by my wife and Mrs (now Lady) Rendel, of crossing the Arabian peninsula from sea to sea.

Under the normal Islamic dispensation, at any rate as interpreted and acted on in the Wahhabi realm, a man with more than one wife is under the obligation of treating all his spouses on a basis of absolute equality in every way, and in particular of dividing his time equally between them. The king himself claimed no exemption from this duty, although, like the Prophet before him, he had already at this time begun to allow himself a certain latitude in such matters not strictly in accord with the rules. He has never exceeded the limit of four wives allowed by Islamic law; but, each of his four wives having a house of her own with a full complement of servants, slaves and attendants, in which they received his visits in rotation, he also had a house of his own—the main building of the Shubra palace—which was run for him by four favourite concubines, enjoying a status indistinguishable from that of wedded wives. And in addition he had four favoured slave-girls to complete his matrimonial team of a dozen, to say nothing of his right to pick and choose from the other numerous damsels at his disposal. He spoke to us quite openly about such things when in an appropriate mood of expansiveness; and, if European opinion might be shocked at such indulgence, which is inevitably limited to the wealthy, the shock is not all one-sided, for Ibn Sa'ud is highly critical of the lax morality of the European system, with its extra-marital unions, its publicised adultery, its public dancing of men and women in close embrace, and other practices not allowed in Arabia nor countenanced in Islam. It would seem after all to be a choice between an indulgent system strictly applied in practice and an ascetic dispensation more honoured in the breach than the observance. Human nature is much the same the world over; and every community manages to achieve a compromise between the desirable and the permissible, satisfactory to itself though liable to incur the wrath or scorn of its neighbours. Of

relatively recent years there has been a tendency among the border-land Arabs to adapt themselves, mainly for economic reasons, to the European pattern of monogamy with licence; but the Arab of Arabia proper is not ashamed of his effort to solve the human problem, and can afford to be severe on vice, though the influx of foreign influences into the desert may well in due course have the same effect on him as it has had on his brethren on the frontiers of Europe. The result of such a development will not necessarily be beneficial to the country, though it may be regarded in some quarters as bringing it a step nearer to "civilisation".

Such matters were, however, scarcely even a subject of speculation in court circles during the early thirties of the present century, when the old régime still reigned unchallenged, though the writing was already on the wall in letters of oil and gold. The king had decided during these autumn days at Taïf to welcome a visit by Mr Charles Crane to Jidda early in the new year for economic discussions with himself and his Ministers. But this momentous meeting, which took place early in March, 1931, may be left over for discussion in a later chapter.*

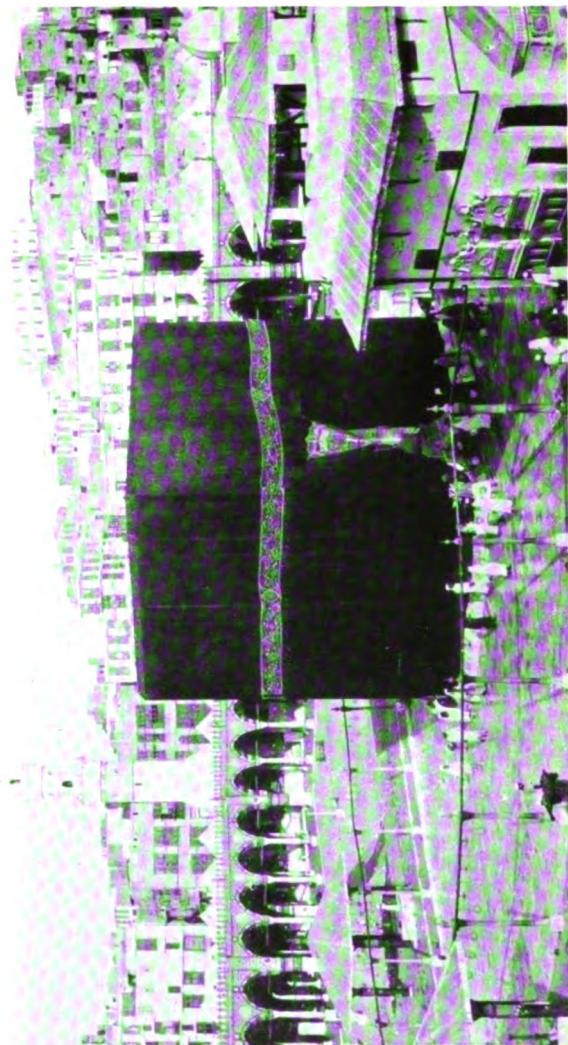
Meanwhile, to resume the tale of life at Taïf during that autumn, women and world politics continued to divide the honours as prime subjects of conversation at the king's private sessions. One day I arrived in the middle of such a session in the political office to find 'Abdullah ibn 'Askar, the governor of highland 'Asir, discoursing on the beauty of the Yaman women. Sa'ud al 'Arafa, the king's cousin of the elder branch, who admitted to having wedded ten wives up to date, suggested that Ibn 'Askar should seek out a couple of pretty girls from his district for him to marry simultaneously. The king then confessed to having married no fewer than 135 virgins, to say nothing of "about a hundred" others, during his life, though he had come to a decision to limit himself in future to two new wives a year, which of course meant discarding two of his existing team at any time to make room for them. He made it a practice to have all his regular meals in his own house, and not in the houses of his wives except as an honoured guest on special occasions. But he told a story of how on one occasion, when visiting one of his wives, he found that she had much better grapes than he was accustomed to have at home. On enquiry about their provenance, he was told that they came from a very special vineyard known to her servants. "Tell me," he said, "from what garden you got them, as I would like to buy it." To

* See below, pp. 177 *et seq.*

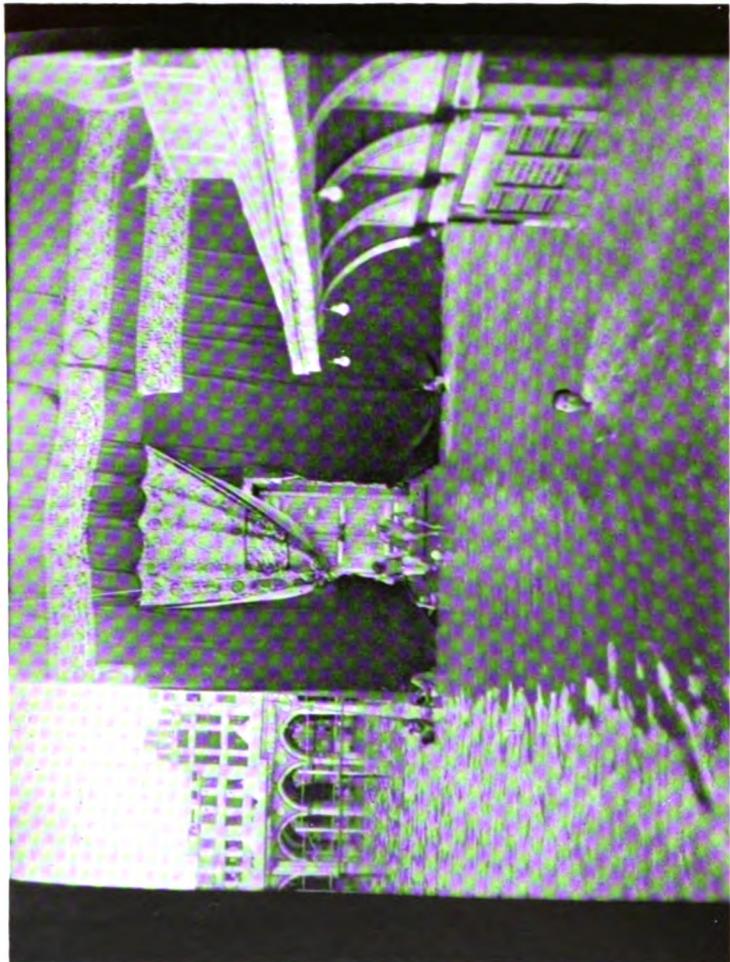
which she replied: "But you couldn't do that, for the owner would never sell it!" He pressed her to disclose the identity of the vineyard, until she said: "Well, it is such and such garden: and it belongs to you!"

On another more serious occasion there was discussion of the marked tendency in the Hijaz to defer the marriage of young people owing to the grave economic burden involved in the customary dowries (*Sadaq* or *Mahr*) required by the parents of girls. The king, on hearing the case stated, instructed the President of the Council, a Najdi long resident in the Hijaz, to enquire into the whole question of wedding expenses in the holy land, and to consider the feasibility, or otherwise, of compelling young people to get married in the interests of the prevention of vice. "Wouldn't it be fun," said the king, "with just the eight of us here"—the occasion being a private sitting one evening after the public session for the daily scriptural reading—"wouldn't it be fun if we could get in eight nice girls to amuse us just now, with the condition that our wives should be present behind a curtain or a grille to watch our goings-on? Philby and Fuad would have nothing to worry about, as their wives are far away; but the rest of us, whew! there would be plenty of trouble awaiting us when we got home!"

These few instances must suffice to illustrate the mixture of the lighter and more serious veins of the court at Taïf in those days. At noon, generally after the public celebration of the midday prayers, at which all adult males about the palace, ministers, henchmen and slaves alike, had to be present, the king would retire to his ladies for lunch and the ensuing siesta, while the rest of us scattered to our homes. The afternoon prayer, half-way between noon and sunset, would be followed by a public session, at which everyone who was anybody would generally put in an appearance. On the departure of such visitors there would be dinner for those who wanted it at that hour after the fashion of Najd, while the king generally retired to his private quarters for his, followed by ablutions in preparation for the sunset prayer. Sometimes we of the private circle dined with him as the prelude to an afternoon outing to some favoured valley, where we would sit on carpets, sipping coffee, chatting about everything on earth, watching the royal children, some of whom invariably accompanied the king on such occasions in his car and played about while their elders talked. Now and again, from a bag always ready at his side for the poor and needy he might meet on the way, the royal hand would scatter a shower of silver coins on the rugs, and there

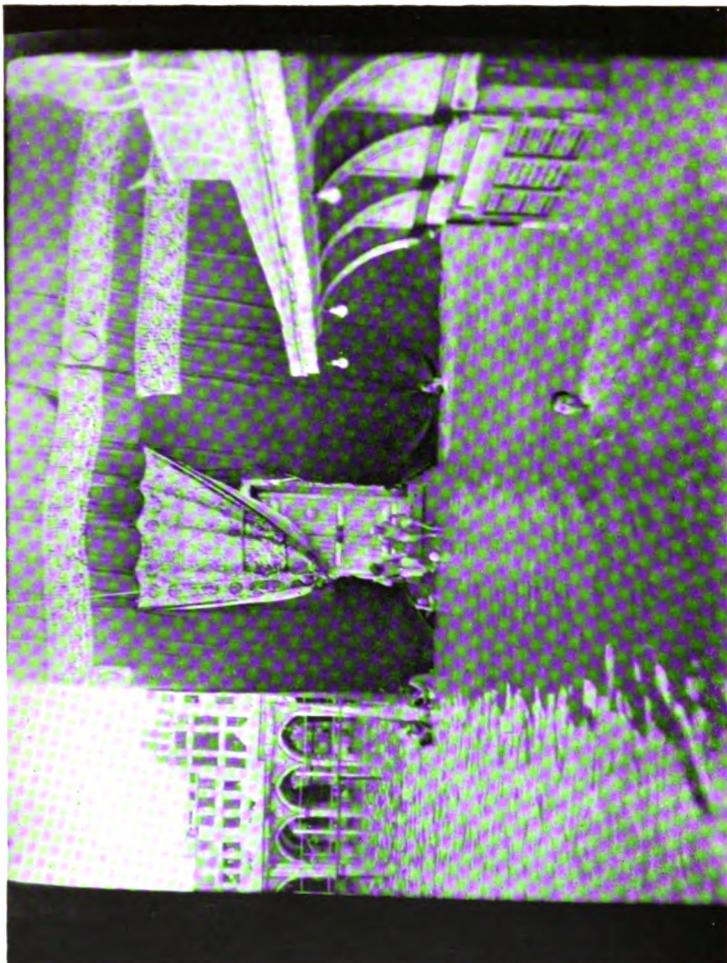


The Ka'ba and Great Mosque at Mecca in 1945



The Ka'ba in the Great Mosque of Mecca during the great flood of the Jubilee month (July 1950), with water 7 feet deep all round it, and people swimming in it

would ensue a general scramble, in which all present would join. Order being restored, a long tablecloth would be spread on the carpet and covered with dishes of seasonal fruit for the refreshment of the inner man. And so to the setting of the sun behind the mountain barrier, and the beginning of another day with the call to prayer by the faithful 'Id or some other stentor of the court. As the long returning procession of cars approached the palace in the gloaming, the road on either side was lined with black-veiled women and children, old men and cripples, from the town and neighbouring villages, all hopeful of royal bounty. One of the two bodyguard slaves, always in attendance on the king in his outings and standing on the running-boards of the car, would leap to the ground as the car slowed down and receive the sack of silver from the royal hands, for the distribution of its contents among the waiting suppliants, while the procession moved on to the palace steps. A new day had begun with prayer and charity: the two great pillars of Islamic society. As it had been in the beginning, so it would remain to the end. The daily routine varied only in its details; the pattern was fixed on the firm foundation of Arab and Islamic culture, and its maintenance unimpaired and intact through fifty years in a world perplexed by doubts and fears is a fair measure of the achievement of a great man.



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CHAPTER X

THE COURT AT MECCA

Inapt as the comparison may be, Taif is often spoken of by the Arabs as the Switzerland of the desert; and such indeed it may fairly seem to the denizens of the Tihama, when they come up to the summer capital of the Hijaz for a change from the hot, damp and enervating climate of the Red Sea coast. I remember being told one summer day by Saiyid Hasan al Idrisi, then sojourning at Taif as a "guest" of the king, after the absorption of his native 'Asir lowlands into Sa'udi Arabia, how he longed to get away from the unbearable cold of the district to the mild summer climate of Mecca with its shade temperatures of between 110 and 120 degrees! Actually the charming vale of Taif is little more than a desert oasis at the relatively high elevation of about 5,500 feet above sea level; and the people of Najd generally find themselves quite at home in its climate of hot days and cool nights. But the king has never liked the place owing to its altitude, and has long since abandoned his earlier practice of spending part of the summer there, in favour of Hawiya in the foot-hills, a thousand feet lower, when he had to be in the neighbourhood of the Hijaz. This locality was chosen for the purpose when the original landing-ground at Taif was found to be unsuitable for modern aeroplanes and was displaced by a new airport on the plateau further north, about seventeen miles from the town. Of recent years operations have been in progress for the construction of a palace at Hawiya for the accommodation of His Majesty and his family on the site of the tented camp with which they have been content hitherto during their occasional visits to the place on their way to the pilgrimage, which is gradually receding into the summer season.

In 1930, however, this alternative to residence at Taif had not been discovered, while the heat of Mecca, about which the king received daily reports by telephone, precluded an early descent to the plains. The summer capital continued, therefore, to house the court until nearly the end of October in spite of frequent complaints by the

king of not feeling very well or of only feeling "half-well". At long last on October 24th the court began to break up, with the departure of the Amir Sa'ud and his large retinue for Riyadh, while the king's cavalcade of cars left for Mecca the following morning. I took advantage of the occasion to travel across country to Mecca by the magnificent Kara pass; and when I arrived the following evening, to become, as I have remained ever since, a citizen of no mean city, the court had already adjusted itself to the tempo of a metropolis, and to its more spacious quarters in the royal palace of Ma'abida. The king was holding court on the palace roof, paved with tiles and ringed around on three sides by broad raised benches, draped with rich embroidery and provided at intervals with sumptuous cushions. A standard lamp and an electric fan, with the inevitable telephone, graced the corner occupied by His Majesty, while diagonally opposite him sat the precentor intoning the scriptural passages selected for that evening's reading. A large gathering of local notables and Government officials sat in rows upon the benches: a respectful gap intervening between the king and the nearest of them on either side of the "throne", while the *Ziqirt* bodyguard squatted on the floor on the open side of the square. Coffee was poured round at intervals in response to the king's push-bell; and, the reading over and a few formal remarks exchanged, the gathering dispersed. As I prepared to follow the general movement downstairs, I was buttonholed by a secretary and guided into his office, where I sat a few moments till I was summoned back to the roof to join the *cercle intime* for the private session: on this occasion a very small gathering of not more than six of us, including the king. A fruit supper of pomegranates and muskmelons brought the proceedings to an end, and the king withdrew to his private quarters, while the rest of us scattered to our homes.

The public sessions of the court in the mornings and afternoons were held in the main audience chamber, of generous proportions and supported by three massive pillars in a line down the main axis of the room. These pillars were of small masonry, covered with a thick coat of stucco, which was painted over to give the appearance of marble or granite! Three sides of the chamber were lined with brocaded benches, the "throne" being as usual in one corner with the usual accessories, while the fourth side between the two entrance doors provided accommodation for the *Ziqirt* sitting on the floor, which was richly carpeted with modern but good Persian rugs. In addition there was a smaller room on the ground floor, with rose-coloured drapings and curtains, to which the king often repaired for

semi-private sittings, when he was not-at-home to the general company. And, at times, he made use of Yusuf Yasin's political office for the disposal of official business of an important or confidential nature. The pattern of court life was much the same as at Taïf; but the problems of the metropolis and its satellite areas now came more immediately to the king's attention, and made much heavier calls on his time, while involving his staff in longer working hours.

On occasion the king would detain a small party of us for lunch in his private boudoir in the mansion known as Bait al Saqqaf (from its original Hadhrami owners), which was now administered under the same régime as had obtained in the Shubra palace, and which formed the nucleus of an ever-expanding palace. The private quarters comprised a self-contained wing of the main public apartments, and were reached through a long corridor, lined by the closed doors of many rooms and leading to the royal boudoir, beyond which were the apartments of the king's own ladies. The boudoir itself was extravagantly over-furnished without any pretensions to style, though the carpets were good and cushions all that cushions should be. A lady's dressing-table, with front and side mirrors and a miscellany of toilet articles, provided an incongruous element, while armchairs, gaudily upholstered with mauve or purple brocades and plush, seemed out of proportion to the size of the room. Lunch was served on the floor of an adjoining room; and we were generally joined at it by some of the royal children: many of them astonishingly beautiful youngsters, destined to grow into handsome young men. After the meal our hands were soused with rosewater, and the guests departed unceremoniously after a round or two of coffee.

After the public session of the afternoon the king would generally ride abroad for an airing: a few of us riding in the king's car, which headed a long procession. One of our earliest excursions of this kind took us out through Muna and the pilgrimage field of 'Arafat to a point on the subterranean canal of Queen Zubaida, where operations were in progress for the clearance of the channel, which is the principal source of the water-supply of Mecca, and emanates from springs at the foot of the high mountains west of Taïf. This channel no doubt goes far back into antiquity, when, owing to its ample water resources, Mecca developed into one of the most important commercial and religious centres of pagan Arabia. But, in its present form, the *kariz* (*kharaz*) or masonry aqueduct, with manholes at intervals to facilitate periodical cleansing or clearing, is attributed by tradition to the wife of Harun al Rashid. It was found soon after

the establishment of the Wahhabi régime that, owing to neglect over a number of years, the flow of water was tending to diminish, with serious effects on the water-supply of the city and at 'Arafat, where the underground channel comes to the surface. The king had accordingly given orders for the systematic cleaning of the whole channel from Mecca upwards; and at this time the work had reached about half-way up Wadi Na'man. At the point where we stopped for the royal inspection, a huge pit about 100 feet deep had been dug out, at the bottom of which the *top* of one of the original manholes could be seen. Thus in a little more than 1000 years the floods in this valley had deposited about 100 feet of silt, at an average rate of ten feet a century. This made it very difficult to trace the course of the channel upwards to its source; and, so far as I know, no attempt was made during these operations to enlist the service of dowsers. So the laborious task proceeded with the digging of deep pits to locate the original manholes; and, as each was found, it was built up to the present ground level, or above it, while the section of the aqueduct between each pair of them was thoroughly cleared out by the removal of all obstructive matter. In due course a great improvement of the water-supply ensued, though the present quantity of water, owing to considerable extensions of gardens in the outer suburbs, is barely sufficient for the needs of the citizens and their pilgrim guests; and other old spring channels have been cleared to increase the supply. The king's visit on this occasion was celebrated by a great feast, served in Najdi style in a great marquee, with enough meat and rice to feed a regiment.

A few days later, in honour of the arrival of the king's father-in-law, Ahmad al Sudairi, and Shaikh 'Abdullah ibn Bulaihid who, in addition to being the bishop of Hail, was a notable pioneer of desert motor-routes in those early days, as well as a champion of mechanical irrigation, a banquet was given by the king in the local Hijazi style known as *Samat*. For this three long tables, forming a hollow square or rectangle, were set up in the public audience chamber, with chairs for more than a hundred guests along the outer sides, while the central space was occupied by servants busily engaged in attending to the wants of the feasters and carving up the whole carcases of sheep, which lay on prodigious piles of rice at frequent intervals on the tables. The extravagance of these enormous banquets has often been criticised by Europeans, accustomed to dinner-parties at which provision is made, however lavishly, for the exact requirements of the bidden guests alone. But in Arabia things are done differently,

and quite deliberately, for the bidden guests, who in the most favourable possible circumstances can scarcely be expected to make much impression on the massive spread before them, are but a small proportion of the legions, who follow them in relays at the table, or who wait—men, women and children—at the palace doors to carry away the residue, down to the last grain of rice, to their homes.

The king himself has never, even in his youth, been a good trencher-man; and, as the years advanced, his appetite declined progressively until one could scarcely help wondering how his meagre indulgence in food could serve to suffice his always gigantic frame. On festive occasions, like these banquets, he would toy with a crust of bread dipped in gravy, with the eye of a perfect host flitting round the table to see how his guests were faring, until, satisfied that they had all reached the end of their tether, he would rise to rinse his hands and mouth with the help of a slave always ready behind his chair with ewer, basin, soap and towel. On occasions when a guest arrived late for the meal and could not reasonably expect the prolongation of the sitting on his account, the king would order him to remain seated until he had had his fill; and as often as not he would depute an A.D.C. to sit by the late-comer and see that he did not shirk his duty! As may be imagined in these circumstances, fasting was no penance for the king; and, almost as if to make up for some imagined indulgence at the banquet above described, he announced that he was going to fast for the next four days, and after a short interval four further days to reduce the total debt of nineteen days incurred during the previous Ramdhan, when he was almost continuously in the field against Faisal al Duwish and his mutinous crew. Fasting is, of course, not obligatory, nor even meritorious, on a journey or when campaigning; but the days so missed should be made good at the individual's convenience before the beginning of the following Ramdhan, which was due to start on January 21st, 1931, or in less than three months' time.

One morning I found the king dealing with a highly unsavoury case of murder, with three of the Mashaikh in attendance together with Mahdi Bey, the Director-General of Police. The latter was an 'Iraqi, who had joined the Sa'udi service two years before and was one of the most efficient officials of the Government. The murder had occurred on a Thursday; it was not till Sunday that the victim's relatives reported to the police that he was missing. Mahdi soon had a line on the sort of company the murdered man used to keep; and a lad of eighteen, known to have been one of his associates, was found

to have gone to Jidda "on business". He was duly arrested, and brought before Mahdi, whose *modus operandi* soon extracted the whole sordid story from the boy, whose other associates were arrested, while the victim was exhumed from under the floor of a disused room in a neighbouring house. The king heard the case and passed sentence on the Thursday following the crime; and the three guilty men were executed in public after the Friday prayers just eight days after committing their offence. It was a case of a sodomitc association of long standing between the three men and the boy catamite, who met at intervals to drink and amuse themselves. One day there was a quarrel, resulting in a conspiracy between the three murderers to finish off their objectionable companion after inducing him to drink heavily. The case was as clear as a pikestaff, and there could only be one verdict. "Kill 'em," said the king after hearing the case; "for the triple crime of drinking, sodomy and murder they deserve to be burnt alive; have them beheaded tomorrow in public in front of the Hamidiya [Government headquarters] after the Jum'a prayers; and have proclamation made as widely as possible that anyone knowing of and remaining silent about such foul liaisons will be liable to the severest punishment; and you, Mahdi, you are personally responsible to hunt down all such cases with the utmost rigour and ruthlessness." Mahdi was not one to need such instructions; and I remember him telling me some years later that there had only been twenty-three murders in his sphere of jurisdiction in seven years, and that in all these cases but two the guilty parties had been arrested, prosecuted, condemned and duly executed. In this case the king deputed his son, Faisal, as Viceroy of the Hijaz to preside over the execution; and, after His Majesty had driven off from the Great Mosque on the termination of the Friday prayers, the Amir took his seat at one of the windows of the large audience chamber on the first floor of the Hamidiya with a great concourse of high officials and notables in attendance. The relatively narrow main street between this building and the Haram was filled to capacity with a huge crowd of spectators, who also occupied points of vantage on the neighbouring roofs, including that of the mosque's colonnade. Immediately in front of the entrance to the Hamidiya a space was kept clear by rows of police; and, after a brief pause, the three condemned men were marched in under guard, bareheaded and with their arms firmly pinioned behind them, and made to kneel at intervals of about five paces in a row facing the mosque wall. They looked dazed but otherwise showed no sign of quailing before the ordeal awaiting them, just as in the prison

from which they had come they had steadfastly refused to give the police any information about friends or accomplices who might have taken part as accessories after the crime or were addicted to the practices which had led them to their doom. In a matter of seconds after the three men had been placed in position the first head was off, rolling in the dust, while the body fell forward with blood spouting from the neck. The second man instinctively turned his head to meet the coming blow, with the result that the sword just failed to sever the head from the trunk as the victim toppled over. Then a few rapid steps and a back-handed sweep of the executioner's sword did their work so cleanly that the headless corpse of the third criminal remained on its knees spouting blood upwards. The execution was over, and the police proceeded immediately to lace the three corpses, each with its head by its side, to the Hamidiya railings, where they remained till sundown for all the world to see and gape at. The proceedings had been rapid and efficient, without fuss or noise; and it was only the curious goggling crowd of pushing, jostling sightseers that created a slight feeling of nausea. Faisal remained seated for a few moments after it was all over, till the executioner, his personal slave Sa'id, with his spotless white shift speckled with blood, came up to report the completion of his task. "God bless you!" said Faisal simply, adding for my benefit: "It is as well to commend them for doing their duty, so that they may do it better next time!"

Whatever may be thought in other parts of the world about capital punishment and public executions, their deterrent effect is not for a moment doubted in Arabia. The principle of the *Lex Talionis* is deeply ingrained in the character of the Arabs, who also hold that, while justice should be done on that basis, it should most certainly be seen to be done *pour encourager les autres*. But the essence of crime prevention is surely the swift detection and punishment of the wrongdoer, in which respect Sa'udi Arabia can give salutary lessons to many lands which indulge in long-drawn-out trials and vulgar publicity: often resulting in the working up of popular sympathy and admiration for a common scoundrel. At any rate for many years, until the final retirement of Mahdi Bey from the police office on account of failing health soon after the end of the Second World War, the Hijaz was not a comfortable place for the criminal classes; nor was any mercy shown to the far too many road-hogs who drove their cars recklessly and to the public danger, with the result that the tally of road casualties in the Hijaz compared at this period more than

favourably with that of the "civilised" countries of the world. Fatal casualties were indeed extremely rare, for the simple reason that the family of a victim had the right of choosing the method of punishment of the offending chauffeur, who was liable to the death penalty unless the next of kin was willing to accept compensation on the full official scale. This may sound severe to the lenient magistrates of some European countries; but the object of the Arabian police was to discourage accidents, and in this they achieved considerable success. It may be thought perhaps that the traffic problem of the Hijaz is not so intractable as that of other countries; but anyone who thinks this should try driving in Mecca amid the pilgrim throngs, which mill about its relatively narrow streets with supreme disregard of the potential risks they run: like the pigeons of the Haram they know instinctively that, barring a genuine accident, they are absolutely safe from molestation in the highways and byways of the metropolis. The high standard of police administration set by Mahdi, with the king's full confidence and support, has certainly shown some falling off since his retirement; but the roads and built-up areas of the Hijaz are still relatively safe for careless pedestrians and schoolchildren, while the professional criminal has, generally speaking, realised the futility of his calling. It is not suggested that the country is a Paradise of crimelessness; but the wolf of crime has adopted the sheep's-clothing of respectability, and directed his attention to the undermining of the moral code in preference to head-on collisions with the penal sanctions of the *Shar'* law.

At the beginning of November considerable interest had been aroused by the publication of a new statement of British policy in respect of Palestine as the result of the Shaw Commission's report on the Wailing Wall incident of the previous year. It did not go as far as contemplating the establishment of a responsible Palestinian government, and thus lost the last effective chance of maintaining the unity of the country. But it did offer the Arabs and the Jews an equal share, under supreme British control, in a proposed Legislative Council, half elective and half nominative. The Jews had already made known their rejection of the proposal, and Dr Weizmann had resigned from the Zionist Executive in protest against a scheme which virtually liquidated the "National Home" programme in favour of an Arab-Jew equilibrium. The Arabs had not yet spoken, but were clearly suspicious of the gifts of the *Danai*. Ibn Sa'ud seemed to be puzzled by the new situation; and in a private chat with him I urged him, as a recognised leader of the Arabs, to take the initiative

in recommending the Arabs of Palestine to accept the scheme. His answer was characteristic of an attitude which, progressively developing from that day to this, has largely undermined the potential leadership and initiative in Arab affairs which might have been his, and has contributed to the present-day situation in which his unwillingness to take a decisive line of his own on matters of general concern to the Arab world outside his own sphere has relegated Sa'udi Arabia to a position of relative insignificance as an ordinary member of the Arab League, or of one of its mutually dissident camps. His policy, he told me on that occasion, was never to intervene in any matter of political controversy between the peoples of the mandated territories and the mandatory governments concerned. The utmost he could do in the circumstances was to await an invitation from the British Government to use his prestige in persuading the Palestine Arabs to accept a scheme which, being the maximum of British concession, represented in fact a great advance on anything previously offered. In such circumstances only could he take a hand in the game. At this stage in his career he had, of course, more to lose than gain from any political or military initiative; and he was already showing a tendency to become a middle-of-the-road man, unwilling to offend the British and other World Powers or to incur criticism from the Arab press or public opinion. The Yaman crisis of 1934 was yet to come, when he was virtually forced into vigorous action; but in general he seemed unwilling to risk the substance by grasping at the shadow. So the opportunity of taking an effective part in guiding the destinies of Palestine was allowed to pass. Yet he seemed to nurse a secret grievance against the British Government for its failure to invite his co-operation.

Meanwhile he had been negotiating a formal treaty of friendship with the representatives of the German Government; and on the day preceding its publication in *Umm al Qura*, the Mecca weekly newspaper edited officially by a Palestinian called Rushdi Mulhis under the guidance of Yusuf Yasin, he confided to me that he was genuinely disturbed at the British official attitude towards him. On every front, he said, he seemed to have made concessions to British sensibilities: in Masqat, Kuwait, Bahrain and on the 'Iraq and Trans-Jordan frontiers. Yet he could not help feeling that Britain was somewhat cool towards him, while he often wondered if she was at heart actually hostile to his interests. For instance, he had seen in the press, though he had had no formal communication on the subject, certain recommendations of a recent Quarantine Conference in Paris, which

at least suggested that Britain and other Powers were aiming at the suppression of the pilgrimage by the indirect method of making it as irksome as possible for prospective pilgrims. I had often told him before, and now repeated on a more urgent note, that he was largely to blame himself, as he had never troubled to keep himself and his aspirations and views before the world, and especially Great Britain. At this time Fuad Hamza was cast for the rôle of Deputy Foreign Minister, to reside permanently at Jidda; but the king's concentration of policy in his own hands, even down to the minutest details, necessitated Fuad's being more or less permanently on a visit to Mecca; and there was certainly more than a grain of truth in Sir Andrew Ryan's (the first British Minister accredited to Sa'udi Arabia in 1930) quip that every nation was represented at Jidda except Sa'udi Arabia!

The approaching elections in Egypt and 'Iraq provided food for thought and discussion in court circles, where it was generally agreed that, while in 'Iraq matters would be so arranged as to ensure the acceptance of the draft Anglo-'Iraqi treaty by the resulting Parliament, it seemed probable that the new two-degree electoral law in Egypt would involve a boycott of the elections by the Wafd, and the consequent deferment of British hopes of securing an Anglo-Egyptian treaty of alliance on the lines envisaged as necessary to safeguard British interests in an "independent" Egypt. Both these prognostications were duly fulfilled. In 1932 'Iraq secured its "independence" with the practical limitations imposed on it by the treaty, and thus became eligible for membership of the League of Nations. But Egypt had to wait till 1936 for the necessary Wafd sponsorship of a twenty-years treaty, representing the then limit of British concessions to national *amour propre*, and destined within a decade to arouse bitter controversy between Britain and a Wafd Government, again in power after a period in the wilderness. Meanwhile Britain remained in occupation of Egypt; and this fact was by no means unpleasing to Ibn Sa'ud, whose insistence on his own complete independence contrasted strangely with his indifference to the struggles of his Arab neighbours for a like status. In the case of Egypt this was scarcely to be surprised at in view of the years of coolness between the two countries over the *Mahmal* episode of 1926, and the undisguised ambition of King Fuad to step into the vacant shoes of the Califate. It was not indeed until the Wafd returned to power in 1936 that the long misunderstanding was finally written off, as the prelude to a new era of friendship and close economic and political

co-operation, which continues to this day as a prime factor in modern Arabian politics in opposition to the Hashimite ideals of the "Greater Syria" and the "Fertile Crescent".

A matter of more immediate concern to Ibn Sa'ud was, however, the question of the still unregulated southern frontier of Trans-Jordan and the liquidation of claims and counter-claims in respect of tribal raiding across it from both sides during previous years. Soon after the king's arrival at Mecca from Taif, he was visited by a deputation of tribal leaders of the Huwaitat from southern Trans-Jordan, headed by 'Auda ibn Za'l, a cousin of the famous 'Auda abu Taiy. A fine-looking man, dark-skinned but with eyes of unusual brightness, he had a strongly marked Semitic nose and a smile that suggested a latent capacity for cruelty. With him the king discussed various matters of common concern, with Fuad Hamza at his side to prime him on the details of recent correspondence with the British authorities on the subject, and an amanuensis at his feet to whom he dictated, as the interview proceeded, two letters: one from himself to his guest, and the other from the latter to himself. These letters were subsequently signed by the respective parties in token of their agreement on the issues involved. So far as all past accounts were concerned, said the king, he had asked the British Government to arbitrate on the various claims, and he cared not whether they decided in his favour or otherwise; he would accept the award unconditionally. As regards the future, he wanted nothing from the Huwaitat but that they should refrain from plaguing his tribes with raids across the border; at the same time he wanted them to understand that, if they came into his territory for grazing or other legitimate purposes, they would be subject to the laws of his kingdom and would have to pay the prescribed animal and other taxes. So long as they observed these principles, well and good; but they should remember that, if in the future they sinned against them, it would not be the British Government who would be called upon to judge between them, but God and the sword!

After the successful conclusion of this interview the king retired to Yusuf Yasin's office where, in the semi-publicity of a private session, he submitted to an overhaul by a committee of four doctors to discover why he had been feeling a little off colour of late. Incidentally he announced that he had arranged to be cupped that afternoon by a *Hajjam* in accordance with his normal practice of being cupped twice a year: the cupping process consisting of the scraping of the skin behind the head and the heel, and the sucking out of the

blood so drawn to the surface. The average Arab seems to have a passion for medical attention, and the king was no exception to the rule. In the middle of a public session he would send for his physician to administer a dose of medicine to cure a headache or an access of biliousness, to which he has always been prone, or to wash out his eyes or ears, after which operation he would dry the affected parts with cotton-wool and throw the stuff on the floor behind his throne. And it was a common enough sight to see His Majesty undergoing electrical treatment, holding the handles attached to a portable generator, and to all appearances enjoying the gentle thrill of the electricity coursing through his body. On such occasions, if feeling puckish, he would summon some unsuspecting person, preferably some Badawin Shaikh, and ask him to hold the handles while he telephoned. The ensuing yell of agony would set the court rocking with laughter, as the wretched dupe tried to detach himself from the current. In the early days of electricity in Arabia he would play similar tricks on the innocent by throwing a few Riyals into a bowl of water and asking them to help themselves!

At intervals during his stay in Mecca the king would visit the Haram, generally in the late afternoon, to perform the *Tawaf* and take part in the sunset prayers. Shedding his sandals at the entrance, he would cross the threshold of the mosque, preceded by his body-guard of slaves and *Ziqirt*, all armed with sword, rifle and bandolier, and walking slowly down the paved path leading to the Bab al Salam and Ka'ba. At midway he was met by a procession of Aghawat, or Haram eunuchs, who shod his feet in slippers and led the way to the *Mataf*, where, a way having been cleared by the police for his party, he would advance to and kiss the Black Stone, after which he would begin the circumambulation: walking at a slow, deliberate pace, and stopping to draw his hand down the Yamani Stone and to kiss the Black Stone at each time of passing them. After the seven prescribed rounds, he would go to the Maqam Ibrahim for the customary two-bow prayer, and then take his place in front of it, facing the Ka'ba, to await the call to the sunset prayer, during which he would occupy a position immediately behind the presiding Imam. A draught of Zamzam water would then be presented to him in a glass bowl; and the procession of eunuchs, slaves and *Ziqirt* would re-form to conduct His Majesty to his car. On one such occasion the king had been invited to a banquet at the house of the Lord Mayor of Mecca, at this time Yusuf Qattan, the head of a prominent merchant family of the city. The royal car was conducted through the tortuous streets in the

growing darkness by a procession of hautboys, bearing pressure lamps decorated with elaborate tassels or carrying censers emitting clouds of incense. The large but dingy mansion of the Mayor was crowded to suffocation by the legion of guests bidden to meet His Majesty; but fortunately for all concerned the dinner was served *alfresco* on a spacious roof-top parlour in the traditional Hijaz (Samat) style: the tables being arranged in an open ellipse, with the servants in the centre dispensing the host's bounty to his guests, who made but little impression on the sumptuous spread before them. The meal was followed by a coffee session in a large reception room, during which the poet laureate, Ahmad al Ghazzawi, who might fairly be ranked in the same class as Colley Cibber, recited an eulogy prepared by him for the occasion. He was followed by a trio of schoolboys in a lively, well-rehearsed argument in rhymed prose on the respective merits of the sword and the pen: young Arabia, as it were, speaking to her elders, and indicating pretty clearly that she now expected triumphs in the field of social reconstruction in place of the military victories which had hitherto monopolised the plaudits of the crowd! It was extremely well done, and caused considerable amusement, while the drilling of the schoolboy choir, which had received the king on his arrival at the house with an anthem in his honour, was also worthy of high commendation. But the king on the whole was not greatly impressed by his Meccan subjects; and, in the course of his drive from the Haram past the crowded cafés and the milling multitude in the shop-lined streets, he had delivered himself of an epigram on the subject. "These folk of Mecca," he said, "are but cattle (*Ahl Makka dabash*)."¹ In truth the citizen of God's city, by and large, is not an attractive character: his whole life being concentrated on the making of money out of gullible people, especially pilgrims, by a studied mixture of fawning and affability. By contrast the people of Madina seem to lead more spacious lives, with something of the patriarchal and patrician outlook so characteristic of the oases of Najd.

Much of the king's time during these days was inevitably taken up by the consideration of measures for the improvement of the pilgrimage administration: especially in the matter of the reception of overseas visitors at Jidda, their forwarding as promptly as possible to Mecca and Madina, and their subsequent reshipment from Jidda or Yanbu' to their homes. The *Mutawwifs* (the Meccan equivalent of tourist agents) were naturally more concerned to make hay while the sun shone than to consider the comfort of their clients, who often got pushed around like so many sheep to suit the convenience of the

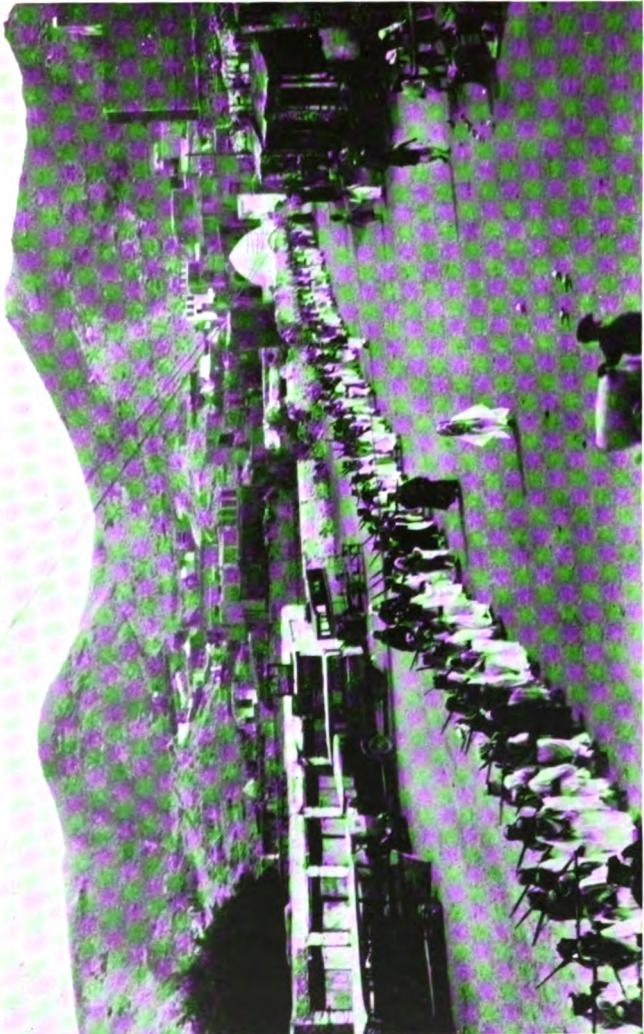
transport companies or the camel-owners rather than their own. Government intervention was therefore necessary to keep their rapacity and highhandedness within reasonable bounds; and a *Hajj* committee of mixed officials and private individuals had soon come into existence to take cognisance of any complaints preferred by pilgrims, and generally to ensure the smooth working of the administrative machinery. The personal interest of the King in all such matters was the best guarantee of maximum possible efficiency; and it was at the first pilgrimage I attended that I heard him compare himself, seated at his headquarters for the time being with the telephone at his side linked to all the departments concerned, to a general directing the operations of a military campaign: receiving reports from every section of the front and issuing orders to cope with any situation arising.

He showed a lively interest in a suggested alliance between France and Germany, prompted at this juncture by an American proposal of a moratorium on all reparations payments, to enable the latter to restore the balance of her internal economy. Further interest in foreign affairs was evinced by his decision to send his son Faisal on an European tour during the summer of 1931, partly in the interests of his health, which was not too robust, but mainly to discuss a variety of political matters in England and France, and to get a first-hand impression of public opinion on eastern affairs in these and other countries, including Russia and Turkey. More immediately preparations were under discussion for the despatch of a team of suitable candidates to the Marconi Company's headquarters at Chelmsford for instruction as prospective wireless operators; while the Finance Minister was in constant consultation with the king regarding the equipment, stores and camel-transport needed by a force of Najdi troops, 400 strong, which was shortly to proceed to the 'Asir province to initiate the new régime of assimilation to the Hijaz administration. Since 1926 the lowland part of 'Asir had enjoyed the nominal status of a protectorate under Idrisi administration; but it had recently been agreed with Saiyid Hasan, the acting head of the family, that this state of affairs should be terminated in the interests of more efficient administration, especially in the matter of the control of the ports and the collection of customs duty, which under the Idrisi régime had been restricted to the 8 per cent *ad valorem* allowed by the *Shar'* law, in contrast with the 20 per cent (or more in the case of tobacco and other special categories of merchandise) prevailing at Jidda. This large difference of duty, combined

with the difficulty of patrolling a land frontier, had resulted in much smuggling of goods into the Hijaz; and the Director of Revenue in highland 'Asir, an able and very charming citizen of Khamis Mushait, 'Abdul-Wahhab abu-Milha, had been brought down to Mecca to be briefed by 'Abdullah Sulaiman for his new task in the lowlands. It was agreed that any attempt to impose the high tariff of Jidda on the new province would merely result in the shifting of smuggling activities to the Yaman frontier. Nine per cent was accordingly fixed as the general rate of duty in the 'Asir ports, on the understanding that all goods re-exported therefrom to the Hijaz would have to pay the difference of 11 per cent. 'Abdul-Wahhab's commission was therefore to devise practicable ways and means to ensure the effective working of the arrangement.

During the king's fasting days we would stay on at the palace to join him at the sunset prayers, after which we usually dined in his boudoir in company with many of the children: always a delightful experience, as the king was an excellent father and, whether in private or in public, was always at his best with the younger members of the family. At times, in the solemn setting of a public session, some tiny tot would come into the room and walk the whole length of it, without the slightest sign of shyness or alarm, either to deliver some personal message from Mamma, or merely to climb on to the seat next the "throne" and play with the telephone or bell-push or anything else that was handy. Sometimes we stayed on till the usual evening reading and the ensuing private session and fruit supper. On one occasion bananas made their appearance, and the king admitted that he had never tasted one in his life; but on our unanimous recommendation he helped himself to one, ready peeled, from the plate offered to him, took one bite of it and laid the thing down with a grunt of contempt. "Is it true," he then asked apparently apropos of nothing in particular, "that in Europe it is customary for lovers to bite each other?" He had noticed suspicious marks on the face of one of his doctors, and suspected that he was addicted to exotic practices not envisaged in the *ars amoris arabica!* It is scarcely likely, however, that the Hijaz, with its cosmopolitan urban population and its long period of Turkish domination, was any stranger to such refinements, though the outlook of Najd in such matters was, at any rate in those days, completely unsophisticated, while the king's enquiry was in all innocence a measure of the intense curiosity of a secluded race about the habits of an infidel world.

The routine of the court was varied occasionally by excursions



Troops marching to the Great Mosque of Mecca from Jarwal for the Friday
prayers in 1938



Friday prayers at the Great Mosque of Mecca: troops presenting arms on the King's arrival, 1945

beyond the range of the normal pre-sunset drive. One of these took us out to the famous well of Ja'rana which, together with Tan'im much nearer to Mecca, was a recognised 'Umra (or little pilgrimage) starting-point, whither pilgrims and citizens of Mecca would sally out on asses (or motor-cars when these became the normal method of transport) to bathe in the well water and assume pilgrim garments before returning to Mecca to do the *Tawaf* and *Sa'i*. The well was famous for its drinking water, drawn up from the clean granite sand of the valley, and the king, who was an outstanding expert on the qualities of water, had already developed the practice of drinking no other water during his sojourns in the Hijaz: his tankers going out daily to bring in a supply for his household. In Najd also he was similarly faithful to a single well: that of Hassi in a tributary of Wadi Hanifa a few miles out from Riyadh, the water here coming from a sandstone stratum and having a lime content derived from the overlying limestone rocks. Thus his two favourite wells could have had little in common so far as quality was concerned, though he always declared that they alone in all Arabia contained water suitable to his constitution. The king always claimed to be something of an expert in general health matters, though he readily admitted that his father, who died in 1928, was a past-master in *Yunani* medical lore which, he declared, was no whit inferior to European medicine. Another famous "doctor" of the royal house was Turki ibn Sa'ud, the king's great-grandfather. He divided human beings, from the constitutional point of view, into four classes: *Damawi*, or plethoric; *Saudawi*, or melancholic; *Balghami*, or phlegmatic; and *Safrawi*, or biliary. He himself fell within the last category, and had found by experience that *Sabr*, an extract from the bark of certain trees, was a sovereign remedy for all internal troubles, and equally effective for external application to dirty or festering wounds. His addiction to periodical cupping has already been mentioned, preference being given for this treatment to the 25th, 27th or 29th day of the lunar month, as the phases of the moon influence the bloodstream of man in much the same way as they control the tides of the sea. I cannot remember any case of the king submitting to actual cautery; but it was a recognised commonplace of medical practice in Arabia, and particularly in Najd. The reading of suitable passages from the Quran by competent practitioners over the sick and ailing was also frequently resorted to; and I have often heard the king express his conviction that it is an effective method of treatment. Nevertheless, in spite of the king's affection for these old-fashioned methods of

coping with disease and disorders, it may fairly be said that the royal palace has proved a veritable gold-mine for medicos and dispensers versed in the methods of the modern west. At this time the budget of the medical department, exclusive of the Quarantine administration, was some £24,000 (gold); and the staff of qualified doctors, who were also free to do private practice for their own account, was twenty, of whom five were allotted to the Mecca hospital, as well as a qualified woman assistant to deal with female patients. This number has, of course, been trebled or quadrupled since those days, and spread more widely over the country; but there are still large tracts of it out of reach of medical help, and there is a tendency among the Syrian and Egyptian doctors, who make up the larger part of the staff, to prefer work in the towns in the interests of their private practice and greater comfort.

Another more ambitious excursion took the king and his party to the oasis of Madhiq, or Wadi Laimun as it is often called owing to its groves of lemon-trees, in one of the loveliest valleys of the Hijaz. We made an early morning start, and the king was in high spirits at getting away from the daily routine of city life, if only for one night, which was all he could spare. His hosts were 'Abdullah abu-Yabis and 'Ali ibn Husain of the Harith Ashraf, who had broken away from King Husain to give enthusiastic support to the Wahhabi invasion of 1924/5, and were consequently in high favour at court. Such visits were somewhat sedentary affairs, but the beautiful setting in which we sat round imbibing coffee, before settling down to the banquet prepared for us, did not fail to evoke the king's admiration, while the more energetic of us spent most of the day in the palm and lemon groves, visiting the spring of Bardan, on which all this cultivation depended. Since my previous visit here in 1917 our hosts and some of their neighbours had built themselves spacious and nice-looking mansions in place of the hovel-like dwellings of old. The reception-room of 'Abdullah abu-Yabis had a large bay-window commanding a splendid view of the valley, and was divided into two sections, one about eighteen inches higher than the other, separated by a broad arch, typical of Meccan architecture and probably necessitated by the standard length of the roof-beams locally available or imported from the Far East. But the most attractive feature of the building was a spacious platform built out from the valley side of the house on a flattened section of the hill-top on which it stood. Here in the late afternoon the king sat, holding court as usual and receiving his local visitors, until after sunset, when, having

prayed, he was escorted on foot to the mansion of 'Ali ibn Husain on a neighbouring hillock, where he was to dine and sleep: the dinner being served *alfresco* on the large terrace in front of the building, while coffee was afterwards taken indoors in a large and comfortably furnished room. Little by little the company slipped away to bed until there were only four of us left with the king. We had had a shower of rain (November 29th) during dinner, and there had been further falls later in the evening, while the hills around were capped by dark storm-clouds, promising a good beginning to the winter. The Rajab moon, in its first quarter, had lit up the valley, with its nodding palms and dark-green lemons, until it sank behind the rim of hills. And, whether it was the latent beauty of the scene, or the rain-freshened atmosphere, or the mere absence of his womenfolk, that dictated his mood, the king began to talk of the women he had known and loved. In Paradise, he said, a good Muslim may expect an allotment of seventy houris, while he will also normally be allowed to select one of his earthly wives, to have with him for ever! But there were six of his wives whom, in view of his rather unusual career, he hoped God in his mercy might allow him to rejoin or keep in the hereafter. The list was headed, appropriately enough, by the first of all his wives, the beautiful Bint al Fiqri, who died within six months of that marriage about fifty-six years ago and has never been forgotten: a remarkable achievement for any woman in Arabia. Next came Bint al Shaikh, mother of the Amir Faisal, of Wahhabi lineage, also long since departed. The third was Jauhara bint Musa'id, who died in 1919, the "year of mercy", when an epidemic of Spanish influenza swept the country and carried off three of the king's sons, including Turki, the heir apparent. She was herself of royal blood and cousin of the king, while her brother, now governor of Hail, was one of the king's companions at the recapture of Riyadh fifty years ago. Fourth on the list was Hassa bint Sudairi, still with him to this day and the most fertile of his wives: mother of seven sons and almost as many daughters, and herself daughter of a house rather specially privileged to provide wives for the princes of clan Sa'ud, whose own daughters never marry outside the royal family. The fifth name I had forgotten by the time I came to record the events of that evening, while the sixth was never mentioned at all, probably because the hour was getting late and the king sleepy. Incidentally in later years I have certainly heard from the royal lips a somewhat different version of the scheme of things in the happy land, under which the number of earthly wives allowed to the

virtuous had become four instead of one. Be that as it may, it struck me at the time as significant that the small group of friends privileged to hear this sentimental homily of a successful polygamist were all practising monogamists, with jealous wives quite capable of defending their monopolies! Far from offering any excuses for his system, he was convinced not only of the desirability but of the feasibility of such a dispensation, and could cite the harmony prevailing in his own household in support of his conviction. What he failed to take into account were the economic factors inimical to polygamy. It was easy enough for queens, each secure in her own realm, to be on visiting and even affectionate terms with each other, and with the concubines who shared their lord's attentions; but it was normally otherwise in an ordinary middle-class household, where a plurality of wives involved undue pressure on the living-space of all, without providing complete satisfaction for any. As for the king, he admitted rather amusingly that there was nothing much in the way of conversation, apart from the small talk of domestic life, between himself and his ladies; and it was not difficult to envisage the scene behind the purdah on the analogy of that daily enacted before the footlights, with the king playing all the principal parts to an appreciative chorus, always ready with applause of his sentiments. In public and in private the royal life was regulated down to the minutest detail; and it was evident that the routine which had evolved round his person was entirely to his satisfaction, though it must on occasion have had a limiting effect on the freedom of an absolute monarch. He only held himself free to absent himself from all domestic festivities, occasioned by normal events like marriages and births; and would generally betake himself to camp to be out of the way when they were due to occur, as they did, of course, with astonishing frequency in a family such as his. This was partly to allow of greater freedom to those more directly concerned with such celebrations, which involved much drumming, singing and dancing, for which he seemed to have a great personal aversion. Even in the case of a birth he would not see the child till it was some days old; and, while he would occasionally visit the mother to enquire about her health and requirements, he would not resume normal relations with her until the lapse of the forty days prescribed by Islamic practice.

On this domestic note, sounded by His Majesty's own soliloquy that night in the romantic setting of the valley of lemons, I may close this chapter on a sojourn in Mecca which was now drawing to a close. The king was to spend Ramdhan and the interval between it

and the coming pilgrimage in the holy land; but there was just time for a rapid visit to Najd for a review of the progress made in the stabilisation of the desert since the shock of the Duwish rebellion of the previous year. With some difficulty the Finance Department had managed to make the necessary financial and transport arrangements for the journey; and on December 20th, 1930, the royal cavalcade of cars and trucks moved out of Mecca on the way to Riyadh.

CHAPTER XI

INTERLUDE AT RIYADH

THE trip to and short sojourn at Riyadh was a bachelor affair. His Majesty had decided to travel light and fast, and the ladies were all left behind at Mecca to await his return. The journey there and back occupied in all one week: fast going for those days, though by no means a record, as single cars have been known to do the distance of just over 900 kilometres in one direction within 36 hours, travelling day and night. The stay at Riyadh lasted four weeks, by the end of which time the king was clearly fretting to get back to his family, as he had not imitated his brother 'Abdullah's example in adding to his matrimonial establishment. The latter had married the fourteen-year-old daughter of Sa'ud ibn Rashid, murdered by a cousin in 1920, though he had announced his intention of not taking her back with him to Mecca for fear of complications with his principal wife, the twenty-four-year-old posthumous daughter of Mit'ab ibn Rashid, who had also been murdered in the Hail holocaust of 1906/7, following upon the death of his father 'Abdul-'Aziz at the battle of Raudhat al Muhanna. 'Abdullah, with this new marriage, had completed his permissible establishment, as he had two other wives: a Buraida girl of the once regnant Abalkhail family, and a Badawin daughter of the Mutair (Shiblan) tribe. There were, of course, women about the palace, and the king may at times have consoled himself with their company; but it was not quite the same thing as the ordered routine of domestic life to which he had become accustomed since his retirement from active military service, which may be dated back to the conquest of the Hijaz, when he commanded his army in the field for the last time.

To some extent hunting had come to be a substitute for the old campaigning; and almost every day during this cold and wintry month of his being at Riyadh we used to sally forth to draw the neighbouring coverts for bustard, sandgrouse and smaller fry, like the cream-coloured courser. I don't remember seeing a single gazelle during these outings, and one had to go much further afield to find

them in the Dahna sands and the desert on either side. On the whole these shooting expeditions were not much fun, especially when one was one of seven in a seven-seater car with the hood up and side-screens fixed to keep out the bitter cold; and I generally transferred in the course of the day to the Amir 'Abdullah's open car, from which one could at times have a shot at a flying bird, while the king's technique was different. Armed with a magazine shot-gun loaded exclusively with No. 1 shot, he would drive about until the quarry was seen, when the car would stop dead and the royal weapon begin to spray shot among the sitting birds. The only interesting feature of the proceedings was the fact that we carried hawks to spot and put up the bustard, which would fluff out their plumage majestically as if to fight out the issue with the enemy but would generally turn tail and take to flight at the last moment; thereupon a chase would ensue with the car following at breakneck speed over the rough ground until the quarry took refuge against the pursuer behind a bush, only to find a merciless gun-barrel pointed at it from a standing car. The hawks never had a real chance to show off their paces, and often showed their resentment by flying off to a distant rock, from which they had to be coaxed back to hand by the falconer with a wing or thigh of a dead bustard, which he produced from his sack. On one occasion, when I was with the Amir 'Abdullah, bustard and hawk after a long chase passed out of sight into the Banban sands, where we could not follow in the car, and completely disappeared. After a long search the hawk was given up for lost; but, next day when we were out in the same area, we encountered a small caravan on the way from Artawiya to Riyadh; and a man came running from it straight to 'Abdullah's car, shouting as he approached: "Good news of your bird!" The man was suitably rewarded, and the Amir was delighted to recover his valuable Bushiri *Shahana* whose reputation was evidently sufficient to ensure its identification by passing strangers. The *Hurr*, a lighter-coloured bird, is another hunting hawk of good reputation in Najd; but I never saw or heard of hawking gazelles, nor saw hawks trained for that purpose, though this sport is, or was, fairly common in the borderlands of desert Arabia. We had recently heard that the 'Iraq Government had issued a decree against all game-hunting by car; but the king made no secret of his scorn, though it must have been obvious to him, and indeed to the most superficial observer, that the country was doomed to be denuded of game in the absence of restrictions on private enterprise. The inevitable has happened, and

nowadays one has to go far off the beaten track to find gazelles in any number, while the oryx has become extinct within the last few years in the north, and the stately ostrich has disappeared from Arabia altogether. And nobody cares: that is the real tragedy.

On the other hand all efforts to get rid of the locust have been in vain: from the relatively simple method of eating them to the more elaborate machinery of the International Anti-Locust Committee operating in Arabia in recent years. I have heard the argument that the operations of this body have in fact resulted in the destruction of vast numbers of this pest in justification of its existence. It is of course true, but it is equally true that I kill hundreds of common flies every day of my life at Riyadh, without making any real impression on the number of flies that remain to afflict me and others. The king was, and probably still is, convinced that the locust emanates from the mouth of a fish; there is an authentic saying of the Prophet to that effect, while I believe that there is a grain of truth in it, subject to its proper interpretation, which seems to me fairly simple, though the literalists remain sceptical. The locust comes from the south, or the direction of Fomalhaut (=the mouth of the fish). The Arabs recognise the eggs of the locust, and the hopper (*Dabba*) resulting from them, as also the first winged stage (*Khaifan*), when the insect is lean and inedible. In this stage it is thought to be short lived and incapable of reproduction, though it eats up everything eatable in its way before it disappears from human ken: to be followed by the *Jarrad*, or edible locust, which devours the crops and lays eggs for the next cycle. "We eat the locust, and the locust eats us," says the Arab wisecrack.

One afternoon while out in the desert shooting we were overtaken by a storm. Soon after noon, when we were beginning to think of lunch, a great band of storm-clouds, as darkly blue as it is possible to imagine, rose menacingly over the north-western horizon, far off but advancing towards us. The king decided to beat in retreat to the nearby headland of Khashm al An, jutting out from the 'Arma cliff; but we were not quick enough. A few wisps of wind sent the sand of the valley whirling about us; and then came the rain in torrents, to develop into a steady downpour, which lasted about an hour and transformed the desert into a paradise of brooks and streams: a glorious and welcome sight. In the panic which ensued on the first strike of the storm some of the cars made for the greater safety of the higher ground at the edge of Wadi Sulaiy, while others made a bee-line for home while the going was good. The latter, as

we discovered to our dismay when the rain stopped as suddenly as it had begun, included the restaurant car; and there was nothing to do but travel hungrily homeward. By this time all the little valleys crossing the road were in spate; and the king's car stuck in two of them, engine-deep in water, while the other cars in attendance had similar experiences. In each case the whole of the available manpower, some thirty or more stalwart *Ziqirt* and slaves, was deployed to rescue the vehicles from their predicament; and in each case the king's car, having safely emerged from the water, waited to see the rest across before proceeding further. It needed such a crisis to discover the latent energy of a race already somewhat affected by contact with the flesh-pots of the Hijaz and approaching the brink of the decadence which would be seen before long in the younger generation. The veterans of the desert campaigns of a quarter-century still remembered enough of the old technique to reproduce it in case of need. On arriving at Riyadh we found the Batha channel in full flood, lapping at the city walls with a majestic stream; and Wadi Hanifa itself was reported in spate.

At this time Riyadh was still very much as it was when I first saw it, though a new quarter, including a spacious garage, had grown out of the old south-east corner at the expense of some fine palm-groves, which had been cut down to make room for houses. The king still lived in the old palace in the middle of the city, dominating the *Suq* and its cathedral mosque, while an old mansion amidst the palms of the Batin served as a country-house for occasional outings of an afternoon. The population of the desert capital was reckoned at about 30,000 souls; and there was little to suggest that it would be transformed out of all recognition in a few years' time. Riyadh was essentially, as it had always been, a Badawin market town, though cars now jostled with the camels in the palace yard. "So long as we have the Quran," said the king one evening, "our faith is safe; and so long as we have the camel, our honour is safe." What exactly he had in mind at the moment, it is difficult to say. Was he as conscious of the then almost imperceptible slackening of moral discipline, as all of us were of the approaching doom of the camel? In both fields the struggle was an unequal one between virtue and comfort; and there can be little doubt as to which way the battle has been going. It is not lost yet; but virtue is on the defensive in strange contrast with its aggressive tactics in harder times. And at that time less than a year had passed since its last offensive had been rudely crushed.

Incidentally the truant restaurant car already mentioned had returned in search of us after the rain, and we had gratefully availed ourselves of its contents before completing the journey to town. The king, well clad as he was, felt the cold keenly; and his thoughts went wandering towards bed and bedfellows, on which general subject he recited some extempore verses of his own to the amusement of the company. This was the first and last time I ever saw him in the rôle of poet; but he brushed away the inevitable compliments on his composition by describing it as *Nabi*, or natural, stuff of the Badawin. My suggestion that efforts should be made to collect and preserve these desert ebullitions met with little approval, though I discovered later that Dr Ahmad Yasin of the Riyadh hospital had made, and was always adding to, a considerable corpus of Badawin erotic poetry, from which he was occasionally invited to recite suitable selections when the court was feeling especially frivolous. They were not too easy to understand in their native Arabic, and were certainly unprintable in any language.

The Amir Sa'ud on this occasion was wearing a magnificent fur-lined coat of European make to keep out the cold, and asked me what I thought of it. I could scarcely do otherwise than admire it because it was a very good coat, but I had no sooner done so than he stripped it off his body and handed it to me, saying: "You have it, it is yours; I have another like it at home!" So it became mine, and I need hardly say that I appreciated its qualities during the cold days that followed. The minimum temperature of that day was as high as 64 degrees, but the biting wind of the desert on a winter's day has to be experienced to be properly appreciated. The reading of a thermometer in the shade seems unable to reflect the impact of that sort of cold on the human body. And the king told us at the evening session that, on his return to the palace, the first person to greet him with anxious enquiries about his health after such long exposure to the inclemency of the weather was his aunt Tarfa, one of the only two surviving children of the great Faisal ibn Sa'ud, who died in 1865. The other was a slightly younger sister, who has since died (1931), as also has the aged husband of Tarfa, her cousin Nasir ibn Farhan (1939). I noted at the time, on the king's own authority, that Tarfa herself was then (1931) eighty-five years old; but subsequent research has caused me to modify that view. She was admittedly some years younger than the king's father, 'Abdul-Rahman ibn Faisal, who was born in 1850; and as she is still very much alive she must be under the century mark, say ninety-six

years, or a quarter-century older than the king, with no other member of the royal family between them. She had two sons* of her own, and she acquired a considerable reputation as a learned woman and a doughty defender of the faith. "My main purpose in coming to Riyadh this time," said the king, "was to see her." Twenty years later, when she was asked whether she intended to go to Mecca for the pilgrimage, she is said to have replied: "Of course I shall go if 'Abdul-'Aziz goes!" From praising the old lady, the king lightly turned to thoughts of love and women. "I love my family very much indeed," said he, "but I don't always let them know it! But what do you folk know about love after all, who take one wife and then sleep on different beds? Why I—well the longest winter night is all too short for me! Even when I settle down to rest, I wake from time to time to embrace my companion, and sometimes I do it in my sleep!" But the king is inconsistent, for I have certainly often heard him in winter shudder at the thought of the long night before him, which for him at any rate ended at dawn or a little before it. His estimates of the amount of sleep he gets in the twenty-four hours of a day have varied from time to time from five to six and a half hours, always spread over three periods: say, a couple of hours over midnight, an hour after the dawn prayer, and two hours over noon, increased proportionally in each case to cover the longer total. Sleep, he has often said, is but a slice of death inserted into life; so why have too much of it? The answer in his case is that he can't, even if he wished to imitate the luckier folk who enjoy longer hours of sleep without feeling guilty or uncomfortable. He of course realises this, and attributes his incapacity to the habits formed during a youth spent in military adventures.

The evening ended with a suggestion by Yusuf Yasin that we should there and then do something vigorous, such as walking to Wadi Sulaiy where we had been that afternoon. "Very well," said the king, "I'll give you £200 (gold, of course) if you go there and back between now and sunrise." The time limit made the proposition impossible; but the king returned to the charge with another suggestion. "Better still," he said, "I'll give you £300 if you go straightforward now, and spend the night in the grotto of Abu-Makhruq." This was a hillock about three miles north of the town, cleft through from side to side to form a vaulted chamber, large enough for motor-cars to pass through, and was a favourite picnic place in the daytime, though reputed to be infested by Jinns and evil

* Muhammad ibn Nasir is still alive, but the other son, 'Abdullah, is dead.

spirits during the night: so much so that nobody would pass by it in the dark or camp near it, much less in it. Yusuf was not without courage, and accepted the challenge on conditions. "I'll do it," he said, "if I may take fuel and matches with me for warmth, and my bedding, and a companion." "All right," said the king, "I'll give you a buxom slave-girl to go with you for company, and she shall be yours for keeps in any event." He added in an aside to the rest of us: "I wouldn't go there myself to spend the night alone for £100,000!" "Why?" I asked. "Why?" he echoed. "Because of the Jinns and devils there!" There was no doubting his seriousness; but for some reason the subject was dropped for the time being, to be renewed with zest the following evening. Yusuf stuck to his guns, and the fun began. About 10.30 p.m. Dr Mahmud and I were deputed to accompany Yusuf to the palace door, where a Ford car was in readiness, with his huge roll of bedding already in it, while Ghashsham, one of the royal slaves, was busy clamping irons on the ankles of the unfortunate girl, a buxom negro wench, who was to be Yusuf's companion in adversity. She was supposed to be mad, and she was certainly in a state of uncontrollable terror at the thought that she was being led away to execution: an idea which Ghashsham did nothing to dispel, as he put a halter round her neck and stowed her into the car by the bedding. Yusuf, doing his best to reassure her and begging her to dry her tears, took his seat beside the chauffeur. I had little doubt that Yusuf would win his bet, though the king seemed equally confident that he would be back before long, and ordered a car to be as near the place as the chauffeur would dare to go, to be at his disposal in the event of his giving up. But the king did not play entirely fair, as he sent out some of his myrmidons to the neighbourhood of the grotto, to impersonate the evil spirits by stone-throwing and other mysterious behaviour. The next day was the fifth anniversary of Ibn Sa'ud's proclamation as king of the Hijaz, though the celebration of such secular occasions was not permitted at Riyadh. The king was, however, in gleeful mood, as he had won his bet! I could scarcely believe my ears when told that Yusuf and his handmaid (for he had made sure of her in the obvious way as soon as they were left alone as near the grotto as the chauffeur would go) had returned to town soon after midnight in the rescue car. According to his account of the adventure, the large roll of bedding had been their undoing. Yusuf had started carrying it towards the grotto, of whose exact location, in the dark, he had but a vague idea. He had then decided to find the grotto first, and then come

back for the bedding. The first part of this programme having been successfully achieved with some difficulty, the bedding could not be found; so they returned to the grotto, resigned to the prospect of trying to keep each other warm as best they could without it. The spirit was willing, the night was dark and cold, the sounds were queer; and the flesh failed. Yusuf, heated by the effort of carrying the lost bedding, was getting chilled, with an incipient pain in his kidneys, when the rescue car passed by, as if on some other errand. He hailed it, and begged the chauffeur to help find his baggage. This assistance being refused, he begged a lift in the car for himself and his friend back to town; and the bet was lost and won. As for Jumaiyila, the girl friend, all was well that ended well, and she lived happily with Yusuf ever after, at least for a time, for she could not accompany him back to Mecca for fear of complications at home. But the initial ragging of her struck me as rather cruel and unnecessary, while Yusuf's performance was a chicken-hearted one. The king did his best to lose his bet by sending out his myrmidons, as a child could have detected the fraud; but it may be that he was genuinely afraid of something untoward happening, and sent out the rescue party, which should have spoiled his game.

Such was the lighter side of life at Riyadh these days; and the king did not seem to be unduly burdened with the cares of State. Everybody living in the palace was expected to attend the dawn prayer with him in a small room immediately above the palace mosque, the prayers being conducted by the Imam below. On Fridays the king would attend the service in the cathedral mosque, proceeding with his bodyguard from his quarters in the palace to his own oratory over the western section of the mosque by an elevated viaduct linking the two buildings across the *Suq*. This oratory extended over the whole width of the mosque, but was too narrow for more than two long lines of worshippers, who consisted entirely of the royal family, the house party and the servants. Here again the service was conducted from below, while those in the oratory could hear the sermon and the prayers, as the windows were kept open for the purpose, while the *Qibla* niche is carried up from the ground floor to the upper storey. It apparently does not matter how many tiers of worshippers are above the level of the Imam conducting the prayers, but the latter may not be on a higher level than any part of the congregation. At the end of the service the king generally prolonged his private devotions, while the rest of his party, having done the two *Rik'ats* of the *Sunna*, would sit back against the wall waiting for His Majesty,

and a slave or other attendant would be ready with his sandals and stick when he rose to depart. In all matters of religious observance and ritual he was extremely punctilious, though it was but rarely that he led the prayers himself. His chaplain always accompanied him in camp and on shooting expeditions or other outings. Incidentally actual practice as regards the wearing or putting off of shoes or other footwear on entering a mosque seemed to be very casual. If one wore sandals one generally kicked them off before entering unless, as was the case with most of the mosques at Riyadh and in Najd generally, the floor was of rough gravel, when it was permissible to keep them on. On the other hand there was no objection to wearing boots and shoes within the mosque precincts, presumably owing to the trouble of taking them off and putting them on again; and the growing practice of the younger generation of wearing European footwear has established their permissibility in all circumstances. The king at this period always, however, wore sandals and discarded them at the door; and when later he had to take to socks owing to sore feet he wore house-shoes over them and discarded them on entering a mosque or his own audience chamber.

One day the conversation turned on Trans-Jordan and the 'Adwan rebellion of 1923: Yusuf Yasin, who had been in 'Amman at the time, suggesting that, in the absence of Peake Pasha, the Arab Legion would have been ready to join the rebels if circumstances had been favourable. I challenged this view, which seemed to me groundless, whereupon Dr Mahmud got on his hobby-horse, praising officers of the Legion like Fuad Salim who, while swearing loyalty to the Amir 'Abdullah and the British and receiving their pay from them, spent all their time working against them and stirring up their troops to disloyalty. The king intervened with an expression of strong disapproval of such conduct; but Mahmud stood his ground, declaring he would do the same and cared not if he went to hell for it. The king pulled him up rather sharply for such blasphemy, telling him to ask pardon of God, which in the end he did with a bad enough grace, after an exhibition of xenophobia rather typical of the very commonplace brain of this doctor turned politician.

Incidentally King Husain was at this time at 'Amman; and the Baghdad papers had recently carried reports of his intention of visiting 'Iraq. One of them had also published three articles by him, written at 'Aqaba six years earlier and containing a bitter attack on Ibn Sa'ud and the British. These were read out to the king in a very small private session in his boudoir, and caused much merriment.

But it was against 'Iraq mainly that public opinion in Najd was still running high in spite of the experiences of Faisal al Duwish and his associates; and one day I was tackled by Majid ibn Khutaila and Mutlaq ibn Zaid, both members of that association who had been pardoned and admitted to the king's favour, on the subject. "Why," they asked, "can't that man [meaning Ibn Sa'ud] let us have a go at the infidels ['Iraq and the British]?" "What would you gain?" I replied. "They would just mow you down with their machine-guns and aeroplanes." "But we would gain paradise," they replied. I told them quite frankly that that did not interest me as much as the future of the Arab cause; "and what," I asked, "would happen to that if you all went to *Janna*?" In spite of the king there was undoubtedly a feeling of resentment simmering in the desert against the restraints he was deliberately imposing on *Ikhwan* enthusiasm to serve the faith. It was to take a course of excessive prosperity to cool their ardour for that or any other cause. But that was scarcely their fault; it was not the fault of the ignorant honest Badawin who, for a quarter of a century, had been taught in season and out of season that the best man was the man who killed most infidels, and then for no apparent reason were told that no more infidels should be killed! The earlier lesson had offered them the prospect of paradise after death, while the later teaching showed how easy it was to have a bit of paradise on account in life. To do people like my questioners credit, they would have preferred it the old way; and I often wondered what the old giants, like Faisal ibn Hashr of the Qahtan, who was at Riyadh and in regular attendance on the king during these days, really thought of the new order. He was reputed to have slain a hundred men in single combat, like his contemporary Faisal al Duwish who was at this time still languishing in prison within a stone's-throw of the palace. All through his life he had subjected himself to an austere régime to keep himself in perpetual training for the rough side of life; and he told me that he still normally didn't drink water as much as once in six months: coffee and camel's or sheep's milk, of course, providing the liquid his body needed. Khalid ibn Luwai, another of these old heroes, was comparatively lucky in that he was on virtually perpetual active service on the troubrous frontier of the Yaman, where he was to die within the next few years of a lingering fever during a campaign in the unhealthy Tihama. To all these representatives of a heroic phase in Arabia's history Ibn Sa'ud's new policy of appeasement of the infidel was fundamentally distasteful; and it was by no means the least of the

proofs of his personal greatness that he could make them all toe the line.

The days drew on, and the only thing that delayed an immediate departure from Riyadh was the failure of the Finance Department to send up the necessary petrol and oil for the long journey. Meanwhile we proceeded to use up all there was for the king's shooting excursions. As for myself, the delay, however annoying, was relatively immaterial, as my plans did not envisage a return to the Hijaz with the royal party. Before leaving Mecca, the king had told me that he would make the necessary arrangements for me to visit the Empty Quarter during the coming winter. I had accordingly busied myself in making everything ready for such a journey, while Yusuf Yasin and I worked out the necessary preliminaries, including two important stipulations: namely, that in the event of my perishing in the attempt there should be no claim on the Government for the payment of compensation to my family; and that my nationality should not confer on the British Government any right of annexation of territory discovered and mapped by me. It was easy to subscribe to these conditions, while in respect of the second I suggested that the nominal leader of the expedition should be a national of Najd, and not myself. Everything was arranged to everyone's satisfaction, and it was understood that I should start when the king's party left for Mecca. I would probably be back in Mecca in time for the pilgrimage; but in any case the pilgrimage could wait for another year, while there was no time to lose over the Rub 'al Khali. I knew that Bertram Thomas, then serving at Masqat, was making preparations for the same journey in the reverse direction; and we should almost certainly have met in what Dr Hogarth described as the largest tract of completely unknown country in the world outside the Polar regions. But it was not to be. Just a week before the king was due to leave for Mecca he sent for me and told me he had bad news for me: the Murra tribe was having trouble in the desert with the Da'kai of the 'Uman borderlands, and the mutual raiding would make the Empty Quarter a zone of danger; so my journey must be postponed. It was a bitter disappointment; and Thomas, knowing nothing of the alleged unrest in the desert, had the honour of being the first European to traverse the great southern desert of Arabia, without the permission or knowledge of the king.

A few more days of desultory hunting and a few more evenings of idle chat filled in the time until noon on January 17th, when the royal cavalcade started for Mecca, which, with a forced march of



The main street of Mecca, with the Great Mosque on right and police-station
on left : 1934

War-dance of Harb tribesmen at Mecca in 1931



390 kilometres on the last day, was reached an hour after sunset on the 20th, the eve of the Ramdhan fast. The whole journey was too rapid for comfort or pleasure, and was not improved by the daily vicious sandstorms which we experienced or the long trail of dust that followed in the wake of His Majesty's car.

CHAPTER XII

FASTING AND PILGRIMAGE

At Sail al Kabir, the station prescribed by tradition for travellers from Najd to change into pilgrim garb for entry into Mecca, we had all discarded the travel-stained garments of the long journey from Riyadh, and bathed in the stone huts provided for the purpose, and finally donned the two-piece garment of *Ihram* for the ‘Umra or little pilgrimage, before continuing our progress. On arrival at the Ma‘abida palace I found that the king was still there, having stopped to renew his ablutions before proceeding to the ceremonies in the Haram. I drove on with others of the party to await his arrival, and was thus able to take part in the ceremonies in his train for the first time: the procession round the Ka‘ba being led by His Majesty, with Shaikh ‘Abdullah ibn Hasan, the archbishop of Mecca, at his side. For the succeeding ritual of the *Sa‘i*, or “running” seven times between the two “hillocks” of Safa and Marwa, about 380 yards apart (making a total distance of a little more than a mile and a half), the king had already established the precedent of using a motor-car, in which he was accompanied by Shaikh ‘Abdullah. The car moved at a walking pace, and it was not difficult to keep up with it, while at each end its occupants got out each time to utter the prescribed formulae on the steps of the shrine-like constructions marking the sites of the two original hillocks, associated by tradition with Hagar’s frantic search for water for the child Ishmael. After this ceremony we all drove back to the palace for a banquet laid for 200 guests, though there were only about thirty of us who turned up for it, as the rest of the king’s following had scattered to their homes. It was not till after dinner, when his guests departed, that the king himself was free to join his ladies.

I returned to my villa in Jarwal, and settled down to a refreshing sleep, from which I was woken at 3 a.m. to join the Finance Minister’s party, across the way, for the pre-dawn supper which heralded in my first day of fasting: not a very exacting ordeal in the cool weather and short days of January. I was, however, woken from my

afternoon siesta by the telephone bell, to find the king at the other end of the line, asking me how I fared and inviting me to join him for his sunset breakfast, consisting of a few dates, a glass of water and several cups of coffee before the sunset prayers, after which we proceeded to the private apartments for dinner. This arrangement, with a short night sitting ending about 10.30, and the usual morning and afternoon sessions, became the framework of a normal Ramdhan day: sometimes varied by a royal visit to the Haram for the evening prayer, prolonged by the special Ramdhan service called *Tarawih* and consisting of ten bows, and ending with the *Witr*, a single-bow prayer with a long collect of supplication. After this the citizens of Mecca and Jidda proceeded to business as usual: turning night into day, buying and selling, paying visits on each other, and generally milling about in the gaily lit bazaars until it was time for *Suhur* (pre-dawn supper) and the dawn prayer, after which they turned in for as long a sleep as nature would vouchsafe. Their celebrations were, of course, not on the scale of the great cities of the Islamic world, like Cairo and Istanbul; but they contrasted strongly with the practice of Najd and the court circle, where the daily routine of the secular months was maintained without change. In fact, one day Yusuf Yasin did not turn up at the morning session, and had to be sent for, to be soundly rated for his remissness and sentenced to six days of all-day attendance at court! This sentence was afterwards revoked on Yusuf's own recognisances and promise to offend no more. Nevertheless the considerable non-Najdi element in Government circles did, for the most part, conform to the cosmopolitan régime, and spent as much of the day as they dared to in making up for their nocturnal activities with slumber. I often sat up all night to take advantage of undisturbed quiet for my own work.

I was gradually being absorbed, though always in an entirely unofficial capacity, into closer contact with what may fairly be regarded as the king's privy council, at which the current preoccupations of the Government, in all its branches, were freely discussed with a view to the taking of appropriate action in accordance with decisions made by the king. One day, for instance, he asked me to confer with Yusuf on ways and means of converting the British press to a more understanding and friendly attitude towards the Wahhabi State in relation to its difficulties with 'Iraq and Trans-Jordan: particularly the latter, on whose frontier Major Glubb had now for some time been developing a policy which was calculated to sap the loyalty of the border tribes and was giving trouble to Turki al Sudairi, then

governor of the Jauf province. With a free hand and ample secret service funds, it was not difficult to seduce nomad tribesmen, always on the borderline of starvation, and not particular as to the source of their livelihood, so long as they lived. The frontier had been laid down by agreement on paper, but the maps on which it had been based were out of date, and there had been disputes about wells and other points which in fact were not on the side of the line, expressed in terms of meridians and parallels, on which they were believed to be. I was asked by the king to prepare an Arabic map of the area in readiness for the visit of a deputation from 'Iraq, headed by Nuri Pasha, the Prime Minister, which he had cordially agreed to receive in response to a telegraphic request from King Faisal.

These negotiations were not to take place until after the end of Ramdhan; and the main subject of diplomatic concern at this time was the discussion of a draft treaty with Italy: an instrument of "*amicizia e stabilitamento*", which was to be signed in Rome by the Amir Faisal in the course of his projected European tour in the summer. In the main the draft followed the customary lines of such international agreements, though the precedent of the British treaty of Jidda (1927) threatened to create certain difficulties. For instance, that instrument provided that, in case of disputes regarding the interpretation of its provisions, the English text should be regarded as conclusive. Sir Gilbert Clayton had successfully insisted on this, but the Hijaz-Najd Government had made up its mind not to accept such a condition in any future treaty with any foreign Power; and Signor Sollazzo, the Italian negotiator and subsequently the first Italian Minister to the court of Ibn Sa'ud, gracefully yielded the point, both Italian and Arabic texts being regarded as equally authoritative.

Another obstacle was his demand for "most favoured nation" treatment of the Italian Legation to be. This could not be granted in view of certain special privileges accorded "under *force majeure*" to the British diplomatic representative, especially in the matter of slavery. The utmost that could be conceded was that the Italian representative at Jidda should have the status and privileges accorded by ordinary international practice on a basis of reciprocity. The Italian representative suggested a clause providing for co-operation between the two countries for the suppression of slavery; but this was rejected out of hand. It was then suggested that, at least, there should be an exchange of letters, formulating such a demand on the one side and rejecting it on the other. It was abund-

antly clear that, in pressing this subject in some form, the Italian Government was mainly concerned to show the world that it had not failed to make a noble gesture in a good cause, though it had been reluctantly compelled to yield the point in view of the intransigence of the Arabian Government. Yusuf was too intelligent to impale himself on the horns of such a dilemma, while he assured Signor Sollazzo that his Government would on no account admit, in any future treaty, the right of any foreign Power to interfere in this matter. Sollazzo then tried another line, pointing out that the Jidda treaty would in a few years be coming up for revision, and assuring Yusuf that, if the British then agreed to drop the offending clause from their treaty, Italy would gladly do the same, if such a clause were accepted in the treaty under negotiation. But Yusuf would have none of that, with the result that no mention of the slavery problem appeared in the text of the treaty, nor in any annex thereto. In effect the Arab point of view won the day on every controversial issue, while the Foreign Office was ready with a draft on the same lines for a treaty with France to be negotiated for signature by Faisal in Paris during the summer. Incidentally Faisal himself had, during his father's absence at Riyadh and during the fast, somewhat overtaxed his strength, and had recently been suffering from a long bout of fever, to recuperate from which he had gone off on a shooting expedition to the Rakba plain. His deputy at Jidda, Fuad Hamza, on whom had devolved most of the treaty spade-work, had also succumbed to some liver ailment, and had had to leave Arabia for a period of convalescence in the Lebanon: his functions thus falling on Yusuf Yasin, who combined them with his own work at the political office in Mecca.

Another serious problem at this time presented itself in the shape of a steady depreciation of the Government's silver currency, while all the signs suggested that, if drastic action to support it were not taken at once, there might be a catastrophic fall in the exchange value of the *Riyal* during the pilgrim season, of which the shroffs and shopkeepers would certainly take the utmost advantage, to the detriment of the pilgrims. The *Riyal* was originally introduced some years before this at a par value of ten to the English gold sovereign: its size and silver content being in the first instance the same as in the Turkish *Majidi*, though it was afterwards assimilated in both respects to the Indian silver Rupee, as it still is, though the latter coin has since been debased. At this time the *Riyal* had dropped as far as 13 to the £ gold; and, on my return from a short visit to Jidda, the king asked

me to join a small committee charged by him to draft an ordinance for its protection from further depreciation. The ordinance that emerged from our deliberations opened with a preamble stating truly enough that the currency crisis was the result of manipulation, and went on to prescribe penalties for all shroffs, commercial firms (implicitly including the European houses) and petty shopkeepers in the event of their refusing to accept the *Riyal* and its fractions (*Qarsh darij* at 22 to the *Riyal*) at their par value. It seemed to me that such threats would have little effect, and that the only way of keeping gold down to its official value was the imposition of an embargo on its export. This proposal was not accepted; and it may be said that at least two members of the committee were interested parties as exporters of gold on a considerable scale to finance their imports from India and elsewhere. The shipping of actual coin was a common practice of the Hijaz merchants in those days, who sought thereby to avoid the payment of bank charges on remittances. As may be imagined the new ordinance was a dead letter from the start, and the crisis reached quite serious proportions during the ensuing pilgrimage, giving rise to a great deal of hardship and bitter complaints. This development was an apt illustration of the basic weakness of the Sa'udi administration, namely, the fact that so many of the officials of the Government were also merchants on their own account, and inevitably examined all proposals for reform with the eye of self-interest. Nothing has been done since to change this situation, and it must be obvious to any unprejudiced observer that the conduct of Government business at the highest levels by persons with private interests inconsistent with the common weal is not an ideal situation.

At this time well-meant efforts were being made to calm the troubled waters between Arabia and Egypt; and Hasan Bey Ash-muni, in charge of the Egyptian consulate at Jidda, was kept busy travelling between the two countries with the unofficial suggestions of either side as to possible ways of composing their differences without loss of face. But King Fuad's ambitions were a formidable obstacle to an understanding; and even the visit of Shaikh Mustafa al Maraghi, the Rector of the Azhar university, did little good. He had had several very cordial interviews with Ibn Sa'ud; but, on his return to Egypt, he had published an alleged statement of His Majesty that he would have no objection whatever to King Fuad becoming Calif. No such statement was ever made by Ibn Sa'ud; but he did say that he personally would be ready to accept as Calif

King Fuad or anyone else who was competent to do the Calif's job, which was a very different thing. The prevalent misunderstanding was further complicated by an incident which occurred towards the end of Ramdhan. Without any previous notice to the Sa'udi Government the Egyptian ports and lights vessel, s.s. "Aïda", arrived in the harbour of Jidda, apparently with the object of surveying suitable sites for lights and buoys. Actually I had heard some weeks before from the British captain's wife, who was to accompany him on the trip together with a British admiral in the Egyptian service and his daughter, of the vessel's proposed visit to Jidda. I had informed the king accordingly, and asked him from time to time thereafter when it was due. Then on February 7th I had a telephone message from Jidda, saying that the "Aïda" had arrived; and there was a regular flutter in the dovecots of Ma'abida when I passed this information on to the king. Of course, Hasan Ashmuni ought to have informed the Government officially of the intended visit, for which permission was required according to the rules; and things were made worse by the suspicion that the British Minister was privy to the ship's unannounced arrival, though this was categorically denied by Sir Andrew Ryan, who disclaimed any official concern with the incident. Yusuf Yasin was ordered to get busy with the diplomatic formalities involved; and instructions were issued to Jidda that no official recognition of the ship's presence was to be accorded, and that steps should be taken to counter any action on its part in the matter of survey or inspection of the harbour. Suitable apologies were then tendered to the Government through the British Minister; and the incident was closed by the king's gift of sheep, rice and vegetables on a lavish scale to provide the crew with a Ramdhan dinner.

As Ramdhan drew to its close the religious aspect of the fast was intensified by strict adherence to the full programme of night services. For the first two-thirds of the month there were no congregational prayers after the *Tarawih* and *Witr*, which followed immediately upon the ordinary evening service. But from the 21st onwards to the end of the month, the period during which on some unpredictable date (though probably the 27th or 29th) of a still less predictable year would fall the night of doom (or glory), the *Lailatu 'l-Qadr* which is "better than a thousand months", there was added the *Qiyam* service beginning about midnight and lasting a couple of hours with prolonged prostrations. One of these days a few of us who had gone for a drive to Muna after the afternoon

session returned to the palace in time for the sunset prayer and dinner with the king; the prayer comprising three bows with two (voluntary) extra bows of *Sunna*. We went on to the Haram for the evening prayer of four bows, preceded by two bows of greeting to the mosque after an absence and two bows of *Sunna*, and followed by two bows of *Sunna*. Then came the *Tarawih* of twenty bows, though the *Witr* was omitted, to come after the *Qiyam*. After this I attended the king's short evening session, which I left for a breather at home before returning once more to the palace at about 1 a.m. for the *Qiyam*, which consisted of (1) two bows lasting ten minutes each and followed by a five-minute interval for tea and coffee served where we sat; (2) two further bows of ten minutes with the same interval for refreshment; (3) four bows of ten minutes with interval for coffee and incense; (4) two bows of seven minutes each without any interval before (5) two bows of normal prayer length and (6) a final bow of normal length preceding (7) a long supplication (*Du'a*) or litany of fifteen minutes, in which the congregation responded with *Amens* to the blind Imam's rapid patter between the bowing and final prostration: the whole proceeding having taken just about two hours. The evening ended with the attendance of a small party of us at the king's *Suhur*, after which we scattered to our homes for the dawn prayer and a well-earned bed. It will be seen from the above that no less than about four out of approximately ten hours between sunset and dawn at this period were devoted to actual prayer, making a grand total of some forty hours for the final ten-day period of Ramdhan. The ordeal was a great strain on the most robust of constitutions; but, unlike the five obligatory prayers of the day, it was entirely voluntary. Actually I only attended these arduous celebrations three times during the ten days; but the king set a good example to his people; and, so far as I could ascertain, he never failed to be present at the *Tarawih* and *Qiyam* services during the thirty days of the fast.

There had been some discussion towards the end of the month as to the possibility of the new moon being seen after sunset on the 29th day; and, after careful study of the Nautical Almanac, I had predicted that it would not be visible. Nevertheless the king sent two sharp-eyed Badawin to search the sky from the roof of the Ma'abida fort opposite the palace. They returned unsuccessful, but a flutter was created by two citizens of Mecca, who claimed to have seen the crescent, and were promptly sent by the king to give their evidence before the ecclesiastical court. Its verdict was negative; and, as no

report of the sighting of the crescent had come in from any other quarter, it was decreed that there should be a thirtieth day of fasting. It should be mentioned that, since the establishment of the network of wireless stations referred to in a previous chapter, the range of possible sighting of the new moon has been greatly extended, with the result that such claims have become more frequent: the duty of determining their truth and reporting the result to headquarters by wireless being incumbent on the local *Qadhis*, while the final decision rests with the king in consultation with the bishops of Mecca or Riyadh. It is a remarkable fact that the north-west corner of the country has almost always been the source of such reports of doubtful sightings: particularly the villages of al 'Ula and Tabuk, whose experts have devised a method of their own for watching the motions of the crescent during the day. They put out a dish of water to catch the reflection of the sun and moon; and, if the latter is behind the former at noon, they follow both bodies till sunset, when they have a good chance of seeing the crescent if the sky is clear. Their system was more ingenious than infallible; and, while they scored some quite undeserved successes, their claims were not always admitted. In 1950, for instance, their reports were corroborated from several other quarters, but were nevertheless rejected on the evidence of the king's own eyes which had seen the waning crescent rise at Riyadh that morning about an hour before the sun.

At any rate February 18th was the last day of the fast, and the following day was the '*Id al Fitri*', or festival of the breaking of the fast. In all the large towns of Arabia there is a special *Musalla*, or prayer-place, for the two '*Id*' services of the year, to accommodate the whole male population as a single congregation too large for the ordinary mosques. But at Mecca and Madina the ample proportions of the *Harams*, designed to accommodate vast numbers of pilgrims, were sufficient to hold the whole population. These services take place about an hour after sunrise, and on this occasion there must have been some 50,000 people present when the king arrived in state to take his place in the front row of a solid phalanx of Najdis, with the bishops ranged on either side of him, before the *Ka'ba*. During the two-bow prayer which opened the ceremony, Musa, a formidable Sudani slave presented to the king some years before by one of the leading Sharifs of Mecca, stood guard over his master, armed to the teeth. After the prayers Shaikh 'Abdullah ibn Hasan ascended the pulpit to deliver the *Khutba*, or sermon, which must have been entirely inaudible to nine-tenths of the congregation. In those days

it was not considered fitting to magnify the human voice by artificial means, though selected human stentors were employed in all large mosques to relay the responses to the inaudible Imam; more recently however, loudspeakers have been installed in the *Harams* of Mecca and Madina for the greater comfort of the congregations. After the service the king proceeded to the Government headquarters to hold public audience and to receive the congratulations and good wishes of his lieges, who were ushered in through one door and out by another in a continuous stream, shaking hands with His Majesty on the way or kissing his hand, nose or forehead. While the general passed through in this way, the notables and high officials settled down into the chairs which filled the room to partake of coffee and sweets: when the king resumed his seat, having stood all the time to receive the greetings of his visitors. Ranged on either side of him was a formidable array of bishops, together with such notables of special distinction as Shaikh 'Abdul-Qadir al Shaibi, the hereditary keeper of the keys of the Ka'ba, and Saiyid Ahmad al Sanusi, a refugee from the Italian usurpation of his native Cyrenaica, where during the early days of this very Ramdhan the forbidden oasis of Kufra had been brought under the sway of Rome.

During the four days of the '*Id*' holiday the people of Mecca exchanged visits of congratulation, and life was rather dull and quiet; and there was but a slow return to work or business when they were over. I found a very small gathering at the palace, discussing the programme for the king's forthcoming visit to Jidda; and the day was to have ended with a visit to Ja'rana, whither most of the king's children had already departed in holiday mood to superintend the arrangements for a banquet there in honour of their father, whom we were to accompany thither in the early afternoon. When we arrived at the palace, however, we were told that His Majesty had cried off the outing for some reason unexplained: a bitter disappointment for his young and enthusiastic hosts, who had probably extracted more pleasure out of the festival than their elders. The mutual visits of the latter seemed to me rather dreary affairs. The day of the '*Id*' itself, after the prayers and official reception, was consecrated to the family; the second day was by custom assigned to those living in the neighbourhood of the *Haram*, who were expected to be at home to receive visitors from the other divisions of the city; on the third day it was the turn of residents of the Shamiya, Falq and other parts of the Wadi Ibrahim area to receive visits; and on the fourth it was the people of Ajyad, Jarwal, Misfala and Ma'abida to stay at home. Such visits

were entirely formal: one entered a house to greet its master and his sons, sat down for a minute, and then rose to go, taking a sweet on the way from a tray set out near the door. But the dullness of these proceedings was made up for by the organisation of semi-military parades and "war-dances" by the Badawin and other elements in the various quarters. By far the best of these was staged by the Harb tribesmen of Ma'abida, though they were put out of countenance by an impromptu response by the king's bodyguard, led by some of the princes and joined in its last stages by the king himself, whose entry into the dancing circle produced an astonishing demonstration of the love and loyalty which he inspires in his own people. The *tempo* of the dance was now accelerated rapidly until it reached a climax in a tableau which Mr Cochrane might have envied: the king, "clad in a linen ephod", towering head and shoulders above his people, whose swords, raised high in the final salute, formed a halo of steel flashing in the morning sunlight.

With Ramdhan over, and the Jidda phases of the king's activities reserved for another chapter, the main preoccupations of the Government centred round the coming pilgrimage, which, owing to the worldwide economic slump, was destined to be the smallest yet experienced under the Wahhabi dispensation. Meanwhile I had received private information that Bertram Thomas had landed at Dhufar for the crossing of the Empty Quarter; and early in March the news of his success came through in an Egyptian newspaper. I immediately sent him a telegram of congratulation, and recorded in my diary: "Thomas, of course, deserves all the praise he will get, and I hope he will get a knighthood to mark a very gallant exploit." I have never understood why he did not. My own disappointment was much sympathised with in court circles; but I think the king was mainly peeved to think that Thomas had traversed a wide tract of his own territory without his permission or assistance. This fact carried certain important political implications, especially as his journey opened up a possible air route to link the R.A.F. units in 'Iraq with those in Aden, which had been showing considerable interest in the air reconnaissance of the Hadhramaut and the approaches to the Rub' al Khali from the south. It also lent substance to the rather vague British claim to the whole of southern Arabia below a line linking the eastern end of the Aden Protectorate frontier, established in agreement with the Turks, with the peninsula of Qatar on the Persian Gulf side. One evening at the usual private session the subject came up, and I gave expression to my chagrin in somewhat

unmeasured terms. This had the effect of nettling His Majesty, who just stalked out of the room in unconcealed ill-temper. The others present protested at my baiting the king on such a sore point, to which I replied that it was sometimes the best way to make him think seriously about matters that might affect his vital interests, though their importance might not be apparent at the moment. And, in effect, the frontier of Sa'udi Arabia in this Rub' al Khali area has been to this day one of the most controversial issues between that country and Great Britain: more difficult to settle now than it would have been twenty years ago, for the simple reason that the argument has been complicated by the probable presence of oil in the area in dispute. However, by next morning the king had recovered his good temper, and referred jestingly to our quarrel. "After all," he said, with reference to some talk about the procedure of the British and other European parliaments, "these gatherings of ours are not unlike those parliaments, except that I do all the talking and the rest of you remain dumb, except Philby who is the opposition!" So the incident was closed amid merry laughter; and the king made up his mind that the Empty Quarter should be explored under his auspices as soon as possible.

Towards the end of the month the king had to deal with an unusual incident. For some time it had been evident that the leakage of petrol had reached a stage necessitating action to stop the wholesale stealing that was going on. All the chauffeurs in the palace service were accordingly placed under the supervision and control of an engineer, who was to be personally responsible in the event of petrol and spare parts being stolen; and the pay of the chauffeurs, then running at £8 (gold) a month, was reduced all round by 15 per cent. The palace chauffeurs countered this move by staging a strike; and the king dealt with the case personally: ordering that each of the twenty-five men concerned should receive thirty stripes and be dismissed the service, deprived of their driving certificates and debarred from all future employment, while those of foreign nationality should be deported and not allowed to return to the Hijaz. Most of the men were Sudanis and Somalis, with some Syrians and others, who had flocked to Arabia in search of work when the country was opening up to motor traffic, and had ever since constituted a riff-raff element of the most unsavoury type. It was high time that they should be taught a salutary lesson; and they got that in spite of the intercession of the king's womenfolk and children, who were, it must be confessed, largely responsible for spoiling them. I was pre-

sent in the Hamidiya after the Friday prayers, when the Amir Faisal presided over the execution of the sentence: the prisoners being marched, clad in nothing but their shifts and pants, between two rows of policemen, each carrying a supply of ratan canes, to a long clearing in the dense crowd in front of the Government building. At several paces from each other they were made to lie prone on the earth, while two policemen, standing on either side of each victim, started belabouring them with alternate blows until the tale of thirty was complete, whereupon their buttocks were sprinkled with some disinfectant. The Somalis, or most of them, took their punishment without a murmur, and walked away unconcernedly after it was over, while one great buck nigger from the Sudan was particularly noticeable, never even twitching a muscle or seeming to feel the blows that rained on him. The rest behaved rather contemptibly, writhing in agony, groaning, yelling for mercy and shrieking, in that order, as the beating proceeded; a fitting sequel to their habitual swashbuckling. It was perhaps fortunate that the victims of this exemplary visitation were the palace chauffeurs, who had long been notorious among their class as prime offenders against all the laws of motoring decency. I certainly never heard of another strike of chauffeurs, though a few years ago there was a strike of the palace electricians at Riyadh on the not unreasonable grounds that their wages were not being paid to them. The king soon settled this by ordering payment of their wages, apparently several months in arrears, in full and at once, whereupon work was resumed.

The opening up of the country to motor-traffic, desirable as it was in the interests of pilgrims and other travellers, had in fact not been an unmixed blessing. Apart altogether from the influx of chauffeurs from the slums of other countries to spread corruption in the land, the citizens of Mecca and Jidda had been carried off their feet by the wave of enormous profits accruing to the owners of cars and trucks during the pilgrim season. The demand for accommodation far exceeded the supply, and they could charge what fares they liked during those first few halcyon years, when it was not uncommon for a man to sell his house over the heads of his family to buy cars for the rush to Eldorado. Mushroom companies sprang up in great numbers to share in the scramble for wealth. The inevitable pricking of the bubble did not long delay to disillusion them; bankruptcy followed bankruptcy, and the Government was compelled to intervene, sequestering the property of the bankrupts to satisfy the claims of creditors, and restricting the freedom of individuals and

groups to indulge in this sort of reckless gambling. It was soon found necessary to create, under Government auspices and with substantial Government financial backing, a single large company, enjoying a monopoly of all pilgrim traffic at rates prescribed by the Government. Subsequently the growing needs of the country made it desirable to encourage private enterprise under licence, but the main transport company continued to enjoy a monopoly of the carriage of pilgrims, while foreign motor companies were also allowed to bring pilgrims from abroad under appropriate arrangements made between the foreign government concerned and the Sa'udi authorities. The huge profits made in the early years by individuals operating a sort of tramp traffic were soon dissipated when a steady increase in the number of such individuals induced a cut-throat price-cutting competition, while the appalling roads of the country and the neglect of car-owners to provide spare parts and proper service for their vehicles resulted in large numbers of them going prematurely on to the scrap-heap. This in turn started the Government thinking on the lines of standardisation of the vehicles to be used for the pilgrim traffic and ultimately resulted in an arrangement which I was instrumental in bringing about and under which the Ford Company obtained a virtual monopoly of the supply of vehicles to the Arabian Transport Company. This development became effective in 1933, and was to have lasted for ten years; but the difficulty of securing prompt payments during these lean years of the thirties, coupled with a continuing demand for cars, resulted in the termination of the arrangement by mutual consent after only five years of operation. Actually neither side was much affected by this abandonment of a very satisfactory experiment, as the war years which ensued almost immediately put an end to the commercial supply of motor vehicles.

Meanwhile the king was personally interested in a matter of some concern to the health of Mecca. The city and its garden suburbs were infested with mosquitoes; and the Ma'abida palace, with a resident population larger than that of the Vatican City, and with an unsatisfactory drainage system scarcely improved by the careless habits of its denizens, was a particularly favourite haunt of these tiresome and dangerous insects. The king himself was constantly complaining of the pest and, on being told that the situation could be improved by the adoption of suitable sanitary measures, asked me to co-operate with Dr Muhammad 'Ali Shawwaf, subsequently in turn chief medical officer of the Hasa and of Madina, in an effort to exterminate

the beasts. We were given a free hand, within reasonable limits, to visit every corner of the palace and its outhouses; and we had quite an interesting, and even amusing, time as, day after day, we went our rounds, chasing bevies of slave-girls from pillar to post as we visited the lavatories and cess-pools, some of them indescribably unpleasant spots, dosing them liberally with oil. Necessary repairs to drains were carried out quite promptly under our instructions, while pits were dug in various places to accommodate all waste water pending treatment with oil. Some improvement was undoubtedly achieved after days of this labour; but it would need continuous treatment for a period of months to cure the evil altogether, while there was a garden with four wells beyond the eastern extremity of the palace which must have been a breeding ground of the mosquitoes, and which, I suggested, should be purchased (its total annual rental was only £15 gold) and brought within the palace grounds for better attention than it received from its tenants.

On April 23rd the king announced that the actual day of the pilgrimage, or "standing" at 'Arafat, would be the 27th, as reports had come in of the new moon having been sighted on the evening of the 18th. A man in Mecca had also claimed to have seen it that day, but the unsupported evidence of one individual out of thousands who had been looking for the crescent was not considered acceptable. Meanwhile we had spent several afternoons with the king on tours of inspection in the direction of Muna and Muzdalifa. Work was in progress at the former on additions to the "palace" to accommodate the whole of the king's own family during the three days of the '*Id* of Sacrifice. The town was already being refurbished after its annual fifty weeks of emptiness; and shops and cafés were doing quite good business with the crowds of pilgrims already wending their way to 'Arafat on camels or donkeys or on foot. Long strings of litter-bearing camels and camels carrying tents or other paraphernalia jostled with the riders and pedestrians, while hundreds, if not thousands, of Yamani pilgrims, who had walked all the way from their country, pushed their way Mecca-wards as best they could through the advancing hosts. Houses were being got ready in the main streets for their pilgrimage guests, while every spare space in the valley was receiving its quota of tents for the same purpose. Even the three "devils" had been whitewashed against their coming lapidation, while the pebbles of yester-year had been cleared away to make room for the next instalment.

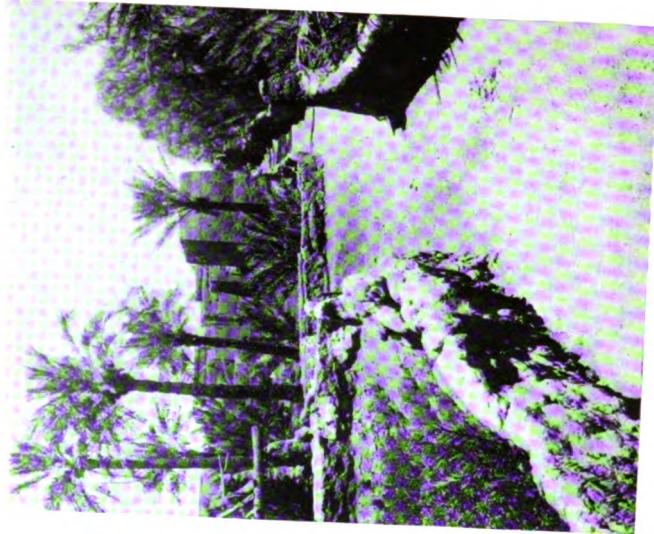
On April 24th the king gave his official pilgrimage banquet to

some 600 guests, the chief of them being Amanullah Khan, ex-king of Afghanistan, and Prince Ahmad Wahid-al-Din of the Ottoman royal house, whose father, Wahid-al-Din, had been the penultimate Sultan of Turkey, while his grandfather, 'Abdul-'Aziz, was the predecessor of Sultan 'Abdul-Hamid. Incidentally Amanullah had been taking advantage of his sojourn in Mecca to do a little propaganda for himself among the numerous Afghan and other interested pilgrims; but the Sa'udi authorities had quite discreetly intervened to discourage such activities, on the ground that, while all Muslims were welcome to Mecca for the performance of their religious duties, the pilgrimage could not be allowed to be used as a platform for political or sectarian propaganda. The Turkish prince had attended the Friday prayers that morning in the king's *Madrasa*, or oratory, in superb European clothes, comprising morning-coat, trousers and patent-leather boots, though he wore a *Fez* on his head; he certainly looked exceedingly uncomfortable throughout the proceedings, as European tailors do not cater for sitting on the ground. The Afghan monarch was wiser in his generation and wore his own national costume for the occasion, as also at dinner, when all the guests sat on chairs in three separate rooms, as the present banquet-room capable of accommodating a thousand guests had not then been built while the main audience chamber had to be reserved for the reception which followed the dinner and the evening prayers.

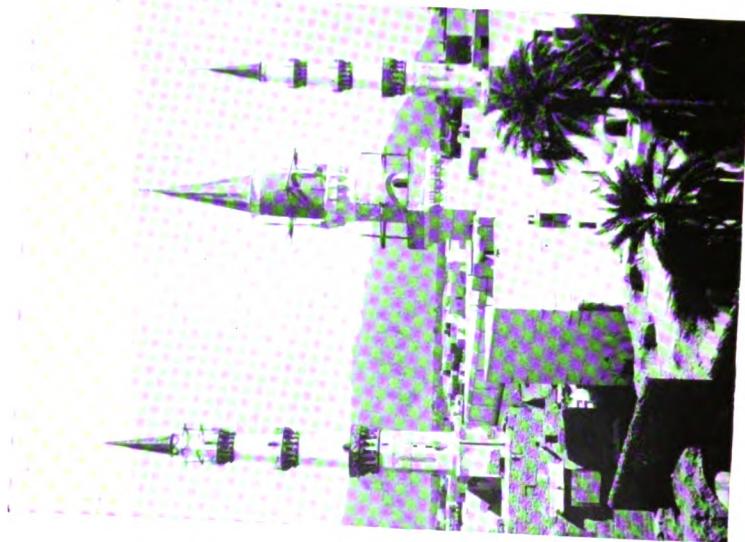
At the reception poems were recited and speeches made, but the event of the evening was certainly a speech by the king, who has all through his life been an unwilling and infrequent speaker, though he showed himself on this occasion capable of rising to heights of eloquence quite unexpected even by those who knew him well. He spoke extempore, seeming for some reason to feel that this particular occasion was of special importance: his general theme being the urgent need of unity in Islam. Perhaps he had in mind the continuing rift between Arabia and Egypt, and the question of the future of the Califate which was the underlying cause of it. Perhaps the presence of a prince representing a dynasty which had worn the Prophet's mantle for four centuries prompted his searching of hearts. Perhaps also the presence of his royal guest from Afghanistan, who had risked and lost his throne by turning his back on the culture of Islam to embrace that of the West, suggested some of his animadversions on modern tendencies in some Islamic lands. At any rate he poured scorn on the activities of Maulana Shaukat 'Ali, who had been touring the world and tub-thumping on the subject of "our brethren



Jabal Nur at Mecca: the scene of the Prophet's first revelation, 1931



The village of Tharmida in 1918



Minarets of the Great Mosque of Madina
in 1938

the Jews and Christians". That was too much for him, as a devout Muslim. "Islam," he declared with fervour, "is not the religion of Ibn Sa'ud nor the religion of the Sharif; it is God's religion. To all who serve it loyally I am willing to be a humble helper; to those who oppose it I am the greatest of enemies. I have nothing to fear from the Christians and the rest of them; but what I do fear is the divisions in Islam itself. Let us then be united, and nothing can harm us or our religion." In this fashion he spoke for about half an hour, to the evident appreciation of most of his audience, which punctuated his speech with bouts of handclapping—to Arab ears the abomination of abominations! It was certainly a great fighting speech, worthy of the occasion and worthy of one who was *de facto*, if not *de jure*, the Calif of Islam. I have attended many pilgrim banquets since, but never saw Ibn Sa'ud rise to the occasion as he did then, or do more than utter a few mumbled words of thanks to the audience for its kindly greetings and the formal speeches of its more talkative members. And, year by year, I have noticed an increasing tendency to ration the time allowed after dinner to the poets and orators in deference to the king's growing weariness of such occasions.

Such was the eve of the pilgrimage of 1931. The next few days were taken up with the actual ceremonies, which need not be described here, as I have published a full account of them, as witnessed by me on this occasion, in my *Pilgrim in Arabia*.

CHAPTER XIII

STRANGERS IN THE GATE

BEFORE 1933 and all that—that is to say, before the American invasion of Arabia—Jidda was the only spot in Ibn Sa‘ud’s territories where non-Muslim foreigners were permitted to reside; and even there the range of their free movement was restricted to quite a small area of the coastal plain around it, beyond which they could not safely go without official permission. Any attempt to do so would have involved expulsion from the country. The total European population of the town about this time was some fifty souls, more or less according to seasonal and occupational considerations: residing within the walled area of the town, whose total population, including the inhabitants of some villas and a few petty hamlets outside the walls, was about 30,000 souls at the most. A large proportion of the Europeans was accounted for by the staffs of the legations, consulates and other semi-diplomatic bodies in political contact with the Government, while there were a number of European commercial houses concerned with shipping and general business in the country: the most important being British, Dutch and Italian, while at this period the Russians and the Germans, to say nothing of the Poles, were beginning to show active interest in the commercial and economic possibilities of Arabia. In status the Europeans varied from ministers to mechanics; but the smallness of the community kept it on a democratic keel, and there were no social distinctions in spite of certain ill-conceived attempts to introduce them from time to time. It was on the whole a happy community; it played tennis, cricket and golf when it was not working; it even had a moribund club without a club-house or the other amenities generally associated with such institutions; in the evenings it played cards or music, danced or sang to the accompaniment of the usual liquid or solid refreshments. When there was a party—and parties were not infrequent—everybody was invited as a matter of course; and there were enough ladies to make such functions very pleasant for a largely celibate society. Life at Jidda was by no means too bad;

for seven months of the year the climate was not unpleasant; for the other five it was. And there was a cemetery, known as the *Kanisa* or church, outside the southern wall, reserved exclusively for those of the European community who fell by the way. It was maintained by the voluntary subscriptions of those most likely to be concerned, and managed by a committee of diplomats and other European residents.

The European community played an important, though by no means dominant, part in the activities of Jidda, whose indigenous population, equally cosmopolitan, comprised many families of high repute with a long record of continuous residence at the main gateway of the holy land, though originally immigrants from the Gulf ports of Persia, from India, from Hadhramaut, from Egypt and Syria, and from Najd (especially the Qasim province). The Qabil family, for instance, were leading merchants here at the time of the visit of Abyssinian Bruce in the eighteenth century; the 'Ali-Ridha family came originally from Linga in the Persian Gulf, and has long been one of the principal mercantile establishments of Jidda: providing the local member of the Turkish parliament, and a governor of the town who held office equally successfully under three different régimes, the Turks, the Sharifs and the Wahhabis; the Najdi house of al Fadhl, with important branches in Bombay and Karachi, had also long enjoyed a respectable eminence in the local commercial community, though the head of the family, suspected of leanings towards Wahhabi doctrines, had spent some years in a Sharifian dungeon, and has for the last two decades held the distinguished post of President of the Advisory Council. There were many other families and individuals in Jidda who had no reason to shrink from comparison with the best of their kind in other seaports of the East. Excellent business-men, imbued with the conviction that the purpose of business was to make money, they were charitable in the extreme; and above all they were punctilious, without ostentation, in observance of the duties imposed on them by their religion. It was indeed a God-fearing, hard-working, frugal and contented community, which bridged the gap between the old world, in which they and their ancestors were born and bred, and the new order, which has brought extraneous influences into the lives of their sons, and entirely changed the character of a town traditionally associated with Mother Eve: whether for better or worse it is perhaps still too early to judge.

Such, in brief, was the Jidda setting into which, from time to time,

Ibn Sa'ud was constrained to make brief incursions to hobnob with a society of unfamiliar type. He has never really liked Jidda; and he has perhaps been too prone to avoid visiting it, in view of the important part played by it in the commercial, economic and diplomatic life of his realm. In the early stages it was perhaps largely a question of accommodation for himself and the enormous troupe which accompanied him wherever he went. Jidda was built on domestic rather than palatial lines. Some of its mansions were spacious enough, as seen from the outside, but there hung about the best of them a flavour of squalor and bad drains. During the first few years after the Wahhabi conquest the king had had no alternative but to occupy one of the largest of these buildings: the house of Shaikh Muhammad Nasif, one of the most important estate-agents of the town, and himself well known for his leanings towards the Wahhabi creed, which had on occasion brought him into conflict with the Sharifian authorities. To entertain the king, he had to clear his own family, lock, stock and barrel, out of the house; and, however gracefully he may have endured such inconvenience in his domestic life, the king himself was acutely aware of the trouble which his visits, however necessary and inevitable, must cause his host. By the time of which I am writing, however, this difficulty had been disposed of by the building of the "Green Palace", over against the military barracks outside the town, on one of the best and breeziest sites available in the neighbourhood.

It was to this palace that the king betook himself soon after the end of Ramdhan for a week's visit to Jidda, during which the climate remained dry and delightful with a northerly wind, though the failure of the seasonal rains in this area had left the desert rather bare and desolate. As it turned out, this week was to prove one of the most important, if not the most important, weeks in the history of Sa'udi Arabia. The main objective of the visit was to enable His Majesty to meet Mr Charles Crane,* who arrived at Jidda with Mr George Antonius on February 25th, and was the central figure on the palace stage throughout the week of his stay. He attended a couple of small dinner-parties at the palace; and one day there was an official banquet of 200 covers given by the Jidda municipality, which seemed to think that first priority in Crane's mental programme centred round a project for providing the town with a piped water supply. Every conceivable topic of potential economic interest was freely discussed by the king and his ministers with their

* See below, p. 177.

guest; and the general outcome of their talks was that Crane should give the Government the services of a competent mining engineer to examine the country's mineral resources and other possibilities of development, while the Government should provide him with all necessary transport and other facilities for the work involved. The visit had proved an unqualified success; the Sanusi leader and the keeper of the Ka'ba keys were specially brought down from Mecca to meet the great philanthropist from the New World. Presents were exchanged, the king presenting his guest with two pedigree Arab stallions, while the latter reciprocated with a small box of dates from California! He was inordinately proud of the fact that the grocers of San Francisco sold those boxes, the produce of an oasis which he himself had created in the image of Arabia, at a dollar a time; it was like bringing coal of poor quality to Newcastle, and the king was not greatly impressed. When the donor withdrew, he asked me whether I liked dates (!) and gave me the box with a caution against my telling Crane that he had done so. Yet the fruits of Crane's visit to Jidda ripened rapidly: within six weeks Twitchell was among us, and the rest of the story will be found in another chapter.

The rest of the king's doings during this visit to Jidda were of a formal character. On the day of his arrival, after having been greeted at the palace by the local notables and principal officials, he held a general reception for all the diplomatic representatives as a corps, whose doyen at this time was the Russian Minister, Hakimoff, who had been raised to that rank on the decision of his Government to give full recognition to the Wahhabi régime in the Hijaz: the British Government having been content to follow suit after a decent interval. After the diplomatic reception, the king received all the non-official Europeans in a body; and later, at convenient times, he received both diplomats and heads of European commercial houses in private audience to discuss matters of mutual interest. Among other things he did me the high honour of attending a tea-party at my house, to which all the leading European residents, including the diplomats, were bidden; and the Municipality's banquet gave him another opportunity of meeting them all again. Meanwhile numerous members of the royal family were flocking down from Najd to take part in the pilgrimage: bringing with them joyful news of much rain in the east, and turning the king's thoughts to the spring pastures and hunting, which he hoped to enjoy at home as soon as he could dispose of his commitments in the Hijaz. During these days the final touches had been put on the draft treaty with France, represented by

Roger Maigret, a veteran of the military and political administration in Morocco; and a final text, satisfactory to the king, had been got ready for ultimate signature in Paris, though the French Government wanted a revised convention relating to Syria signed at the same time in replacement of the instrument of 1926, which had lapsed in 1930. Some delay was therefore likely to ensue in the search for a mutually satisfactory preamble to such a document, and negotiations on that point were left over for the moment. Meanwhile the currency question had cropped up again, and two conferences were held between Government officials, local merchants and representatives of the Europeans to discuss ways and means of preventing a collapse of the local currency. The result was a new regulation, promulgated during these days at Jidda, and becoming effective forthwith. Its principal provisions were: (1) an absolute embargo on the export of gold, now belatedly recognised as the only effective method of supporting the *Riyal*; (2) universal acceptance of the *Riyal* at its par value of ten to the £ (gold) under pain of severe penalties; and (3) an arrangement under which the Dutch Bank (Netherlands Trading Society) undertook to accept *Riyals* at that rate without limit in payment for remittances abroad. These measures created much uneasiness in some business circles; but there was little doubt that they were in the public interest, while the credit of the Government was good enough to cover the whole of its silver issue, amounting to about £150,000 in nominal value.

A pleasant little ceremony took place at the palace on the evening before the king's return to Mecca, when Shaikh Muhammad Nasif presented His Majesty with a sword of *Yamani* manufacture. It was graciously received with an apt quotation from the Arabic classics, and the king treated us to a dissertation on the subject of swords: the *Yamani* type coming third in order of excellence after the '*Ajami*, or Persian, blade, of which there were two outstanding classes, the *Qara al Khurasan* and the *Daban*, and the *Hindi*, or Indian, of white steel. All the famous swords of the Sa'ud family, now distributed among his elder sons, were at this time in his possession, except two, namely *al Ajram*, which his uncle, 'Abdullah ibn Faisal, had presented to the Khalifa family of Bahrain, and another, known as *al Zujaiyif* (?), of which all trace had been lost for years.

The king paid another very short visit to Jidda just before the pilgrimage, mainly to meet and discuss plans with Mr Twitchell, who had arrived on April 16th. Khalid al Qarqani, who was associated with a German commercial firm, recently established at Jidda, and

was at the same time acting as an adviser on the king's privy council, was deputed to accompany Twitchell in his wanderings. Their first concern was to examine the environs of Jidda and its hinterland in search of possible sources of water; but they were soon off after bigger game: travelling up the whole length of the Tihama plain as far as Dhuba', and returning with encouraging reports of the discovery of traces of oil, as well as of gold and other minerals. The presence of oil seepages along the coast in this area had, in fact, been detected many years before, during the Great War and the period following it, when King Husain brought in experts to report on the possibilities of development. But, to anticipate matters somewhat, it may be said at once that the extravagantly optimistic attitude induced by Twitchell's expedition was to prove ill-founded: in fact, no oil or other minerals have been found in the Tihama area up to date, at any rate in exploitable quantities; and it was elsewhere that the real natural resources of Arabia were to be found at a later date. Yet it was precisely this optimism which created the dream of an Eldorado, and set the ball rolling against the bias of the prevailing xenophobia and fanaticism of the country, in a desperate effort to find some compensation for the serious loss of revenue resulting from the inability of pilgrims to visit the holy land in numbers sufficient to support its economy. The Wahhabi Government had come to regard 100,000 overseas visitors as constituting an average pilgrimage on the basis of its experience up to date; but the number had fallen to 80,000 in 1930, while in the following year it was only 40,000, and worse was to follow. The standard of expenditure based on the revenues of an average pilgrimage had not been lowered to conform to a falling income; and the Minister of Finance was merely expected to be selective in meeting his budgetary obligations, so that money should always be available for the departments administered more or less personally by the king: e.g. the household, security and defence, ecclesiastical affairs, charity, entertainment, etc. The first timid probings of dangerous ground encouraged ever-increasing boldness in the negotiation of its pitfalls, and landed the Government in a labyrinth in which it has wandered ever since, unable to find the exit. It was simple, for a start, to raise the equivalent of an internal loan by deferring the payment of their emoluments to officials in the lower salary grades: "regular" soldiers, police, door-keepers, messengers, petty clerks, and so forth. After all, say, 10,000 employees on an average monthly salary of 20 Riyals meant 200,000 Riyals a month, while the deferment of such payments for four or

five months, soon accepted unilaterally as a reasonable period, automatically provided the Treasury with a revolving credit of £80,000 or £100,000 gold. The innocent victims of this process had no alternative but to milk other cows in the shape of their grocers, butchers and the like, who in turn recorded the debts with interest against payment in due course; and in the end the officials took quite openly to demanding from the general public *douceurs* for the performance of acts which it was their duty to perform without charge. This trickle of corruption developed into a steady stream as time went on, and has come to be regarded as a normal feature of the Arabian landscape. A further loan was easily arranged, to the tune of about £300,000 at this time, by defaulting on payments due to the various commercial houses; but this process had to be kept within bounds lest it might seriously impair the credit of the Government, and stop the flow of essential goods into its store-rooms. Other methods of bolstering up the Government's financial position were devised as occasion offered, and taxation was stepped up all round.

This situation provoked a recurrence of the old currency crisis. The shroffs and petty shopkeepers, temporarily baulked by the measures already described of the profits which they had expected from the manipulation of the *Riyal*, soon discovered another outlet for their ingenuity. If the *Riyal* had been stabilised at its nominal par value, nothing had been said in the new regulation about the legal tender value of the nickel *Qarsh*, nominally 22 to the *Riyal*. This essential coin of the poor, far more numerous than the rich, was accordingly attacked during the holidays at Muna, when it was too late to check the actual depreciation of the nickel *Qarsh* and its fractions, namely the *Halala* or quarter *Qarsh*. It may be mentioned in passing that, from the beginning of the Wahhabi régime up to the date of the pilgrimage in question (1931), the Government had introduced its local currency into the Hijaz to the tune of 1,500,000 *Riyals* (including halves and quarters in silver) and 10,500,000 *Qarsh darij* (also including halves and quarters). For the time being this local currency had not been forced on Najd, where the Maria Theresa dollar was still in regular circulation, though the Sa'udi *Riyals* were making a tentative appearance and were legal tender in payment of taxes and other Government dues.

The total amount of this local currency in circulation at this time must have been reduced by normal causes such as loss of coins, hoarding, etc. But the residue in actual day-to-day use must have been very considerable, offering the shroffs and shopkeepers oppor-

tunities for making profits on every petty transaction. If, for instance, a *Riyal* were offered in payment of purchases worth half the amount, change would be given on the basis of, say, 17 or 18 *Qarsh* to the *Riyal*; if, on the other hand, one tendered payment in *Qurush* for a *Riyal*'s worth of goods, the seller would reckon 25 to 30 *Qarsh* as the equivalent of the silver coin. In both cases the shopper would have to accept the arrangement, or go without the goods. And it was the same with the shroffs, when the pilgrims wanted to convert their nickel coins into *Riyals* for ultimate reconversion of the latter into gold or foreign currency at the end of the holidays, or on departure from Mecca. In the end the Government, after many consultations, decided to create a temporary reserve by the forced withdrawal of nickel coins from circulation: the Government itself, the Jidda merchants, the Mecca merchants and the merchants of outlying places like Madina and Yanbu' providing the amount required in the proportion of 8:10:3½:3½, respectively. It was reckoned that this measure would result in the withdrawal from circulation of two-thirds of the whole nickel issue (actually only half this amount was affected, as the Government had miscalculated the total quantity of nickel coins originally introduced), while for the balance it was deemed sufficient to nominate certain shroffs as Government representatives to maintain the official exchange rate of 22 *Qarsh* to the *Riyal* by free and unrestricted dealings at that rate, subject only to a small fixed commission for themselves. These decisions were, of course, too late to protect the pilgrims from the losses they had already suffered, while the general effect of the crisis on the credit of the Government had resulted in a partial breakdown of the arrangements for protecting the *Riyal* itself, which had concomitantly depreciated to a rate of 11 to the £ (gold), while the Dutch Bank had been constrained to prolong the pilgrimage holiday for a fortnight to protect its stock of sovereigns against the depredations of an unrealistic rate which the Government could no longer support.

It has been necessary to set forth these details of the fluctuation of the local currency, in order to show that the fundamental problem was not one of maintaining this or that exchange rate, but the much more serious one of an actual all-round decline in the credit of the Sa'udi Government. This could no longer be bolstered up out of the Government's virtually non-existent resources. Some whittling down of extraordinary expenditure, which category may be regarded as embracing the large sums required by the king himself for his civil list, his hospitality and his shadow army, had certainly been

effected, but there was still much criticism of the extravagance involved in the unthinking and wholesale purchase of motor-vehicles of all sorts. Joggle as the Finance Minister might, the situation had become really serious. All sources of credit had run dry under the process of ceaseless pumping. The British Government had been approached for financial assistance; but the British system was too rigid for Arabia. It could offer no credit without rules and regulations, guarantees and controls: the old-fashioned stranglehold over impecunious countries! No doubt France and Italy had been approached tentatively in the same sense in connection with the treaties under negotiation with them; but they were not in a position to help financially. There seemed to be no alternative to a rigorous reorganisation of the administrative machinery to make both ends meet; but that course had no charms for those in authority. Perhaps it would be better to trust to luck: to gamble on some improvement in the situation, for which there was little or no reason even to hope. It was an utterly depressing situation; and no wonder that the king himself was weary and dispirited. He had had to prolong his sojourn in the growing heat of the Hijaz summer, watching the crisis develop from one phase to another, and strangely unable to cope with it. Apart from his brief visit to Riyadh in December, he had been away from Najd for just about fourteen months: his longest absence since his first sojourn in the Hijaz during and after its conquest. Yet it was not homesickness that suddenly decided him towards the end of June to go home, leaving his son Faisal and his ministers to get out of the economic mess as best they could. He actually left, with every appearance of precipitate flight, on June 29th, to remain in his own coverts till the pilgrimage of 1932.

The reason for his going thus was a curious and revealing one. I have said that all sources of credit had run dry. That was true—with one exception. There was indeed one source which had not been tapped because it was considered, perhaps wrongly, to be contaminated. The Soviet Government had taken the lead among the Powers in 1926 in according official recognition to the Wahhabi régime, and had been the first foreign State to convert its consulate into a legation in 1929, with a Muslim as its first minister. To all appearances at any rate it had always been foremost in showing courtesy to and consideration for the Wahhabi Government. Like other countries, Russia was interested to develop trade with Arabia; and in 1927 a Russian ship had arrived at Jidda with Russian goods, which were duly dumped for exploitation in the Hijaz markets at

ridiculously low prices. The local Arab merchants protested strongly at the potential competition, and the Government sequestered the merchandise, which was ultimately disposed of under arrangements mutually satisfactory to the two governments. Thereafter cheap Russian goods seemed to have no attraction for the Hijazis, and a ban was imposed on Soviet trading with the Wahhabî ports. This setback discouraged but did not terminate Soviet interest in Wahhabî Arabia, with its magnificent potential propaganda facilities in the Islamic world, while Russian commercial activities seem to have succeeded better in the Yaman. The bear preferred to bide his time, and was rewarded in due course with the scent of honey in the emaciated carcase of an impoverished country. The Legation at Jidda had almost reached the stage of complete despair of success in a land where the Communist creed was regarded, rightly or wrongly, as the mortal enemy of monarchical government; and the question of closing down the Legation altogether was actually under discussion on the ground that the existing ban on Soviet commerce made it unnecessary. The economic crisis came in the nick of time; and the offer of cheap Russian products on long-term credit was too tempting to resist any longer. So the Soviet representative was bowed into the audience chamber in the wake of the retiring British Minister. And the ensuing interview revealed a complete identity of views, expressed in an atmosphere of great cordiality. So the king slipped away to his deserts, leaving his deputy to perform as best he could the disagreeable task which stood between the State and disaster. Priority was, of course, given to the country's urgent need of petrol, more precious than rubies or bread; and in due course a Russian ship unloaded a welcome cargo at Jidda, for which, so far as I know, payment was never made. It took the Russians some years to learn that the giving of favours in Arabia was an unilateral process; and, if I may anticipate the course of events by a few years, it was in 1938 that the Soviet Government finally decided to abandon its efforts to convert the Arabs to the Marxian creed. The diplomatic staffs at Jidda and in the Yaman received orders to liquidate their activities, and report at Moscow on the work of their missions. Hakimoff was warned by friends not to return to Russia, but treated the warning as ridiculous in view of his standing as a miner who had gained well-deserved promotion in the diplomatic service by his political orthodoxy. A Russian doctor attached to the Legation had perhaps good reasons of his own for shrinking from explanations at headquarters; but, after an abortive attempt to

abscond, he was forced to board the ship which was to take him and his comrades home. Through the good offices of a friend in the French Legation he was able to slip off the vessel into a rowboat, tethered under his porthole, and so to escape as the ship was putting out to sea. In gratitude he praised the "Lord of the House" (*Rabb al Bait*), and embraced Islam, to find employment to this day in the medical service of the Sa'udi Government. The rest of the party, including two Ministers and two women (a doctor and a secretary) and half a dozen minor officials, arrived in due course at Moscow, and were all liquidated in the traditional way. Since then neither party seems to have evinced any desire to resume the interrupted diplomatic relations.

Meanwhile the red star was in the ascendant in Arabian skies; and the ill-temper of a government soured by financial stringency was vented in another and quite unexpected direction. The Marconi contract began to materialise in May with the arrival of the installations ordered by the Government, accompanied by expert engineers, one British and the other Egyptian (for the sets allotted to Mecca and Madina), to erect them in the places selected by the Government. Attention was, however, concentrated in the first place on the four mobile half-kilowatt sets mounted in Ford vans; and Boucicault and Kurdi got busy on them as soon as they came ashore. No sooner were the first two in working order than they were taken over by the Government operators, who proceeded to work them non-stop, day and night, without so much as thinking of keeping the Douglas engines lubricated. A breakdown was soon reported; and the sets were unilaterally declared to be worthless, and not up to the agreed specifications, which had envisaged eight hours continuous running! I was inevitably put on the mat; and, after consultation with Boucicault, I told the king that the fault was not with the engines but with the operators. This explanation was scornfully rejected; and my offer to demonstrate the proposition was very grudgingly accepted. I only stipulated that a committee of the highest officials should attend the demonstration at Jidda, and remain on the spot until the engine ceased running. The experiment started at dawn on a typical Jidda summer's day, very hot and very damp. By noon I had had several suggestions that the party was satisfied with the efficiency of the engine; but I had assured them that the engine was good for hours yet, and insisted that they should remain as eye-witnesses of its performance. By sunset they were almost in tears, expressing complete satisfaction with everything, and begging for

the engine to be given a rest. I assured them that they had not seen it at its best, as they assuredly would during the cool hours of darkness; and I added that we reckoned to keep it running for forty-eight hours before calling it a day. They begged for mercy; and we let it go at that. No more was said about the specifications; and the king did not so much as refer to the incident when I returned to Mecca.

But a worse contretemps was in store for me. The two mobile sets, established for the time being at Jidda and Mecca under the eyes of our engineers, conversed with each other like birds; but their twittering could not be heard at Madina, 250 miles distant—the guaranteed range of these sets. The antiquated Telefunken station, installed there by the Turks many years before, reported that it could not pick up our messages, whereas it could correspond freely with its approximately contemporary sister station at Jidda. There was obviously something wrong; and the hunt started again after a different hare. The mobile sets could communicate over the forty-five miles which separated Jidda from Mecca, as had been demonstrated, but that was apparently their limit. Therefore the sets were useless for the purpose in view. The king was very angry; and, after further consultation with Boucicault, I proposed that one of the two sets should remain at Jidda with him, while Kurdi and I should proceed to Madina with the other to establish communication. I stipulated furthermore that, if we succeeded in that, we should go on further north to al 'Ula, 400 miles from Jidda; and thereafter to Tabuk, Jauf and the Salt Villages to ascertain the maximum range of the instruments, which I reckoned to be about a thousand miles! The king was in no mood for such jesting, and remarked sarcastically that he supposed I wanted to intercede with the Prophet to make the wretched sets work. The evening ended on a note of stalemate and crisis; but next morning His Majesty was all smiles, as if there was nothing wrong with the world. The important thing was that he now agreed to the test proposed by me: and, lest he might change his mind, Kurdi and I started next day on our way to Madina and beyond. That was June 6th, and it was rather more than three weeks later that the king left for Riyadh, knowing at least that communication had been easily established between Jidda and Madina and al 'Ula. In fact, he himself had cut short what had promised to be quite a long and very pleasant sojourn in the Prophet's city. The authorities were as usual taking their time in making provision for our onward journey, which envisaged a trip of 500 miles or more beyond Madina northward; and it was not for me to jostle

them out of their leisurely proceedings. I was perfectly happy to dally in the charming city and oasis, and was actually out on the afternoon of June 19th, inspecting the ruins of the old Jewish capital of Yathrib, when I was recalled urgently to see the Governor. He had had a sharply worded telegram from the king, asking why on earth I was wasting any more time at Madina, and instructing him to get my party off without delay to al 'Ula, whence we were to be back without fail at Madina within three days! In less than twenty-four hours we were off, negotiating one of the worst roads in any country, along the line of the Hijaz Railway, whose track, bridges and stations had been left in the sorriest plight by Lawrence and his myrmidons during the First World War, and had never recovered from the treatment. It took us five days to reach al 'Ula, and a day or two more to establish communication with Jidda (400 miles). The king was on the point of departure from Mecca, when my message arrived, informing him that, having accomplished our mission in al 'Ula, we proposed to start next day for Tabuk. But it was not to be. His reply was a peremptory order to return at once to Madina and Jidda, and to follow him to Riyadh with all possible speed, as he was urgently in need of the mobile set for communication with Mecca and Jidda (600 miles!). The implied assumption that this distance could be covered was the only suggestion of a compliment from His Majesty. So I had to turn my back regretfully on the Nabataean ruins of Madaïn Salih, just beyond al 'Ula, and the land of Midian to the north; and within a fortnight I had rejoined the king in his desert capital. The Marconi project, which had had so painful a birth, never gave us any more trouble, and remains to this day the pivot of the whole administration of Sa'udi Arabia. It has, of course, been greatly expanded since those days, particularly during the recent war, when American enterprise took a hand in the development of wireless communications on an impressive scale.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MIRACLE

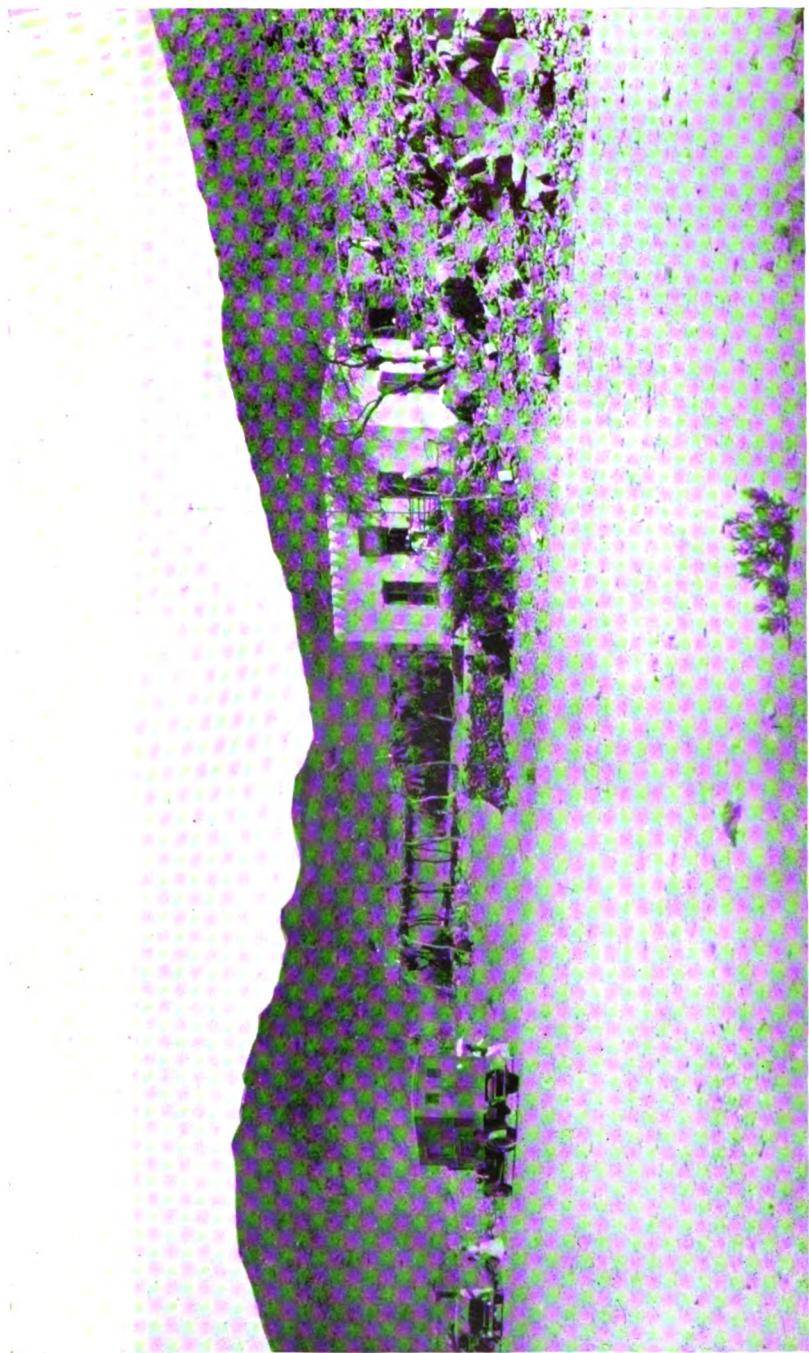
THE four fat years which had heralded in the Wahhabi régime, and given it a good start, had set a standard of administration which, however disappointing it may have been in actual performance for the reasons discussed in the last chapter, seemed to provide at least a firm foundation for the structural improvements which experience had already shown to be necessary, for the consolidation of the progress already made, and for the elimination of weaknesses which had become too obvious to be ignored. At the same time the achievement of that standard had strained the financial resources of the country to the limit; and it could obviously only be maintained at its existing level on the assumption that the State would continue to receive the income to which it had become accustomed. That illusion was shattered quite suddenly by the worldwide economic slump, whose effect was felt in Arabia through an alarming diminution of the pilgrim traffic from such countries as Java and India, whose agricultural products had become a drug in the world market. The Muslims of such countries could no longer afford the luxury of the Meccan pilgrimage.

It was during the months preceding the pilgrimage of 1931 that the stark grimness of the situation began to be realised in responsible Arabian circles. The Government had to a considerable extent mortgaged its future revenues in advance with such schemes as the establishment of a network of wireless stations throughout the country, the improvement of the water supply at Jidda, and of course in the lavish purchase of motor-vehicles. The outstanding payments due on these and other projects represented a national liability of some £300,000 or £400,000 at the time; and the prospect of meeting them on due dates was exceedingly nebulous, while the Government was saddled with considerable liabilities on account of the salaries of its officials. A moratorium on reasonable terms postponed or spread out the day of reckoning with the Government's commercial creditors, while the payment of salaries to its employees was allowed

to fall into arrears: a bad habit, rendered temporarily inevitable during the actual crisis, but unfortunately continued, quite unnecessarily, from that day to this, with disastrous effects on the civil service and the police. All that can reasonably be said in retrospect over the past twenty years is that the Government has, in fact, always met its debts in due course, though its credit has unquestionably been impaired by the delays and tergiversations attendant on the process.

Returning to the crisis itself, I happened one day during the autumn of 1930 to accompany the king in his car on one of his regular afternoon outings. He was so evidently in a despondent mood that I asked him straight out the reason for his gloominess. He sighed wearily, and admitted that the financial situation of the country was seriously worrying him. With a meagre prospect of visitors for the coming pilgrimage, the exchequer was already all but empty. And the situation was so bad that the Government could see no way of making both ends meet, and was at the same time confronted by difficulties with which it could not hope to cope. I replied, as cheerfully as possible in the circumstances, that he and his Government were like folk asleep on the site of buried treasure, but too lazy or too frightened to dig in search of it. Challenged to make my meaning clearer, I said I had no doubt whatever that his enormous country contained rich mineral resources, though they were of little use to him or anyone else in the bowels of the earth. Their existence could only be proved by expert prospection, while their ultimate exploitation for the benefit of the country necessarily involved the co-operation of foreign technique and capital. Yet the Government seemed to have set its face against the development of its potential wealth by foreign agencies; and was content to sit back bemoaning its poverty. In conclusion I ventured on my favourite Quranic quotation: "God changeth not that which is in people unless they change that which is in themselves."

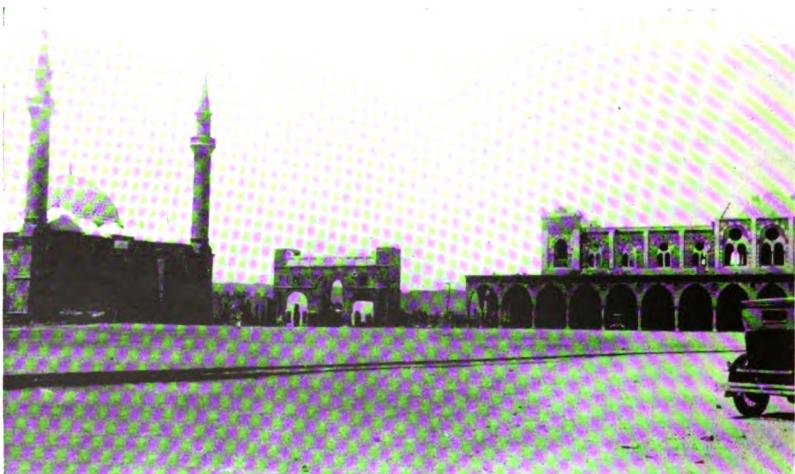
"Oh, Philby," he exclaimed, almost beseechingly, "if anyone would offer me a million pounds, I would give him all the concessions he wanted." This was certainly a startling confession. A short experience of unaccustomed riches during the previous few years had made the continuance of wealth, even as a flash in the pan, an imperative necessity! And all other considerations must go by the board. "Well," I replied, "it won't be as bad as that; but nobody will give you a million pounds today without a preliminary investigation of the potential resources of your country. Yet there is a man in Egypt now—an American, whom you would not take the trouble



Musajid on the road to Madina (mobile wireless lorry near left of picture) in 1931



The Great Mosque of Madina in 1938



The Railway Station and 'Anbariya Mosque at Madina: 1938

to meet when he visited Jidda a few years ago. He would willingly give one of his eyes to see you with the other! He has recently visited the Yaman, and done a good deal to help that country in various ways. He could help you too, for he is a very rich man, with important contacts in the American industrial community. I suggest that you should meet him as soon as possible; and, if you will let me know the dates between which you can guarantee to be at Jidda after the pilgrimage, I will wire to him; and I guarantee that he will come there to meet you."

In due course Mr Charles Crane,* the American millionaire philanthropist, accompanied by Mr George Antonius, arrived at Jidda, and had the honour of adding Ibn Sa'ud to the long list of royalties and other great folk he had met personally during half a century of globe-trotting. And for that honour he duly paid in the best coin he could possibly have devised. He undertook to place at the disposal of Ibn Sa'ud's Government, free of charge, the services of an expert mining engineer, who had worked for him in Abyssinia, the Yaman and elsewhere, for a period of six months. It was thus that Mr K. S. Twitchell first came to Sa'udi Arabia to find the buried treasure, at whose existence I had hinted at the darkest moment of the country's economic depression. Mr Crane has long since been gathered to his fathers, though he lived to see the ripening of the first-fruits of his philanthropy, while Mr Twitchell retained his close connection with Sa'udi Arabia until quite recently, with twenty years of valuable service to his credit.

Such were the beginnings of the mineral exploitation of Arabia. It was a long cry yet to the developments that have made the country rich and enviable; but the discovery by Twitchell of the existence of oil in eastern Arabia and of gold in the Hijaz opened the door to foreign competition for the honour of developing the resources of the country. By the end of 1932 the stage was set for the opening of the play. Meanwhile during the summer of that year, having recently returned home from my exploration of the Empty Quarter, I was approached by Messrs Lombardi and Loomis of the Standard Oil Company of California on the subject of the possibility of seeking an oil concession from the Sa'udi-Arabian Government. I was able to encourage their aspirations; and in October I was formally authorised by telegram to enquire from the Government regarding the terms on which it would be prepared to grant such a concession. I was soon in a position to wire the terms proposed by

* See above, p. 164.

the Government as a basis of negotiation, in response to which Mr Lloyd Hamilton, accompanied by Mr Twitchell as his technical adviser, arrived at Jidda to negotiate on behalf of the Company. The 'Iraq Petroleum Company lost no time in sending a representative, Mr Stephen Longrigg, to compete for the concession. And, somewhat surprisingly, Mr Frank Holmes, who, as already noted, had secured the concession ten years earlier on ridiculously easy terms for the Eastern General Syndicate, reappeared on the scene as a third competitor. Less surprisingly he departed hastily within a few days of his arrival, when it was hinted to him that he would at least be expected to pay up the arrears of rent (£6,000 gold), outstanding when the original concession was cancelled, before he could be regarded as a serious competitor.

Thus the Government was confronted by only two competitors in the negotiations, which occupied the first four months of 1933. Its terms envisaged the payment of a lump sum of £100,000 by the successful competitor on account of future royalties, which were to be calculated at the rate of four shillings gold per ton of oil produced. In the end the issue came to hang on the amount of the down-payment on signature of the concession, as it was quite easy for both companies to accept the proposed royalty rate and all the other conditions suggested by the Government. On that point, however, the bidding was far from brisk; and when it was plain that the I.P.C. would not consider a higher lump-sum payment than £10,000 (gold, of course), the Americans ran away with the concession with an offer of £50,000, or 250,000 dollars. In view of subsequent developments this was a ridiculously low figure; but it must be remembered that at that time the existence of oil in *commercial quantities* had not been proved. And the days were yet distant when competing companies would be prepared to pay forty or fifty times that sum on account of royalties to get the concession for the Sa'udi-Arabian share of the Kuwait neutral zone or for the Sa'udi-Arabian deep-sea rights.

The subsequent history of oil exploitation in Sa'udi Arabia and contiguous territories is too well known to require a detailed discussion in this story. Suffice it to say the Americans lost no time in getting to work in eastern Arabia, where by 1935 the existence of oil in commercial quantities had been duly proved. By 1938 production had actually begun on a modest scale, reaching a daily output of some 30,000 barrels on the eve of the outbreak of the second World War. Allied strategy and other requirements necessitated the im-

position of this limit on Sa'udi-Arabian production of oil for the duration, though the contingent loss occasioned to the Sa'udi-Arabian Government by this embargo was made good by various financial gestures of a very generous character on the part of the British and American Governments in recognition of the moral contribution to the Allied war effort of one whom Mr Churchill described on a momentous occasion as "our very good friend in time of need".

By 1944 the Allies were in a position to withdraw their ban on the production of oil in Arabia, and the American Company, now re-designated the Arabian-American Oil Company, or Aramco for short, found itself able to provide the plant needed for the increase of production, as well as for refining and other purposes. The rapid stepping-up of production during the past five or six years has been a veritable romance: converting one of the poorest communities in the world almost overnight into a rich and prosperous people, and involving what can only be regarded as a profound social revolution, the ultimate effects of which cannot yet be assessed. The wildest dreams of the old Arabian Nights pale into insignificance before the actuality of today's exploration of the caverns of the desert by strange men from the west: descending from the skies on their flying carpets, with strange devices for probing the bowels of the earth in search of the liquid muck for which the world clamours to keep its insatiable machines alive. The Arabia which once trafficked in spices and perfumes, for the service of the gods and dead of the ancient world, has risen at last from her long sleep to serve man and Mammon from the new-found sources of her hidden wealth.

With current production of oil running at about 300,000 barrels a day, and with every prospect of this output being doubled* very shortly, when the pipe-line to the Mediterranean is completed to cope with the Abqaiq (Buqaiq) reservoir, one of the largest and most productive in the world, with its estimated capacity of 300,000 barrels a day, Sa'udi Arabia can look forward to an indefinite period of financial stability and security. Its economic future depends entirely on a wise use of the financial resources now at its disposal for the constructive development of the country as a whole for the benefit of all its inhabitants, and in particular of those large sections of them who are engaged in agricultural and pastoral pursuits. Past experience has shown that, in the event of war or of worldwide

* The pipe-line was completed in October, 1950, and the output of oil is now running at the 600,000 barrels a day envisaged above.

economic disturbance, both factors of which account must be taken for an indefinite period in the present unstable condition of the world, Arabia is peculiarly vulnerable as a country so largely dependent on foreign supplies of foodstuffs and other necessities of life. Its aim should therefore be to increase the amount of its home-grown food-stuffs to the maximum possible extent; and there is every reason to believe that this can be done on a very large scale, provided that capital and enterprise can be enrolled to that end. There is plenty of the latter, as even the most superficial acquaintance with the people of the country is sufficient to reveal, though it is largely nullified by lack of the means of improving production in a country so largely at the mercy of wind and weather: to say nothing of such other natural catastrophes as floods and locust invasions.

To develop properly the native enterprise and intelligence of the people, capital is needed; and under existing conditions most of the country's available capital is in the hands of the Government and of a relatively small number of rich merchants and large landholders. It is therefore to the Government that the people must look for a progressive and intelligent use of its financial resources. It cannot be denied that the Government has in recent years undertaken a number of useful projects, that other such schemes are under way, and that yet others are under consideration. But it may in general be urged that the activities of the Government in such matters have been spasmodic, and to far too great an extent confined to the principal urban areas, many of which enjoy amenities undreamed of as recently as a decade ago, and comparing favourably with similar areas in other parts of the East, or even in parts of Europe.

There is, however, a conspicuous absence of planning; and even the recently expanded towns of Jidda and Riyadh, both of which have at least trebled their population within the last decade or so, show all too obvious signs of having grown by a process of uncontrolled sprawling over their desert hinterlands, rather than in accordance with any plan prescribed by competent authority. That is where the rub comes: the patriarchal government, which has proved itself adequate to cope with the basic problems of the country up to within the last ten or fifteen years, now finds itself confronted by a complex of very different issues, which defy solution on the lines of the benevolent authoritarianism of the past. The new problems are mainly of an economic and financial character, while there are also grave political and international issues which demand the constant watchfulness of the authorities. To cope with them under

existing conditions, the country has to rely entirely on the unco-ordinated skill and honesty of a number of individuals who, by admittedly meritorious service in the past, have emerged in positions of trust and leadership. But there is still nothing in the nature of an organised administration "to grasp this sorry scheme of things entire, and remould it" to the requirements of a modern State. Hence the recent financial crisis of December, 1949, occurring in the midst of plenty, and due entirely to the overtaxing by individual enterprise of the financial resources of the State in a galaxy of development projects: all of which were admirable in themselves though all of them were not capable of implementation at one and the same time. Hence too, in the final analysis, the wretched débâcle in Palestine during the previous year; and the unreadiness of Sa'udi Arabia with any reaction to the Korean crisis, on which issue it seemed disposed to follow the prompter Egyptian initiative or, in the alternative, to leave the matter to the tender mercies of the Arab League. It did the same in the case of the three-Power (United States, Britain and France) proposals for the supply of arms to the Arab States, in respect of which its own initial reaction was to accept them despite the implied condition that such acceptance would involve *de facto* recognition of Israel within its established borders.

These and other points which might be adduced in support of the general theme seem at least to indicate a progressive loss of initiative and efficiency on the part of the Sa'udi-Arabian administration of today. To some extent these failings are due to the fact that far too great a burden of responsibility is inevitably under present conditions thrust upon the king himself: and it is probably only to him that the country can look for the initiative in the reform and reorganisation of the administration on which it is fashionable nowadays to call "democratic" lines. It is certainly only on such lines that he, an autocrat by instinct and by necessity, however benevolent, can hope to relieve himself of the increasingly crushing burden of his daily work, and in doing so to bequeath to his people a government inspired by the noble motives that have marked his long reign, and competent in concert to keep together the great régime which he has built up single-handed.

The reflections contained in the last few paragraphs have been inspired by the contemplation of the miracle that has been wrought in Arabia during the past few years. I was lecturing recently before a learned society in London on this extraordinary transformation of the Arabian scene, which I first saw more than thirty years ago in

very different circumstances. And I was asked by a critical member of the audience whether it was right that a country like Arabia should, without the slightest effort on its own part, become so fantastically wealthy, as it were overnight. My reply, which seemed to meet with the approval of the audience, was simply that it was the reward of virtue. In saying so, I looked back unconsciously to the lean years of the past, when in the poverty and hardship of their daily lives the Arabs saw only confirmation of the benevolence of God, whom they served with a devotion which was both touching and beautiful. The danger is that in prosperity they may find distractions perilous to virtue, for, as the king quoted recently in my hearing, "a man's possessions and his children are his enemies!"

It may be that prosperity may prove to be a snare and delusion in Arabia, as it has been elsewhere. But the miracle has occurred, and it is up to the Arabs to accept it with humility, and with a determination not to allow it to become a source of national corruption. The man who has led them up out of the wilderness into the promised land can rest on his laurels in the consciousness that he has never swerved from the ideals which animated his every action fifty years ago. His successors will find it much more difficult to follow his example in a world which is becoming more and more materialistic, and which has already stretched out its corrupting hands over the deserts in the sacred cause of the "Four Freedoms" and other shibboleths of this mechanical age.

Be that as it may, the Arabia which I first knew in the days when it was great on a total income of £100,000 a year is today blessed with an income of £80,000 sterling a day from oil alone since the completion of the pipe-line, with a good prospect of this figure rising to £100,000 a day within the next few years provided that no untoward circumstances intervene to check production. In addition it can count on a further sum of about £10 million a year from the pilgrimage and other sources of revenue. Thus, with a present income of some £50 million a year and a good prospect of this sum being increased steadily in the future, the financial position of the country is excellent beyond comparison with anything it has ever known in the whole of its history. It has shown that it can use the money; but not even its warmest admirers would maintain that it has all been used wisely or even legitimately. There has unquestionably been a great deal of leakage of a far from creditable nature, and there has been gross extravagance, while many of the undoubtedly useful development works that have been undertaken have been con-

tracted for on an unnecessarily expensive basis. All these shortcomings, largely the result of inexperience, hasty conception and lack of co-ordination between the individuals and departments concerned, can be remedied. But it is unlikely that the fullest benefit can be derived from the considerable and ever-increasing resources of the State without a radical overhaul and reconstruction of the governmental machine itself. Men of ability and imagination are available in satisfactory numbers; but their individual efforts in this field of activity or that are scarcely likely to bear fruit unless they are co-ordinated for the execution of plans fully considered and prescribed in advance by a responsible body of ministers and experts, answerable individually and collectively to the king himself. This was in effect the method adopted at an earlier stage of Sa'udi-Arabian history, when the king played a more active part in directing the policy of the Government, as for instance during the negotiations for the oil concession in 1933. But the growing complexity of affairs in recent years has tended to weaken the collective effort of the king's advisers, and to concentrate too much power and responsibility in the Ministry of Finance, which exercises virtually dictatorial powers over far too wide a range of other departments, and thus discourages the initiative and enterprise of their nominal heads. The institution of collective ministerial responsibility would thus seem to be the only way of restoring equilibrium to a country which is now fully equipped with the necessary resources.

CHAPTER XV

RELATIONS WITH THE YAMAN

WITH the establishment in 1926 of a protectorate over the Idrisi principality of lowland 'Asir and the extension of effective occupation to the northern districts of the Hijaz, up to the *de facto* frontier of the Ma'an-'Aqaba district annexed to Trans-Jordan by unilateral British military action, Ibn Sa'ud had expanded his realm to what are in effect its present limits. In Trans-Jordan and 'Iraq, in Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar and along the Trucial Coast and in 'Uman, he was confronted by established British interests which he was not in a position to challenge. Beyond the Empty Quarter lay the anarchic territory of Hadhramaut, which did not tempt him, and had not yet begun to tempt the British authorities in Aden, or to stir the cupidity of the Yaman. The latter itself remained the only sphere likely to demand the attention of the Wahhabi monarch in view of the hazy frontier which separated it from his own territory and of the known ambition of the Imam Yahya to include Najran and some of the Idrisi territory in his realm.

Like King Husain in the case of the Khurma oasis, it was the Imam Yahya who took the initiative with a series of expansionist pin-pricks in this area to provoke Ibn Sa'ud to positive action. The latter had, after the conquest of the Hijaz, deployed his troops southward to watch the activities of his neighbour, while in the case of Najran, a large oasis with an unsavoury reputation for turbulence, he was in principle disposed to leave it to its independence, at any rate for the time being, as a buffer between himself and the Yaman on the desert side of the mountain barrier. With the troops of the two parties roving about along an undefined boundary, frontier incidents were inevitable; and in one such case the Sa'udi troops were clearly in the wrong in occupying the village of 'Aru, though at that time (1931) there were no maps available to either side to determine clearly the rights or wrongs of the local dispute.

This sparring on relatively minor issues led progressively to a clarification of the Yaman objective, which was Najran itself. A

Yamani force descended on the oasis during the winter of 1931/2 to confront Ibn Sa'ud with a *fait accompli*. To make their occupation palatable to the inhabitants of the oasis, they proceeded to harry those known to be unfriendly and to lay waste their dwellings and palm-groves. Their complaints forced Ibn Sa'ud to action; and Khalid ibn Luwai, of Khurma fame, hastened to the scene with a large army of *Ikhwan* in the spring of 1932. The Yamani troops proved ineffective against this challenge and, after some desultory fighting, withdrew whence they had come. The Najran issue was thus settled for good; and a Sa'udi deputation visited San'a to negotiate a general settlement of the frontier problem with the Imam, who, however, adopted an evasive attitude and obviously had no intention of agreeing to an accommodation on the basis of the Sa'udi claim. It was clear that the issue would have to be submitted to the ordeal of war; and it seemed equally clear that such a war could only end in a Wahhabi victory, though some apparently competent judges seemed to think that Ibn Sa'ud would at last meet his match in the hardy highlanders of the Yaman.

Be that as it may, the negotiations dragged on into the spring of 1934, when Ibn Sa'ud, having lost all patience with the Imam's prevaricating attitude, issued an ultimatum. His troops were already deployed to meet any contingency: partly on the plateau under the command of Sa'ud, the Crown Prince; and partly in the Tihama under his brother, the Amir Faisal. Both commanders had received orders to begin their advance across the frontier on April 5th unless they had by then received instructions to the contrary. And it so happened that on April 3rd a sandstorm of exceptional violence set in, which not only lasted several days but put the wireless apparatus of the advanced armies out of action. So, in the absence of fresh instructions from Riyadh, the Wahhabi armies crossed the frontier; and within three weeks the Amir Faisal had reached and occupied the port of Hudaida, the main source of supplies to the Yamani capital. Meanwhile the Amir Sa'ud had encountered more serious obstacles in the difficult terrain of the plateau, where his mechanised transport could only operate spasmodically, with the result that he could not get supplies of food and ammunition to the front.

This mattered little, as the startling success of Faisal had stirred the Great Powers into action. British, French and Italian warships appeared in the harbour of Hudaida to urge moderation. Orders from Riyadh forbade his advance either on San'a or further along the coast. So the three-weeks' war ended in a three-weeks' truce to

allow of further negotiations, pending whose result Faisal and his army remained at Hudaida. The Imam Yahya, seriously alarmed by the astonishing collapse of his army before the vigour of the Wahhabi thrust, agreed to negotiate, and nominated one of his principal lieutenants, Saiyid 'Abdullah ibn al Wazir, as his plenipotentiary for the purpose. The negotiations took place at Taif immediately, under the watchful eyes of a conciliation commission composed of representatives from Egypt, Syria and other Arab States and headed by Muhammad 'Ali Alluba Pasha and Saiyid Shukri al Quwwatli, the latter destined in due course to be president of the Syrian Republic. The peace talks took place in an atmosphere of goodwill, and Ibn Sa'ud made it quite clear that he had no desire to occupy any part of the Yaman, while protesting that the fight had been forced on him by the intransigence of the Imam over the settlement of the boundary question. 'Abdullah ibn al Wazir showed himself an able and reasonable negotiator, though he was inevitably handicapped by the fact that he had to consult his master by wireless at every stage, and on almost every point of detail.

Nevertheless it was not long before an agreed draft of the Treaty of Taif was ready for signature, while certain incidental matters not set forth in the treaty, such as the indemnity to be paid to Sa'udi Arabia to cover its campaign expenses, had also been settled to the mutual satisfaction of both parties. All that remained, indeed, was for the Imam to confirm his acceptance of the treaty, and authorise his representative to sign it on his behalf. It was, however, at this stage that he seemed unwilling to take the final plunge; and for some days it seemed as if the treaty might after all not materialise. The probable explanation of this hesitation on the part of the Imam is that at the last moment he could not bring himself to part with his money.

Be that as it may, Ibn Sa'ud was constrained to fix a date for the completion of the proceedings, with a warning that he would continue military operations in the event of his demands not being met. To explain the situation to the world, and in particular to the members of the conciliation commission, he arranged for a banquet, ostensibly in celebration of the signing of the treaty, on the night of the expiry of his ultimatum. And he found it convenient to cast me for the rôle of the disinterested mutual friend, anxious to ascertain the terms on which the parties had agreed to bury the hatchet. I was to open the proceedings after dinner with a speech, to which he would reply, explaining the regrettable circumstances in which the negotiations had after all broken down owing to the intransigence

of the Imam. Roughly briefed in this manner, I hastened to prepare a suitable address for the occasion, the draft of which I submitted for the king's approval. He proceeded to remould it to his own taste; and I must admit that the final version dictated by him had little in common with my draft. All I had to do was to memorise it and to await, with some trepidation, the moment for its delivery. Perhaps fortunately, that moment never arrived; and the banquet was served without any speeches at all. On the morning of the fateful day the Imam's reply had arrived, and all was well. The treaty was duly signed; and the occasion was celebrated next morning with a grand military parade, at which the king in person led the war-dance of his janissaries.

'Abdullah ibn al Wazir had acquitted himself nobly in the service of his master, and was almost immediately appointed governor of the Red Sea province of Hudaida: to be in personal charge of the implementation of the treaty conditions. Faisal sadly withdrew his victorious troops from the scene of their victories, to celebrate his triumph amid the plaudits of Taïf; and the king went in person as far as Ranya to greet his eldest son on his return from a rather thankless mission amid the mountains of the frontier. The magnanimity of Ibn Sa'ud in eschewing a potential addition to his realm won a good press in neighbouring countries, where the prospect of his annexation of the Yaman had been viewed with alarm and some displeasure.

The Treaty of Taïf envisaged arrangements for the demarcation of the frontier between Sa'udi Arabia and the Yaman; and no time was lost in assembling the necessary boundary commission, with responsible representatives of both sides, to carry out that task in accordance with the principles laid down in the treaty itself. In general this involved adhesion to the tribal boundaries ascertainable on the spot, and the setting up of pillars to mark the exact line of the frontier, so that in future there should and could be no doubt of its position or of the allegiance of the villages and tribes on either side. By 1935 the task was completed, and a record of the boundary pillars made: some 240 pillars in all on a line extending some 400 miles from the Red Sea coast between Muassam and Maudi to the edge of the Empty Quarter. In the following year I had the honour of traversing the whole length of this line to make a map of the varied and, in some sections, very impressive country through which it runs; and in the course of my wanderings in this area I had the pleasure of meeting 'Abdullah ibn al Wazir again on the occasion of his official visit to Jizan, to satisfy himself and his master that the

treaty provisions banning the construction of forts within five kilometres of the frontier on either side were being observed by the Sa'udi authorities. The very cordial relations he had established with Ibn Sa'ud at Taïf during the negotiations seemed to ensure the smooth working of the agreement arrived at, now that, as governor of the Hudaida province, he was to be responsible for the frontier administration on behalf of the Yaman Government.

The uneasy terms on which the two countries had lived side by side during the decade which preceded the three-weeks' war, and the Treaty of Taïf that ended it, could, it seemed, now be relegated to oblivion. There remained, however, some fanatical elements among the Zaidi denizens of the Yaman, which continued to nurse a grievance against the triumph of the Wahhabis. And their discontent was not slow in showing itself. At the pilgrimage of 1935 a large contingent of Yamanis came up overland to Mecca, and went through the prescribed ceremonies as usual. On the morning following the culminating rite of the "standing" at 'Arafat, however, when the king, followed by the Crown Prince and his bodyguard, was performing the customary circumambulation of the Ka'ba in the midst of the vast throng of pilgrims, he was suddenly assailed by three Yamanis, armed with daggers, who had managed to worm their way through the crowd to within striking distance. Both the king and the Crown Prince received slight knife-wounds before the assailants were shot down by members of the bodyguard. The subsequent investigation showed that the three men had had their passports signed, like those of the other hundreds intending to make the pilgrimage, by one of the sons of the Imam. But no evidence could be discovered of any organised conspiracy in the Yaman to avenge the country's defeat at the hands of the Wahhabis. Perhaps the king's assailants had lost near relatives in the fighting, and had thought to settle their private scores in this dramatic way. The incident, however, served to warn the authorities of the danger inherent in the king's normal practice of mixing with the crowd on all public, and especially religious, occasions. So from that day to this the space round the Ka'ba has always been cleared for His Majesty's circumambulations, while on other public occasions he has submitted, with as good a grace as possible in one of his kidney, to the somewhat elaborate security ceremonial devised by those responsible for his safety.

This sinister incident was soon forgotten amid the manifold signs of a growing understanding between the two countries and their

rulers. Visits of one or another of the Imam's sons to Mecca, during the pilgrimage and on other occasions, were frequent during the ensuing years, while Sa'udi officials or missions visited the Yaman from time to time to discuss matters of common interest. By the time of the outbreak of the second World War the two countries had reached a perfect understanding and, while the inevitable minor incidents of frontier administration were easily settled by the local officials, no matter of major significance arose to need the attention of the governments themselves: a very different state of affairs from that which has persisted through several decades to the present day on the uneasy frontier which separates the Yaman from the British colony and protectorate of Aden.

The increasing emergence of Yaman into the limelight as a recognised political entity, coupled with its post-war adhesion to the United Nations Organisation and the Arab League, has led it into co-operation with the other Arab States on all issues of import to the Arab world; and its voice has not seldom been heard to good effect on matters of general public interest. The old Imam may often have felt that his Arab neighbours, and particularly Ibn Sa'ud, have not been as forthcoming as they might have been in support of his case in the perennial controversy with the British Government. But he can scarcely have failed to be satisfied of the goodwill of Ibn Sa'ud towards himself and his régime. He was indeed, on more occasions than one, warned by the latter of the dangers of ignoring the local unrest in his own country: partly due to his own rather reactionary attitude towards the modern world, and largely arising out of the all too obvious lack of understanding between himself and his eldest son and heir, and consequential doubts about the succession. For some years the situation in the Yaman had been giving cause for anxiety in neighbouring countries, lest the unsatisfactory economic condition of the realm should give rise to subversive activities. And it was not long after the end of the second World War that one of the Imam's younger sons, Saif-al-Islam Ibrahim, broke openly with his father, and withdrew to Aden with a small following of malcontents to agitate for reforms in the Yaman administration. At the same time, the eldest son and heir-presumptive to the throne, Saif-al-Islam Ahmad, suspicious of his father's intentions towards himself, deemed it wise to keep away from court, and withdrew to Ta'izz, where he was able to gather round himself a considerable tribal following for use in case of need in his own interests. And even the principal ministers and advisers of the Imam, who remained at San'a

to conduct the administration, were of doubtful loyalty, as subsequent events were to show. These included such outstanding persons as 'Abdullah ibn al Wazir himself, 'Abdullah al 'Amari and Muhammad al Kibsi.

The first-named of these certainly made tentative approaches to Ibn Sa'ud with a view of ascertaining whether he would lend his support to a new régime in the Yaman in the event of an attempt to force the Imam into accepting a more constitutional type of administration. He received no encouragement from that quarter; and it was during these years that Ibn Sa'ud, having once for all settled accounts with the Yaman in 1934, showed himself a loyal friend to the Imam. More than once he urged him as a friend to liberalise his autocratic rule, and above all to settle for good the vexed question of the succession, lest trouble should arise between his sons on his demise. At the same time Ibn Sa'ud took steps to keep himself well informed of all developments in the Yaman, as it was obvious that trouble beyond the frontier would or could have unsettling effects further afield.

By December, 1948, it had become clear that things were reaching a critical stage; and it was significant that towards the end of that month Saif-al-Islam Ibrahim's coterie at Aden announced the death of the Imam. This news was at once discounted at Riyadh as false, as it proved indeed to be; but it was evident that the Aden gang had been expecting something to happen on a given date about that time, and had anticipated it by announcing its occurrence in a relatively innocent form, as the Imam had been seriously ill during the year, and had had a relapse in December. The discovery that he was still alive and, indeed, recovered from his illness was somewhat disconcerting for the conspirators, who to some extent had revealed their identity. Such of them as were still in the Yaman were therefore in danger of discovery and punishment; and, so far as can be judged from the circumstances, they seem to have made up their minds to act more decisively. This they certainly did, for on February 17th the wireless operator at San'a phoned through to his opposite number at Mecca the tragic news that the Imam and his Prime Minister had been ambushed and murdered while out for a drive; and that two of his sons had also been killed when they refused access to the Treasury and Government Offices to the conspirators, among whom the principal personality was 'Abdullah ibn al Wazir himself, who usurped control of the administration and proclaimed himself king. Ibrahim came up from Aden to be given

a post in the new "constitutional government", while other members of the royal family, including the son of Saif-al-Islam Ahmad, threw in their lot with the usurper; either from fear of the consequences of refusal to do so, or because they were in or on the fringes of the conspiracy. Meanwhile 'Abdullah ibn al Wazir made every effort possible to secure the support or goodwill of the various Arab States and of the Aden administration; and the Arab League played into his hands by organising a commission of enquiry to go to San'a to examine and report on the situation. This was tantamount to provisional recognition of the *fait accompli*; but the ardour of the commissioners to get to San'a was somewhat cooled by the news which reached them at Jidda *en route* that the airfield at San'a was under fire from Badawin and other unruly elements of the population, to whom 'Abdullah ibn al Wazir had somewhat unwisely distributed arms and money from the Imam's treasury on a lavish scale. It seemed likely that a period of chaos and disorder would ensue; and it remained to be seen, first how the usurper would cope with the situation, and secondly what steps Saif-al-Islam Ahmad would take to avenge his father and press his own right to the throne.

The usurper's appeal to Ibn Sa'ud for military help and aeroplanes was ignored; but the mission which he sent to Sa'udi Arabia to explain his acts and intentions was duly received by the king at Riyadh. Its members were politely allowed to say their say in public assembly; and, when they had done, the king turned to them, saying: "How can you come to me, asking for my support and goodwill for your master? You people," he continued, pointing at them with his finger, "are murderers. You have come here as my guests; and, having heard what you have to say, I can only ask you to leave my country."

Meanwhile things had been going none too well for the conspirators, though the movements of Saif-al-Islam Ahmad, who had definitely thrown down the gauntlet to the usurper, were painfully slow, and seemed to indicate that he was by no means sure of the attitude of the people towards him. On the other hand 'Abdullah ibn al Wazir had failed rather conspicuously to take advantage of the situation created by his surprise initiative in ridding the country of a ruler who, whatever his merits may have been, was widely unpopular. That initiative seemed merely to have unleashed all the disruptive elements in the country, which the Badawin now roamed in search of loot, while the long disgruntled townsfolk, now well supplied with arms and money, broke up into factions to fight each

other without any very definite aim. It was, however, the Badawin that controlled the situation; and for all practical purposes the country outside the capital was in a state of complete anarchy, while the outer provinces were openly in the hands of tribal leaders, whose loyalties had not been pledged to either side. Ibn Sa'ud viewed the situation from afar with growing anxiety, while Ahmad moved slowly through this scene of chaos, making sure of his ground at each step, towards Hajja. With 'Abdullah ibn al Wazir now obviously losing control beyond the limits of the capital, the situation slowly turned in Ahmad's favour; and, once established at Hajja, he was able to develop a desultory offensive against San'a. This gradually gained ground, and the conspirators were constrained to take refuge in the forts: as much in fear of local hostility as of an actual attack by Ahmad's forces. They were thus caught in a trap; and the police they had armed and paid so well merely held them to hand them over to the representatives of their rightful sovereign on March 12th. 'Abdullah ibn al Wazir and his principal lieutenants were ignominiously packed into a lorry and driven to Hajja to be surrendered amid the execrations of a large crowd to Ahmad, who consigned them to various dungeons in the town pending disposal. On March 15th 'Abdullah and other conspirators were hanged in public. Saif-al-Islam Ibrahim, as a member of the royal family, was merely confined to one of the forts, where he died within a matter of weeks. Ahmad's young son, Muhammad Badr, was appropriately treated as a naughty boy who had been misled and corrupted by his elders, and survives as presumptive heir to the throne. Another brother, 'Abdullah, who was sent abroad at the time of the *coup d'état*, seems to have supported the rightful heir unswervingly, though he had preferred to remain absent from his country in the comfortable post of its ambassador at large. Yet another, Husain, serves his brother in the rather thankless post of governor of the capital, which the present king, who has made his headquarters for the time being at Ta'izz, has not yet seen fit to visit. There may be good reasons for this but the general impression created by his prolonged abstention from closer acquaintance with San'a is that he is not yet very sure of his ground outside the area of his effective personal control. Nevertheless European visitors to his court at Ta'izz have had no difficulty in visiting San'a also in recent times, though it would seem that the Government has not yet been able to re-establish effective control in the desert provinces of the realm, including Marib and Jauf, the ancient capitals of Arabia Felix. On the Aden Protectorate side Ahmad has maintained his



Madina: the Dome of the Prophet's tomb, and two of the minarets
of the Great Mosque: 1938



The main street of Muna during the pilgrimage in 1945

father's claims to certain tribal areas, also claimed by the British, who during 1949 used bombing aeroplanes on a Yamani fort on the disputed frontier of Wadi Baihan to point their argument in the familiar modern way. The grant by them of a concession to prospect for oil in the Shabwa area has also given offence at Ta'izz, where suspicions have also been aroused by the recent presence of an American* archaeological expedition at the ruin-field of ancient Kahlan in Wadi Baihan.

The present king may be disappointed that Ibn Sa'ud has not found it possible or expedient to intervene diplomatically in his favour for the settlement of these knotty issues. But, apart from that, he has had every reason to be grateful for the steady support of and sympathy with the legitimate cause in the Yaman which the Wahhabi monarch has evinced in no uncertain manner ever since the recent crisis. The old quarrel with the Yaman is over and done with; and all present indications are that it is unlikely to be revived, now that the international status of the Yaman has been endorsed by the world at large and by the Arab countries in particular. Towards the end of 1950, moreover, negotiations took place in London in a comprehensive effort to settle all outstanding issues of the long controversy between Britain and the Yaman. An agreement in principle was duly arrived at in October, and now awaits formal acceptance by the two governments.

* This expedition was later, however, given permission to excavate the ruins of Marib.

CHAPTER XVI

OUR BROTHER OF JORDAN

ON May 25th, 1946, the Amir 'Abdullah* of Trans-Jordan assumed the title of "King of the Hashimite Kingdom of Trans-Jordan", as the result of the Treaty of Alliance between his country and Great Britain, signed in London on March 22nd of the same year by Mr Bevin and the Trans-Jordan Prime Minister, Ibrahim Pasha Hashim. A consequential revised treaty, recognising this change of status, was signed at 'Amman two years later, and duly ratified in London on April 30th, 1948. Subsequent events in Palestine invited a change in the name of the realm, which now became the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan. In the summer of 1948, King 'Abdullah paid a state visit to Sa'udi Arabia, and was royally entertained by Ibn Sa'ud with the customary exchange of gifts and compliments. The visitor may well have looked wistfully round on a scene changed out of all recognition since he had last set eyes on it wellnigh a quarter of a century before. And the milk and honey of Riyadh may have taken his mind back to the lost opportunities of an unforgettable past, when ambition had overreached itself in grasping at what was then but a shadow: albeit the shadow of coming events. The substance of those days, such as it was, had been lost for ever; and in its place stood the simulacrum of a throne, surrounded by much pomp and majesty it is true, but supported by the bounty and bayonets of a kindly foreign race, and not large enough for one who was born to be great, though he had neither been able to achieve greatness nor found an ungrateful world ready to thrust greatness upon him. The surface courtesies of the occasion scarcely concealed the mutual antipathy of two men so unlike; and the minds of both must have gone back to a single occasion in 1919, when a retort discourteous involved its utterer in disaster. Ibn Sa'ud had written to 'Abdullah, warning him to refrain from advancing on the oasis of Khurma, and the latter had replied: "I breakfast tomorrow

* King 'Abdullah was assassinated on Friday, July 20th, 1951, as he was entering the Masjid al Aqsa in Jerusalem. This chapter was written long before that event, and I have not considered it desirable to alter it in any way.

at Khurma, and next week I shall sup at Riyadh." So that night his army was annihilated where it stood at Turaba, while he himself, in his own words, was "saved by a miracle", i.e. by headlong flight from the battlefield. He has never forgotten the Wahhabis; and when they next paid him a visit in Trans-Jordan in 1922 he was soon booted and spurred for another miracle. On their second visit to that part of the world, he was absent on a visit to his father in Mecca just before the bursting of the storm over Taïf.

No wonder then that, throughout his career, he has been obsessed by the bogey of Ibn Sa'ud and his Wahhabis. He has many other grievances against life and fate, and numerous alternative ambitions to nurse in the hope that the future may be kinder than the past. But his consuming passion is obviously to rectify the wrong done him and his family by the wild men from Najd, when they dislodged the short-lived Sharifian dynasty of modern times from the land of his ancestors. This is abundantly clear from the Arabic version of his *Memoirs*, published shortly before his assumption of the royal title, and recently given to the world by Jonathan Cape in a modified English translation, on which a galaxy of talent has been employed to adapt the outspoken Arabic of the original to the more squeamish appetite of the ordinary Briton: and incidentally to explain away or deprecate much that is patently absurd in the musings of a king by frequent editorial appearances on the stage after the manner of a Greek chorus.

"Down with the son of 'Abdul-wahhab and those of his sect!" says the original text in more than one passage, while the English translation shrinks from such blasphemy. It also omits *in toto* the following characteristic passage, which rings like a cry of despair from the depths of the author's soul:

"If I and my companions had known that this would be the result of the Arab revolt and national uprising, we would have disassociated ourselves from it and from its author. The holy land is ruled today by a house nurtured in rapine and robbery, raids and aggression and bloodshed; surrounded by persons of no standing or consequence from 'Iraq and Egypt and Syria, like Yusuf Yasin who is a known Nusairi, and Fuad Hamza who is an undisguised Darzi, and Hafidh Wahba who was a shopkeeper at Kuwait; these gallant gentlemen, who made what they made out of our uprising! There is no majesty nor might save in God! and God knows that we sought only the good of the Arab people in all our actions and efforts. Yet what have these folk done in the sacred territory of God but tyrannise over and humiliate the people of the Hijaz, battening on the wealth

and taxes of the pilgrims, and revelling extravagantly in every forbidden thing? Moreover oil concessions have been granted without discrimination; opening wide the eastern gate of the Arab countries and, as it were, creating a bridgehead for dangers to religion and morals more formidable than any military menace. And all this has happened without consultation of the religious authorities, or of any constituent assembly, or of any parliament! But no one is to blame but the Arabs."

All this comes rather strangely from a scion of a land notorious for every kind of vice and profligacy until the dour Wahhabi came to clean the Augean stable: only to be corrupted himself in the process, as the general and increasing laxity of today is sufficient to prove. And as for the deleterious effect of oil concessions in eastern Arabia on the virtuous denizens of the Hijaz, religion had long since been commercialised on the lines of a tourist industry, when again the Wahhabi came in to impose reform on the prevailing system of pilgrim exploitation. Yet even in this matter the passage of years has induced a slackening of the reins, with the result that the pilgrims still complain today as they complained of old. The trouble in the Hijaz now is rather that the conquered have led their conquerors captive, to the detriment of Islam and the Arabs. It was perhaps inevitable that the old fire would die down, and more's the pity; but 'Abdullah is scarcely on firm ground in denouncing the results of the impact of western civilisation on a land called holy. In respect of morals and religion, Mecca is not markedly different today from what it was in his time.

As for the question of oil concessions in general, that is clearly where the rub comes. The old virtue of the Wahhabis has been well and truly rewarded by an accession of wealth beyond their wildest dreams, which is capable, if wisely used, of laying firm foundations for the future of Arabia. On the other hand, as 'Abdullah knows all too well, his own little State of Jordan can never be a viable proposition, and must depend for ever for its safety and livelihood on the generosity of the British taxpayer and, in certain fields, on the bounty of America. It is indeed strange to think back to the days when I had the honour of representing the British Government in His Majesty's territory, when a total sum of £150,000 was considered sufficient, in addition to its meagre revenues, to meet all its requirements, whereas the British Government is today committed to a presumably permanent subsidy of £3 millions, with an additional million thrown in for the present year of grace to cope with development work in the interests of the refugees who have flocked

into the country, fleeing from Israel. With a population of barely half a million in a land capable of only modest development, and a total revenue from its own sources of barely £1 million, it is clear that the defence and administration of the country on anything like its present scale cannot be maintained without outside help. British help involves substantial restrictions on the independence of the country and its Government; and King 'Abdullah himself, as he says in his *Memoirs*, "never tried to conceal the difficulties of my ministers which resulted from undue interference by the Resident". The offending official was Sir Henry Cox, who had succeeded me at 'Amman in 1924 and virtually controlled the Government for no less than fifteen years, until his term of office was terminated, as the king implies, at the latter's request in 1939. Some restrictions and controls are nevertheless inherent in the existing arrangements between Britain and the "independent" kingdom of Jordan, in whose territory the former has an unqualified right to maintain troops, as in the case of Egypt, whose people and Government have for years been chafing impotently at the presence of foreign troops in their territory. King 'Abdullah has seen clearly enough that the only way to free himself of such checks on his independence, which he values as highly as any of his Arab neighbours, is to extend the sphere of his jurisdiction. To this end he has devised and propagated the "Greater Syria" conception, which is a sound enough ideal in itself, though rendered unpalatable to the occupants of the other territories concerned by his *sine qua non* assumption that it can only be realised under his auspices and in the guise of a monarchy. The "Fertile Crescent" idea is of the same order, though of wider application; but here again he finds himself stymied by his own conception of the rôle reserved for himself in the extended organisation by virtue of his seniority in the Hashimite house. As he says in his *Memoirs* "if the Arabs should cease to be under Quraish, then good-bye to the Arabs and the Quraish". It is this obsession with the divine right of his own family which thwarts 'Abdullah at every turn. And the Arabs, who for many centuries have experienced almost every kind of rule except that of the Hashimites, can scarcely be expected to share his views on the subject. *Hinc illae lacrimea!* So 'Abdullah must make the best of a bad job, and continue to depend on the bounty of Britain in that walk of life to which an unkind fate has relegated him, and from which he looks out with envious eyes on his more fortunate neighbours, whose financial resources are enough, and more than enough, for all their needs without extraneous assistance.

But surely he goes too far in girding at Ibn Sa'ud for enjoying the sour grapes which he himself was never of a stature to reach. And readers of the English recension of his *Memoirs* will surely gasp with astonishment when they come to the third appendix, entitled "The Petrol Concession in the Hejaz", which consists entirely of the text of a letter addressed by him to the High Commissioner in Palestine on April 5th, 1944. Surely he should have known as well as anyone else that no such concession exists or ever existed, for the simple reason that there is no oil in the Hijaz. And lest it be thought that, in his righteous anger at the desecration of the holy land, he inadvertently coupled the word petrol with gold in a broad objection to the granting of a concession for the exploitation of the latter in an area from which the sacred territory of Mecca and Madina was expressly excluded, let it be proclaimed to the world that, if Ibn Sa'ud erred in this matter, he did so at least in the excellent company of the Hashimite forbears of King 'Abdullah himself. It is on record that the 'Abbasid Califs of Hashimite stock exploited this very same gold-mine of Mahd al Dhahab to which he refers—and which incidentally does not lie west of the two holy cities, as he says, but about half-way between the two and slightly to the east of a straight line drawn from one to the other. And there is, indeed, reason to believe that a still more distinguished member of this distinguished family was keenly interested in the same project, whose output doubtless went to adorn the temple at Jerusalem in the days of Solomon, the son of one whom Major Broadhurst, in his introduction to the *Memoirs*, for some reason includes among the five principal Prophets, to the exclusion of Adam!

Be that as it may, few intelligent persons will concur in King 'Abdullah's geographical conception of the holy land, or agree that

"the whole area, from the Medain Salih to the borders of Yemen and eastwards to the frontiers of Hail and Nejd is sacred, that no industrial work may be done there, and that it must be reserved for such acts of worship by the Muslims as pilgrimages, prayers and visits to the Holy Shrines. . . . It is a place [he continues] for solitude, for contemplation, for penitence, for devotion to the worship of God, and for the fulfilment of all our sacred duties: and such it has been throughout Muslim history. Even if King Ibn Sa'ud has conquered and occupied this area, he has no right to disturb its sacred character, and to change its rites. He should not allow into it those who work for this world and who will put temptation in the way of the population so that they no longer devote themselves to the two Holy Cities. The whole district will become contaminated with worldly in-

terests and its tranquillity will be gone for those who come from all over the world and repent from their transgressions.

"His Majesty the King of Nejd" [he adds graciously enough] "is probably ignorant of these things as he is new to his position." [After twenty years of rule in the Hijaz!] "Please believe that this is the truth, free from all bias, and I beg you to transmit my statement to the British Prime Minister with the greatest possible despatch . . . the world will hear of this sacrilege and there will be disturbing reactions throughout the Muslim world. . . ."

The reaction of the High Commissioner and the Prime Minister to these alarming revelations of the wickedness of Ibn Sa'ud does not appear to be on record, while the Muslim world seems to have enjoyed without demur the amenities and creature comforts accruing to its pilgrims from the working of King Solomon's mines and the exploitation of oil in the distant area of the Persian Gulf.

It is true that King Husain would never allow such products of infidel industry as the motor-car into the Hijaz, except one for his own exclusive use; and that, while the Hijaz railway had reached Madina before his appointment to the Amirate, he was a prime factor in preventing its continuation, as originally planned, to Mecca. Yet I have never met a pilgrim who objected on principle to travelling in a motor-car, if he could afford to do so, or one who would have objected to riding to Madina or Mecca in a train, if there had been a train to ride in. If it is morally wrong to perform the pilgrimage in reasonable comfort, then Ibn Sa'ud has erred in making it as comfortable as it is today; and he persists in his error by seeking in every way to make the path of the pilgrim still easier. He will have to account for such lapses from grace to a higher court in due course; but meanwhile he can console himself with the reflection that human judgment will endorse the efforts he has made throughout his reign in the holy land to temper its harsh breezes to the shorn lamb of the pilgrimage, and reject as ill-founded the carping criticism of one whose house was scarcely conspicuous for tenderness towards the pilgrims. And, in humble gratitude for the mercy of God, he can point with pride to the simple fact that, during the quarter-century of his reign, the annual pilgrimage has been free of epidemic disease: a splendid record, judged by the standards of Turkish and Sharifian times.

King 'Abdullah, to some extent in spite of his filial loyalty, tries to put the major blame for the Wahhabi imbroglio on his father, who had proved as impervious to the good advice of the British

Government as he had at an earlier period to that of the Sublime Porte, tendered through its Prime Minister, Ibrahim Haqqi Pasha. On his "miraculous" return from the disaster at Turaba in 1919 he found his "father ill and nervous. The disease from which he died was already attacking him. He was now forgetful, bad-tempered and suspicious. He had lost his quick grasp and sound judgment." This seems at least a remarkable estimate of a man who, five years later at the age of seventy-five, rode the seventy-five miles of the then difficult track from 'Aqaba to Ma'an on a mule in two days, and later took charge of the proceedings at 'Amman to the utter consternation of Sir Herbert Samuel. He certainly showed no sign of mental decline or forgetfulness, unless his idea of replacing his son 'Abdullah by his son 'Ali in the Amirate of Trans-Jordan may be regarded as an indication of the former. That project was baulked by an event beyond his frontiers. Ankara had abolished the Caliphate, and King Husain, having assumed the vacant office, had to hurry back to the Hijaz to have himself formally inducted in the Great Mosque of Mecca. Incidentally the index to the *Memoirs* contains the item: "Caliph, King 'Abdullah appointed as, 213, 226" [!] and the editor, in a footnote, makes it clear that His Majesty's account of the incident was far from accurate. At any rate Trans-Jordan was left to its fate; and Sir Herbert Samuel breathed a sigh of relief. King 'Abdullah, in another passage which apparently does not occur in the original Arabic version, says that I "did a great deal to persuade people to agree to the appointment". That is to some extent true, though my activities in the matter were later terminated by the arrival of His Majesty's Government's orders that no sign of British reaction to the new development, favourable or the reverse, was to be given. It will be remembered, however, that in the MacMahon correspondence the British Government had expressed its desire to see the Caliphate restored to its proper setting in Arabia. Nevertheless, in deference to my orders, I refrained from addressing the king by his new title: contenting myself with "Your Majesty", at a banquet given by me in his honour on the eve of his departure for the Hijaz. Incidentally King 'Abdullah might have added that I did my best to make the independence of his country a reality, whereas in the stringent financial circumstances of the time he himself preferred to take the cash with the bonds.

In another passage of his *Memoirs*, dealing with his father's activities as the cat's-paw of the Turks in the desert hinterland of the Hijaz, he refers briefly to the early clash between Sharifian and

Wahhabi interests over the question of jurisdiction over the 'Ataiba tribe in 1912. This was the episode, described in an earlier chapter,* which resulted in Sharif Husain's capture of Ibn Sa'ud's brother Sa'd, and the Wahhabi chief's subsequent acceptance of certain somewhat humiliating conditions as the price of his brother's release. He was obviously entitled to gloat over this minor triumph, which was the prelude to so many later disasters. But it is difficult to see why the translator of the *Memoirs* thought it necessary to explain that the name of Sharif Husain's victim was not Sa'd but Sa'id, which the editor, in a footnote, corrects to Sa'ud: remarking that H. C. Armstrong, in his *Lord of Arabia*, had wrongly called him Sa'd, which was actually his name! As already noted, he was killed in a tribal battle in 1916, while Sa'ud, another brother, is still alive.

Incidentally it is worth noting that King 'Abdullah, in the original Arabic version of his *Memoirs*, quite deliberately refrained from stating his age or the year of his birth: for reasons which any woman will readily appreciate. But his translator, evidently disturbed by so important an omission, goes to the trouble of making him say: "I was born in Mecca in 1261 A.H."—or 108 lunar (105 solar) years ago! The editor, however, intervenes in a footnote to translate the lunar date as 1882 A.D. which is at least more plausible. In a later passage the king is made to give the year 1293 A.H. as the date of the Turkish constitution, which was in fact granted in 1908 A.D. (or 1326/7 A.H.). It is only fair to say that in neither case was the royal author to blame for the interpolations of his translator.

Lest it be thought that Ibn Sa'ud, the prime cause of the discomfiture of Hashimite ambitions, was, or is, the only object of King 'Abdullah's animadversion, it should be emphasised that he virtually regarded his brother Faisal, more fortunate than himself in securing the smiles of fortune, as all but a traitor to the Arab, or Hashimite, cause. It was he who received the lion's share of Allied bounty and arms in pursuance of an understanding that, in due course, Syria should become a separate State independent of the Hijaz. He had agreed to the hauling down of the Arab flag at Beirut to avoid offending the delicate susceptibilities of the French. He had gone to the Paris Conference, not to champion the interests of the Arabs, but to secure a throne for himself as a gift from Clemenceau. He had acquiesced in Zionist claims on Palestine in his own interests, and so on. And as for the Arab League, he makes no secret of his doubts of its success:

* See above, pp. 26-27.

"A very hazardous affair," [he remarks] "with a big name and a resounding programme for a gathering of representatives out of touch with the national aspirations and without capacity, while every one of the States of the League is bound to a great foreign Power and unable to operate beyond the obligations which they have accepted, whereas the Arab peoples and their kings stand apart from all that. Take note, ye people of understanding!"

Finally, if 'Abdullah, as the principal loser in the hurly-burly of modern Arab politics, is naturally inclined to harbour malice against his more successful competitors and to seek revenge, if only circumstances would conspire with him, especially against Ibn Sa'ud, what is the other side of the picture? It is nearly blank, but not entirely so. Egypt, Syria, 'Iraq and Sa'udi Arabia have no substantial cause to envy him, so far as the good things of this world are concerned. The Lebanon and the Yaman are so distant from his sphere of activity that they scarcely concern themselves with him. Yet 'Abdullah has something which none of his contemporaries, except his brother Faisal, have had. It is not that he has charm; many, if not most, of the Arab leaders of today have that in full measure. He has the capacity of capturing the European, and particularly the Anglo-Saxon, imagination, as Faisal had. He is the "blue-eyed boy" of the United Nations—of which his State is not even a member—and of Britain. He has a better press than any other Arab ruler of our times. The Arab Legion is the finest army in the world, the equal of the Guards on the parade ground, and, by God! unequalled in war, for did they not save the situation in the Middle East in 1941, and that with the loss of only two men killed in the whole campaign? Was it not, moreover, the only undefeated Arab army in the recent war in Palestine, the only one of those armies for which the Jews have a wholesome respect, because they left Lydda and Ramla and the Tul Karam triangle to the enemy according to plan? And is it not on record in His Majesty's memoirs that, while the British Trans-Jordan "Frontier Force had shown itself incapable of carrying out its duties in the desert . . . the energy of Glubb Bey and the military aptitude of the Bedouin" made the Arab Legion "the pride of Trans-Jordan"?

The modern world seems to live on a veneer of futile insincerities; and the butter is laid on thick for its good boys, who treat their masters as minor deities. But what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and the Arab is extremely sensitive to publicity and propaganda. And in Arabia, as perhaps elsewhere, the writers of

eulogies expect their reward, as the wandering poets and minstrels of old expected theirs. But 'Abdullah pays in other coin than cash, and the encomia that come to him and his from the British press and the B.B.C. are but the reward of faithful conformity to the political pattern approved by the "Man in the Street". It is not too much to say that King 'Abdullah has emerged from the general chaos of recent years with an enhanced standing in the western world, while all his contemporaries would seem to have lost ground in the public eye owing to their more independent attitude towards the various problems of our times. The Vicar of Bray is still a popular character, but popularity was never a measure of merit. So we can leave King 'Abdullah chafing under the unkindness of Fate, and his contemporaries envying him his good press.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PALESTINE PROBLEM

IT is no easy matter to unravel the tangled skein of Ibn Sa'ud's reactions to the modern phase of the Jewish question; but no record of his reign would be complete without an attempt to grapple with this intricate problem, which cannot be summarily dismissed with Mr Crossman's airy accusation of "robust anti-semitism"! That surely is the last crime which can be laid at the door of Arabia with any semblance of reason: the homeland of the Semites, notorious through the ages (until very recent times) for a vigorous xenophobia developed unconsciously as a defence against gentile penetration of their ancestral domain. The Arabs are not given to introspection, nor prone to analyse their traditional reactions to the various situations of life. Yet any such analysis, pursued to its logical conclusion, would show that the true basis of Arab hostility to Jewish immigration into Palestine today is xenophobia, and instinctive perception of the fact that the vast majority of the central and eastern European Jews, seeking admission into Palestine owing to persecution in their own countries, are not Semites at all: a point on which Jewish historians and politicians are extremely reticent. Whatever the political repercussions of their settlement in Palestine may be, their advent is regarded as a menace to the Semitic culture of Arabia, which is already experiencing unaccustomed strains from other directions, notably from America with its powerful thrust into the economic life of the desert. The true Semitic Jews of the two Dispensations have had little to complain of in the Arab lands, in which they have been settled for nearly 2,500 years, for the simple reason that they are heirs of a culture similar to that of their hosts. But the European Jew of today, with his secular outlook and his repulsive foreign ways, is regarded as a stranger and an unwelcome intruder within the gates of Arabia.

We cannot here enter upon a detailed discussion of this semi-cultural, semi-economic antipathy of the Arab towards the non-Asiatic Jew, which is a phenomenon of quite recent growth:

certainly no older than modern Zionism, of which it is the product, and probably to be attributed to the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and its immediate consequences. It was, as it were, by accident that it was the Jews who became the object of this antipathy. It might have been any other race placed in the same situation by the political machinations of the time: as indeed in Syria it was the French who courted and won the uncompromising hostility of the Arabs, while in Libya it was the Italians who played the same rôle. It was the cultural and economic incompatibility of the foreign régimes set up in the three countries concerned with the vital interests of the local populations thereof that created the political situations which have caused so much trouble and unrest in the Middle East during the past few decades.

Yet in the case of the Jews there was another and a much older factor at work, which was rather surprisingly absent in the case of France and Italy. Christianity, as the religion of the principal imperialistic Powers of the last several centuries, many of them controlling the destinies of Muslim lands from the Atlantic to the Pacific, has long since won the respect, if not the approval, of the Islamic world. Judaism, on the other hand, has always been regarded in Islam with feelings akin to contempt as the faith of down-trodden minorities scattered about the world in Ghetto communities without political rights or importance. Hence the shock felt by the whole world of Islam when it became known that the Christian Powers, with Great Britain in the lead, had decided on steps designed to give the Jews a political status in a world which had long since forgotten the two short periods of their political existence in days of yore and times long gone before: and that in Palestine of all countries, which had known none but Muslim rule for thirteen centuries without a break. Arab nationalist rejoicing over the collapse of the Turkish Empire was turned to wrath and grief by the affront offered to the honour of Islam. And matters were made worse in Palestine itself by the economic and political injury which accompanied the insult.

If a real leader had then arisen in Arabia to proclaim a *Jihad* against the infidel on a genuinely religious issue, it is probable that the project of the National Home for the Jews would have been stifled at birth. The Turks were still in Arabia, while the Bolshevik betrayal of the Sykes-Picot intrigue on behalf of European imperialism was causing some searching of hearts among the Arabs. And Britain could ill afford to allow a crisis to develop in the Middle East while the issue of the war was still in the balance. But no such leader

appeared. King Husain and his sons, having staked out in principle a claim to the whole of Arabia, including the Levant countries, were too busy looking after their own interests in various directions to take the new development in Palestine seriously. Ibn Rashid, the ally of the Turks, was never more than a nuisance to the Allied cause. And Ibn Sa'ud was still very much of a dark horse, with his way yet to make in Arabia itself, let alone the inception of enterprises further afield in a more altruistic cause than he could then afford to contemplate. So Britain was able to proceed on her way in sublime disregard of the religious susceptibilities of Arabia and Islam. It would take a generation before the dragon's-teeth of her sowing would mature in bloodshed, misery and disillusionment. And it would then be too late for repentance or remorse for the sins of fathers visited on the children they betrayed.

So much by way of preamble to the discussion of an episode to which some publicity has recently been given in the remarkable autobiography of the first President of Israel, published in 1949 under the title of *Trial and Error*. It must be said at the outset that Dr Weizmann's description of the incident in question is somewhat disingenuous, and so hedged in by reticences that one may wonder whether it was really worth while referring to the matter at all unless the whole story could be told: if only to remove the aura of mystery that now shrouds a perfectly straightforward proposition which eventually came to nothing. Its implementation on the lines envisaged by its author would clearly have obviated the bloodshed and misery which ensued upon the collapse of the British mandatory régime in Palestine in May, 1948, while producing in all essentials precisely the result since achieved by resort to violence, namely the establishment of a Jewish State in control of the greater part of Palestine. And, if the Jews have gained by force the benefits envisaged for them in the "plan", the Arabs have been left to nurse their grievances against them and their Christian allies without achieving a single one of the consolatory advantages suggested for them therein. The "cold" war which has followed upon their military defeat may last indefinitely; but it is difficult to see what advantage can accrue therefrom to anybody.

Dr Weizmann introduces the episode as a surprise development in connection with an interview he had with Mr Churchill a few hours before his departure for America on March 11th, 1942.

"I want you to know," said the Prime Minister, "that I have a plan, which of course can only be carried into effect when the war is over.

I would like to see Ibn Sa'ud made lord of the Middle East—the boss of the bosses—provided he settles with you. It will be up to you to get the best possible conditions. Of course we shall help you. Keep this confidential, but you might talk it over with Roosevelt when you get to America. There is nothing he and I cannot do if we set our minds on it.' "

Dr Weizmann professes to have been rather dazed at this communication, which, however, reminded him

"of a rather extraordinary circumstance which had puzzled me for some time and which only now became meaningful for me. A few months before I had met St John Philby. . . . He had made a statement which I had noted down, but which had seemed incomprehensible to me coming from him. He had said: 'I believe that only two requirements, perhaps, are necessary to solve your problem; that Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt should tell Ibn Sa'ud that they wished to see your programme carried through: that is number one: number two is that they should support his overlordship of the Arab countries and raise a loan for him to enable him to develop his territories.' I now fitted together St John Philby's 'offer' and Mr Churchill's 'plan'."

The intelligent reader will by now be getting warm as to the identity of the author of the plan that didn't come off! But, before proceeding further, I would deprecate Dr Weizmann's descriptions of me as the "confidant of Ibn Sa'ud", "the confidential agent of Ibn Sa'ud", and "Ibn Sa'ud's representative". I have never been, nor ever claimed to be, any of those things; nor have I ever held or sought to hold any position, official or semi-official, in the Sa'udi-Arabian Government. I am Ibn Sa'ud's friend, and proud of the fact that I have been that for over thirty years: with all the privilege of a friend to disagree with his opinions, and to criticise the policy or activities of his Government, to say nothing of my complete freedom to express my own opinions on any subject whatsoever even in conflict with his own views. I did so, for instance, when I gave enthusiastic support to the Peel Commission's recommendation for the partition of Palestine in 1937, on which occasion the Sa'udi-Arabian Legation in London was instructed to make clear in the English press that my views on the subject did not represent those of His Majesty or his Government.

To return from this personal digression: it would perhaps be impertinent to challenge the accuracy of Dr Weizmann's memory or to impute a prophetic quality to his notes! Yet there are several indisputable facts within my knowledge, to say nothing of their being on record in my diaries, which suggest that, perhaps for mere

convenience of handling, he has chosen to group them round the dramatic incident of his interview with Mr Churchill in March, 1942. For instance, he dates his meeting with me to "a few months before" that occasion. He may very well have forgotten that I had had the pleasure of meeting him and his wife as far back as 1922, when I had played a modest part in securing the elimination of Trans-Jordan from the scope of the National Home clauses of the British mandate. I well remember a vigorous argument on that occasion with Mrs Weizmann on the whole subject of Zionism and its aims and prospects. That was nearly thirty years ago, and may well have passed from Dr Weizmann's memory; but he can scarcely have forgotten the many contacts we had during the period of the Palestine Conference of 1939, including an occasion when my mother and I had the pleasure of entertaining at lunch at my home in Acol Road Dr Weizmann himself, Mr David Ben Gurion and Fuad Bey Hamza of the Sa'udi-Arabian delegation to the Conference. That was on the last day of February, while I lunched with Dr Weizmann at the Carlton Hotel on March 17th, the day on which the Palestine Conference came to an end without result. Up to this point my personal discussions of the Palestine problem with the persons already named and with others, including Professor L. B. Namier of the Zionist Organisation, Dr J. F. Grahame Brown, the Bishop in Jerusalem, Canon Douglas, Saiyid Jamal al Husaini of the Palestine Arab delegation, and A. W. Lawrence, had been purely exploratory and inspired by the hope that a basis of agreement between the conflicting parties might be found in view of the expressed intention of the British Government to dictate an unilateral solution of the problem in the absence of any such agreement. That hope proved vain; and the collapse of the Conference, followed in May by the issue of the British Government's White Paper, created an entirely new situation.

For the first time since the publication of the Balfour Declaration nearly twenty-two years before, the British Government had been constrained to admit that the Arab interpretation of the promises made to them in 1915 was better founded than had been supposed! To make partial amends for a wrong that could not be wholly righted, the British Government proposed in effect to liquidate its obligations under the Balfour Declaration and the mandate by offering the Jews a final sop of limited immigration during the ensuing five years, after which no Jewish immigration into Palestine was to be allowed without the consent of the Arabs: the total number of



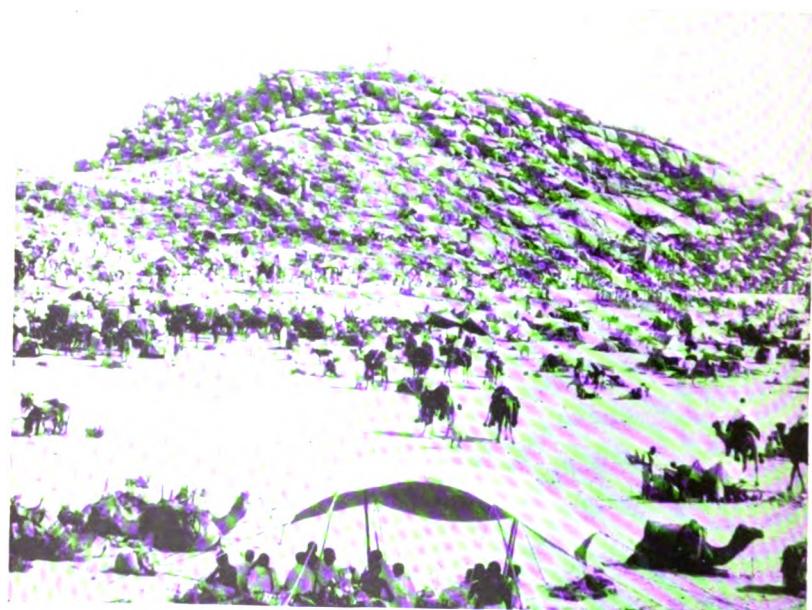
Pilgrimage celebration before the King's palace at Muna in 1945



The King's palace at Muna during pilgrimage in 1945



Najdi pilgrims “standing” at ‘Arafat during the pilgrimage of 1931



Jabal al Rahma (The Mount of Mercy) on the plain of 'Arafat during the pilgrimage of 1938

immigrants during this period being 75,000. Inevitably the Jews rejected the offer, and proceeded to mobilise their formidable resources to prevent the implementation of the White Paper policy. The Labour Party condemned it and announced its intention of rescinding the proposal in the event of their being returned to power. Mr Churchill and his friends were equally vehement in their opposition. And in due course the League of Nations declared that the policy envisaged was in contravention of the mandatory obligations of the British Government.

It is difficult to determine whether the latter really meant to implement the proposed policy, or was merely playing for time against a background of ever-increasing international crisis. Be that as it may, I was strongly of the opinion that the Arabs should have taken it at its word, and accepted the offer, which was undoubtedly an improvement from their point of view on the partition proposals of the Peel Commission, which I had also supported. My view was admittedly based on expediency rather than on the legal and moral merits of the Arab case against the admission of Jews into Palestine. I have always held, and still hold, that the Jews, in whose favour the Balfour Declaration and the mandate were drafted, have no shadow of legal or moral right to go to Palestine. Time and again I have urged that the legal aspect of the matter should be submitted to the Court of International Justice for a ruling. And it is pertinent to point out that, when this proposal was urged by the Arab representatives before the United Nations Assembly in 1948 on three separate occasions, the voting was either a tie or so close as to show the discomfort of many fair-minded members of the Assembly at being associated with a highly questionable proceeding without the guidance of the only body in the world competent to pronounce on the basic issue involved. At the same time it has always been obvious to me that, when a powerful majority of individuals or nations is determined to ride rough-shod over the law in favour of a deliberately conceived act of aggression or injustice, it behoves an injured party to act circumspectly and with consummate diplomatic skill to mitigate the consequences to itself of the contemplated wrong. Rightly or wrongly—and that dilemma has quite deliberately never been tackled by the self-proclaimed enemies of injustice and aggression—many of the great nations of the world, with Britain and America in the lead, have for years past made up their minds that the Jews shall be permitted to set up a State of their own, covering as large a part of Palestine as possible. Dr Weizmann himself quotes

the report of the British Labour Party National Executive Committee in April, 1944, as saying:

"There is surely neither hope nor meaning in a Jewish National Home unless we are prepared to let the Jews, if they wish, enter this tiny land in such numbers as to become a majority. . . . Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out as the Jews move in. Let them be handsomely compensated for their land, and their settlement elsewhere be carefully organised and generously financed."*

Incidentally the date of this remarkable pronouncement is of interest in relation to the five-year period of the White Paper, which was tacitly regarded as a dead letter; and the Government had no difficulty in devising a formula for the continuance of Jewish immigration for the duration of the mandate.

For this, to some extent, the Arabs had mainly themselves to blame. As they had rejected partition in 1937, which would at least have limited the area of the National Home, so also they had rejected the White Paper of 1939, which would have limited the size of the Jewish population of Palestine. With right but scarcely worldly wisdom on their side, they appear to have been motivated in their rejection of both proposals by a curious mixture of obstinacy and optimism. They refused to do anything that might savour of recognition of the right of the Jews to be in Palestine at all; and they went on hoping against hope, in spite of all the signs of the times, that something would somehow crop up to change the heart of the mandatory Power. And it was quite obvious at the time of their rejection of the White Paper proposals that the Jews would advance steadily, however slowly, towards the realisation of a majority in the population of Palestine. It was certain that the British Government would not implement to the detriment of the Jews a policy which, though meant for their benefit, had been rejected by the Arabs. To what extent the latter at that time contemplated the probability of another resort to force to stem the Jewish advance it is difficult to say. But not one Arab in a thousand who contemplated such a development had the slightest doubt about the result of such a challenge. Their confidence matched their obstinacy and their optimism; and to the ordinary observer it certainly seemed to be well founded in relation to the circumstances of 1939.

I certainly had no reason *at that time* to think differently on this point; and I would only mention in passing that the wartime munificence of Britain and America, and the all too sudden opulence

* All this sounds like an echo of the "plan".

which came to Arabia with the development of its oil resources, had not then begun to corrode the virtue of the Arabs. But I did feel convinced that any military argument which the Arabs might be able to bring to bear on the issue would be strongly, and irresistibly, countered in favour of Jewish aggression by the great "freedom-loving" democracies of the world. Thus it was that I came to make a virtue of necessity in seeking a way out of the imbroglio by agreement with the adversary in the way. Quite frankly I thought that the Arabs, in their own best interests, would be wise to aim at an obtainable *quid pro quo* at the expense of an undeniable right, which would never be recognised by those who had all the necessary might to defend the wrong.

Hence the "plan" so surprisingly sprung upon Dr Weizmann by Mr Churchill in March, 1942. I cannot guess why, for the purposes of his story, Dr Weizmann has chosen to represent the latter's remarks as a bolt from the blue which "rather dazed" him. It can at any rate be shown conclusively: first, that he had had knowledge of the "plan" since September, 1939; secondly, that he had discussed it in general terms with Mr Churchill himself, then still at the Admiralty, on December 17th of that year, a few days before his first departure for America; and thirdly, that he had talked about it to President Roosevelt early in February, 1940. Incidentally his attribution to me of the statement that "Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt should tell Ibn Sa'ud that they wished to see your programme carried through" is manifestly an anachronism, for the simple reason that Mr Churchill was not Prime Minister at the time (September, 1939), while I left England in November and was absent in Arabia until October, 1940.

I proceed now to the facts connected with the "plan", of which I can without immodesty claim to have been the author. The rejection of the White Paper proposals by both the Arabs and the Jews, and the storm of protest aroused by them among the champions of the latter, seemed for the time being to have blocked any possibility of progress towards the solution of the Palestine problem. In normal conditions there would have been nothing more to do than await developments in the hope of their presenting an opening for a fresh attempt at settlement. But the normality of conditions was soon disturbed by the outbreak of war; and it was obvious that the continuance of a sense of crisis in the Middle East would be detrimental to the Allied war effort, in which the goodwill and co-operation of both Arabs and Jews were essential. Neither party would have been

impressed in our favour by the mere shelving of the issue till after the war, while in several of the Arab countries—Egypt, 'Iraq and Syria for instance—there were important elements which could scarcely be regarded as well-disposed towards Britain and her Allies. The Jews, in spite of their disillusionment, were committed by the circumstances of the war to co-operation with the Allies, though it would have been difficult to profit by their co-operation in the Middle East. On the Arab side the whole previous record of Ibn Sa'ud had made it abundantly plain that Britain could always count on his goodwill, though it might have been far from easy to derive full benefit from it in the face of a policy wounding to the susceptibilities of the Arab world. Our Palestine policy was the outstanding case in point.

It was clear that we would not, or could not, go back on the National Home aspect of that policy. At the same time in the years following the First World War we had got very near to securing formal Arab connivance in our Palestine policy through our negotiations with the Amir Faisal. Our failure in that case had been due to the too obvious fact that the sole beneficiary of the proposals made by us was the Amir Faisal himself. And he had proved unable to carry his father with him, much less the Arab world, in his flirtations with Zionism. The immediate problem seemed therefore to be the devising of a formula for spreading the contingent benefits of a suitable settlement of the Palestine issue over every section of the Arab world; and, not less important than that, the finding of an intermediary willing and competent to secure general acceptance of the formula. There was indeed only one possible candidate for that rôle in the field: Ibn Sa'ud's opposition would have been sufficient to rule any solution out of court; on the other hand his support would have gone a long way towards securing general acceptance of any scheme which could be shown to promise substantial advantages for the Arab world as a whole. As for the formula itself, one had but to stretch out one's hand to the pigeon-hole in which the correspondence between Sir Henry Macmahon and King Husain of the Hijaz had been reposing for a quarter of a century. No better statement of the Arab demand for independence has ever been drafted. All that was necessary was to exclude Palestine from and include the Lebanon in the scope of the original proposals.

So the solution presented itself to me in three simple, straightforward, comprehensive sentences. The whole of Palestine should be left to the Jews. All Arabs displaced therefrom should be resettled

elsewhere at the expense of the Jews, who would place a sum of £20 millions at the disposal of King Ibn Sa'ud for this purpose. All other Asiatic Arab countries, with the sole exception of Aden should be formally recognised as completely independent in the proper sense of the term. These arrangements were to be proposed to King Ibn Sa'ud, as the principal Arab ruler, by Britain and America; and guaranteed jointly by them in the event of their acceptance by him on behalf of the Arabs. And it will be observed that, so far as I was concerned, there was no question either of offering Ibn Sa'ud a bribe to secure his goodwill for the scheme, or of making him a "boss of the bosses". And it is evident that the sum of money suggested was quite insignificant compared with the expenditure necessitated ultimately by the refugee-relief work and resettlement operations of ten years later.

Be that as it may, it was on September 28th, 1939, that, at lunch at the Athenaeum, I first suggested and discussed the general tenor of the plan with Dr Weizmann and Professor Namier. Their positive and favourable reaction encouraged me to consult a number of friends on the other side, particularly A. W. Lawrence. And on October 6th the "plan" received the cordial approval of both Dr Weizmann and Dr Moshe Shertok (now Shareth) at a lunch party at the Athenaeum, at which, besides myself, Professor Namier and my son were present. They agreed to use all their influence with the British and American Governments with a view to their accepting and implementing the pact, while I was authorised to inform Ibn Sa'ud of its provisions and to endeavour to secure his goodwill in anticipation of the *démarche* to be made in due course by the two governments concerned.

About a month later I left England on my return to Arabia; and it was on January 8th, 1940, the fourteenth anniversary of Ibn Sa'ud's assumption of the throne of the Hijaz, that I communicated the details of the plan to His Majesty at Riyadh. His reaction was interesting and characteristic. He asked me to keep the matter strictly confidential between ourselves: presumably to test my veracity in the matter of the initiative to be expected from the two Powers. It would be ample time to commit himself when that initiative materialised, as I then confidently expected it to do. Meanwhile Dr Weizmann had already discussed the matter with Mr Churchill, whom he presumably regarded as the principal champion of Zionism in the Cabinet, and was shortly to have an opportunity of doing the same with President Roosevelt. But three months passed without

the slightest sign of activity in those quarters; and, when I deemed it expedient to remind the king that he had not given me a definite reply to my proposition, he replied somewhat enigmatically that, while he was convinced of my genuine desire to help him, he found it very difficult to help me to help him to achieve his ends! I took this as a friendly rebuke for my having put to him a proposition which seemed to be entirely lacking in substance. The silence of the two Powers certainly seemed to justify his remonstrance; and I could only assume that Dr Weizmann had failed to interest his powerful friends. If that was so, the "plan" had gone awry, as it was quite obvious that Ibn Sa'ud could not be expected to take any initiative in the matter. In these circumstances I should have been justified in dropping the project altogether; but I did not do that. On the contrary I decided to sound some of the king's principal advisers on the subject, only to find a bewildering diversity in their first reactions to a suggestion whose tempting aspects were offset by its all too obvious practical difficulties. Some of those in whom I confided informed the king of my conversations, as indeed I hoped they would; and in due course I was rebuked for discussing such matters out of school. In spite of that I did not give up hope that developments entirely beyond my control would ensue to bring the "plan" within the orbit of practicability.

Meanwhile Dr Weizmann, who was contemplating a second visit to America in May, 1940 (which was indefinitely postponed owing to the seriousness of the military situation), had sent me a message, assuring me of his confidence in securing acceptance of the plan and asking for news of my progress. I may have gone beyond my brief in replying to him that positive results might still be expected in the event of the materialisation of the initiative envisaged in our original arrangements. Incidentally I still believe that such results could have been achieved in this manner, and would have been of permanent benefit to all concerned. But the future of Palestine paled into insignificance amid the tension of the dreary months that followed. And, so far as I know, nothing more was done about the matter until the very eve of America's entry into the war at the end of 1941. Meanwhile I had left Arabia to suffer a period of temporary eclipse, so far as any possibility of political activity was concerned, with the added mortification of realising that, while my Arab friends suspected me of trying to help the Jews, others actually suspected me of anti-Semitic leanings! It was even suggested that Ibn Sa'ud had notified his intention of never letting me return to his country, though I

had little difficulty in proving the baselessness of such a suggestion, made officially in February, 1941, and renewed two years later, as I shall show.

On my return to normal activities in April, 1941, I was frequently in touch with Professor Namier, and inevitably discussed with him the somewhat faded prospects of the 1939 "plan", which incidentally he and his friends had by no means given up as hopeless. It was not, however, till the middle of November that he informed me that the Prime Minister was again actively interested in the scheme, and that Dr Weizmann was shortly to see Mr Eden on the subject. Hence the developments, slowed down, of course, by the entry of America into the war, which led up to Dr Weizmann's interview with Mr Churchill on March 11th, 1942, the day of his departure for America. As I have shown, he was already aware of the Prime Minister's interest in the "plan"; and incidentally I had met him and Professor Namier at lunch only two days before this interview, while my diary records a second lunch party at the Athenaeum, at which Professor Namier and Captain Gammans, M.P., were also present, on March 17th, which seems inconsistent with Dr Weizmann's statement that he left for America on the 11th!

He states specifically that he did not discuss the "plan" with President Roosevelt during this visit, which seems somewhat strange in the circumstances, though he did sound various American officials on the subject, including Colonel Hoskins, whom he "understood to be the President's personal representative in the Middle East". On the other hand, in a later passage, he records that, towards the end of this visit, he had an interview with the President in the presence of Mr Sumner Welles, and "the attitude of Mr Roosevelt was completely affirmative". Thus we have it on Dr Weizmann's authority that both Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt were strongly in favour of a settlement of the Palestine issue on the basis of the "plan", against which circumstance we have to set the simple fact that neither of them took any positive action to implement it on the lines indicated. Both did, however, take steps to explore the situation by sending their representatives in the Middle East, incidentally both strongly anti-Zionist in outlook, on visits to Ibn Sa'ud. Lord Moyne was first in the field, and met Ibn Sa'ud on December 29th, 1942. Dr Weizmann does not record this fact, much less the results of his visit, which have doubtless been consigned to oblivion in the pigeon-holes of Whitehall. It can only be assumed that, presumably not being authorised to make the

proposal indicated in the "plan", he failed, as might be expected, to get any positive reaction out of so formidable a fencer as the king of Arabia, later to be acclaimed by Mr Churchill himself at the Faiyum meeting in 1945 as "the friend in need" whose help had never failed England in the dark days of the war.

Colonel Hoskins, who visited Ibn Sa'ud in the latter part of 1943, was also evidently briefed to do no more than explore the situation, and certainly not to propound the plan. Inevitably he met with a similar reception at the hands of the astutest politician of the Middle East; and he came back brimful of fantastic tales of his experiences at Riyadh. According to him Ibn Sa'ud had spoken angrily and contemptuously of Dr Weizmann and his attempt to "bribe" him into selling out Palestine to the Jews. But that was nothing in comparison with his "further report" (I quote Dr Weizmann's statement) "that Ibn Sa'ud would never again permit Mr Philby to cross the frontiers of his kingdom". The simple answer to such a slander is that, as soon as British war-time restrictions on travel were relaxed in the summer of 1945, I returned to Arabia, travelling in the king's personal plane (the gift of President Roosevelt) from Cairo to Riyadh *via* Jidda on July 27th. And the explanation of the answer may be given in the king's own words, when I told him how Colonel Hoskins and others had been trying to denigrate me in the eyes of an ignorant world. "How could they say things like that?" said the king. "Don't they realise that, in the days when I was desperately in need of friends, you were my only friend? Do they think that I can ever forget that?" The five years of my absence from Arabia were as if they had never been; and I resumed my place in the king's court, to remain there from that day to this: the recipient of many marks of Ibn Sa'ud's unchanging and unchangeable friendship and affection. And I shall in all probability remain in Arabia for the rest of my life, of which it has long been an inseparable part.

It is true that Colonel Hoskins very considerably modified the statement quoted above at an interview I sought with him at his London hotel on November 15th, 1943. But his official reports had doubtless had their effect on his master, with the result that the "plan" came to nothing, and that the Palestine problem was left to be solved in due course to the advantage of the Jews by the arbitrament of the sword. How that came about is another story, which reflects no credit on the Arabs; but, in view of Mr Churchill's dictum that "there's nothing he and I cannot do if we set our minds on it", the full blame for the bloodshed and misery that preceded the final

settlement rests fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the two men who could have solved the problem peacefully, if they had set their minds to it. Neither was in office when the account came to be settled in the blood of Jews and Arabs: neither of whom have any reason to feel grateful to the two Great Powers mainly responsible for the very existence of the Palestine problem.

"What was one, what is one, to make of all this?" asks Dr Weizmann. ". . . Nothing came of the 'plan', as we know today; what prospect of realisation it at one time had it is hard to say." It is, of course, always difficult to say what would have happened in a contingency that never materialised. The course of the war would have been, and its result might have been, different if Hitler had not attacked Russia, or if Japan had not attacked Pearl Harbour: for both of which events we had reason to be profoundly grateful. As for the Palestine "plan", its essential feature was that Britain and America should make up their minds to try it. They might even have condescended to seek elucidation of its details and prospects from its author, though pride and prejudice doubtless stood in the way of such condescension. Ibn Sa'ud was certainly given to understand that, if there was any substance in the communication made to him by that person, the "plan" itself would be proposed to him by the highest authorities in the world. He was not called upon to commit himself in any way until approached by those authorities. He certainly did not commit himself in any way at that stage; and the circumstances never arose in which he would have been called upon to make a decision. The reason for that was that Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt, genuinely desirous as they may have been of a solution on the general lines of the "plan", were unable to make up their minds to try an unorthodox solution of an entirely intractable problem. Still less were they prepared to submit the rights and wrongs of the case to the test of legal argument before the International Court, whose verdict would almost inevitably have been unpalatable to the Jews and their supporters. So they were reduced to playing the orthodox political game of trying to get as much as possible for the Jews after the war without committing themselves to any *quid pro quo* for the Arabs. The cost of that game has been appalling in terms of life, suffering and treasure; its political and economic consequences in the Middle East have scarcely yet begun to be felt, but will be disastrous.

Those on whom this guilt lies may sooth their consciences with the conviction that the "plan" would not in any case have been

accepted by the Arabs. That is certainly no excuse for not having tried it. The Arabs now know what they might have gained under it, and what they have lost without it. And I doubt if any Arab, wise after the event, would not now admit that they would have been better off under the "plan" than they now are. All they clamour for now is that the Arab refugees should, if they desire, be allowed to return to their homes in Jewish Palestine; or that, in the alternative, they should be compensated for their losses.

As for Ibn Sa'ud, his potential reaction to the "plan" can now only be gauged in the light of subsequent events. He alone of all the Arab leaders concerned has ever maintained a realistic attitude towards the Palestine problem, with which he felt but a remote concern during the currency of the British mandate, whose termination none regretted more than he. He discountenanced rebellious activities before the British withdrawal; and he was profoundly critical of the Arabs' light-hearted, unco-ordinated plunge into war after that event. He is on record as recommending some form of partition during the United Nations deliberations and the truces. His participation in the actual hostilities was of no more than a token nature, consisting as it did of a small ill-equipped force operating under Egyptian command, and financial contributions towards the conduct of the operations, in respect of which he was content to rely on the discretion of the Arab League, though he was never comfortable about the way the campaign was being organised and directed. The ultimate débâcle was roughly in accord with his prognostications; and the fact that Trans-Jordan was the only Arab State to secure a slice of consolation out of the Jewish conquest of the greater part of Palestine was certainly not calculated to give him any satisfaction. Indeed he washed his hands of the whole sorry affair, and declined to take any part whatever in the resulting negotiations with the Jews on the future of Palestine, though he allowed his troops to take part in the victory march arranged in celebration of the Egyptian army's evacuation of the country! The *Jihad* proclaimed by the ecclesiastical authorities of Sa'udi Arabia was virtually ignored so far as official action was concerned, though it was made the occasion for collecting substantial voluntary subscriptions for the Arab cause. And the only really effective action which the Sa'udi-Arabian Government could have taken, namely the cancellation or suspension of the American oil concession as a protest against American championship of the Jewish cause, was never considered seriously, or considered only to be rejected out of hand as prejudicial to the

economic interests of the country, in spite of a spate of propaganda sponsored by unfriendly elements in 'Iraq and Trans-Jordan.

In view of all this, is it not at least possible that a statesman of Ibn Sa'ud's calibre might have thought it in the interests of the Arab cause to compromise on the Palestine issue in favour of the very solid advantages offered by the "plan"? That is a question which cannot now be answered for the simple reason that those advantages were never authoritatively offered for consideration. It follows therefore that Ibn Sa'ud was never more than a passive observer of the activities described in this chapter. He was never invited to intervene in the matter; and he remained uncompromised to the bitter end of a long struggle, whose outcome no Arab can contemplate without distaste and a sense of national humiliation. He has never swerved from the view that the Jewish invasion of Palestine, first under British and later under American and United Nations auspices, was an affront and an injury to the Arabs. In effect he condoned it so long as it was under the control and direction of Great Britain as the mandatory Power; and in the end, while his sympathies were wholly with the Arabs of Palestine, he found himself impotent to help them owing to the frustration of the Arab League by the jealousies and dissensions, corruption and incompetence of its member States. Whether he was wise to put his trust so completely and unreservedly in the Arab League is open to question; and whether the Arab League can survive the internal stresses of a house divided against itself is very much open to doubt.

As for myself, no one can reasonably doubt my devotion to the Arab cause, in spite of the occasions on which I have found myself in profound disagreement with the unrealistic official policy of the Arabs in the matter of Palestine. I have always held and still hold that the Jews have not a shadow of legal or historical right to go to Palestine; and I have advocated the reference of the matter to the International Court of Justice for a ruling. At the same time I have not failed to realise that Britain and America have from the beginning been firmly minded to ride roughshod over all considerations of right and justice in favour of Zionism, and that they could at all times bring irresistible force to bear against the Arabs on that issue. I may, indeed, have fallen from grace in taking the practical view that the Arabs could only save themselves from ultimate disaster by compromising with the hostile elements whose conscience did occasionally prick them to set limits to the Zionist dream. In 1937 I supported the Peel Commission's partition plan as a step in this

direction, only to find myself thinking against the grain of Arab intransigence. In 1939 I welcomed the White Paper proposals for a final liquidation of our Zionist commitments, only to find my Arab friends resolute in their refusal to compromise. In the same year I became the author of the abortive "plan" described above, in response to which (perhaps I should say in spite of which) my name appeared in a recently published black-list of nine persons, including General Spears, Monsieur Spaak and Captain Farran, whose liquidation was recommended by a joint session of a number of Jewish extremist organisations in Paris during 1948! It is certainly difficult to please everybody.

CHAPTER XVIII

SUNSET

SUNSET! perhaps the most poignant moment of the day in those lands which still live close to nature: the moment which separates one day from the next, when man can watch the retreating light and see the advancing darkness, with the short twilight between them: the moment when, in Arabia and all other lands of Islam, man turns to Mecca, giving thanks to God for the favours of the day gone by and praying for His blessing on the tasks of that to come: the moment when, on the great occasions of Islam, a million eyes eagerly scan the afterglow for a first sight of the crescent moon, which marks the beginning or end of the annual fast, or the beginning of the month of pilgrimage: the moment when even the western exile in eastern lands allows his thoughts to accompany the sun beyond the horizon, where it still shines on the folk of his native land. Yet in the busy cities of modern Europe and the New World there is no such vesper pause in the lives of men; and the sun sinks unseen behind its pall of smoke or screen of crowded houses. Indeed the break between day and day is advanced to the mystic hour of midnight: when the clocks of the Antipodes mark noon, and when all men are asleep, except the criminal and the reveller, and all alike oblivious of the newborn day until the sun itself summons them to its labours.

Unlike the measured and certain days of solar time, the days of man on earth may be short or long according to the vicissitudes of life: beginning with the traditional expectation of the normal span of three-score years and ten, but more often falling short of it or outrunning it for a thousand different reasons, mostly arising out of man's own frailties or virtues: inherited from his fathers or self-created. Lap after lap of the human race claims its victims before they reach the tape, while some few runners pass the post with strength enough to continue another lap or two. Yet fewer in those extra rounds maintain the verve and poise of their earlier running, to hand on their torch undimmed to those who wait to carry it on in the

endless contest between man and his ideals. And rarer still are those among the waiting aspirants to fame who are capable of emulating the pace and standards set by such champions. As Ibn Sa'ud is fond of quoting:

"No merit his who says: 'So did my father!'
Who says: 'Myself I did!' his the merit rather."

Arabia, happily enough, is not yet confronted by this problem of the future. With the normal human span already reached, Ibn Sa'ud still runs gamely on: not perhaps as aggressively as of yore, though a shade more wearily after the superhuman exertions of a lifetime; but not wilting and, indeed, showing every sign of ability and determination to pursue indefinitely the mission to which he swore allegiance fifty years ago. Such men die only in harness, but not without thought for the future: for which he made provision as long as seventeen years ago by nominating and securing popular acceptance of his eldest surviving son, Sa'ud, as heir to the throne. From that moment the Amir Sa'ud, now forty-nine, has been closely associated with the king himself in the governance of the country. The next son in order of seniority, the Amir Faisal, aged forty-six, has long, and with considerable distinction, served his father in the double capacity of Viceroy of the Hijaz and Minister for Foreign Affairs. Other sons, like the Amir Mansur,* as Minister of Defence, and the Amir Sultan, who succeeded his brother Nasir as Governor of Riyadh in 1947, have also gained valuable experience of public affairs. In addition many of the king's sons have travelled extensively abroad: imbibing ideas from Europe and America which should stand their country in good stead, as it takes its place ever more effectively in the comity of modern nations: bringing to their councils an element of faith and chivalry, as it did indeed in ages long gone by and almost forgotten amid the more materialistic preoccupations of western civilisation. In all their activities these young men have never been allowed to forget their duty to the country which bred them: and to the faith and race of which they are the purest, and should be the most distinguished, representatives. Their name is legion. With thirty-six living sons of the king, and as many living grandsons, to say nothing of the great-grandsons now coming forward or of numerous nephews and grand-nephews, who, with the five surviving brothers of the king, make up a royal family of truly prodigious proportions, the survival of the Sa'udi dynasty into dis-

* He died in May, 1951.

tant centuries seems assured beyond a peradventure. And not the least satisfactory feature of this enormous family is that all its members have been brought up, under the king's own guidance, to regard themselves as a band of brothers: united for the common weal, and taking precedence at court in the order in which they came into the world, without regard for their individual provenance, or the social status of their mothers. Not least among the achievements of the king must be reckoned this knitting together of such a cosmopolitan group of relations, among whom, in spite of long and careful study of their mutual reactions, I have never been able to detect any trace of the animosities and dissensions which so nearly wrecked the dynasty in the generation of the king's uncles, and which did destroy for ever the rival dynasty of the Rashids in northern Arabia in our own time.

Ibn Sa'ud's remarkable success in the domestic sphere has its parallel in, if indeed it has not been exceeded by, his achievement in the field of tribal administration. The turbulent and stiff-necked Badawin of his youth, the product of the centrifugal forces of the desert which had plagued his ancestors, and their predecessors before them from time immemorial, were not long in recognising their master in the young man who ruled at Riyadh at the beginning of the century. And they were soon harnessed to a machine destined to crush their own independence out of being: though used at first with consummate skill and discretion to destroy, with their willing aid, all the rivals who might claim their allegiance in future struggles for hegemony in Arabia. All these tribes are now, without exception, law-abiding pastoral communities; prosperous enough in the new general prosperity of the desert, or partly settled in agricultural groups, tilling the lands which they formerly ravaged in search of loot.

Many factors have, of course, contributed in recent years to the stabilisation of this unique development in desert history. But it was unquestionably the personality of Ibn Sa'ud, working in the hopelessly unpromising circumstances of his earlier days, that laid the foundations of an organisation which would not necessarily have emerged from the mere improvement of the economic conditions of the country. It is indeed open to question whether this very improvement in the economic circumstances of Arabia has not to some extent loosened a tightly knit fabric designed to meet the strains of a very different situation, but now compelled to adjust itself to stresses of a more insidious type. At any rate the architect's plans

had taken shape long before the new storms began to gather round the structure he had designed; and so far as the desert and its denizens are concerned, it may be claimed with confidence that it has triumphantly stood up to all the tests to which it has yet been subjected under the changed, and ever-changing, conditions of life in Arabia.

It is indeed rather in the superstructure than in the foundations that one may detect certain weaknesses, due not so much to the original design of the master as to makeshift, and often hurried, execution by masons of varying and generally inferior calibre. It is now in the Government rather than in the governed that one finds faults open to legitimate criticism; always remembering that, while the subjects of the king were licked into shape by the king himself, and used by him for the furtherance of his cause which was also theirs, the rapid success which attended the integration of their forces resulted in so sudden an expansion of their sphere of interests and responsibilities that their desert organisation was unable to cope with the volume of new and unfamiliar work without extraneous aid. This was forthcoming in full and ever-increasing measure from the neighbouring Arab and other Muslim countries, for the king had quite rightly set his face from the beginning against the employment of non-Muslim foreigners in his service. But the flood of candidates for employment had largely to be taken on trust in the circumstances of the time; and its organisation into administrative cadres had to be improvised too quickly to be anything but haphazard, while the weeding out of weaklings and swashbucklers took time. Even so it was not achieved before much damage had been done to the interests of the country and the reputation of the Wahhabi Government.

Yet there was among them a sufficiently large number of really capable men, from among whom it ought to have been possible in course of time to form a thoroughly competent government to supervise and control the various administrative departments of the State. And it is a remarkable fact that practically all the Ministers and high-ranking officials of today have held the offices they now hold for the best part of a quarter of a century: enjoying the king's complete confidence and personal friendship. Yet, with one exception, they have exercised no kind of executive responsibility whatever. That, of course, is largely the fault of the king himself: an autocrat by nature, and so conscious of his personal responsibility for the proper guidance of his people that he has never been able to delegate authority, even in the smallest matters. The arrival of a guest, the



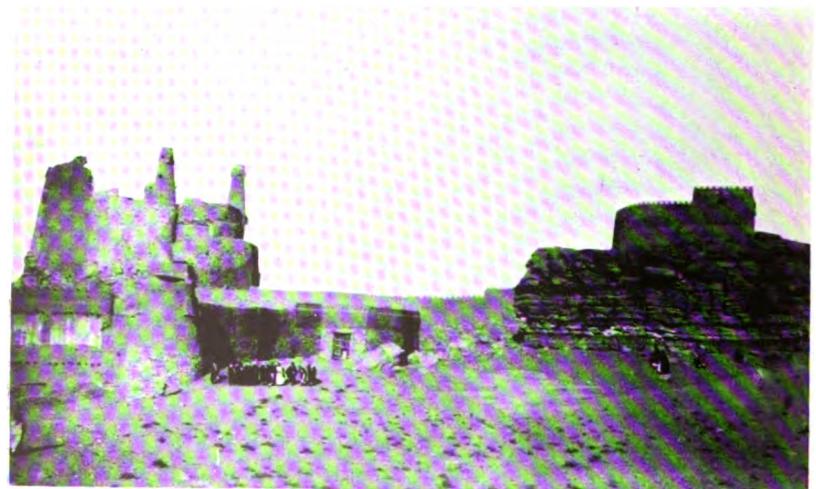
The King's camp at 'Ashaira in 1936



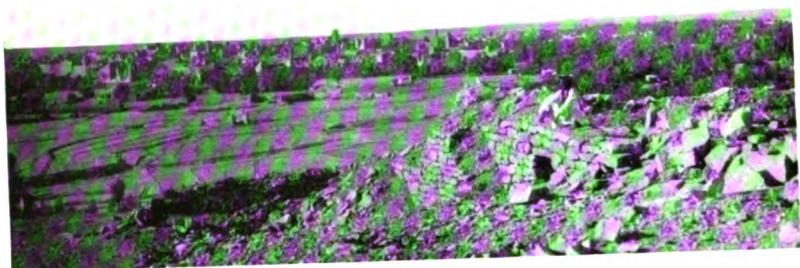
The King's palace at Taif in 1930



The station of Buwair on the Hijaz Railway in 1931



The castle of Marid at Jauf in 1922



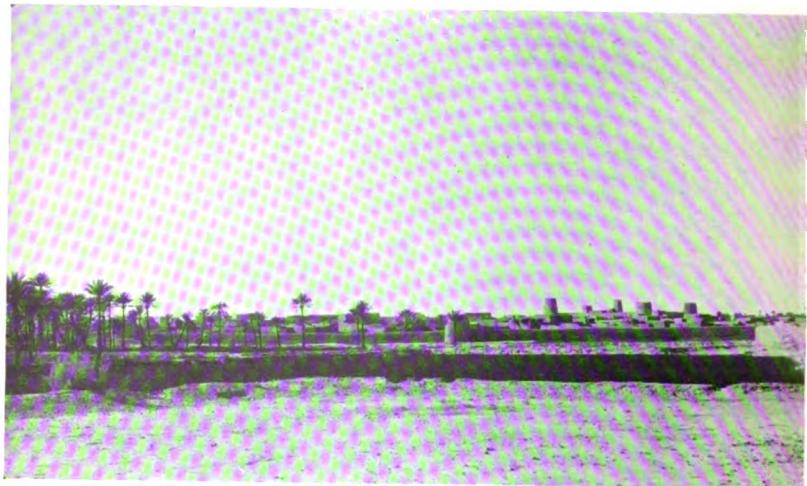
The ruins of Dar'iya, the original capital of Sa'udi Arabia, in 1917



The ruins of Dar'iya in 1947



The city wall of Riyadh in 1931



Riyadh with the towers of the castle of Mismak in 1931

breakdown of a motor-car, a minor illness in the family, and other apparently trivial incidents claim his personal attention side by side with State problems of the highest importance. This extraordinary capacity to grapple with detail can, I think, only be explained by the fact that Ibn Sa'ud is *always thinking*: surely the hallmark of a first-class brain, differentiating its possessor from the general average of mankind who, with ever-increasing educational facilities at their disposal, are content to follow sheep-like in the paths explored by their leaders. And for thinking Ibn Sa'ud, towering head and shoulders above the common herd of his countrymen and their satellites, has always had plenty of time. In public and in private it is always he who does all the talking to a silent audience, which often does not listen to his words of wisdom or hear them, but is always ready with agreeable phrases in the event of His Majesty deigning to solicit an opinion on his remarks. In such circumstances his own periods of silence remain uninterrupted; and, if he is not dozing as in these latter years he increasingly tends to do, thought resumes its sway over his mind, preparing the way for another bout of "conversation". His reading, apart from listening to the religious, exegetical and historical passages selected by his chaplain for the evening readings and, in more recent times, to the news of the day culled by his monitors from the world's wireless broadcasts, is virtually confined to a breviary of saws, proverbs and religious wisdom, which helps him to pass the lonely hour which separates his short slumbers of the night from the dawn, when his prayers are followed by a period of meditation and another short bout of sleep. In this connection it is of particular interest to record his emergence in this very year of his jubilee, and apparently for the first time in his life, as an author of an anthology (*Wird*, or garland of roses) of specially significant passages of the Quran, followed by a selection of his favourite collects and prayers. It has been published by the Government press at Mecca, and, while it makes no claim to originality, provides the student of his remarkable career with an interesting glimpse of the basic principles by which he has ever sought to direct his actions in the service of his God and his country.

But the "old Cyclops", as I have often heard him called affectionately in the rough-tongued speech of his Badawin cronies, has a blind eye in his mind as well as in his head: each having the same sort of disconcerting effect on the gatherings over which he presides. In each case the sound optic is as penetrating as a telescope or a microscope; but, just as in the physical sphere one can never be

quite sure which way he is looking when he shoots forth a remark or a question which seems to require a response, so in the mental sphere it is not always easy to detect the angle from which he is approaching some problem of the moment. He may be asking a question merely to elicit information on the subject; or, on the other hand, he may know the answer himself, and merely be testing the reaction of his audience. It rather depends whether he is on his own familiar ground, where he can hit any bowling for six with consummate ease and assurance; or whether he is playing on the queered pitch of a strange world with nasty patches near the wicket, which it is his business to defend against the body-line attack of an implacable enemy.

Fortunately for him, it was just at the juncture at which he found himself confronted by the severest test of his capacity that he found a partner capable of scoring off the new-fangled bowling, while he could content himself with keeping his end up. The one exception to the general rule of executive incapacity among the high-ranking officials of the Wahhabi régime during the past quarter of a century, mentioned earlier in this chapter, was 'Abdullah Sulaiman,* who came into prominence about twenty-one years ago as Minister of Finance in succession to Sharif Sharaf Ridha, and has held that post ever since. Himself a Najdi, he has perhaps been better able than any of his "foreign" colleagues in the Government to sympathise with the patriarchal system, which had served his country well enough in the lean years, and to impose upon it gradually the more elaborate checks and controls necessitated by the relatively rapid swelling of the country's revenues as the result of the conquest of the Hijaz. Expenditure inevitably kept pace with the expanding income; more often than not indeed it outran it at a rate with which it was difficult to keep up; and the Minister of Finance frequently found himself in the unenviable position of having to produce loaves and fishes out of non-existent ovens and seas. In such circumstances he had to resort to juggling; and much of his juggling laid the Government wide open to serious and not undeserved criticism. By keeping the lower grades of the administrative services in arrears of pay, he opened the door to petty corruption, which tended to grow in volume as its original cause persisted. By failure to pay on or near due date for goods purchased from the merchants he lowered the Government's credit. And by defaulting on his larger contractual obligations he closed the door on further accommodation. At the same time he

* See above, p. 81, and below, pp. 230-231

failed to check the extravagance of the court, and of various Government departments including his own. And, when he was forced by circumstances to proclaim a moratorium on all Government debts in 1933, it was inevitable that the honesty and competence of the Wahhabi administration, if not its chances of survival, should be called in question. By the middle thirties its reputation certainly stood very low in the eyes of the world; and the only hope of salvation seemed to lie in the very problematic possibility of the discovery of oil and gold in Arabia under the concessions granted in 1933: the oil concession having produced a more than welcome, though soon expended, down-payment of £50,000 on account of future royalties, if any.

Actually, as already noted,* oil in commercial quantities was soon discovered in the Hasa province, while a workable goldmine was found at Mahd al Dhahab, half-way between Mecca and Madina. Production of oil began in 1938, and by the time of the outbreak of the Second World War was running at the rate of 30,000 barrels a day, at which it was stabilised for the duration by Allied war policy. This was a serious blow to the reviving hopes of Arabia, whose economy was further undermined in 1940, when the entry of Italy into the war involved a total stoppage of the pilgrimage from overseas. The position seemed almost hopeless in spite of the willingness of the Oil Company to finance the urgent requirements of the country against the security of future oil royalties. Then the British and American Governments came forward with generous measures of help, to which the Arabian response was a further orgy of extravagance and mismanagement, accompanied by the growth of corruption on a large scale in the highest quarters.

The resumption of oil production in 1944 seemed to mark a definite turning of the tide in favour of Arabia, which promised to become one of the world's principal oil-producing countries. Royalties went up by leaps and bounds until, in the Jubilee month of July, 1950, they had reached a rate of £25 millions sterling per annum! Yet in the preceding December a very serious financial crisis had occurred, involving the application of an unofficial moratorium on Government debts and the postponement of a number of important development projects, all under simultaneous consideration regardless of the country's financial capacity to undertake them all at the same time. There was in fact at a given moment no money at all in the till; and it was an unfortunate coincidence that the king selected

* See above, p. 184 *et seq.*

that moment for demanding a very large sum in cash for the suitable celebration of a dozen simultaneous weddings in the royal family. The Finance Minister must have come perilously near to summary dismissal when he informed the king of his inability to comply with his demands; while his deputy was actually relieved of his office. The saving factor was oil, the royalties from which would be coming in at a fabulous rate, and would certainly suffice to ensure the economic stability of the State after the paying off of amounts already mortgaged in advance; provided only that the king and his Government would make up their minds to cut their coats according to their cloth. That is the supreme question; and there has been little sign yet of its being answered in the affirmative.

There has at intervals been much talk of retrenchment and economy, but little tendency to practise those virtues. And the only experiment made in recent years (1947) to conduct the administration on the basis of a published, and much publicised, budget was such a fiasco that no further attempt has been made to take the people into the confidence of the Government.* The Finance Minister, to give him all due credit, had on this occasion made a gallant bid to cut down the financial provision for various heads of expenditure, such as Government hospitality, the Ecclesiastical Department, official charity and so forth; but the king would have none of that, on the ground that the traditional hospitality of the Arabs was a precious heritage which nothing could be allowed to impair, while the Ecclesiastical Commissioners did more good to the country than all the other departments put together, in catering for the spiritual welfare of the people. So in the end it was education that had to make the major contribution to the balancing of the budget, while certain other departments had to suffer minor cuts in the ample provision made for their contingencies. It mattered little anyhow, as the budget, apart from the untouchable provision made for the royal exchequer and unpremeditated raids from the same direction on the resources of the State, would be administered at the sole discretion of the Finance Department, which could always withhold funds provided in the budget from any other department soever, and did normally withhold the pay of the lower grades of officials for periods varying from eight months (at the worst) to four months (at the best).

This brief review of the see-saw methods by which the financial

* The budget estimates for 1951 have, however, been published since, with revenue and expenditure balancing at £49 million sterling as against £21½ million in 1947.

administration of the country has been conducted during the past twenty years has been necessary to demonstrate certain fundamental points of difference between the Arabian outlook on such things and the systems developed by long experience in most western countries and others trained in western ideas by long periods of foreign domination. Arabia is fundamentally a democratic country; with State ownership and State control accepted as a matter of course, as, for instance, in India, where British Conservative and Liberal Governments inherited and developed a truly socialist régime long before Socialism and the Labour Party were ever heard of in Britain. But *L'État c'est moi*, as the king of Arabia might say with the old India House; and in both cases the government of the country was the servant, not of the people but of the effective ruler: any delegation of authority being entirely within the discretion of the latter.

In Arabia there has been virtually no delegation of powers, except in the case of the Minister of Finance. Both the Crown Prince and the Viceroy of the Hijaz exercise the king's functions in his absence from their spheres; but they do so on his behalf, and subject to reference to him of all matters of moment, which in effect means everything but the details of pure routine. Similarly all ministers, advisers and the like in attendance at headquarters differ little from the various grades of secretarial officers in a European government: devilling cases for the king's orders, and occasionally deputed by him to see such orders executed, especially abroad when attending international and other conferences. Only on such external missions do they have opportunities of exercising a limited discretion, though for the most part they are briefed in such detail that they can do little more than recommend the reconsideration of points on which other parties to such conferences hold different views from those of Riyadh. This happens not infrequently in the Arab League, to whose meetings the other Arab States send their principal ministers with virtually plenipotentiary powers, while the Sa'udi-Arabian representative generally holds little more than a watching brief: with instructions to vote with the majority when possible or, in the event of an even cleavage, with the anti-Hashimite *bloc*. This has inevitably resulted in the loss of that initiative and leadership in the Arab world which might have fallen to Sa'udi Arabia by reason of her rapidly growing economic importance and the unique personal ascendancy of her king. No one will deny that these ministers and officials have worked hard, and even efficiently, within the limitations imposed on them by circumstances. But not one of them has proved able to rise above those

circumstances to give the country the lead of which it is desperately in need. And, considering that they were all poor men twenty-five years ago with no assets but their brains, and are all rich men now after years of basking in the king's bounty, their performance can only be regarded as disappointing. It is perhaps significant that in all this period there has not been a single case of resignation of office as a mark of disapproval of any particular policy or action.

'Abdullah Sulaiman,* on the contrary, has from the beginning stood out among his colleagues as a man of great capacity and originality, with a genius for leadership, and supremely confident both in the soundness of his views and in his ability to translate them into action. Physically a frail little man of "uncertain" age, but with something of the inspiration of the prophets in his soul, and endowed in full measure with the native intelligence of the desert, he entered upon his new task as Finance Minister as to the manner born more than twenty years ago, and has gone from strength to strength: concentrating his attention on the problems confronting him like a boxer in the ring, and risking the occasional frown of Fortune in his fanatical determination to win through. Respectful, and even humble, in the presence of the king, always sitting on the floor while folk of less distinction loll on chairs or brocaded benches in the assembly, he always seems to stand out in any company like Coquelin in a stage crowd, the strong silent man reserving his strength for the great occasions, which for him generally occur in the priviest of private conferences with his master. And the king himself quite recently put the matter in a nutshell. He was laying down the law on some subject or other, when he suddenly appealed for support to 'Abdullah Sulaiman, who was sitting some distance away, and who enjoys the advantage of a real or assumed hardness of hearing. "I didn't hear," he replied, as if waking from a daydream. "No!" retorted the king, "Ibn Sulaiman listens to no man, but everyone listens to Ibn Sulaiman!"

Many a true word is spoken in jest. It is indeed true that from the beginning 'Abdullah Sulaiman detected the schizophrenic quality of the king's mind, and set himself to reinforce that part of it which had to deal, but had not been trained to deal, with the new-fangled problems of the modern world. Apart from such matters as the gradual, and in the end virtually complete, introduction of the Sa'udi currency throughout the realm, and the establishment of revenue offices in all the provinces for the collection of taxes and

* See above, pp. 81 and 226.

other dues of the Government, to say nothing of the supervision of their disbursement, he studiously eschewed every temptation to meddle in the patriarchal affairs of Najd, and was content to write off as a lump sum the financial provision required by the king and the various provincial governors, mostly members of the royal family, for use at their unfettered discretion, and without any obligation to account for such funds. Much as he would no doubt have liked to reduce this chaotic arrangement to some sort of order, he realised that any attempt to do so under existing conditions would not only be doomed to failure, but would seriously jeopardise his freedom to mould the "civilised" provinces to his own pattern. He therefore concentrated his attention on the spheres within his reach. Fortified by the king's complete confidence in his loyalty and his ability to transform the administration of the Hijaz and the oil territory of the East on lines which would pass muster by European standards, and thus qualify the country to receive loans and other financial support from the west at times of stringency, he soon established virtually undisputed sway over all branches of the Government. He became in effect the arbiter of the country's destinies, and Fortune smiled on him. During the lean years of the war, his skill in extracting doles from Britain and America in support of his efforts to keep his king and country contented met with well-merited commendation. And since then the rapid development of the oil resources of the country has poured an ever-increasing flood of gold into the Government's coffers.

It only needed a little restraint and judicious administration to place the country beyond the reach of want for ever, and to raise it to a high level of permanent prosperity. But riches begat extravagance on a scale never before experienced in Arabia; and for this 'Abdullah Sulaiman must surely share the blame with the king. The argosies which sailed to Egypt and India during the war years on the proceeds of the bounty of Britain, and returned laden with the riches of Afric and Ind, spices and perfumes, silks and brocades, pearls and rubies and gold, and other delectable things long denied to the austere peoples of the warring nations themselves, recalled the spacious days of Hatshepsut and Solomon. British protests against such irresponsible spending of funds intended to keep Arabia alive were met by the king's own smiling acceptance of the full guilt for himself; and that effectively closed the incident. In Arabia one may look a gift horse in the mouth, but does not expect to be asked how it is being employed.

The oil made it possible for Arabia to indulge in extravagance out of its own resources. And it did this literally on a princely scale: leading off with the despatch of a dozen princes to the New World to inaugurate the new era of the United Nations, and to ransack America for motor-cars and other aids to the enjoyment of life. Other such expeditions followed, one led by the Crown Prince and another by 'Abdullah Sulaiman himself: each bringing back to Arabia substantial mementoes of its invasion of the richest country in the world, among whose wonders one member of one of these expeditions singled out as the most wonderful of them all a submarine night-club with walls of glass, through which the circumambient fish could watch the dancing! With American motor-cars and other industrial products, including cine-cameras and projectors, air-conditioning sets and sports paraphernalia, came many American notions and even a taste for American food. I have sat down to alfresco dinners in the Crown Prince's garden estate at Riyadh, to which every item on the menu had come fresh from America in refrigerator planes. And some of these princely estates are equipped with tennis, badminton and basket-ball courts, to say nothing of swimming-pools and an occasional football pitch. Hunting, otherwise than in motor-cars, racing (in a country where betting is still unknown and forbidden) and horse-riding, let alone camel-riding, are demodified in a country once famous for them all. America has certainly taught it how the rich should live in comfort; and her pupils have been apt at their lessons.

So the demand for the luxuries of life keeps pace easily enough with the expanding revenue of the State; and the Finance Minister must often be at his wits' end to meet it. But let it not be supposed that he has anything of the ascetic in his own make-up. He believes in spending; and he spends lavishly himself, though he prefers the spending to be done under his control and not in the haphazard manner prevalent at court, wherever the court may be: at Riyadh or Mecca or Taïf or in some desert camp. The humble servitor, sitting at the king's feet in the great assemblies, can transform himself in a trice outside the palace walls into his proper rôle of dictator. Hedged about by a princely bodyguard, he moves about the country in royal state in a fleet of the most modern cars; or holds court in princely style in his Meccan palace or in the sumptuous air-conditioned prefabricated "huts" of his Jidda residence, where he is as unapproachable by the public as the king is the reverse. His suitors are legion, all on business bent: and lucky to be accorded the few

minutes of his precious time necessary for the disposal of their urgent business, while scores of others throng his anterooms and lobbies, awaiting the summons to his private sanctum for similar interviews. His energy is boundless; but even he could not possibly carry alone the heavy burden of affairs and responsibility that rests upon his shoulders. He has however, gathered round himself, and those members of his family who constitute the core of the financial administration, a large and, generally speaking, efficient corps of secretaries to aid him in his task. Many of them are men of first-rate ability, competent to deputise for the Minister on occasion, and often trusted with important negotiations up to the point at which his own intervention becomes necessary. And needless to say, most of them, like their colleagues in the king's entourage, are rich men who have prospered in the harness of high office.

Such are the two mainsprings of the Sa'udi administration, evenly balanced at Riyadh and at Jidda: with the strain of executive authority and responsibility gradually and almost imperceptibly shifting from the former to the latter, as the complexities of modern administration increase in response to a rising income and the highly technical development projects made possible thereby. It is almost possible to date the beginning of this process exactly. Up to about the middle of 1939 the centre of gravity was definitely at Riyadh, while the wide discretion allowed to the Finance Minister in the conduct of the administration was principally exercised in meeting the demands of the court as of priority and distributing the residue of available funds to the best possible advantage in the maintenance of the other departments of State. During this period the king himself was the effective head of the Government, and presided over all meetings of his privy council to discuss all important matters and dictate the decisions "agreed upon". He sometimes nodded or dozed during the reading of tedious long-winded documents, like the oil concession, the motor monopoly agreement, the Marconi contract, and so forth. But he generally had a good enough sense of their contents and, at the end of such readings, he would ask for comments, if any, before giving his blessing to the schemes involved. In all such cases, of course, the spade-work inevitably fell upon the Finance Minister, or on *ad hoc* committees on which he was associated with other Ministers or officials nominated by the king. But their proposals had to run the gauntlet of criticism in the privy council in the presence of the king, who was quite capable of taking a line of his own if such criticism seemed to him well founded. The new

problems were confronting him gradually and, while he left the devilling thereof to those best qualified for the task, there was no sign of any incapacity on his part to grasp their significance, and thus to keep the initiative in his own hands.

The change came during the war years. Ibn Sa‘ud never made any secret of his genuine sympathy with the Allied cause; but he set his face resolutely against involving his country in a quarrel which was none of its concern. His neutrality was genuine and strictly observed, as he showed in the case of the Italian sailors who were forced to take refuge on his shores, and who were interned out of reach of the Allies in such comfort as the hill-station of Taif could offer. At the same time he declined to allow the German Minister at Jidda, who was away on leave at the outbreak of war, to return to his post, to avoid all possibility of unpleasantness in the narrow quarters of that town; and later on he made suitable arrangements for the Italian Minister and community to reside on one of the quarantine islands in the harbour with the same object in view. He would not have any part of his country converted into a propaganda battleground; and, by the same token, such propaganda literature as was forwarded to his Government by the British authorities from time to time was discreetly put away in office cupboards; to be used in due course as scribbling-paper by the wireless monitors, whose duty it was to listen in to the wireless war news from all sources, and take it down for his benefit. At the same time, while always ready to receive British, American and other visitors at Riyadh, he tended to avoid all but urgently necessary visits to the Hijaz to obviate involvement in the politics of the war, whose developments he followed earnestly enough through the wireless from the safe distance of his desert capital. Later in the war, when the need for discretion and circumspection was no longer pressing, he made no secret of his satisfaction at the course it was taking, and accepted invitations to meet President Roosevelt and Mr Churchill in Egypt. The latter introduced him to his colleagues as “our very good friend in time of need”, while the President, seated in his invalid-chair to receive him and apologising for not rising, introduced him to a sedentary mode of life which soon proved too tempting to be resisted. It is difficult to remember exactly when the king’s arthritic knee, the result of a battle wound, first began to give him real trouble. He always perhaps walked a little stiffly, but certainly up till the middle thirties he was taking part in the Najdi war-dances on occasions of festival; and up to the time of my departure from Arabia in July, 1940, he was walking

quite normally: camping and shooting in the spring, and enjoying regular outings in the summer to one or another of the many gardens which were beginning by then to spread over the desert in the immediate neighbourhood of Riyadh. But when I returned to Riyadh exactly five years later at the end of the European war, he had received the President's gift of an invalid-chair like his own; and it was then simply a question of time when he would surrender unconditionally to its charms, as he has of course done long since. But the charms and blandishments of the President and Mr Churchill were powerless to shake him out of his neutrality; the idea of his declaring war on Germany seemed too ludicrous for a moment's entertainment. Yet the matter was to be raised again by the British and American representatives at Jidda in connection with the proposal to set up an United Nations Organisation. The *sine qua non* condition of original membership of that august body was a declaration of war against the Axis Powers before March 31st, 1945. The king, who had declined to join the League of Nations a quarter of a century earlier and had had no reason to regret that decision, had no desire to join the new institution; but he was strongly pressed to do so by the two Great Powers whose war-time bounty he had enjoyed. Yet this was a matter of principle, on which he could not give way; and a last-minute effort by the British Minister to change his mind was met by a polite but firm negative. Within a few minutes, however, the king had repented, and recalled the delighted envoy, to inform him that he would after all declare war to show his solidarity with the peace-loving nations! On the other hand he never made any secret of his disgust at the Nuremberg trials, and forbade his wireless monitors to mention the proceedings in his presence. And the only "war criminal", Saiyid Rashid 'Ali Jilani, to seek refuge with him has remained an honoured guest at his court ever since.

As will be seen from the above, Ibn Sa'ud during this trying period was still very much master in his own house, though he preferred to live on the top floor, leaving the housekeeping and other concerns of the estate to his steward. After all there was little revenue to collect in a land deprived of all its normal sources of livelihood. And, as the requirements of the court had to be provided for by hook or by crook, it was better and more dignified to leave the problem to the wit of the Finance Minister. So, little by little, and by dint of some extremely clever juggling, 'Abdullah Sulaiman acquired that ascendancy over the whole administrative machine which he enjoys

to this day. It was well indeed that some effective control had been established before the reopening of the oil sluices in 1944, which from that day to this have flooded the country with golden silt.

But these war-years bore heavily on the king who, in his secret heart, had long been hoping for another world war, from which perchance Arabia might prosper vicariously as she had done in the first. But at the beginning everything seemed to be going awry; and by the end of it Sa'udi Arabia had become heavily involved in the toils of the western world: even to the extent of having an American military base in her territory, constructing and administering the modern airport of Dhahran. This was a vital gauge in the hands of Fate, and still continues in a somewhat modified, though effective, form. In addition there was an American military mission at Taïf, training the young idea of Arabia to become soldiers after the western pattern. And, of course, American development of the oil-fields and American constructional engineers were rapidly changing the whole structure of Arabian life. The urgent need of money, and ever more money, was over-riding all other considerations. And the king, with his enormous family and countless hosts of other dependants, was committed to the hilt to a course which conflicted patently with the pattern of Arabian tradition, in which he believed profoundly. The two things were mutually incompatible; and Ibn Sa'ud had already gone too far along the primrose path to turn back. He seemed at times to bear it hardly. At any rate, when I left him in 1940 for my long exile in England, he was as bright and debonair as he had been at any period of his career: carrying the heavy cares of state with a buoyancy which had always been his most marked characteristic in bad times as well as in good. Five years later he was a care-worn man, already tiring under the strain of a vigorous life: with a crippled knee to which he was rapidly surrendering, and other signs of the inroads of the great enemy, which the most skilful dyes could not altogether conceal. He was clearly following the path of least resistance through the dark forest of a world he had never seen and only knew by hearsay, though by now he had met many, and in the coming years was to meet many more, of its denizens; attracted to his desert sanctuary by the new rumour of its fabulous wealth and a desire to see the man who had tamed a turbulent wilderness, and made of it one of the few havens of peace and security in the troubrous world of our times. Unfortunately they could not see him as he was in the days of his prime. The old strong voice was muted, as it mumbled the shibboleths of an unfamiliar

jargon; the quick clear mind was blurred and hesitant as it struggled with the problems of a strange world; and even the spirit, which had flamed in his soul in the days of conviction and conquest, seemed to be subdued by doubts, and to have lost something of the fire which had inspired his devotion to a creed and a cause. Both had triumphed under his guidance; and both have lost ground since the fervour of his own enthusiasm began to be tempered by the suave winds of the west.

Yet the fire is still there under the surface, damped down but not burned out. One has only to be present when the king is foregathered with a Badawin deputation, or when he is in solemn conference with his archbishops and clerics. In the more familiar atmosphere of such occasions the old eloquence bursts the bonds of long restraint; the voice resumes the quality of command and decision; and the expert is seen at work on a problem with which long experience has made him thoroughly familiar. He comes alive, dissecting the matter in dispute with all a surgeon's skill, as the rival parties plead their cases with all their desert passion, and giving his verdict in winged words which go straight to the mark. The scowling chiefs will then rise and kiss each other's foreheads in token of the settlement of their quarrel; and they and their followers, kissing the king's hand, will file out of the audience, knowing that they have heard an order which must be obeyed, and knowing moreover that that order is just. As with the Badawin, so with the religious Shaikhs, the king speaks in their own idiom as to the manner born. If it is a question of general slackness of attendance at prayers or some other sign of backsliding, he will put the bishops on the defensive; lecturing them on their duty to keep their flock in order, and deplored with passionate eloquence the all too manifest laxity of the people in matters religious; and imploring them with emotion, often even with tears, not to flinch from their duty to God to save his servants from the awful consequences of default. In all such matters he is in deadly earnest: for when he talks about religion, as he often does in his private and public sessions, one can see that he speaks with all the conviction of a simple faith, unshaken by the wonders and horrors of modern science. Yet he is not unaware of the scepticism and confusion that have seeped into his country from the western world in recent times, though he is perhaps conscious of the impossibility of checking tendencies which are the inevitable consequence of western education and foreign travel, which he himself has done as much as anybody to encourage in his own family and among his subjects.

As in other countries where secularisation is widespread, there will always be an honoured place for religion in Arabia. But it is extremely unlikely that religion will ever again be the principal, let alone exclusive, preoccupation of the Arabs, as it was in Najd only twenty years ago, when it held out to man high hopes of substantial compensation for the woes and weariness of life on earth. Today life is too pleasant to encourage excessive speculation about the hereafter.

Obviously the white heat of Wahhabi fanaticism, which dominated desert politics during the second and third decades of this century, could not last for ever. The conquest of the Hijaz had exhausted the supply of fuel for its fires; and the suppression of the *Ikhwan* rebellion of 1929/30 against the author and leader of the movement had stamped out its last flicker. Ibn Sa'ud had deliberately destroyed the Frankenstein he had created lest it should destroy him; and he has enjoyed in peace for twenty years the fruits of a victory which could not have been won without the monster's help. But the reaction of the country as a whole in the direction of indifference and even secularisation, fostered, of course, by the rapid influx of alien influences, has perhaps been more complete than one could have anticipated before those influences began to operate.

In a remarkable address to the British Institute of International Affairs in March, 1925, that is to say after the fall of Taif and Mecca but before the capture of Madina and Jidda or the conquest of the Hijaz, Dr D. G. Hogarth, than whom there was no more competent student of Arabian tendencies in those days, attempted a prospect of the future. Some passages of his lecture merit quotation in the light of our knowledge of what has happened since those days. His address was in the main an apology for the British Government's war-time policy in the Middle East and, in particular, for its failure to support King Husain, its own candidate for hegemony in Arabia, against the Wahhabi invasion. But it is rather his estimate of the probable trend of Wahhabi development with which we are here concerned. "Sooner or later," he said, "we knew that Hejaz must go under for a while"—a remarkable statement in view of the unanimous decision of Lord Curzon's Departmental Committee in March, 1919, to support King Husain in the conviction that he would experience no difficulty in disposing of the Wahhabi menace! But let that pass. Dr Hogarth went on:

"Now, while . . . the fanatic spirit of Nejd has boiled up and over more than once, none of its past ebullitions has, *for obvious reasons equally operative today*, enjoyed any but very brief life. . . . I see nothing in the circum-

stances or constituents of the present Wahabite expansion to promise it longer life than has been enjoyed by earlier Nejdean ebullitions. These, to take only one test, have not prevailed in Mecca for ten years on the average. Just conceivably the masterful and sagacious personality of the Sultan, Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, may prolong this last domination: but for myself I expect him to find, not less quickly than his forbears, that Mecca, Taif and Medina are so many Capuas, sapping the fervour and fortitude of his fanatics, and that he has over-reached the limits of one-man rule. . . . *I prophesy therefore that Arabia is not in for more than a decade at most of Wahabite domination outside Najd.* . . . The facts indeed go far to confirm my view that already *Wahabism has both reached its geographical limit and also exceeded the capacity of any single control.* . . . Is it prejudicial to our interest that the Wahabites should dominate Taif, Mecca and the rest of south Hejaz, except Jidda? That is about their present position."

On the whole he answered this question in favour of the Wahhabis; but the passages I have italicised will be sufficient to show that his estimate of Wahhabi prospects was far from optimistic, while in one other passage, though more plausibly, he went wildly wrong. In the course of a brief discussion of potential British interests in the country he said:

"Arabia neither sells nor buys nearly enough to weight political scales. Nor, with all deference to certain enterprising firms and individuals who have gone concession hunting there since the War, do I foresee a day when this will cease to be true. Since Yemenite coffee was superseded by Brazilian and African, Arabian exports have been trivial. Imports are hardly worth more consideration."

Hogarth did not live to see the thirty-million-dollar railway creeping across the eastern desert to Riyadh, nor the tarmac roads linking Jidda with Mecca and Madina (the latter now under construction), nor the great modern harbours of Jidda and Dammam, nor the wireless stations of Arabia, nor the electric power grids of its four great cities, nor the piped water-supply of Jidda, nor the great agricultural development scheme in Khajr, nor the great oil-derricks in the desert, nor the goldmines of Solomon rediscovered and producing their precious metal, nor the aeroplanes of the Sa'udi-Arabian Air Line which traverse the peninsula in half a day's camel-journey, nor indeed many other things which would astonish him if he could return to check up on the progress of his prophecies.

I too was among the prophets, with the advantage of priority over Hogarth, who disagreed with me profoundly at the time. And I can

at least claim that my view has been substantially justified by events and by the present shape of Sa'udi Arabia. In connection with my passage through the oasis of Khurma, then in dispute between Ibn Sa'ud and King Husain, a few days before Christmas of 1917, I referred to it* as "a locality destined, for all its seeming insignificance, to a fateful share in the making of history, perhaps indeed to be the earthly grave of the Utopian ideal of Arab unity, perhaps, who knows? to be the anvil on which that ideal may yet be hammered into reality". Khurma was indeed the anvil on which Arabian unity was fashioned, as it exists today, within the uttermost limits allowed by European, mainly British, imperialism, which Ibn Sa'ud was too wise to provoke into conflict. The only Arab country not under European domination and not included within the bounds of Ibn Sa'ud's united Arabia is the Yaman, which indeed came within an ace of fulfilling another prediction of mine in the three-weeks' war of 1934, and would have done so but for the moderation of Ibn Sa'ud and his fear of European intervention.

"The territories at present under British and French mandates being excluded from consideration," [I wrote in 1929†] "it is difficult to envisage the future of Arabia otherwise than under Wahhabi auspices, with the final consummation of its union under Wahhabi rule dependent on the result of an almost inevitable and epoch-making conflict between Ibn Sa'ud and the ruler of the Yaman in the near or not very distant future. The ultimate triumph of the former can scarcely be doubted in the light of the lessons of the past quarter of a century; and those who would peer into the future can but see the Wahhabi king dominant, as none of his predecessors ever was, over the whole length and breadth of the Arabian peninsula, and wearing on his head the triple diadem of Mecca, Riyadh and San'a, encircled by a wreath of British and European goodwill."

The goodwill of the world is there indeed in full measure to cheer the old king, as he braces himself to guide his people through the years that yet remain of a great reign, to which there has probably been no parallel in Arabian history. Legend, it is true, preserves a record of three very early kings of Sheba, which in those days included most, if not all, of what is now Sa'udi Arabia, who reigned for periods of 125, 180 and 160 years respectively! But, legend apart, the only reliable record of a reign comparable to that of Ibn Sa'ud in length relates to a much later king of Sheba, Warau-amar Aiman, who appears to have ruled Arabia from A.D. 378 to 425‡ and who,

* *The Heart of Arabia*, I, p. 168.

† *Arabia*, p. 363.

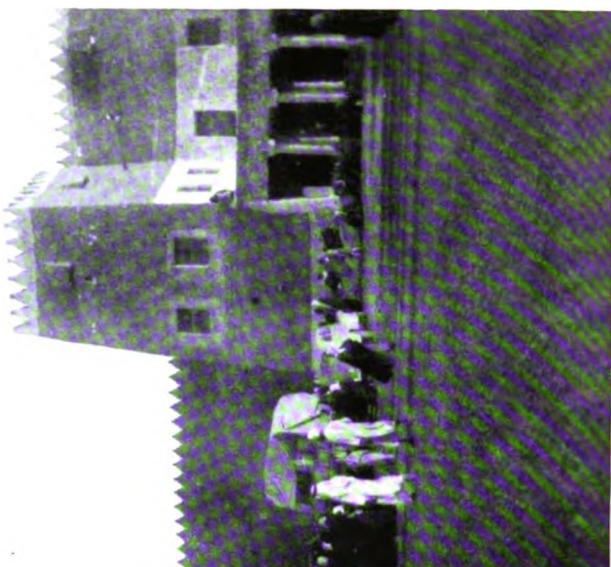
‡ See *The Background of Islam*, p. 116.



The palace of Badi'a at Riyadh in 1935



The palace of the King's brother, Muhammad, at 'Ataiyiqah (Riyadh) in 1938



The Governor's palace at Hail in 1935



The King's town-palace at Riyadh, undergoing reconstruction, in 1949

curiously enough, was a Jew by religion though of pure Arab race. The names of his father, brother and nephew, all kings of Sheba in their turn, are mentioned in an interesting Sabaean inscription recently found in the Central Arabian district of Duwadami.

Be that as it may, the task that confronts Ibn Sa'ud today is no sinecure for a man who has laboured so strenuously all through his life. Much of the burden of government, particularly in its more exotic aspects, has, as has already been explained, been taken off his shoulders by 'Abdullah Sulaiman, who is himself not as young as he used to be, and certainly no younger than the king. Yet, so far as one can see, apart from the fact that the succession to the throne itself has been secured, no provision has been made for the future. The most urgent need at the present moment is the creation of a governmental machine to conduct the administration of the country in an orderly fashion and to obviate any break in continuity as the present passes into the future. Successful as the king has been, with the assistance of his Minister of Finance, in preserving the centralised control of a country unfamiliar with parliamentary institutions and lacking in experienced personnel, the rapidly increasing burden of government has already passed beyond the capacity of one-man rule. And it is only to be hoped by those who wish to see the complete triumph of a unique dispensation, that steps may not be too long delayed to create at least an executive Council of Ministers, preferably under the presidency of the Crown Prince, to relieve the king of all but the supreme responsibilities, and to usher in, in due course, a new era in the history of Arabia. A very strong governmental team could easily be formed out of the existing material, which comprises some men of outstanding ability and long experience in the service of a great leader, as well as many competent officials who, given a reasonable chance to show their paces in responsible positions, are capable of manning the various departments of State with distinction. It is also to be expected that a less arbitrary system of government would progressively attract to the service of Sa'udi Arabia from the neighbouring Arab countries many able men who, for one reason or another, cannot be effectively employed in their own homelands; for instance, Saiyid Rashid 'Ali Jilani, who has been referred to above, and Jamal Bey Husaini, who appears to have given up all hope of the successful functioning of the "all-Palestine Government", recently set up at Ghazza in reaction to the division of the Holy Land between Jordan and the Jews.

If such a body could take its place in the constitution of Sa'udi

Arabia with collective responsibility for the administration of the country under the supreme authority and control of an effective king, to the exclusion of all other personal ascendancies, there is little doubt that the realm founded by Ibn Sa'ud will be able to make its way in the modern world without recourse to imitative parliamentary institutions, such as have proved a snare and a delusion in other Arab countries, like Syria and Egypt. The East, essentially more democratic than the West in its complete freedom from race and colour prejudice, should be capable of developing a system of its own, more suitable for lands whose peoples have not yet received the doubtful benefits of mass "education" without tears!

Above all such a body would relieve the king himself of a burden heavier than his ageing shoulders can be expected to bear without distress, besides providing an easy transition from the old order to a new deal, whose cards will have to be played by younger and, inevitably, less skilful hands. A political genius is not born in every generation of a ruling dynasty; but it would be surprising if there were not one or two thoroughly competent individuals among the two-score sons of Ibn Sa'ud. The trouble is that under existing conditions most of them have nothing to do, while the only education they get is that which they pick up in their actual experience of life. One might have thought that they would make admirable officers, if properly trained, in the "regular" army of one division, which for the past three years a British military mission has been helping to organise; or understudies to the governors of the various provinces; or even in the ranks of the civil service. But the king is too sensitive about his family, and prefers to tether it to his apron-strings lest it should make mistakes and incur criticism. The inevitable result is that the youngsters run wild whenever they do get away from home. Even in the case of his elder sons, on whom after all the burden of the future must fall, and who, to do them justice, take their cares seriously and find much to criticise in the existing administration of the country, such attempts as they make to intervene in public affairs by making suggestions for improvements are generally brushed aside by their father as the vapourings of inexperienced children. That is rather hard on young men in their forties; many of them have had indeed more practical experience of the modern world beyond the limits of Arabia than the king himself, who has deliberately avoided making contacts with a civilisation so strangely different from that in which he was brought up.

At various times during my long association with His Majesty I

have indeed suggested the advantage that would accrue to him and his country from an occasional foreign tour to see the world as it is, rather than as it is presented in the caricatures of the vulgar press, or in illustrated papers which seep into Arabia in ever-increasing volume. Many years ago he retorted that he really had no wish to make the closer acquaintance of a society in whose activities he would see so much that he would so inevitably disapprove of that he might fail in the duties of a guest. On another occasion he seemed more inclined to consider the idea of visiting some of the countries with which he was in political contact, to establish personal relations with their governments and leading men; but he added that he would do it in style after his own fashion. He would charter a ship to carry him and his myrmidons, in numbers suitable to his dignity, abroad; and on arrival at his destination he would establish himself and his party in a mansion, hired or purchased for the occasion, so that they could live therein the life to which they were accustomed at home: driving out to see the sights of such countries, their military and industrial establishments, their race meetings and other inoffensive amusements, while avoiding contact with the more improper side of their lives: their cocktail parties and their dance-halls, their cinemas and their theatres, and so forth. I could only urge that the whole point of such a visit would be lost if he did not want to see the life of the people as they lived it.

It is not surprising that no such visit has ever eventuated, except by proxy. During the past thirty years, beginning with the romantic visit of the Amir Faisal to England and the European battlefields of the Great War in 1919, many of the sons, nephews and grandsons of the king have between them visited practically all the countries of Europe, including Russia, and have crossed the Atlantic to become quite familiar with North America. India, Turkey, Egypt and the Levant countries have also been visited by these princely ambassadors from Sa'udi Arabia. As for the king, he has of course long been familiar with the petty principalities on the Arabian shore of the Persian Gulf, and his visits to such places as Kuwait and Bahrain scarcely fall within the category of foreign travel. His first experience of that was in 1916, when he visited Basra as the guest of the Army Commander and Sir Percy Cox, as noted in an earlier chapter.*

His next experience of entertainment by British hosts was on board the British sloop H.M.S. "Lupin", outside the territorial waters of Arabia and Iraq in the Persian Gulf, in 1930, when he was

* See pp. 46-47.

invited by Sir Francis Humphreys, the High Commissioner for Iraq, to meet King Faisal for a general discussion and settlement of their differences, of which a by-product had been the *Ikhwan* revolt. Everything was scrupulously arranged to obviate any unintended offence to the susceptibilities of the Wahhabi king; and even King Faisal had to slink away for a quiet cigarette in some convenient cabin. The only thing that shocked Ibn Sa'ud during all these proceedings occurred at church parade, which the two kings attended as spectators of a typical occasion on a British warship. Unfortunately the sharp eye of the Wahhabi, probably witnessing a Christian service for the first time, observed that the troops sat upon their bibles (probably prayer-books) when they were not reading from them! One cannot imagine the Quran being treated so discourteously in Islamic lands; and on one occasion a few years before the "Lupin" incident the king, having graciously agreed to attend a tea-party given by my wife at Jidda, found our best cushion awaiting him in the seat of honour. He checked a moment, and then asked for the removal of the cushion: a rich silk affair embroidered with the names of God and his Apostle!

It was not till the spring of 1945 that Ibn Sa'ud next ventured on a journey abroad. In the interval he had, of course, become quite familiar with Europeans and Americans, who thronged the country in connection with the various development projects in operation, or came as visitors from afar. During the war years it was particularly the Americans who sought to develop his acquaintance and to establish diplomatic contact with his Government through a Minister accredited to the Wahhabi court for the first time. Special envoys of President Roosevelt also visited him at Riyadh; and the supreme moment came when he was invited to meet the British and American architects of approaching victory. Ibn Sa'ud set sail for the Suez Canal in an American destroyer, and met the President on board the cruiser "Augusta", moored in the Bitter Lakes over against Isma'iliya. From there he proceeded by road to the Faiyum, passing through Cairo on the way, but not breaking his journey there, as his presence on Egyptian soil was as it were incognito, to meet Mr Churchill and his colleagues at lunch by the shores of Lake Karun. This was strictly a business visit to the war chiefs, and gave the king little opportunity of enjoying the fleshpots of Egypt, or of seeing anything of the wonders of a famous land. Cairo was the first great city he had ever seen; and of course he passed by the Pyramids on his way to and from the Faiyum.

King Faruq had paid a State visit to the Hijaz in the previous year, and the two kings had then spent some days together in a sumptuous camp between Yanbu' and Madina under the shadow of Jabal Radhwa. It was then that the idea of a return visit by Ibn Sa'ud to Egypt had been mooted; but etiquette forbade its combination with the short visit to meet the American President and the British Prime Minister on Egyptian soil. The State visit was accordingly postponed till January, 1946, when it took place in a blaze of glory in a world once more at peace. The Egyptian royal yacht conveyed the party, in which I had the unique honour of being included, from Jidda to Suez; and the fortnight spent by Ibn Sa'ud on Egyptian soil was an occasion never to be forgotten. The people of Egypt took him to their hearts: thronging the streets wherever he passed, and often barring his passage to get a closer view of the great man of Arabia, or just to touch the car in which he rode. The enthusiasm was tremendous: women held up their babies to bask in the monarch's smile; girls lined the pavements to watch the passage of a modern Solomon; and Solomon himself was not blind to their charms. "There are some nice girls in this country," he said one night at Alexandria, when he was left alone with his own boon-companions after an exhausting day of continuous sightseeing and entertainment. "I wouldn't mind picking a bunch of them to take back to Arabia, say a hundred thousand pounds' worth of the beauties!" Yet it had seemed to me during the day that he had passed through those cheering, laughing crowds with an impassive face, which suggested that he was merely enduring an ordeal thrust upon him by his fame; and I had wished that he could have seen these scenes when he was young enough to enjoy them! And many a time I thought, as we passed through these extraordinary demonstrations of joy and homage, that if there had been any good cause to fight for, Ibn Sa'ud could have stirred the millions of Egypt to follow him wherever he led. Yet he never made a speech during the whole of his visit, nor gave an interview to journalists for publication, nor ever seemed to make any visible response to the seething enthusiasm around him. He had probably made up his mind not to allow or encourage any use of his State visit as a stamping-ground for propaganda of any kind, which might give offence to anyone. The politics of Egypt, with Mustafa Nahas Pasha still in the wilderness and Hasan Banna and his Muslim brotherhood rampant, were certainly delicate enough to warrant such caution. At the same time any sign of approval or encouragement of the official Egyptian

demand for the withdrawal of British troops, and the unification of the Nile valley under the Egyptian crown, would have given offence to his British and other western friends. It was not an easy situation for one in his position to face; and he gave the impression of being weary with the burden of greatness, and of feeling the strain of his advancing years. It was, I think, the first time that I realised that he had crossed the threshold of old age.

Banquet followed banquet without respite; and visits to the various wonders of Egypt: the Pyramids and the Barrage, the University, where the young ladies were not admitted to the Encaenium nor paraded in their gym-suits, and the Mosque of al Azhar, the cotton mills of Shajarat al Kubra and the Muassat hospital at Alexandria. It was a heavy programme to endure, despite all the efforts of his hosts to cater for his comfort; and the new impressions crowded so thickly on his attention that his memory of the details of his visit must have been rather blurred when the proceedings were all over.

King Faruq may have found his guest somewhat heavy on the hand at times. What a contrasting pair they made too: the young Pharaoh, ruler of the most ancient realm on earth, young and full of confidence in the future when, under his guidance, it would surely shake off the shackles of dependence and stand forth once more among the nations, free and glorious as it was in days of yore; and the old lion of the desert, lame of old wounds and tired with the cares of long dominion, silent and seemingly morose as he peered into a dim future, shorn of some of the splendour imagined in times long gone by: conscious of great achievement, but awed by the magnificence of a land favoured by nature and long fostered by man. Grateful as he was for the extraordinarily warm welcome accorded to him in Egypt, Ibn Sa'ud was glad to get back to Arabia, where he could relax in the simple but comfortable routine of his own court.

Yet even there there was no real peace. The end of the war had brought no respite to the peoples of the world, while in the Middle East itself there were problems in plenty to cause grave anxiety to its governments. The Arab League, like the United Nations Organisation, was not slow to show the deep rift in its ranks. Its dissensions resulted in the fiasco of the Palestine war, in which Sa'udi Arabia played but a nominal and inconspicuous part: being more concerned to scotch the ambitions of the Hashimite dynasties of 'Iraq and Trans-Jordan, than to support vigorously a united effort to save Palestine from the Jews. Ever since the formation of the Arab

League in March, 1945, Ibn Sa'ud has adopted the general position that all matters of common interest to the Arabs should be left to that body, whose decisions he would be prepared to endorse. But when Trans-Jordan qualified for admission to the League two years later by becoming an "independent" kingdom, he drew closer to Egypt as the natural leader of a movement to block the "Fertile Crescent" and "Greater Syria" projects, primarily sponsored by King 'Abdullah and generally supported by Iraq. The Lebanon also had no sympathy with such schemes in view of their potential menace to her own independence, while Syria Infelix was, of course, the pawn at stake between the rival parties. King 'Abdullah had some support in the country thanks to his lavish expenditure on propaganda at the expense of the British taxpayer; and it has been freely suspected that his bid for the Syrian throne has the backing of Israel in return for certain contingent accommodations in Palestine itself: the first of which has recently materialised in the occupation of the important area by the Jews in which the Yarmuk river meets the Jordan. This was done, it is said, in connivance with King 'Abdullah, but without the knowledge of his Government, which has threatened war and contented itself with making a somewhat half-hearted protest to the United Nations.

Be that as it may, there was little danger of the "Greater Syria" idea making any real headway, so long as Shukri al Quwwatli was President of the Republic. But, when he sought and obtained a second term of office, the situation changed. The three revolutions of 1949 were watched at Riyadh with mixed feelings, according as they reflected, or were deemed to reflect, sympathy with or antipathy towards the ideal of a "Greater Syria" under the Hashimite crown. The political situation in Syria would seem now to have settled down to a steadier stroke; but it is significant that the kings of Egypt and Sa'udi Arabia did not appear in the list, published by the Syrian Government, of rulers or governments which had sent congratulations to the venerable Saiyid Hashim 'Atassi on his recent election as President of the Republic. The argument is that a certain amount of discretion must be exercised in the recognition of régimes which succeed each other with such bewildering frequency; and the inevitable inference is that for the moment the situation in Syria is creating a certain amount of alarm and despondency in Cairo and at Riyadh.*

* The relations between Syria and Sa'udi Arabia have since been very satisfactorily stabilised.

This morbid preoccupation with the ups and downs of the fortunes of King 'Abdullah is symptomatic of a disease which has kept the Arabs weak for many centuries. It is scarcely likely that a cure will be found for it in the lifetime of their present leaders, who spent the space of two world wars in mutual dissensions, while their mutual friends occupied themselves in beating their real enemies to their knees. They have carried their quarrels into the twilight period which separates the second war from a potential third, for which the storm-clouds seem to be gathering apace in every quarter of the world. Here again the common enemy is too obvious to be mistaken and the danger is perhaps greater than ever before; yet the project of an Arab collective security pact, mooted recently by some members of the League in imitation of Western "defensive" associations, proved abortive owing to the previous commitments of Jordan and 'Iraq on lines not altogether compatible with the ideas of Egypt and Sa'udi Arabia.

Nevertheless, apart from their much advertised, though scarcely justifiable, apprehension of an aggressive irruption of Israel into their territories in the future, all the Arab countries recognise that the main threat to their security derives from sources behind the "Iron Curtain". They call it Communism, perhaps to justify that *Jihad* feeling, though they know in their hearts, or would know if they took the trouble to think instead of swallowing the propaganda dished out to them so liberally by interested parties, that it is nothing more nor less than their old enemy, imperialism, in undisguised wolf's clothing. As for Ibn Sa'ud, it is by no means easy to analyse the complicated reaction of his mind to the present world situation. It can be stated quite categorically that he would abhor and does not believe in the possibility of a Russian victory in the event of another war. Yet he is puzzled by, and even disgruntled at, the apparently tortuous policy of the Western Powers, and their slowness in tackling the problem which manifestly confronts them. Why don't they attack the enemy while they have the superiority in the matter of the atomic bomb, he seems to ask, before he too has the advantage of the same weapon? Incidentally, he would reject as utterly silly the idea of anyone being squeamish about the use of so effective a weapon. All is fair in love and war, and after all the sole object of both is victory! He denies very strongly any desire to see another world war in his time; yet sometimes one can scarcely but think that he protests too much at the soft impeachment. Arabia did much too well out of the first two wars to shrink from the prospect of another,

in which she would again play the part of an admiring spectator of the prowess of others: forgetting perhaps that this time she has a vital stake in the game which may bring the struggle uncomfortably near home. The man who has brought peace to Arabia regards strife as the natural lot of mankind; fearing that, if the Titans delay too long in getting on with the good work, he may not see the approaching Armageddon, he muses fretfully on the signs of the times: earthquake and flood; distances reduced from years to days or hours; the voice of man himself reaching round the globe in a trice; vice masquerading as virtue, especially in the Communist world, where, he is quite convinced, man normally sleeps with his mother or sister; the light of virtue dimmed even in Arabia; and, finally, the little yellow men of Gog and Magog emerging from their far eastern caves to challenge God himself and to herald the coming of Antichrist. Verily, the last hour cannot be far off now! "I sometimes wish," says the king—and he has said it more than once of late—"I sometimes wish that it would come now to end all this trouble and confusion in the world." By Islamic standards the expression of such a wish is improper, bordering on the impious, as the king's brother 'Abdullah very gently pointed out: adding that there was a genuine saying of the Prophet, to the effect that the last hour will not come upon the world until the Island of the Arabs is transformed into a land of meadows and rivers. There is obviously plenty of time yet ahead for humanity, while the identification of the North Koreans with Gog and Magog is not perhaps absolutely certain. Anyway Ibn Sa'ud is by no means unique among men in desiring to be an eyewitness of doomsday. Long live the king! and may his works live long after him!

APPENDIX I—GENEALOGY

Notes. The bracketed numbers against names in this table refer to the explanatory notes following the genealogy.

Names in heavy type are those of actual rulers.
Names in italic are those of female members of
royal family.

The Roman figures at the top of the table show the generations of the family.

A question mark against a name denotes a doubt as to its authenticity.

OF THE SA'UD FAMILY

X.	XI.	XII.	XIII.	XIV.	XV.	XVI.	XVII.
(5) Mu-hammad							
Farhan 'Abdul-Rahman	(12) Mishari	'Abdul-Rahman	Miqrin	(13) Muhammad	Miqrin Sa'ud 'Abdul-'Aziz 'Abdullah 'Abdul-Rahman Hasan	Mishari Fahd Sa'd 'Abdullah	
Hasan	'Abdul-Muhsin	Hasan Ibrahim	Muhammad 'Abdul-Muhsin	Ibrahim	Fahd Sa'ud Mishari 'Abdul-'Aziz 'Abdullah Muhammad	Sa'ud	
'Abdullah Sa'ud Miqrin	Ibrahim	Sa'ud	(15) Nasir	'Abdul-Rahman 'Abdullah (16) Muhammad Sa'ud	Sa'd 'Abdul-'Aziz 'Abdullah Muhammad Mishari Abdul-Rahman Nasir	Farhan Fahd Faisal Khalid	
			Turki	Faisal	'Abdullah Fahd	'Abdul-'Aziz Farhan Farhan Turki 'Abdullah Faisal	
			Ibrahim				
Yusuf	Muhammad	Yusuf	'Abdul-'Aziz				
'Abdullah	Nasir	Faisal	Nasir	Fahd Faisal Hidhlul	(18) Fahd (19) Faisal (20) Sa'ud	Muhammad Faisal	
Ibrahim	Thunaian	(21) 'Abdullah	(22) Muham-mad Ibrahim	Thunaian	Ibrahim Muhammad	Thunaian 'Abdullah	Bandar Muhammad Sa'ud Fahd
				'Abdullah	Faisal (23) Ahmad Sa'ud (24) 'Abdul-Qadir (25) 'Abdul-Rahman	'Abdul-'Aziz 'Abdullah (Zaki)	Mansur

Appendix I—Genealogy of the Sa'ud family (contd.)

IX.	X.	XI.	XII.	XIII.	XIV.	XV.	XVI.
(26) Muhammad	(27) Faisal (28) Sa'ud	Nasir ? Hasan ? Husain ? 'Abdul-Rahman ?					
	(29) 'Ali (30) 'Abdul-'Aziz	(31) Sa'ud	(32) 'Abdullah Faisal Nasir Turki Ibrahim Sa'd Fahd (33) Mishari 'Abdul-Rahman 'Umar (34) Khalid 'Abdul-'Aziz Hidhlul	Sa'd Sa'ud Muhammad Faisal Mishari	Nasir		
		'Abdullah 'Umar ?					
	(35) 'Abdullah	Zaid Muhammad Ibrahim	'Abdullah (Sunaitan)	Fahd Sa'ud	'Abdullah		
		(36) Turki	(37) 'Abdullah	Nasir Turki Muhammad 'Abdul-'Aziz Muhammad Sa'd Turki 'Abdullah	Muhammad Sa'd Turki 'Abdullah	'Abdul-'Aziz 'Abdul-'Aziz Fahd Khalid Dha'ar Faisal 'Abdul-'Aziz 'Abdullah Muhammad Khalid ? 'Abdul-'Aziz Sa'd Sa'ud	
			Jiluwi	Muhammad Sa'ud Fahd Mishari 'Abdul-'Aziz (46) Musa'id	Mishari	Jiluwi Fahd	
				Sa'ud Ahmad (38) 'Abdullah (39) 'Abdul-'Aziz		(40) 'Abdullah (41) Fahd (43) Musa'id (43) Jiluwi (44) 'Abdullah (45) <i>Jamkara</i>	

Appendix I—Genealogy of the Sa'ud family (contd.)

XII.	XIII.	XIV.	XV.	XVI.	XVII.	XVIII.
	Sa'd Mansur 'Abdul-Muhsin (47) 'Abdullah	Jiluwi (48) Fahd (49) Sa'ud Nasir 'Abdul-'Aziz 'Abdul-Muhsin (49e) Muham-mad Musa'id Jiluwi Sa'd Mishari ? Muhammad * Mansur (49d) Turki	Sa'ud ? Muhammad ? Mishari Khalid Faisal 'Abdul-'Aziz (49b) 'Abdullah (49c) 'Abdul-'Aziz 'Abdul-'Aziz Fahd	'Abdullah ?		
(50) Faisal	(51) Muhammad (52) 'Abdullah (53) Sa'ud	Turki (52a) <i>Sara</i> (54) Muhammad 'Abdul-'Aziz	Sa'ud Salman 'Abdul-'Aziz Muhammad Faisal Sa'ud ? 'Abdullah (55) Sa'ud 'Abdul-'Aziz Turki Faisal (57) Faisal (60) Muhammad (61) Turki Mishari	Sultan (56) Muhammad (Shaqrani) 'Abdul-'Aziz Turki Faisal (58) 'Abdul-'Aziz Sa'ud 'Abdullah Sa'd 'Abdul-Rahman Faisal 'Abdul-'Aziz <i>daughter</i>	'Abdullah Faisal Sultan Fahd (59) Faisal Khalid Fahd Faisal	Fahd Khalid
	(62) Sa'd (66) 'Abdullah	(63) Faisal (64) Fahd (65) Sa'ud <i>several daughters</i> Turki Sa'ud				
	Fahd ? 'Abdul-Rahman					

Appendix I—Genealogy of the Sa'ud family (contd.)

XII.	XIII.	XIV.	XV.	XVI.	XVII.
	(67) <i>Tarfa</i> (68) <i>daughter</i> (69) 'Abdul-Rahman	(70) Faisal (71) Fahd (72) <i>Nura</i> (73) 'Abdul-'Aziz (see separate table for his descendants) (74) Muhammad	(75) Khalid (77) Sa'd (78) Fahd (81) Sa'ud (82) 'Abdullah (84) 'Abdul-'Aziz (85) 'Abdul-Rahman (86) Bandar (87) Badr	(75a) Fahd Sa'd Sa'ud (76) 'Abdullah <i>daughter</i> (79) Muhammad (80) <i>daughter</i> <i>daughter</i> <i>daughter</i> Khalid Muhammad Fahd Faisal Turki (83) 'Abdul-Rahman Sa'ud <i>2 daughters</i>	
	(88) Sa'd		(89) Faisal (93) Fahd (100) Sa'ud	(90) <i>daughter</i> (91) Khalid (92) Sa'd <i>2 daughters</i> (94) <i>Jubaiyir</i> (95) Sa'd (96) <i>Sara</i> (97) Khalid (98) 'Abdullah (99) Faisal (101) Sa'd	
	(102) Sa'ud			Muhammad Abdullah Faisal	'Abdullah (104) Sa'd Bandar Muhammad (103) Hamed
	(105) 'Abdullah			(106) Faisal (107) Yazid (108) 'Abdul-Rahman (109) Muhammad (110) Khalid (111) Fahd (112) Sa'd (113) Mas'ab (114) Sa'ud (115) Bandar (116) Turki <i>10 daughters</i>	<i>daughter</i>
	(117) Ahmad (120) 'Abdul-Muhsin ? (121) Musa'id			(118) Muhammad (119) 'Abdul-Rahman (122) 'Abdullah (123) 'Abdul-Rahman <i>2 daughters</i>	
	(124) Sa'd				

NOTES ON THE GENEALOGY OF SA'UD FAMILY

(1) Mani' al Muraidi (or Muridi) ibn Rabi'a is the earliest definitely traceable ancestor of the House of Sa'ud. He belonged to the Duru' element of the population of Qatif, which presumably settled there on migration from the homeland of the great Duru' tribe, famous as breeders of the Dara'iya riding camels, in the hinterland of the Oman peninsula. Mani' was invited by the inhabitants of Wadi Hanifa to settle amongst them; and thither, at some time during the last few decades of the sixteenth century, he migrated with his family to found the colony of Dar'iya: destined in due course to become the capital of the Wahhabi Empire.

(2) The senior line of his family was eliminated in the eighth generation (about the middle of the eighteenth century) by the murder of Ibrahim in a family feud with his Al Yahya ahl al Kabash cousins, the descendants of Saif (3), the second of the four great-great-grandsons of Mani'. Elements of Al Yahya survive to this day, but are insignificant.

(4) 'Abdullah, the third great-great-grandson, was the ancestor of three offshoots of the family: Al Watib, Al Husain and Al 'Isa, of all of which some insignificant remnants survive to this day.

(4a) It was Markhan, the fourth of the great-great-grandsons of Mani', whose descendants succeeded in establishing themselves as effective rulers of Dar'iya, as a first step on the way to the realisation of a wider realm.

(4b) His elder son, Rabi'a, was succeeded in the headship of the community by his son Watban (5), who, however, got involved in a family feud and went into voluntary exile at Zubair after killing his cousin Markhan (11) ibn Miqrin (4c): leaving behind some fourteen sons, of whom the eldest, Markhan (5a), seems to have succeeded to the leadership of the family, which he bequeathed to his son Zaid (6). The position of this branch of the family was challenged by the chief of neighbouring 'Ayaina, Muhammad ibn Hamad ibn 'Abdullah ibn Mu'ammar Al Kharfash, and Zaid was killed in the ensuing operations.

(5b) Thaqib, another son of Watban, followed his father into exile at Zubair, where his son, Ibrahim (5d), in due course became ruler. He was succeeded in the chiefship by his son Muhammad (5f), whose influence in the neighbourhood was resented by the Turkish administration at Basra. On the occasion of some religious ceremony, when he and his principal followers went to pay their respects to the Turkish Mutassarif of Basra, named Ahmad Agha, they were seized and put to death. This was in 1836, when the surviving members of the family fled to Kuwait.

(5c) Another son of Watban was Rabi'a, whose son, 'Abdullah (5e), died in 1857.

(7) Another son of Watban, Idris, was the ancestor of the group known as Al Idris, of which there are survivors still alive, though of no significance.

(4c) Miqrin ibn Markhan, mentioned above, in the sixth generation from Mani' is the effective link between the latter and the Sa'uds of today through his son Muhammad (4d). The royal family often refers to itself as Al Miqrin (classically Muqrin, though vocalised with two short i's).

(8) Of his other three sons, 'Abdullah was the progenitor of the Al Nasir group, which has sunk into insignificance if it still survives; 'Ayaf appears to have died without issue, as also Markhan (11), killed by Watban (5), as noted above.

(9) Sa'ud ibn Muhammad ibn Miqrin, who died in 1747 as the effective ruler of Dar'iya soon after the inception of the reforming mission of Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab at 'Ayaina, was the eponymous ancestor of the Ibn Sa'ud dynasty.

(26) His eldest son, Muhammad, who reigned from 1747 to 1765, was the actual founder of the Ibn Sa'ud dynasty and of the Wahhabi Empire. It was he who welcomed Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab to his court at Dar'iya after the latter's banishment from 'Ayaina, and co-operated with him in the religious reform, on which the subsequent military campaigns for the conversion of semi-pagan Najd were based.

(10), (14), and (17) His three brothers, Mishari, Farhan and Thunaian, were among the earliest adherents of the new religious movement, and took an active part in propagating the reform of the faith. The details of the three branches of the royal family emanating from these three brothers have been somewhat obscured by the passage of time; and a recent attempt by one Muhammad Amin al Tamimi to cover these branches in an elaborate and somewhat ornate family tree of the royal house leaves much to be desired in the matter of accuracy and completeness. The details given in the present table have been obtained by assiduous enquiry from various members of the branches in question; and, allowing for the possible omission of some individuals who have left no descendants, they appear more

accurate, and certainly more reasonable, than those given in Tamimi's tree, which, in the case of the Mishari branch, prolongs the line to the twentieth generation from Mani', whereas the great-grandchildren of the king, representing the senior line of the family, fall in its seventeenth generation. In general I have adopted the principle that names listed in Tamimi's tree should not be admitted unless corroborated from other sources, while in a number of cases in which I have admitted his names without any such corroboration I have attached a question mark to indicate a doubt as to their authenticity. It should be noted, however, that Mr Bayly Winder of Princeton University has annexed a family tree including all the names and generations shown in Tamimi's tree, which was prepared in 1943 and published in 1946, to his altogether admirable, though still unpublished, study of the history of the Sa'ud dynasty in the nineteenth century, which he has been good enough to let me see in a photostat copy of his typescript. I may add that, for the period 1818 to 1850, when the Najdi historian, Ibn Bishr, ended his record of events, this work when published will supersede all existing recensions of Wahhabi history, while the later part of his work up to 1891, when the Sa'ud dynasty went into temporary eclipse as the result of Muhammad ibn Rashid's victory at the battle of Mulaida, is necessarily less complete and detailed owing to the failure of native sources of information. This gap may yet be made good from the records, still only available in manuscript, collected by another Najdi historian, Ibn 'Isa. Mishari (10) died in 1820.

(27), (28) & (29) These three sons of Muhammad, Faisal, Sa'ud and 'Ali, were killed in battle, the first two in 1747 and the third in 1770, during the long-drawn-out hostilities between the Wahhabis and Dahham, the chief of Riyadh, which fell to Muhammad in the latter year.

(30) Muhammad was succeeded as the second Wahhabi monarch by his son 'Abdul-'Aziz, who reigned from 1765 to his murder at Dar'iya by a Shia' fanatic from Karbala in 1803, and greatly expanded the realm inherited from his father: including the capture of Mecca.

(35) 'Abdullah, the surviving brother of 'Abdul-'Aziz, played an active part in the subjugation of the Najd provinces: notably Sudair, Washm and Kharij. But his main claim to fame is that he was the father of Turki (36), the sixth Wahhabi ruler and founder of the present dynasty. 'Abdullah is thus the great-great-grandfather of the present king.

(31) Meanwhile Sa'ud, the eldest son of 'Abdul-'Aziz, succeeded his father as third monarch: reigning from 1803 to 1814, when he died at Dar'iya at the age of sixty-eight, being succeeded by his son 'Abdullah (32), whose whole reign was occupied in hostilities with Muhammad 'Ali Pasha, the Viceroy of Egypt, and his sons, Tussun and Ibrahim. In 1818 Dar'iya surrendered to the latter, and in due course 'Abdullah was beheaded at Constantinople. The Wahhabi Empire was temporarily eclipsed, and Najd suffered the indignity of an Egyptian occupation.

(33) In 1820, however, Mishari, another son of 'Abdul-'Aziz, who had been deported to Egypt with other members of the family after the fall of Dar'iya, returned to Najd and succeeded in reoccupying the capital, though his success was short-lived, as he was defeated and captured in the same year.

(36) See (35) above. In the following year (1821) Turki ibn 'Abdullah, who had escaped from Dar'iya before its fall, reappeared as the leader of revolt against the Egyptian occupation, and was able to maintain his position as sixth Wahhabi monarch until 1834, when he was assassinated as the result of intrigues by Mishari (12), a distant, though ambitious, cousin in concert with the Egyptians.

(12) Mishari, grandson of his namesake, a son of the original Sa'ud, had headed an abortive revolt against Turki in 1827, but failed to make good his position as ruler at Riyadh, which Turki had adopted as the new capital of the dynasty. His second attempt to seize the throne was equally unsuccessful, and he was killed in the storming of the castle at Riyadh by troops loyal to the legitimate line. Mishari cannot therefore be counted among the effective rulers of the Wahhabi realm.

(50) Faisal thus succeeded his father as the seventh Wahhabi monarch; but his position was never secure, and the Egyptian Governor of Arabia, Khurshid Pasha, was soon able to secure the co-operation of an acceptable rival for the throne in Khalid, one of the many sons of the great Sa'ud and therefore a member of the senior line. Faisal was forced out of Riyadh, and took to the desert, whence in 1838 he sought to make his peace with the Egyptians. Khurshid was in a strong enough position to insist on his leaving the country for a sojourn

in Egypt. His reign was thus interrupted after a period of four years on the throne (1834-38); but he was destined to return in 1843 and to rule with outstanding success until his death in 1865.

(34) Meanwhile Khalid, the third of the sons of Sa'ud to occupy the throne, was firmly established, both by Egyptian support and by popular acclaim, as the eighth ruler of Najd, though there was soon a revulsion against him as the too obvious puppet of Egypt. In 1840, however, the Egyptian troops were withdrawn from the country and sedition soon raised its head. Khalid seems to have made little effort to stem the tide of revolt, and was soon in flight to the Hijaz.

(35) The leader of the revolt was 'Abdullah, a great-grandson of Thunaian, one of the sons of the great Sa'ud. He seems to have had no difficulty in occupying Riyadh in 1841, but his reign as ninth monarch only lasted until 1843, when he was without difficulty defeated by Faisal (50) and died shortly afterwards in captivity.

(36) Muhammad, the great-great-great-grandson of Mishari ibn Sa'ud is the oldest living representative of the Mishari branch.

(37) Nasir, great-great-grandson of Farhan ibn Sa'ud, died in 1939 at the age of over ninety. He married Tarfa (67), one of the daughters of Faisal (50), who is still alive at the great age of ninety-seven. Their son Muhammad (16) is the oldest living representative of the Farhan branch. Another son, Sa'ud, by a different wife is also still alive.

(38), (39) & (40) The living representatives of the elder line of the Thunaian branch are Faisal (19) and Sa'ud (20), who has two sons, Muhammad and Faisal. The other brother Fahd (18) died recently. Sa'ud (20) is a man of scholarly pursuits, and I am indebted to him for much valuable information about the Mishari, Farhan and Thunaian branches of the family. He is also the possessor of the original manuscript (or a copy) of Ibn 'Isa's history.

(41) Muhammad, the elder son of 'Abdullah (21) ibn Thunaian, was killed, apparently in the operations leading to the recapture of Riyadh by Faisal (50).

(42) Ahmad, a great-grandson of the same 'Abdullah (21), was born in Constantinople but returned to Najd during the First World War, and served the present king as confidential and political secretary until his premature death in 1921. He had accompanied the king's son Faisal on his visit to England in 1919. His widow married in Constantinople, and her daughter is the principal wife of Faisal, the king's son and viceroy of the Hijaz.

(43) & (44) Ahmad's brothers, 'Abdul-Qadir and 'Abdul-Rahman, were also born in Constantinople, where they have remained ever since, and nothing appears to be known of their offspring, if any.

(45) 'Abdullah ibn Turki (36) sided with 'Abdullah (52) ibn Faisal in the latter's quarrel with his brother Sa'ud (53) after the death of Faisal (50), and held Riyadh against Sa'ud for a few weeks in 1871. A number of his descendants are still alive.

(46) 'Abdullah ibn Musa'id (46) died without issue.

(47) 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Musa'id (46) has for many years been Governor of Hall. Of his five sons four, (40), (41), (42), (43), died without issue, while the fifth, 'Abdullah (44) is the present Governor of the Qasim province, to which he was appointed in 1947. He has four sons.

(48) Jauhara bint Musa'id (46) married the king about 1908, and was the mother of his sons Muhammad and Khalid, and of his daughter 'Anud. Jauhara died during the influenza epidemic of 1919.

(49) 'Abdullah ibn Jiluwi was one of the king's principal supporters in the bold raid which resulted in the recovery of Riyadh in 1902. He was later Governor of the Qasim, until transferred in the same capacity to the Hasa after its capture from the Turks in 1913. As Governor of the Hasa he acquired an almost legendary reputation for stern justice, as also for his expert knowledge of horses, camels and women. He died in 1938.

(50) His eldest son Fahd was killed in action against the 'Ajman tribe during the rebellion of Faisal al Duwish in 1929.

(51) His second son Sa'ud succeeded him as Governor of the Hasa, where he still is.

(51) Muhammad, the third son of Faisal (50), sided with his brother 'Abdullah against Sa'ud, and survived them both: to die childless about 1894.

(52) 'Abdullah, the eldest son of Faisal (50), succeeded his father as the tenth Wahhabi monarch in 1865, but lost the throne four years later to his brother Sa'ud, on whose death in 1875 he resumed his interrupted reign till his own death in 1889. He had one son who died young, and his line is extinct. His only daughter Sara (52a) married the king and is still alive, but had no children.

(53) Sa'ud, the second son of Faisal (50) was the eleventh monarch of Najd, ruling from 1869 to his death in 1875. He had six sons, and a large number of his descendants are still living.

(54). (62) & (66) Muhammad, Sa'd and 'Abdullah, sons of Sa'ud, kept up desultory hostilities against their uncle 'Abdullah after their father's death, using the Kharij province as their base of operations. By this time, however, 'Abdullah's authority had become little more than nominal, and the effective ruler of Najd was Muhammad ibn Rashid, to whom it fell to deal with the sons of Sa'ud. The Rashidi Governor of Riyadh, Salim ibn Subhan, went down in person to Kharij to deal with the situation, and the three sons of Sa'ud were seized and put to death in 1886.

(55) Sa'ud ibn 'Abdul-Aziz, a grandson of Sa'ud (53), kept up the pretensions of the senior branch of the family after the recovery of the throne of Riyadh by the present king; and was involved in sporadic hostilities with him for several years up to 1912, when he was finally defeated and surrendered to his cousin, who generously accorded him a free pardon. He married the king's sister Nura, by whom he had a son Muhammad (56), nicknamed al Shaqrani. Ever since his reconciliation with the king, he has been one of his staunchest friends and supporters, and he is still alive, as also is his brother Muhammad (60), noted for his religious zeal. Sa'ud and his brothers and cousins were formerly known by the sobriquet of al 'Araif (*sing.* 'Arafa) owing to an incident in one of their battles against the present king in support of Ibn Rashid, after which they were found and recognised in the captured enemy camp.

(57) Faisal, another brother of Sa'ud (55), died in 1938, leaving a son 'Abdul-'Aziz, born in 1921 and still alive (58), with a son Faisal (59) born in 1944. He married a daughter of Turki, the eldest son of the king.

(61) Yet another brother of Sa'ud (55), named Turki, escaped to the Hasa at the time when Sa'ud was captured and pardoned, and raised the standard of revolt in the tribal area of the 'Ajman: keeping up desultory hostilities until he was killed in battle in 1916.

(63), (64) & (65) Faisal, Fahd and Sa'ud, the only three sons of Sa'd (62) were all involved in the 'Araif rebellion at various times, and were all killed in the 'Ajman operations of 1916.

(66a) Faisal ibn Turki, a grandson of 'Abdullah (66), is still alive, and married Lulua, a daughter of the king in 1951.

(67) Tarfa, a daughter of Faisal (50), was born about 1854, and is still alive, by far the oldest living member of the royal family. She married Nasir ibn Farhan (15), to whom she bore Muhammad (16).

(68) Another daughter of Faisal (50), born about 1851, died in 1931.

(69) 'Abdul-Rahman, the father of the king, was born in 1850 and died in 1928. He was the youngest of Faisal's sons, and at times played quite a prominent part during the conflict between his two eldest brothers. At times he was called upon to act as head of the State, but he never actually ruled in Najd in his own right. After the battle of Mulaida in 1891, he went into voluntary exile at Kuwait with his family, remaining there till the turn of the century. In 1901 he made an abortive effort to recover the throne of his ancestors; but after his defeat at the battle of Sarif he renounced his claim to the throne of Najd in favour of his eldest surviving son, the present king. After the recovery of Riyadh by the latter, he devoted the rest of his life to the loyal support of his son in the expansion and consolidation of his realm.

(70) Faisal, the eldest son of 'Abdul-Rahman (69), was born in 1870, and died about 1890, without playing any part in the activities of a disturbed period.

(71) Of Fahd, another son of 'Abdul-Rahman (69), nothing is known except that he was born about 1875.

(72) Nura bint 'Abdul-Rahman, full sister of the king, was born in 1878, married Sa'ud al 'Arifa (55), and died in July, 1950, a few days before the actual date of the king's Jubilee. She and the king were devoted to each other all through her life; and in a country in which there are no queens she long enjoyed the status of its senior lady.

(73) His Majesty the King, 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn 'Abdul-Rahman ibn Faisal Al Sa'ud: born on the 20th Dhul-Hijja, 1297 A.H., corresponding to November 26th, 1880 A.D.

(74) Muhammad, the fourth son of 'Abdul-Rahman, was also born in 1880, and died on July 28th, 1943. He took part in his brother's expedition for the recovery of Riyadh in 1902, and in the subsequent military operations. But his life was mostly spent in the activities of a gentleman farmer; and he took little part in the politics of the period.

(75) Khalid, the eldest son of Muhammad (74), was born in 1904 and was killed in a motoring accident, while hunting, in 1938. He married a daughter of the king, the full sister of Faisal; and his eldest son Fahd (75a) married 'Anud, the daughter of Faisal. Of his other sons, 'Abdullah (76) died young.

(77) Sa'd, the second son of Muhammad (74), died young.

(78) Fahd, the eldest surviving son of Muhammad (74), was born in 1904, and married the king's daughter Shaikha. His surviving children are two daughters only: his only son Muhammad (79) and a daughter (80) having died young.

(81) Sa'ud, another son of Muhammad (74), was born in 1910 and died in 1936 without issue.

(82) 'Abdullah, the next son of Muhammad (74), was born in 1912 and has five sons alive: one 'Abdul-Rahman (83) having died young.

(84) 'Abdul-'Aziz, another son of Muhammad (74) died young.

(85) 'Abdul-Rahman, son of Muhammad (74), was born in 1930, and died without issue in 1950.

(86) Bandar was born to Muhammad (74) in 1931, and has a son and two daughters.

(87) Badr, the youngest son of Muhammad (74) was born in 1935.

(88) Sa'd, the fifth son of 'Abdul-Rahman (69), was killed in the 'Ajman operations of 1916. He was a full brother of the king, and one of his most devoted lieutenants during the fighting which established his position. In 1912 he was captured by Sharif Husain of the Hijaz in the course of a raid into Najd, and held to ransom, with the result that his brother had to agree to a treaty on very unfavourable lines.

(89) His eldest son Faisal was born in 1910, and married the King's daughter Qumasha, full sister of Mansur, Mish'al and Mit'ab. His sons, Khalid (91) and Sa'd (92) were born respectively in 1945 and 1949, while a daughter (90) was born in 1946. Two other daughters are infants.

(93) Fahd, the second son of Sa'd, was born in 1912, and married the king's daughter 'Anud in 1940. One son, 'Abdullah, was born in 1935 and died in 1940 (98). His son Sa'd (95) was born in 1940. By 'Anud he has two daughters (94) and (96), born respectively in 1941 and 1944, and two sons, Khalid (97) and Faisal (99), born in 1945 and 1947 respectively.

(100) Sa'ud, the youngest son of Sa'd (88) by Jauhara bint Sudairi, was born in 1914 and married the king's daughter 'Anud (see 93 above). He had no children by her, and the marriage was dissolved about 1935. His only son, Sa'd (101), by a later marriage, was born in 1944.

(102) Sa'ud, the sixth son of 'Abdul-Rahman (69), was born about 1890, and has never played any part in public affairs, being of a retiring character. He has three sons, four grandsons, one of them Sa'd born in 1930, and one great-great-grandson Hamud, born in 1945 (103).

(105) 'Abdullah, the seventh son of 'Abdul-Rahman (69), was born in 1900, and took an active part in the military operations (including the capture and destruction of the notorious Ikhwan centre of Ghatghat), which led to the crushing of the Duwish rebellion in 1929/30. For many years he has been prominent in the counsels of the king; and since the beginning of the Second World War he has been closely associated with the country's administration as one of the official Advisers of the king and a member of the Privy Council. His eldest son Faisal (106) was born in 1928, and has a daughter. He has ten other sons (107/116), born between 1933 and 1946, three of whom have recently married. He also has ten daughters.

(117) Ahmad, the eighth son of 'Abdul-Rahman (69), was born about 1920; and has played no part in public affairs. His two sons, Muhammad (118) and 'Abdul-Rahman (119), were born in 1934 and 1943 respectively.

(120) 'Abdul-Muhsin, the ninth of the sons of 'Abdul-Rahman, died in childhood.

(121) Musa'id, the tenth son of 'Abdul-Rahman, was born about 1922, and has also played no part in public affairs, though he is an enlightened and progressive agriculturist. His two sons, 'Abdullah (122) and 'Abdul-Rahman (123), were born in 1939 and 1944 respectively, while he has also two daughters.

(124) Sa'd, the eleventh and youngest son of 'Abdul-Rahman (69) was born about 1925, and has no children. He also has taken no part in public affairs.

APPENDIX II
THE FAMILY OF HIS MAJESTY THE KING

XV.	XVI.	XVII.
1. Turki *	1a. Faisal	1aa. Turki 1ab. 'Abdullah 1ac. daughter 1ad. daughter
2. Sa'ud	1b. daughter * 1c. daughter * 1d. daughter 2a. Sultan * 2b. Fahd 2c. Musa'id 2d. Muhammad 2e. 'Abdullah 2f. Faisal 2g. Khalid 2h. 'Abdul-Muhsin 2i. 'Abdul-Rahman 2j. Mansur 2k. 'Abdul-Ilah 2l. many daughters 2m. Sa'd 2n. Badr 2o. Bandar 2p. Majid 2q. Thamir 2r. Sultan 2s. 'Abdul-Majid 2t. Talal 2u. Naif 2v. Miqrin 2w. Ahmad 2x. Nuf	2ea. Mit'ab 2eb. Juhaiyir
(a) Nura * 3. Khalid * 4. Faisal	4a. 'Abdullah 4b. 'Anud 4c. Muhammad 4d. Khalid 4e. Sa'ud 4f. 'Abdul-Rahman 4g. Sa'd 4h. Bandar 4i. Turki 4j. daughter 4k. several daughters	4aa. Khalid 4ab. Muhammad 4ac. 'Abdul-Rahman 4ad. Sa'ud 4ae. Talal 4af. several daughters

XV.	XVI.	XVII.
(b) daughter 5. Fahd *6. Muhammad	6a. Fahd 6b. Bandar 6c. several daughters 6d. Badr 7a. Bandar 7b. 'Abdullah 7c. four daughters	6aa. Faisal 6ab. two daughters 6ac. Sa'd
7. Khalid		
(c) 'Anud 8. Sa'd *9. Nasir	9a. Sa'ud 9b. Khalid 9c. 'Abdullah 9d. Fahd 9e. Muhammad 9f. 'Abdul-Rahman 9g. Turki 9h. Ahmad 9i. four daughters	
10. Sa'd (d) Shaikha 11. Fahd	11a. Faisal 11b. Khalid 11c. Sa'ud 12a. daughter * 12b. daughter 12c. Talal (renamed Mansur)	
12. Mansur *		
(e) Jauhara (f) Lulua (g) Hassa 13. 'Abdullah 14. Bandar	14a. Faisal 14b. daughter	
15. Musa'id 16. Sultan	16a. Khalid 16b. Faisal 16c. four daughters	
17. 'Abdul-Muhsin 18. Mish'al	18a. daughter 18b. 'Anud 18c. Faisal 18d. Mishari 18e. Muhammad	
19. 'Abdul-Rahman	19a. Khalid 19b. Fahd 19c. four daughters	
(h) Qumasha 20. Mit'ab 21. Talal *	20a. daughter	
(i) daughter 22. Badr *		
23. Talal 24. Badr 25. Mishari 26. Naif	23a. Faisal	

XV.	XVI.	XVII.
<p>27. Nawwaf 28. Turki 29. Fawwaz 30. Majid *</p> <p>(j) daughter *</p> <p>(k) daughter *</p> <p>(l) Sultana</p> <p>(m) Haiya</p> <p>31. 'Abdul-Ilah 32. Salman 33. Ahmad (Majid) 34. Thamir (n) <i>Madhwari</i> 35. Ahmad 36. Mamduh 37. 'Abdul-Salam 38. Hidhlul 39. Mashhur 40. 'Abdul-Majid 41. Sattam 42. Miqrin 43. son * (o) <i>'Abta</i> (p) <i>Tarfa</i> 44. Hamud (q) daughter * (r) daughter * (s) numerous other daughters (t) Nuf</p>	27a. son	

Notes. * after name denotes that he (or she) is dead.

Names of all females are in italics.

Names of members of family holding important posts in the Government are in heavy type.

Out of forty-four sons borne to the king thirty-five survive.

Of the nineteen daughters listed above five are dead. The total number of daughters borne to the king, and the number still alive have not been ascertainable.

Similarly the total number of his granddaughters and great-granddaughters is not exactly known.

HISTORICAL NOTES ON THE KING'S FAMILY

1. Turki, the eldest of the king's family, was born at Kuwait in 1900, and died during the influenza epidemic of 1919. At the age of sixteen he began to take part in military operations, and he was in command of the Wahhabi troops during the preliminary operations against Ibn Rashid in 1918.

1a. His son Faisal was born posthumously in 1920, and is the tallest member of the royal family, being 6 feet 4½ inches. His sons (1aa and 1ab) were born in 1943 and 1946 respectively.

2. Sa'ud, the second son, was born, also at Kuwait, in 1902; and was proclaimed heir to the throne in Mecca in 1933. As titular Commander-in-Chief of the army and Victory of Najd, he has long been his father's right-hand man in the government of the kingdom. On a number of occasions he has made State visits to Britain, the United States, various European countries, India and Egypt on behalf of the king. His eldest surviving son (2b) was

born about 1923, while his three youngest sons* (2i, 2j and 2k) were born respectively in 1946, 1947 and 1949. His only grandson (2ea) was born in 1948, and his only granddaughter (2eb) in 1949. His first-born son (2a) died young.

(a) The king's daughter Nura married her cousin, Faisal ibn Sa'd (89 in genealogical table), and died by accident in 1930, leaving a daughter, who in 1940 married 'Abdullah ibn Faisal (4a).

3. Khalid, born in 1903, died in infancy.

4. Faisal was born in 1904, and made a State visit to England on behalf of his father in 1919, visiting the battlefields of France and Flanders during his tour. Since then he has made many such visits abroad, including Russia and Turkey on one occasion. As Minister for Foreign Affairs in his father's government he attended the inaugural session of the United Nations at San Francisco in 1945, and has since regularly represented the Sa'udi Arabian Government at sessions of the Organisation. In 1920 he led the successful military expedition to the 'Asir province, while in 1934 he commanded the western army in its advance into the Yaman, occupying the whole of the Tihama including the port of Hudaida, and thus forcing the enemy to sue for peace. In addition to being Foreign Minister, he has been Viceroy of the Hijaz for the past twenty years. His mother was a descendant of the founder of Wahhabism.

4a. His son, 'Abdullah, whose mother was Sultana bint Sudairi, was born in 1921, and is perhaps the outstanding individual of the second generation of the King's offspring. He has had much administrative and political experience, as he has frequently deputised as Foreign Minister and Viceroy during his father's frequent absences abroad.

4b. 'Abdullah's sister 'Anud, born in 1923, married Fahd ibn Khalid ibn Muhammad (75a of genealogical table).

(b) Faisal's full sister married Khalid ibn Muhammad (75 *ibid.*), who was killed in a motor accident in 1928.

5 & 8. Fahd and Sa'd both died young during the influenza epidemic of 1919, having been born in 1905 and 1914 respectively.

6, 7 & (c) Muhammad (born 1910), Khalid (born 1912) and their sister 'Anud (born 1917) were borne to the king by Jauhara bint Musa'id (45 & 46 *ibid.*), whose mother was Nura, daughter of Ahmad al Sudairi. Their mother was another victim of the influenza epidemic of 1919. Muhammad in 1925 led the Wahhabi expedition which led to the surrender of Madina during the Hijaz war. He has ever since enjoyed the title of Amir of Madina, though he has not been concerned with the administration of the city, or held any other post in the Government of Sa'udi Arabia; nor has Khalid held any official post. The sister, 'Anud, has for many years occupied a position comparable to that of Princess Royal. She married: first her cousin, Sa'ud ibn Sa'd (100 *ibid.*), by whom she had no children, and secondly his elder brother Fahd (93 *ibid.*), to whom she bore two sons and a daughter (94, 95 & 98 *ibid.*).

9. Nasir was born in 1920, and occupied the post of Governor of Riyadh for two years between 1945 and 1947. He married Mudhi bint Ahmad al Sudairi (4b in Sudairi table), by whom he had five sons (9b, 9c, 9d, 9g & 9h); and also a daughter of 'Abdullah ibn Mit'ab ibn Rashid (died 1947), the last but one Amir of Hail, by whom he had one son (9f).

10. Sa'd's mother was a woman of the Qasim province.

(d) Shaikha, born in 1922, married Fahd ibn Muhammad (78 *ibid.*).

11. Fahd, born in 1921, was the eldest of the many sons of Hassa bint Ahmad al Sudairi.

12. Mansur, the eldest of the four children of Shahida, who died in 1938, was born in 1922 and died in Paris of a kidney complaint on May 2nd, 1951. He had occupied the post of Minister of Defence and Aviation, since 1940. He left an infant son (12e) and daughter (12b).

(e) Jauhara was married to Sa'ud al 'Arafa (55 *ibid.*) until 1950, when he divorced her to marry (in 1951) Hassa (g), a daughter of the king by Haiya bint Sa'd al Sudairi (s of Sudairi table).

(f) Lulua married Faisal ibn Turki (66a *ibid.*) in 1951.

* There have been some additions to his family since 1949.

13. 'Abdullah was born in 1923, the son of Bint 'Asi al Shuraim of the Shammar, who died in 1934.

14. Bandar's mother was Bazza, who died in 1940. He was born in 1923, and has a son (14a), born in 1943, and a daughter.

15. Musa'id, born in 1923, and his brothers, Sa'd (10) and 'Abdul-Muhsin (17), born in 1920 and 1925 respectively, are the sons of Jauhara bint Sa'd al Sudairi (t of Sudairi table).

16. Sultan, the second son of Hassa bint Ahmad al Sudairi (e of Sudairi table), was born in 1924, and succeeded Nasir as Governor of Riyadh in 1947. He has two sons (16a and 16b) and four daughters (16c): the sons being born respectively in 1949 and 1950.

18. Mish'al, second son of Shahida, was born in 1926, and succeeded his brother Mansur as Minister of Defence in 1951. He has two daughters, born in 1945 and 1946, and three sons born respectively in 1947, 1948 and 1949 (18a to e).

19. 'Abdul-Rahman, third son of Hassa bint Sudairi (see 11 and 16 above), has two sons and four daughters (19a to e). The other four sons of the same mother are Naif (26), Turki (28), Salman (32) and Ahmad (33), born respectively in 1933, 1934, 1936 and 1937. None of them have any children yet.

(h) Qunasha, daughter of Shahida, was born in 1927, and is married to Faisal ibn Sa'd (89 in Sa'ud table).

20. Mit'ab, the youngest son of Shahida, was born in 1928, and has an infant daughter (20a).

21. Talal, son of Munaiyir, was born in 1930 and died the following year at Taif.

(f) Daughter of Haiya bint Sudairi.

22. Badr, son of Haiya bint Sudairi, was born in 1931 and died within the year.

23. Talal, named after his dead brother, is the son of Munaiyir (generally known as Umm Talal), and was born in 1931. He is Controller of the King's Household, and has one son, Faisal, born in 1949.

24. Badr, also named after his dead brother, is the son of Haiya bint Sudairi, and was born in 1933.

25. Mishari, born in 1932, is the son of Bushra.

27. Nawwaf, the second son of Munaiyir, was born in 1934, and has an infant son (27a).

29. The mother of Fawwaz, born in 1934, is Bazzza.

30. Majid, the son of Mudhi, was born in 1934 and died in 1940.

(j) A daughter who died in infancy.

(k) Another daughter who died in infancy.

(l) Sultana } daughters of Mudhi.

(m) Haiya }

31 & 40. 'Abdul-Ilah (born 1935) and 'Abdul-Majid (born 1940), like Badr (24), are sons of Haiya bint Sa'd al Sudairi.

34, 36 & 39. Thamir (born 1937), Mamduh (born 1940) and Mashhur (born 1942) are the sons of Bint al Sha'lan of the Ruwala.

(n) Madhwawi, born in 1939, is the daughter of Munaiyir (Umm Talal).

35 & 37. Ahmad (born 1940) and 'Abdul-Salam (born 1941?): names of their mothers not ascertained.

38 & (o) Hidhlul (born 1941) and his sister 'Abta (born 1944?) are the children of Sa'ida al Yamaniya.

41. Sattam was born in 1943 (name of mother not ascertained).

42. Miqrin, the son of Baraka al Yamaniya, was born in 1943.

43. Another son (name not known) was born in 1943 and died in 1944. His mother was Khadhra al Yamaniya.

(p) Tarfa, daughter of 'Aisha, was born about 1946.

44. Hamid, the son of Futaima al Yamaniya, was born in 1947, and is the youngest child of the king: two daughters being born in the same year and dying very young.

APPENDIX III—GENEALOGY

	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
C.	Muhammed al Sada'i Ibn Raj'i	'Ali	Farhan	Hamed	Muhammed	Soliman	Tukki
B.	'Amir						
A.	Ibn Bedran of Badrin (<i>ahl Badr</i>) section of Dawasir tribe.						
<p><i>Note.</i> Capital letters at the top of the table indicate the generations of the family. All names of female members of the family are in italics. Bracketed letters against names refer to the explanatory notes.</p>							

OF THE SUDAIRI FAMILY

K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
Muhammed	(e) Ahmad al Kahir	(d) Muhammed	(g) Ahmad	(d) Turki	Fahd Muhammed Khalid Ahmad 'Abdul-Mubein 'Abdul-Rahman	
				(i) 'Abdul-'Aziz	'Abdullah Sultan Naf	
				(j) Khalid	Fahd Muhammed Musa'id Turki Ahmad 'Abdul-'Aziz 'Abdullah Sultan	
				(k) Muhammed	Zaid Mish'al Khalid	
				(l) 'Abdul-Rahman	Faisal Sultan Salman	
				(m) Musa'id	Ahmad Khalid	
				Sulaiman (n) Bandar (o) Hase (p) Sedara (q) Modbi		
			Sa'd	(q) 'Abdullah	Musa'id 'Abdul-Rahman Muhammed Sa'd Fahd Turki	Fahd
				Naf	Musa'id	Naf
				'Abdul-Mubein	(r) Ahmad Musa'id	Muss'id
				Nasir	Sa'd Fahd	
				(r) Fahd	Sa'd 'Abdul-Mubein	
				(t) Hajra (f) Jambora		
				Nasir	'Abdullah	(r) Nasir 'Abdul-'Aziz Turki
						Musa'id Ahmed

L	M	N	O	P	Q
Turki	<p>(e) Turki (d) 'Abdul-'Aziz 'Abdul-Rahman (e) <i>Sara</i> (f) <i>Nora</i></p>	(ee) Muhammad	Muhammad	?Turki Fahd ?Abdul-Muhsein	'Abdul-Muhsein Ahmed
		Ahmed	(e) 'Abdul-Rahman	'Abdullah Fahd	
		'Abdullah	Nasir	(x) 'Abdullah	
		'Abdullah	(y) Muhammad		
		Turki	Turki	'Abdullah	'Abdul-'Aziz
		Sulaiman	Turki	Sulaiman	
		Muhammad	Nasir	Muhammad Turki Sulaiman 'Abdul-'Aziz	
			Ahmed	Muhammad 'Abdul-'Aziz	
		'Abdul-Rahman	(z) Turki Sa'ud Muhammad 'Abdul-Rahman		
		Sa'd	Turki 'Abdul-Rahman Muhammad		
		(ee) Ahmed	Turki Khalid 'Abdul-'Aziz		

NOTES ON THE SUDAIRI FAMILY

The Dawasir tribe is reputed to have come into existence in the sixth century of the *Hijra* (twelfth century A.D.) by the fusion of elements of the ancient tribes of Azd and Wall, and to have settled in and around Wadi Dawasir. One of the sections of the Dawasir tribe, to which the Sudairi family traces its origin, was the Baddarin, or Ahl Badr, so called after its eponymous ancestor Badr, the first to settle in Wadi Dawasir about 1400 A.D.

The following notes refer to individuals of the family shown in the genealogical table and indicated therein by the same letters.

C. Raji' ibn 'Amir was the first of the family to migrate from Wadi Dawasir northwards to the Qasim province, where he settled at 'Anaiza.

D. Muhammad ibn Raji' migrated from 'Anaiza to settle at 'Auda in the Sudair province, being the first of the family to adopt the surname of al Sudairi.

E. 'Ali ibn Muhammad al Sudairi was the first of the family to settle at Ghat about 1560 A.D., since when Ghat has been the family home, as it still is.

I. Sulaiman, the great-great-grandson of 'Ali, is regarded as the ancestor of the main

branch of the family, shown in the genealogical table. Earlier branches from the main stem appear to have been lost in the mists of history. Sulaiman flourished during the end of the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth centuries, being thus an elder contemporary of Shaikh Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab before the beginning of the latter's ministry.

J. Turki ibn Sulaiman flourished during the early days of the Wahhabi movement in the reign of the first Wahhabi monarch, Muhammad ibn Sa'ud.

K. Muhammad ibn Turki was contemporary with the early triumphs of the Wahhabi cause under the second Wahhabi monarch, 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Sa'ud, during the closing decades of the eighteenth century.

(a) The life of Ahmad al Kabir, so called to distinguish him from his grandson of the same name, covered the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century (1800 to 1867/8), including fifty years of active military and administrative service in the Sa'udi cause. As a young man he took part in the campaign against the Egyptians under Ibrahim Pasha, which resulted in the capture and destruction of Dar'iya, the Wahhabi capital. During the Egyptian occupation of Najd he was appointed Director of Revenue in the Hasa province, of which he later became Governor. He appears to have occupied this post throughout the reign of Turki ibn Sa'ud (1821-34) and during the first short period of that of Faisal (1834-37), as well as during the subsequent (second) Egyptian occupation under Khurshid Pasha and the Amir Khalid ibn Sa'ud (1837-41). On Faisal's return to the throne in 1843, he was appointed commander of the Wahhabi expeditions of the following years against 'Uman, leaving his son Muhammad to act for him in the Hasa. On the conclusion of the 'Uman campaigns he resumed his post as Governor of the Hasa, leaving another son, Turki, in control of 'Uman, and freeing Muhammad to become Governor of the Qasim province. He remained in the Hasa until his death in 1867/8.

(b) His son Muhammad, having already acted as Governor of the Hasa and of the Qasim, as noted above, now succeeded him as Governor of the Hasa: remaining there until about 1870, when, during the struggle for the throne between 'Abdullah ibn Faisal, the reigning Amir, and his brother Sa'ud, he resigned his post and threw in his lot with the latter. He was later killed at the battle of Talal, while in command of Sa'ud's troops.

(c) Turki ibn Ahmad was murdered about 1870 in 'Uman where, as above noted, he had been left in charge of the conquered territory by his father.

(d) 'Abdul-'Aziz, another son of Ahmad al Kabir, was killed at the battle of Talal above mentioned.

(e) Sara, the daughter of Ahmad al Kabir, married 'Abdul-Rahman, the youngest son of Faisal, and by him became the mother of the present king of Sa'udi Arabia: as also of his brother Sa'd (killed in battle in 1916), and of his sisters, Nura (died in 1950), Bazza and Haiya.

(f) Nura, another daughter of Ahmad al Kabir, married Jiluwi ibn Turki, a brother of the Amir Faisal, by whom she became the mother of Jauhara, who became the wife of the present king and died in 1919: as also of 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Musa'id, now Governor of Hall.

(g) Ahmad ibn Muhammad, the grandson of Ahmad al Kabir, was born in 1869/70 and died in 1935/6, after a distinguished administrative career in the service of the present king. As a young man he took part in the military operations against Muhammad ibn Rashid, which resulted in the temporary eclipse of the Sa'udi dynasty at the battle of Mulaida in 1891. During the Rashidi occupation of Najd he does not seem to have taken any active part in the affairs of the country; but on the reoccupation of Riyadh by the present king in 1902 he took part in the military operations which resulted in the liberation of the northern provinces. In particular he played a prominent part in the defeat of Ibn Rashid before Shaqra in 1903, and was appointed Governor of the Washm province. Later, having rendered distinguished service in repelling the attacks of Ibn Rashid on the province of Sudair, he was appointed Governor of his home province. He continued, however, to follow the military fortunes of his master in the Qasim during the following years, after which he remained Governor of Sudair until 1906, when he was appointed Governor of the Aflaj province. In 1908 he was transferred to the Qasim as Governor on the banishment of Ibn Muhamma, the contumacious Amir of Buraidha; and two years later he returned to the Aflaj, to remain there until 1916, when he finally retired from active service to his paternal acres at Ghat. He had set a standard of public service which many of his sons and nephews have faithfully

maintained to the present day, while he was the father and uncle respectively of two of the king's wives, who have been with him for the best part of thirty years, as also of another who was married to him for a shorter period: the three of them having produced no fewer than thirteen of the king's sons, to say nothing of many daughters.

(h) Turki ibn Ahmad, born in 1901, has for many years been Governor of the 'Asir province.

(i) 'Abdul-'Aziz ibn Ahmad, born in 1907, has held various provincial governorships, and is at present Governor of Quraiyat al Milh and Wadi Sirhan on the Jordan frontier.

(j) Khalid ibn Ahmad, born in 1914, has, after a similar career, been Governor of the Northern Territories for a number of years with his headquarters at Tabuk.

(k) Muhammad ibn Ahmad is the present Governor of the territory through which the Trans-Arabian Pipe-line (TAP-line) runs.

(l) 'Abdul-Rahman ibn Ahmad is Governor of Jauf.

(m) Musa'id ibn Ahmad is Governor of Jizan and the district bordering on the Yaman frontier.

(n) Bandar, the youngest of the sons of Ahmad, was born in 1934, the year before his father's death.

N.B. It will be seen from the above that no fewer than six of the eight sons of Ahmad are at present governors of provinces in Sa'udi Arabia.

(o) Hassa bint Ahmad married the king about 1921, and has had no fewer than seven sons by him as well as many daughters: the sons being Fahd, Sultan (the present Governor of Riyadh), 'Abdul-Rahman, Turki, Salman, Naif and Ahmad.

(p) Sultana, a younger daughter of Ahmad, married the king's second son, Faisal, Foreign Minister and Viceroy of the Hijaz, and is the mother of his eldest son, 'Abdullah.

(q) 'Abdullah ibn Sa'd, nephew of Ahmad and born in 1902, has held a number of governorships, and is at present Governor of Madina, to which post he was appointed a dozen years ago.

(r) Fahd ibn Sa'd, another nephew of Ahmad, is the present Governor of Wadi Dawasir, the original homeland of the family.

(s) Haiya bint Sa'd, a niece of Ahmad, married the king about twenty years ago, being the mother of three of his sons (Badr, 'Abdul-Ilah and 'Abdul-Majid) and several daughters. (She was previously married to the king's brother, Muhammad, by whom she had one son, 'Abdullah.)

(t) Jauhara bint Sa'd, another niece of Ahmad, was first married to the king's brother, Sa'd, to whom she bore one son, Sa'ud. After Sa'd's death in battle in 1916 she married the king, to whom she has borne three sons (Sa'd, Musa'id and 'Abdul-Muhsin) and some daughters.

(u) Ahmad ibn 'Abdul-Muhsin ibn Sa'd is the present Governor of al 'Ala.

(v) Nasir ibn 'Abdullah ibn Nasir is the present Governor of al Wajh.

(w) 'Abdul-Rahman ibn Ahmad, a great-grandson of Ahmad al Kabir, has occupied the post of Governor of Jidda for a dozen years.

(x) 'Abdullah ibn Nasir was born in 1915 and died without issue in 1950. He was a great-great-nephew of Ahmad al Kabir.

(y) Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah, a great-nephew of Ahmad al Kabir, is still alive, but has no children.

(z) Sa'ud ibn 'Abdul-Rahman, another great-nephew of Ahmad al Kabir, has for some years been Governor of Mahd al Dhahab, a gold-mining district under operation by the Sa'udi Arabian Mining Syndicate.

(aa) Ahmad ibn Turki, the only surviving nephew of Ahmad al Kabir, is Governor of the Qunfudha province.

(ab) Mudhi, another daughter of the younger Ahmad, married Nasir, a son of the present king, and bore him five sons: Khalid, 'Abdullah, Fahd, Turki and Ahmad.

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(ac) Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Muhsin, a grandson of Ahmad al Kabir, was killed in action during military operations against Ibn Rashid; and his posthumous son was also given the name of Muhammad.

N.B. It is of interest to note that no fewer than thirteen members of the Sudairi family held governorships in Sa'udi Arabia in the Jubilee year: most of them having occupied their posts for considerable periods. The importance of the family is further emphasised by the fact that some twenty-one of the sons and grandsons of the king himself have Sudairi blood in their veins through their mothers: to say nothing of numerous royal princesses, and a number of the king's nephews and nieces.

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