

THE SERIES OF ARABIC ISLAMIC STUDIES

COAST OF  
ARABIA  
25 Miles

ARAB BACKGROUND SERIES

# PERSONAL COLUMN

A HISTORY OF  
BAHRAIN  
1926 - 1957

WITH PHOTOGRAPHS

CHARLES BELGRAVE

Librairie du Liban Publishers

## PERSONAL COLUMN





*For*

**MARJORIE**





*Photo: Peter Holdstock*

The author in the Adviserate drawing-room



CHARLES BELGRAVE

# PERSONAL COLUMN



LIBRAIRIE DU LIBAN  
BEIRUT

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**Riad Solh Square , Beirut**

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First published 1960  
Third Impression 1996



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*Printed in Lebanon*

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## MAP

The Bahrain Islands

*facing page 7*

## PREFACE TO THE 1972 EDITION

BY JAMES H. D. BELGRAVE

*PERSONAL COLUMN* tells the story of thirty years of Bahrain's history, from 1926, almost half a century ago, when my father, Sir Charles Belgrave as he was later to become, first arrived in these islands, to 1957, the year he retired. These thirty-one years saw the rule of Shaikh Hamed and of Shaikh Sulman, the decline of the pearl industry, the discovery of oil, the Second World War and the growing political awareness that came to Bahrain in the 1950's as the inevitable result of the educational, social and economic progress that had occurred in the Islands.

Many of principal characters that figure in *PERSONAL COLUMN* are no longer alive. Shaikh Sulman was succeeded by his son Shaikh Isa, the present Amir, in 1961; the leaders of the political movement in the 1950's are dead or in retirement, the British diplomats who figured in the history of Bahrain have largely left the service, and my father died in 1970.

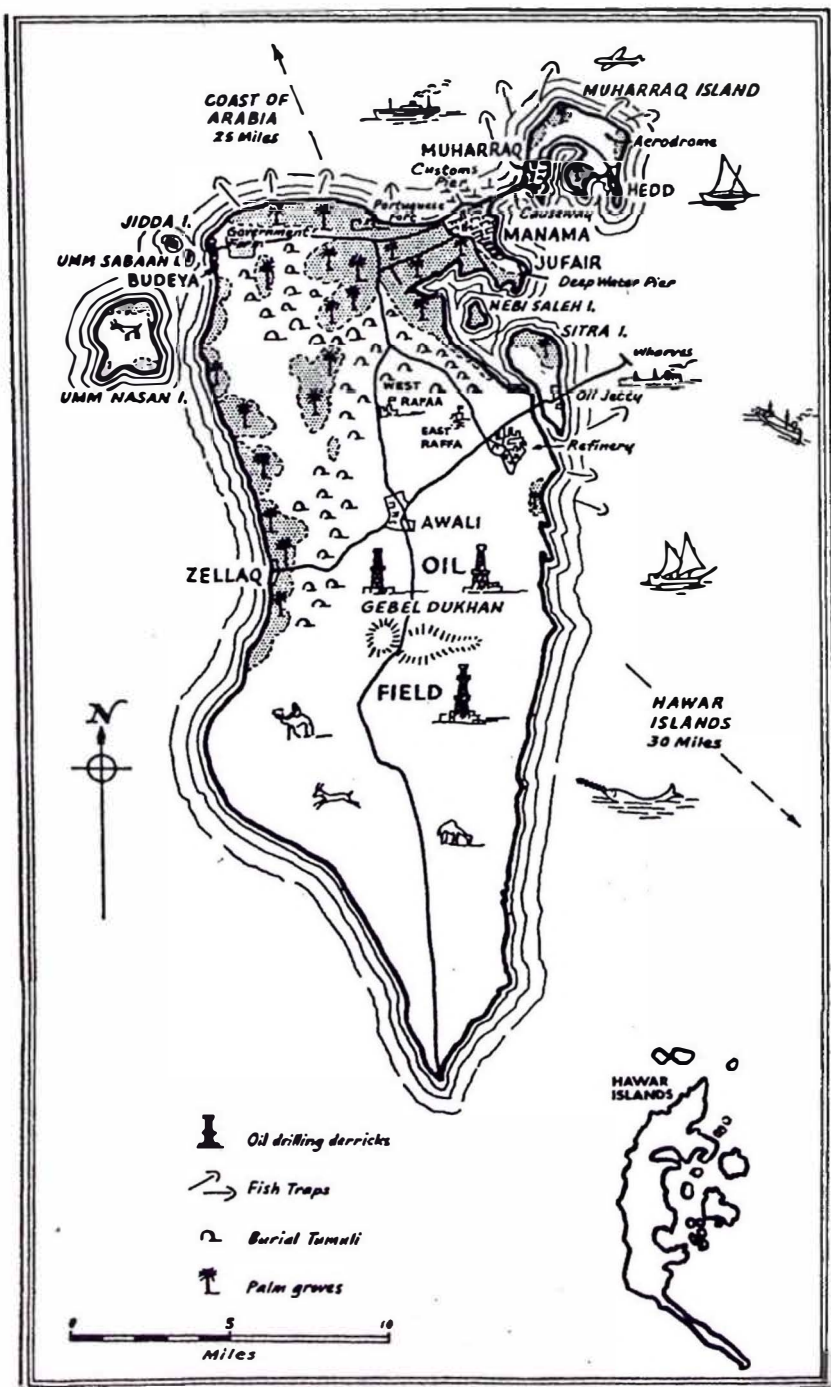
For this reason *PERSONAL COLUMN*, although written as an autobiography, is today history, a commentary and a description of the events in Bahrain during three decades as viewed by someone who was closely involved with them. Some of these views and comments are inevitably controversial — they may be agreed with or argued about by today's readers — but they represent an eyewitness report on the Bahrain of yesterday that is valuable for understanding the Bahrain of today. For this reason I was delighted when the Librairie du Liban expressed a wish to republish *PERSONAL COLUMN*.

In conclusion, I would like to reproduce a comment made by Sir Charles Belgrave which appeared in his introduction to the Bahrain Government report of December 1937, one that is as true of Bahrain today as it was then.

«In other Gulf States, Bahrain is considered very progressive; the wish to be progressive comes from the people themselves, it is not forced upon them by the Government.»

JAMES H.D. BELGRAVE

MANAMA, BAHRAIN





# One

*Monday, August 10th, 1925*

## PERSONAL

Young Gentleman, aged 22/28, Public School and/or University education, required for service in an Eastern State. Good salary and prospects to suitable man, who must be physically fit; highest references; proficiency in languages an advantage. Write with full details to Box S.501, *The Times*, London E.C.4.

ONE morning, in the summer of 1925, I was sitting at breakfast in a flat in Chelsea, overlooking the Thames, reading the papers when this advertisement, in the middle of the 'Personal Column' of *The Times*, caught my eye.

I was on leave from Tanganyika, in East Africa, where I had spent two years as an administrative officer in the Colonial Service. I had been lucky in my first term of service. The district where I was stationed was in the south-west highlands, one of the healthiest parts of the Territory; the work had been interesting and, as I was in the centre of the big-game country, I had enjoyed exciting and profitable sport. In my two years I shot eight elephants and by selling the ivory of six of them I had supplemented my very meagre pay. The vast herds of elephants used to descend on the gardens of the Africans and destroy cultivation and houses, and I was often called upon to shoot one. There was, however, small chance of my being posted again to such a good station; besides, I wanted to marry and I saw little prospect of this in the immediate future on the pay which I got in the Colonial Service. I had no private income. From the time when I joined the Army as a subaltern, on seven-and-six a day, I had kept myself. I was in two minds whether to remain in the Colonial Service or to look elsewhere for another job in the Middle East.

Before going to Africa I was a 'temporary officer' in the Army. I got my commission after leaving Oxford, through the O.T.C., and I served

in the Sudan, Palestine and Egypt. I was first commissioned in the Royal Warwicks but all my service was with various Camel Corps, and during most of the time I was in the Army the men whom I commanded were Arabic-speaking. I started in the British Camel Company, in the Sudan; it was a small force in which the Sirdar, General Sir Reginald Wingate, took a very keen interest. I took part in the expedition against the Sultan of Darfur, during 1915 and 1916, which was a somewhat Kiplingesque affair. During this little war, aeroplanes appeared for the first time in the southern Sudan and the Sultan, Ali Dinar, built high towers from which he hoped to shoot them down. On one occasion he was almost successful; Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Slessor, then a young officer in the Flying Corps, was wounded in this expedition.

I never had the slightest wish to be in the Army. I was originally destined to be a parson and hoped some day to occupy the family living in Leicestershire, where the incumbent had been a Belgrave for over 200 years, but I was attracted and drawn to the East and I decided to give up the idea of returning to Oxford and eventually settling down as a country parson. Towards the end of the war I was seconded from the British Army for service with the Frontier Districts Administration Camel Corps, a branch of the Egyptian Government.

I spent several years on the Western Desert of Egypt and was stationed for two years in the Siwa Oasis, where I was the only white man. In Siwa my duties included a certain amount of court and political work—when I came back I wrote a book about my experiences there. I remained in Egypt for some time after the war ended, until British officers in the Frontier Districts Administration were replaced by Egyptians. It was owing to this background that I felt that I should prefer to work among Arabs than to continue my career in Africa.

I answered *The Times* advertisement, more from curiosity than the expectation that it would lead to anything. In reply I received a letter asking many questions about myself but giving little information about the appointment; so, before writing again, I decided to take advice. I consulted two people, both well-known men, older than I and experienced in the ways of the world.

One of them advised me to have nothing to do with it. 'I think it looks very fishy,' he said. 'You had better stay where you are.' My other friend, Sir Reginald Wingate, under whom I had served in the Sudan, recommended me to follow it up. I took his advice and dutifully replied to the long questionnaire. One of the queries was whether I had any hobbies, so I mentioned that I was fond of painting. This, I learnt afterwards, almost

wrecked my chances! I still cannot think why painting should be regarded with suspicion.

I was summoned to an interview in a small West End hotel where I met an unusual little man with a dynamic manner and a pointed beard who reminded me of Captain Kettle—though only my generation will remember the illustrations of Cutcliffe Hyne's fiery little Welsh skipper. He asked me a great many questions and eventually told me that the post was in Bahrain, in the Persian Gulf.

My only knowledge of the Persian Gulf was from the crew of a tanker in which I had 'wangled' a passage when coming home on leave in 1919. They described it as 'Hell'. The only 'Bahrain' I had heard of was the uninhabited oasis of that name south of Siwa, in the Libyan Desert; in fact, I was one of the few Englishmen who had visited it. My interviewer, Clive Daly, of the Indian Political Service—later to be knighted—closed the interview by saying: 'You may, or you may not, hear from me again. There are many other candidates in the field.'

By this time I was very interested and I tried to find out what I could about Bahrain. Nobody seemed to have heard of the place and my friends thought it 'very odd' that a responsible post should be advertised in the 'Personal Column' of *The Times*. Such a public approach was more unusual thirty years ago than it would be today.

But all of a sudden Bahrain was in the news. A tremendous storm struck the Persian Gulf in the neighbourhood of the islands and many of the boats of the pearling fleet were lost. It was an even worse storm than the one which occurred in the spring of 1959. The London papers published a few (very inaccurate) facts about the islands, which I read with interest. Even today Arabs in Bahrain, when they want to fix a date, refer to incidents having happened before, or after, 'the year of the sinking'.

Time passed and nothing happened. I supposed that someone else had been chosen for Bahrain. Then, when I had almost forgotten the affair, a telegram arrived telling me to present myself at a flat in Baker Street. Again, although quite unintentionally, there was a slight air of mystery about the proceedings. Finding myself at the address much too early I wandered round Madame Tussauds to fill in time; after the Chamber of Horrors I felt rather like a victim going to execution by the time I got to the flat. However, I was soon put at my ease.

The flat belonged to Colonel F. B. Prideaux, the British Resident in the Gulf, and both he and his wife were extremely pleasant and communicative. He was a large, rather pink-complexioned person, who reminded me of a bishop, interested in horses, archaeology and genealogy.



He explained that Bahrain was an independent Arab state, which had had treaty relations with Britain since 1820, and whose rulers had been on friendly terms with us for several generations. The present ruler, Shaikh Hamed bin Isa al Khalifah, had recently visited England for the first time, and had expressed a wish to employ an Englishman as his Adviser. Because nobody had a suitable protégé for the post, Daly, the Political Agent, had advertised in the 'Personal Column'. There was nothing 'fishy' about the appointment at all.

There was no time for all the questions that I wanted to ask, but Prideaux told me that the Shaikh was a man of about sixty. He had been Heir Apparent since 1893 and assumed control in 1923 when his venerable father, Shaikh Isa bin Ali, had, very unwillingly, been 'persuaded' by the British to retire from active control of affairs after ruling for fifty-five years. I gathered that the Shaikh's position was not altogether secure. There was a strong party in Bahrain which was opposed to the old Shaikh's forced abdication. The people, too, were beginning to demand reforms and modernization and the Shaikh, especially after his visit to England, wanted to make changes. He could not depend permanently on the sole advice of the Political Agent, who had guided him during the difficult days after his father's abdication. He wanted someone belonging to him, whom he could trust and rely upon. This was the post which had been advertised. I felt then, and afterwards, that it was very confiding of the Shaikh to appoint someone whom he had never seen to a post of such importance. When I said good-bye to Prideaux and his wife they said that they hoped to see me again. I thought to myself, 'That's a good omen.'

The final interview was at the India Office, which in those days dealt with the affairs of the Gulf. I was looked over by Sir Arthur Bannerman, the Political A.D.C. to the Secretary of State for India. He apparently approved of me, for shortly afterwards I was offered the post of Adviser to the Shaikh, with a salary of some £720 a year and a Provident Fund of £15 a month, which seemed to me a handsome salary—in those days. One of the conditions was that I should take home leave only after completing four years' service. At the time this did not worry me. I had not sampled the summer climate of Bahrain before there were electric fans, running water and refrigerators. Later in my service the Shaikh allowed me to take leave every other summer.

On Daly's advice I joined the School of Oriental and African Studies for a three-month course in Arabic, since the Arabic which I spoke was Egyptian Arabic and my knowledge of the language was not profound.

Work at the School left me with plenty of spare time and I found that London was an amusing place for a presentable if impecunious young man. In one of the Bond Street galleries I had a small picture show, paintings of Siwa and Tanganyika, which was quite a success.

Unintentionally, I got a certain amount of publicity. Kathleen Shackleton, a sister of Sir Ernest Shackleton, did a black-and-white portrait of me which was published in some of the papers and produced a great deal of nonsense about the 'young Englishman' who was going to the Persian Gulf to be 'Wazir to a Shaikh'. I was never styled 'Wazir' though it would perhaps have been a more appropriate title than 'Adviser'. The Shaikh and the Arabs in Bahrain invariably called me 'Al Mustashar'—'the Adviser'—they never used my own name. I, for my part, always addressed the Shaikh as 'Your Highness'. Every member of the Ruling Family was, by right of birth, a 'Shaikh', and, except when talking to the young ones, I used to address them as 'Shaikh So-and-So'. In the same way the ladies of the family were styled 'Shaikha', which is the feminine of 'Shaikh'. Unfortunately the papers which described me as 'the young English Wazir' reached Bahrain just before my arrival, so I had to live that down.

In January 1926 I became engaged to Marjorie Lepel Barrett-Lennard—her second name came from the famous Molly Lepel, who married 'Handsome Hervey', Lord Bristol. Her father had lately succeeded to the baronetcy and they were living in one of the fine old Regency houses in Lewes Crescent, Brighton. Her parents were old friends of my parents and our families and their various branches had known each other for generations. Our own acquaintance, if it can be called that, dated from an early age; our mothers said that when we were very young they used to take us out together, in prams, in Kensington Gardens on the nurses' day off. This must have been when my family was visiting England because I was born in Switzerland and spent my early boyhood, until I went to school in England, on the shores of the Lake of Geneva, where my grandmother had a villa.

Neither of our families had any particular connection with the East, apart from various relations who had served in the Army and the Navy in India, Egypt or Africa, the most famous of them being Marjorie's great-uncle, Field Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood, whose A.D.C., in 1883, was Sir Reginald Wingate. None of our relations had ever heard of Bahrain, but when my future father-in-law looked it up, in a very old encyclopaedia, he and the family were horrified to hear that the climate of the Persian Gulf was described as being similar to that of the West

Coast of Africa, the 'White Man's Grave'. I found it difficult to convince them that the Gulf was probably not so bad as it sounded.

Marjorie had never been abroad, except for a few visits to Europe, but she showed no signs of alarm or despondency at the prospect of making her home in a completely unknown place, thousands of miles from England, among a race of people whom she had never met, whose language she could not speak. I suppose neither of us realized how primitive and uncomfortable living conditions were going to be during our first few years in Bahrain. I had lived quite happily in many strange places, in tents, in African huts and once, for some time, in a cave, but she had never had to 'rough it'.

Before Daly went back to Bahrain he told me that I could spend £200 on furniture for my house, but he gave me no idea as to what size the house would be. In fact, no house existed, but when Daly returned a building was designed by him and work was begun. I went to Hamptons and bought sufficient good second-hand furniture to furnish the house for many years to come and which, after thirty-one years, looked much better than the more expensive new furniture which was added later. At that time very little could be bought in Bahrain, so I ordered a year's supply of groceries and tinned goods. I made one or two mistakes in the orders: instead of getting a dozen tins of baking powder I ordered a gross and the same number of tins of custard powder! My Nyasaland cook in Africa had a passion for both these things, though milk and eggs were very cheap in Tanganyika, but in Bahrain we never used custard powder and rarely needed baking powder.

Before our wedding we spent much of our time meeting and staying with friends and relations—and being given a great deal of well-meant advice. I remember, when dining with the Wingates, that Lady Wingate told Marjorie that she should always wear a long chiffon veil over her sun-helmet, and that she must on no account allow a manservant to enter her room. I don't think she ever wore a sun-helmet in Bahrain; and as there were no women servants, it would have been very difficult to have taken Lady Wingate's advice about an all-male staff. When we first lived in Bahrain all the men and some of the women wore sun-helmets in the summer. Today they are seen only on official occasions when people wear uniform. Young soldiers, sailors and airmen work in the sun wearing nothing but a pair of shorts and canvas shoes. Yet the climate has not changed and the sun is just as hot as it was in 1926.

We were married in St Mark's Church, Kemptown, Brighton, on February 27th. It was a big wedding and I thoroughly enjoyed it, how-



ever unusual this may be in the case of bridegrooms. Driving up to London I told my bride that I did not suppose that we should stay in Bahrain for more than ten years, at the most. I wonder what she would have said if I had prophesied that we would spend thirty-one years in the Persian Gulf!

We stayed five days in London and then set off on our honeymoon journey to Bahrain: by train to Switzerland, where we spent several days at Montreux, my home town, where I had friends and relations; then by Simplon Express to Trieste, where we embarked for Alexandria on a Lloyd Trestino ship. After a night in Cairo we went by train to Haifa, crossing the Canal at Kantara, a place I had known well during the war. Haifa was a quiet, pleasant little village, with one small hotel—oil had not yet made its mark there. We left Haifa in one of the cars of the Nairn Transport Company for Baghdad, via Beirut, Tripoli, Palmyra and Rutba Wells. Today this company operates a service of big air-conditioned coaches and the journey is made in one night in comparative comfort, but in 1926 we travelled in open cars, with inadequate canvas hoods, and we picnicked in the desert. It was hard going and very uncomfortable.

We shared a car with Mr. Wedgwood Benn, who afterwards became Lord Stansgate, and his wife. Having very long legs, I sat in front and the three passengers at the back took turns in falling asleep on each other's shoulders. Our driver was Norman Nairn, one of the two Australian brothers who, soon after the First World War, started the desert transport company which eventually brought them fame and fortune. But when we crossed the desert, travelling 'by Nairn' was still an adventure, especially as the Druze tribesmen were then in rebellion against the French and there was constant danger of attack.

Most of our fellow-passengers were members of an international anti-narcotic commission, on their way to Persia to study the opium industry, which was a very flourishing concern. The leader of the party was a professor of unknown nationality, he spoke no language which anyone understood. He was a keen botanist and constantly stopped the convoy in order to get out and collect desert plants. The cars had to stop when he intimated that he wished to descend, because nobody knew whether he wanted to get out to collect plants or for more natural reasons. The other passengers found him extremely tiresome, and, owing to the delay which he caused, we arrived at Tripoli after dark.

The Tripoli hotel was small, squalid and very over-crowded; we were given a little room, opening out of a larger room in which the narcotic

gentlemen were sleeping—not very suitable accommodation for a honeymoon couple. I had entirely forgotten that it was the first night of the Moslem month of Ramadhan, so I had not warned Marjorie about the guns which were fired off, very loudly, in the middle of the night. She and our neighbouring room-mates naturally assumed that the Druze tribesmen had launched an attack on the town. Rarely have I spent such a disturbed night.

At Palmyra we were entertained and shown round by the French Commandant and his wife, who were extremely kind and hospitable. We were very distressed to learn, a few days later, that the Druzes, during an attack on the small garrison, had killed our kind hosts.

We arrived in Baghdad with no further adventures, very dirty and rather tired. After staying there a day or two we went by train to Basra to catch the British India mail boat which sailed every fortnight down the Gulf to India and called on the way at Bahrain. On reaching Basra, however, we were told that the ship had sailed—rather earlier than usual. There was a certain elasticity about the sailings of the B.I. ships in those days.

By this time I had very little money and I knew nobody in Basra. I enquired about hotels and was directed to 'the best hotel in the town'. It lay in the purlieu of the bazaar, in a very unsavoury quarter. I went in, took one look and decided immediately that it was not the type of establishment to cater for a respectable married couple. After driving about for some time we got a room at the Railway Club, which, though not comfortable, was at least respectable.

The prospect of waiting in Basra for a fortnight with little money and no friends was most depressing; at the time it did not occur to me that I might have got help from the British Consul so I cabled to Colonel Prideaux at Bushire, on the Persian coast, asking what I should do. Fortunately he was able to arrange a passage for us in a troopship which was carrying the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment from Iraq to India, calling at Bushire on the way down the Gulf. Among the officers on board was Major Wemyss, with whom I had been at school at Bedford, and this made the short trip more pleasant than it would otherwise have been.

We stayed one night with the Prideauxs in the Bushire Residency, a rambling old-fashioned house, built in the Indian style, with big, high rooms and old-world sanitation, but comfortable and more dignified than the houses which are now being built in the Gulf. Some of these look like third-rate seaside hotels or, as someone unkindly but accurately

described them, air-conditioned cowsheds. Bushire, once an important Persian port, was a dismal place with many empty shops and an appearance of decay, but the country along the coast was attractive. There were quantities of narcissi and wild lupins growing near the shore, and the Residency garden was full of flowers.

Bushire is the principal Persian port nearest to Bahrain. From Bushire the Persians frequently attacked Bahrain and at various times in its history they established themselves in the islands. But they were not the only race which held Bahrain. The Portuguese occupied it for about a century, until they were driven out by the combined efforts of the Persians and the Bahrain Arabs in 1602. The Persians then ruled the islands until they were expelled by the Omanis in 1718. For a time Bahrain came under the domination of the Wahabis, from what is now known as Saudi Arabia. Again, in the middle of the eighteenth century, the rich and powerful semi-independent Shaikh of Bushire conquered Bahrain, but in 1783 the Persian garrison was expelled by the Khalifah tribe, the ancestors of the present Shaikh of Bahrain, who invaded the islands from Zabara, on the Qatar coast, where they were then living. Since 1783 Bahrain has been ruled by the Khalifah family.

Next morning, with a stiff wind blowing, we went on board the *Patrick Stewart*, the cable ship, which was going across to Bahrain. It was the one and only time I landed on Persian soil and it has always been one of my greatest regrets that I never saw the beautiful cities and scenery of Persia. Owing to my position in Bahrain, and the Persian claim to ownership of the islands, it was thought 'undesirable' that I should visit Persia.

On the morning of March 31st, after a very rough night at sea, we cast anchor about three miles from the shore off a long, low island. By this time the sea was calm, the sparkling water was brilliant, green, purple and aquamarine. Along the coast groves of date-palms extended down to the shore, and opposite the anchorage there was a town; to the east, a few miles off, there was another town on a neighbouring island. Little boats with white sails, crowded with white-robed Arabs, were skimming across the water between the islands.

We had come to the end of our journey: this was Bahrain.

## Two

The island is a pleasant oasis. It is friendly, not hateful like the abominable coast that faces it. It is not antagonistic to life and does not breed such a missing link as the littoral Arab. . . . The golden-dusted roads which cross it are broad and shaded on either side by long forests of date palms, deepening into an impenetrable greenness, cool with the sound of wind among the great leaves and the tinkle of flowing water.

*Ben Kendim.* AUBREY HERBERT. Written of Bahrain in 1905

**D**URING the last thirty years few things have changed more visibly in Bahrain than the view from the sea of Manama, the capital of the State. Looking across the brilliant blue water from the deck of the *Patrick Stewart*, on the morning of our arrival, I saw a squat line of mud-coloured houses along the shore with no buildings of any height, no minarets and nothing green, except westward where date-groves came down to the water's edge. Today a wide road runs along the sea front lined with high white houses with deep-shadowed verandas, the skyline is pierced with tall minarets and in places there are groups of trees among the buildings.

We disembarked into a launch, then, reaching shallow water, transferred into a skiff which took us to a short, stone pier. Lord Curzon, then Viceroy of India, visited Bahrain in 1901, before the pier had been completed. That 'most superior person' was carried ashore from the boat in a chair to which poles had been attached. Fortunately he arrived without mishap. This odd equipage was kept outside the office of the Political Agent as an object of historical interest. Years later, one of the Political Residents, whose nickname was 'God', was carried ashore in the same chair, the ostensible reason being that he was suffering from gout, but I believe he really wanted to emulate Lord Curzon.

Even when the pier was built official arrivals were not very dignified proceedings. When the tide was low, distinguished visitors, with their

swords swinging round their legs, had to leap, nervously, from a bobbing skiff on to the slippery pier steps, watched by the anxious reception committee waiting above, with the Guard of Honour and the Band of the State Police behind them. Few people under the circumstances preserved a dignified mien. Now most people travel by air and visitors arriving by ship can come alongside in launches, for the pier extends a quarter of a mile into the sea. But until the deep-water pier, which is under construction, is built, steamers still anchor about three miles from the shore.

Daly met us on the pier with a car. There were about a dozen cars in Bahrain—today there are over 7000. He drove us to the Agency, making a wide *détour* round the back of the town; there was only a footpath along the sea front and the bazaar lanes were too narrow for motor traffic. The Agency was on the shore, a large building with deep verandas and many windows, both in the outer walls and inside the house, to allow air to circulate. It was built in 1900, at a cost of £2000, and was then described as 'a most commodious and imposing residence'. During half a century it was altered and enlarged and propped up till one morning in 1954, without any warning, the roof subsided and demolished the dining-room a few minutes after the occupants had finished breakfast.

A new Agency, with an entrance resembling the foyer of a cinema, was built in 1955. In Daly's time there were hand-pulled *punkahs* in the rooms, but in the winter, when storms lashed the waves over the front of the building, it was a very cold house, in spite of fires in the rooms. We were hospitably received by Daly and his wife, but it was not till some time later that I discovered that they had expected me to come alone. I had written telling Daly of my engagement but he had not received my letter saying that I had married and was bringing my bride. However, the Dalys were extremely kind and gave no indication that they had been taken unawares.

During our stay Daly showed me round and introduced me to the leading people. Being Ramadhan the Arabs were fasting during the day-time and the place was quieter than usual. Manama, and the neighbouring town of Muharraq, on the adjacent island, were typical Arab coast towns. The houses were built of coral stone, quarried from the sea bed at low tide; few houses had more than two storeys. The streets were narrow and congested, roofed with palm-branch matting; the little shops, with wooden shutters, contained few European goods. Fish, meat and vegetables were sold in fly-infested matting booths. The only buildings of any pretensions were the Agency, the houses of the American Mission (the Dutch Reformed Church of America) and the office of the Mesopotamia Persia Corporation, agents of the British India shipping line.



One morning I said to Daly, 'Where are the Government offices?' He took me to them. The Customs House, Court and the Shaikh's office were in two ramshackle Arab houses near the pier. Most of the Customs clerks were Indians, working under Claude de Grenier, the Customs Officer, who, with a young police officer, seconded from the Indian Army, were the only two British officials in the Shaikh's service. The Shaikh's office was presided over by Haji Seggar Zayani, a charming old Arab with a white beard, who knew everything about everybody in Bahrain, but nothing about files, typewriters or office management. But he gave me valuable help, teaching me the way I should go, in a kind, fatherly manner. He worked in my office till he died. One or two of the young clerks who worked under him spoke a little English.

The police headquarters was in a fort behind the town, and there was a police station in the middle of the bazaar, in a converted shop. The only school was in Muharraq; there was a Municipality in Manama which was presided over by the Shaikh himself, thus giving the force of law to any decision. Later, I persuaded him to delegate the presidency to another member of the family, which he did very willingly. The American Mission had a small hospital and there was a Sub-Assistant Surgeon attached to the Agency. He had a few beds in rooms below his house which had the resounding title of the 'Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital'. Town roads were unpaved and those in the country were desert tracks. Many of the houses on the edge of the town and in the villages were 'barastis', made of date-sticks and matting. Water, from distant unhygienic streams, was sold in the bazaar. At a higher price one could buy water from a well, ten miles off, which was carried into the towns every day in skin water-bags on the backs of donkeys. But the people looked fit, cheerful and contented.

After a few days we moved to temporary quarters in an old Arab house overlooking the site of the new offices which were being built. Above them was a flat, which was to be our home. The ground floor, which was full of rats, was used by the owner of the house as a store. We had two island rooms, which served as bedroom and living-room, an expanse of open roof, and two lean-to sheds. One was the kitchen, the other was a bathroom. There was no electricity so we used candles and oil lamps; the candles melted and the lamps gave out a great deal of heat and threatened to explode when there was any draught. An old water-carrier came daily with two tins of brackish water slung on a yoke across his shoulders. 'Fresh' drinking water was collected from the mail boats, which called at Bahrain once every fortnight. As there was no ice we

kept the water cool in porous earthenware jars. Sanitation was what is known as the 'Indian system', which entailed a sweeper. Cooking was done, very successfully, on a mud fireplace, with charcoal. Our three servants cost us £9 a month, which I thought expensive, but during our last year in Bahrain our servants' pay was £60 a month. The walls consisted entirely of badly fitting half-glazed doors; they rattled and jangled in the slightest wind. Daly lent us some bits of furniture which we used until our own things arrived.

I was nervous when I first took Marjorie to see the 'house'. It was not a good introduction to housekeeping in the East. But she was quite contented with it although it was tiresome not having any cupboards in which she could hang her clothes and only a small spotty mirror in which she could survey the rather elaborate trousseau which she had brought. It was very different from the conditions in which she had lived at home. Our first public appearance was at a party given by the Mission, attended by the whole European community—about a dozen people. Marjorie, tall, slim and fair, came in for a great deal of admiration from both men and women.

We were encouraged by watching the rapid progress of the new building. From dawn till dusk we heard the monotonous song of the Persian masons who worked on it. Everything in the house, including our wedding presents which arrived later by boat, was permanently covered in a thick layer of dust from the building operations below. But in spite of all domestic difficulties we enjoyed life and Marjorie soon began giving small dinner parties. I still have some of the menus and they seem to me, now, quite surprisingly elaborate with, usually, five courses: soup, fish, meat, pudding, savoury!

Years later, when young men or married couples arrived in Bahrain and at once began complaining about not having enough air-conditioning units, or large-enough rooms, or the wrong colour scheme, I used to tell them how we lived when we first came out. I found, however, that their comment was: 'Yes, that's all very well, but in those prehistoric times the amenities which we need now, which, you know, are really quite essential, did not exist. Now that they are available they should be provided.' Yet we, and other people, too, worked and lived very happily without all these things.

Four days after we arrived in Bahrain, on Easter Sunday, the Shaikh invited us and the Dalys to dinner at his country house at Sakhtir, in the middle of the island. I was apprehensive about this first meeting because I found so much difference between my Egyptian Arabic and the Arabic of Bahrain. We drove out in two cars; the party was the Dalys and their

son, aged seven, Abdulla bin Jabr, the Shaikh's secretary, and Major Frank Holmes. Abdulla was a strikingly handsome Arab of the Dawasir tribe whose good looks any film star would have envied. He dealt with the Shaikh's confidential affairs.

The Dawasir Arabs came to Bahrain in 1845 and settled at Budeya, on the west coast, where they became rich and powerful. They owned a fleet of pearling dhows and many divers, who were virtually slaves. They were fine-looking men, tall, handsome and arrogant, and they terrorized the villages in the neighbourhood. They were more or less independent and had opposed the appointment of Shaikh Hamed as Deputy Ruler. But when they found that, with the support of the British, he was determined to enforce their submission they secretly made plans to leave Bahrain. One night the whole tribe embarked in their ships, with their divers and their possessions. They crossed to Saudi Arabia, where they were well received. Their big houses at Budeya were left empty and soon they fell into ruin, giving the place the appearance of an ancient deserted town. Later, the Government persuaded other Arabs to settle there and now Budeya has a school, a water supply, electricity and a police station; close to it is the Government Experimental Garden. A few of the Dawasir remained in Bahrain and Abdulla was one of them.

Frank Holmes, a New Zealander, was drilling artesian wells for the Government. He represented a small British company, the Eastern and General Syndicate, which had a concession from the Shaikh for exploring the oil possibilities of Bahrain. He was not the ordinary type of concession-hunter, he reminded me of a Somerset Maugham character—I wonder whether Somerset Maugham minds so many people being described as like characters in his books! Holmes had lived in all parts of the world and could hold one absorbed for hours by his real-life stories of people he had met. Outwardly he was the bluff, Colonial type, but his manner concealed great ability and skill in dealing with Arabs. He spoke no language but his own but he got on very well with the Bahrain people, who did not mind his habit of shouting at them and slapping them on the back, which they would have resented from anyone else.

He was a heavily built man with a sun-burned face and very blue eyes, who always wore a hat, and a waistcoat under his coat, even in summer, and carried a walking-stick with which he prodded his driver if he drove too fast or too slowly. He used to say that he gave his servants extra pay on condition that he could use his stick in this way; certainly they were all devoted to him. He had a varied fund of knowledge about literature, natural history, the Bible, astronomy and geology and a great

appreciation for Oriental antiques, especially china, which both he and I collected. He was one of the few people in Bahrain, when we first arrived, who seemed to speak our own language and, as we got to know him better, we liked him more. The discovery of oil in the Gulf was due to Frank Holmes; from the very first he never wavered in his belief that there was oil in Bahrain.

After leaving the town we drove along a narrow twisting road bordered by date gardens. The sun was setting and the palm trees were silhouetted against a lemon-coloured sky. Beyond the gardens we crossed open desert, then climbed a hill through a vast area of ancient burial tumuli. From the top we saw Jebel Dukhan, the Mountain of Smoke, in the centre of the island, looking quite impressive from a distance, although only 450 feet high. The Shaikh's house, in the foothills, was a straggling group of buildings standing whitely in the desert without a vestige of vegetation around it. My impression of the place that night was that there were animals everywhere, tethered camels feeding on bundles of lucerne, donkeys, wandering goats, silugi hounds lying on the ground and hobbled horses in the background. The varied smell of animals, with camels predominating, combined, with the scent of wood fires and a waft of incense, to produce an aroma which took me back to nights in camp on the Western Desert.

Standing in the moonlight, at the door of a building, I saw a tall, impressive figure, plainly dressed in white robes. On his shoulders he wore a white 'bisht'—cloak—made of fine wool, on his head a Kashmir shawl, held in place by a golden fillet. The moonlight glinted on the gold scabbard of the dagger in his belt and on the signet ring which he wore on his right hand. His leather sandals were embroidered with coloured silks. The day had not yet come when Arabs took to wearing shoes and Europeans took to wearing sandals. As we approached Daly said to me, 'This is Shaikh Hamed.'

He was a handsome man with good features and fine hands, lively dark eyes and a complexion no darker than a southern European. He had a black beard. Later I discovered that he dyed it every fortnight. The dye used to give him a form of hay fever and on those days he was rather unapproachable. He walked towards us and greeted us warmly. Turning to Daly he said, 'So this is my Adviser.' Then, taking my hand, he said, 'We welcome you to Bahrain and hope that you will be happy here.' Much to my relief I found that I had no difficulty in understanding him, or being understood. As he walked slowly up the steps into the room he asked about our journey and how we had fared on the trip.

I never saw Shaikh Hamed make a hurried movement, except when

out hawking, for to be slow and stately was considered compatible with the dignity and position of a Shaikh. A young Khalifah Shaikh who, when quite a boy, became Amir—Governor—of a town on the death of his father, once told me how difficult it was to comport himself in the way which his older relations considered suitable. When he succeeded his father he was constantly told that he should walk more slowly, that he should not laugh or show too much interest in people who talked to him, he should assume a slightly abstracted air and should at all times try to behave exactly as his father did, though the father was an elderly, old-fashioned gentleman. This was twenty-five years ago, but the older Arabs still have very set ideas as to what is seemly for a Shaikh to do—in public.

We sat down, on the carpeted floor, in the 'maglis'—reception-room—which then appeared to me quite impressive. It was forty feet long but rather narrow, as no steel beams were used in buildings. When Shaikh Isa, the Shaikh's father, heard that people were importing steel beams to carry roofs he was quite upset as he considered it a dangerous innovation. He was very conservative and it was said that he disapproved of mules because their creation was contrary to nature. The walls of the room were decorated with arabesques cut in the plaster, which was made from gypsum, an art which unfortunately is dying out in Bahrain. Doors and window shutters were made of carved teak wood from India, and the ceiling consisted of mangrove poles with a criss-cross of split bamboos above them, then matting, and on top a thick layer of mud. Reinforced concrete was still a thing of the future in Bahrain. We leant against large, hard cushions, in white cotton covers. In later years these covers were usually decorated with embroidery which was taught in the girls' schools. Several beautiful silugi hounds sprawled on the carpets and the Shaikh's favourite bitch, Hosha, which accompanied him everywhere, even on official occasions, lay at his feet.

The Shaikh called out 'Gahwa'—coffee—a servant at the door repeated the word, someone outside called out 'Gahwa' and a voice in the distance, more faintly, echoed the word. After a pause it was brought in by an old black servant, a descendant of slaves. A very little coffee was poured from a brass beaker into small china cups, without handles. It was rather thin, flavoured with cardamom and cloves, unlike any other coffee. Three cups was the most that should be taken; to shake the empty cup indicated that another fill was not required.

The dinner was typical of hundreds of meals which I subsequently enjoyed, but it was very different from the meals to which one is invited nowadays when chairs and tables, knives and forks, fruit imported by air



and branded ice cream are provided. Negro servants and Arab youths carried in the food in big copper trays balanced on their heads. After rinsing our hands in water poured by a servant from a tall copper ewer, we sat round a circular palm-leaf mat, on the floor. I was accustomed to sitting cross-legged, but for people who are not agile, or women in tight or short skirts, it is an awkward, inelegant affair.

On a mound of rice there were two sheep, roasted whole, stuffed with rice, full of currants and almonds. In the sheep were whole chickens, with hard-boiled eggs inside them. The Daly boy asked how the chickens got into the sheep, like King George III who wondered how the apple got into the dumpling. There were brittle sheets of bread, as thin as cardboard, bowls of stewed meat, heaps of brown dates, a wooden bowl, ornamented with brass nails, full of sour milk with lumps of cream floating on it—one fished out the cream with a piece of bread—and plates of cornflour pudding, with a flavour and scent like hair-oil.

It was a silent meal. Arab meals are regarded as occasions for eating, not for conversation. The Shaikh threw a few joints of meat to his hounds, when they pressed nearer; Hosha was usually given a whole leg of mutton, which she ate in the corner. When each person had eaten enough he got up with a murmur of thanks, washed his hands and was given a few toothpicks, slivers of bamboo. If the mutton was stringy this was a very necessary attention. People unaccustomed to Arab meals find it difficult to squeeze rice into balls and convey it to their mouths without dropping it, but one soon acquires the knack of eating without implements and at least one can ensure that one's hands are clean, which is not always the case with knives and forks.

After dinner I began to take out my cigarette-case, but Daly signed to me not to do so. Shaikh Hamed never smoked. Any kind of smoke seemed to affect him; if he was in a garden where there was a bonfire he would move away from the smoke holding his headcloth pressed over his face. Nobody smoked when he was present.

Soon after the oil company was established an important oil magnate dined with the Shaikh. His knowledge of the East was based on journalistic inaccuracies in the American Press. 'Will the Sheek give me the sheep's eye?' he asked me. 'No, it's most unlikely,' I said. 'It's not done in Bahrain.' But he kept on talking about it. The Shaikh asked me what his guest was saying, so I told him. 'Does he really want to eat the sheep's eye?' said the Shaikh. I replied, 'He seems to wish to.' The Shaikh pulled one of the heads from the dish, gouged out the eye and handed it to the American. The oil magnate was delighted; he swallowed it whole and, I

am sure, for the rest of his life he dined out on the story of how the 'Sheek' had absolutely insisted on his eating a sheep's eye—but Shaikh Hamed thought it very odd.

The Shaikh was very talkative after the meal. He seemed interested in the fact that we had come abroad five days after being married, and asked whether this was to avoid the jokes which newly wedded couples have to put up with. But before we left he began to look worried and had a long conversation with Daly about the situation in Bahrain. When Daly made signs of moving the Shaikh called for rose-water and incense. Servants sprinkled rose-water on our hands and waved incense-burners under the beards of those who had them and under the chins of those who had none. This was the signal for departure.

The Shaikh had cause for worry. Bahrain was unsettled and public security was at a low ebb. Recently there had been murderous attacks on villages by Arab gunmen and there was fear of raids on the coast by the disgruntled Dawasir tribe. The powerful pearl merchants, who controlled the diving industry, on which the economy of the country depended, were opposed to the reforms which the Shaikh was introducing. Many people resented the prospect of organized government, knowing that it would affect their vested interests, and there was a faction which would have preferred someone else in the Shaikh's place. It was the older men, religious leaders and merchants, who had political influence. Now it is the younger generation, who have not long left school, who are most active in politics.

Daly had given me some idea of the complicated internal situation. I described it in my diary as 'a mixture of Lyceum melodrama and Arabian Nights Pantomime'. Later, having met the 'leading characters', I found that it was more like one of Shakespeare's plays. Instead of Kings and Princes there were Shaikhs and Amirs. Instead of prelates there were Kadhis—religious judges—whose appearance and eloquence were truly Shakespearean. Some citizens played leading roles, as did a few of the villagers, often providing comic relief. There were no female actors, but off stage they played important parts in the drama.

The festival at the end of the month of Ramadhan fell soon after our arrival and we went with the Dalys to Muharraq, in the Agency launch, to pay calls. While Daly and I paid calls on the leading Shaikhs our wives visited Shaikh Hamed's wife. Marjorie was greatly impressed by her beauty and intelligence; they became great friends and Marjorie used to consult her about problems connected with the girls' schools, in which the Shaikha took much interest. The Shaikh was in his town house. I thought he seemed to enjoy introducing 'my Adviser' to the Arabs who were there. As he, not

I, had to answer such pertinent questions as 'What is he going to advise you about?' or 'Why did you get such a young one?' I enjoyed the visit too.

We then called on Shaikh Isa, the Shaikh's deposed father, who lived in a big house in the middle of Muharraq. We walked through several courtyards, filled with gaily dressed visitors, and climbed a steep, narrow staircase, where, being 6 ft. 4 in., I had to duck my head, to a room on the roof where Shaikh Isa awaited us. He was a little old man with a white beard, beautifully dressed in an old-fashioned style; though differences are not very discernible, there are fashions in Arab clothes. He was dignified and extremely frigid. He paid no attention to me, probably regarding me as an interloper. When Daly enquired after his health he replied, 'Though I may appear to be well, in truth I am ill, and only you have the medicine to make me well again.'

As we left I asked Daly the meaning of this cryptic remark. It referred to the allowance which the Shaikh received from the Government, which he considered inadequate. I was soon to learn that every member of the family drew an allowance from the Civil List, which every one of them regarded as inadequate. This matter became one of the most constant and trying problems during my years in Bahrain.

Shaikh Isa became Ruler in 1869. His father, Shaikh Ali, reigned for one year and was killed in battle during a civil war between two factions of the Khalifah family and Shaikh Isa retired to Zabara, on the coast of Qatar. The British intervened and arrested Shaikh Ali's brother, Shaikh Mohammed bin Khalifah, who had led the rebellion against the lawful Ruler. Shaikh Isa, then aged twenty-one, came back from Qatar and was proclaimed Shaikh of Bahrain by the unanimous wish of the people of the country. During his long reign Bahrain was constantly threatened with attacks by the Arab tribes of Qatar, and the Turks and the Persians both laid claims to the islands, which were firmly repudiated by the British Government. The presence of British men-of-war in the Gulf deterred any attempt at invasion. Shaikh Isa made a number of Agreements with Britain, undertaking not to treat with any foreign power or to allow agents of foreign governments to reside in Bahrain without the agreement of Britain. He signed an Agreement prohibiting the import and export of arms, he asked the British Government to exercise jurisdiction over foreigners resident in Bahrain and, in 1914, gave an undertaking not to embark on the exploitation of oil, or grant oil concessions, without the approval of the British Government.

We called on Shaikh Mohammed, another son of Shaikh Isa's, where we sat on chairs at the end of a long room, while sons and relations sat,

more comfortably, on carpets along the sides. This made conversation difficult. Shaikh Mohammed was the poet of the family, and a great traveller. In his later years, at an advanced age, he visited most parts of the world. At the house of Shaikh Abdulla, the younger brother, we drank tea out of ebony teacups which had been given to him by Faisal I of Iraq, and enjoyed lively conversation about politics and our host's two trips to England, in 1919 and 1925. Shaikh Abdulla was considerably younger than Shaikh Hamed, his brother. He was handsome, always well dressed, witty and shrewd. He was a man of the world, with a keen sense of humour and a roving eye. I always enjoyed his company. We worked together, closely, for many years, while he was 'Minister of Education'—an inappropriate designation as there was no Cabinet and no other ministers. Even when we had to discuss matters which were tiresome, or about which we disagreed, he would argue in a pleasant manner. He was probably the most influential man in Bahrain, after the Shaikh.

Around the Shaikhs' houses, bands of Arab retainers danced and sang to the music of drums, brandishing swords and long flintlock guns, which they fired at intervals. The streets were full of people wearing new clothes, the women and children in brilliant colours, the little boys dressed as replicas of their fathers, all making the round of calls on their neighbours. The air was saturated with the smell of cooking for the feast that ended the month of fasting, and strong, cheap, Oriental scents were much in evidence after a month of abstinence.

Next day we called on some of the merchants and on the two Kadhis. Shaikh Jasim al Mehza, the Kadhi of the Sunni sect, although old and nearly blind, was still a power in the land. It was perhaps because he was so blind that he lived in such squalor in a tiny house in the middle of Manama bazaar. In spite of his dirty white robes, and what appeared to be an old towel wrapped round his head, he was a man whose personality one felt. His features, the drapery of his robes and his flowing white beard reminded me of a drawing by Michelangelo. His voice was impressive, his speech 'choice words and measured phrase, above the reach of ordinary men, a stately speech'. One felt that his sonorous utterances were addressed to the crowd which waited outside the house as much as to the people inside the room. He had a habit of taking his listener's hand and gently kneading it to emphasize a point, then, suddenly, asking if his hearer agreed with him, knowing full well that his Arabic was too highfalutin to be understood. He was a clever old man and a wily politician, an adept at sitting on the fence. I got to know him well and I often called on him to ask his advice. Without an audience he used to talk in a more

practical, down-to-earth way, though he had a great fondness for speaking in parables. He died about a year after I came to Bahrain and there was never another Kadhi of his calibre.

Our next call was on Shaikh Khalaf, the Kadhi of the Shia sect. The title 'Shaikh', besides being applied to all members of the Ruling Family, was used by religious leaders, which used to cause some confusion to people unacquainted with the custom. He was a dramatically striking figure, very tall and thin, with aquiline features, a parchment-coloured complexion, a white beard and piercing eyes. He wore dark robes, an enormous black turban, and he carried an ebony, silver-topped cane, which he did not hesitate to use. He had a tremendous reputation among the village people. They used to fall on their knees and kiss the hem of his robe, and when he visited the villages they brought out the best of everything for his delectation. Though the Kadhis were judges they received no salaries, but they both became rich men. The administration of 'waqf' property was in their hands, this being property bequeathed for religious purposes, for the upkeep of mosques, to assist poor pilgrims, for prayers for the dead and for teachers of religion.

Shaikh Khalaf supported the Shaikh over the diving reforms and was very pro-British, but eventually he became unpopular among his own people owing to financial malpractices, which were too blatant to be ignored. I had the awkward task of going out to one of the villages, where I found him surrounded by a deferential crowd, to inform him that Shaikh Hamed had decided that he should leave Bahrain at once for an indefinite period. He was far less embarrassed than I was and he urged me to share the large meal which the villagers had provided—I did not then know that twice in his long career Shaikh Khalaf had been banished for similar misdeeds.

The merchants received us in their big, cool rooms, spread with beautiful Persian carpets. Some of the rooms were above the shops with views across the house-tops to the blue sea beyond. Most of them had travelled in India; they were accustomed to meeting Europeans and had pleasant, easy manners. They provided highly coloured sweet drinks, biscuits and sweets and a concoction called 'Ra'hash', made from simsim seeds, date juice and butter. It looked like wet cement but was, in fact, extremely good. We used to have it in the house. The inevitable coffee always appeared. I soon developed a liking for it and drank many cups of coffee every morning when I was working in my office. After the holiday, which lasted for three days, life settled down to a routine of long hours and hard work, which increased as the Shaikh handed over to me more responsibilities and duties.



## Three

My object all sublime  
I shall achieve in time—  
To make the punishment fit the crime—  
The punishment fit the crime.

*The Mikado.* W. S. GILBERT. 1836-1911

Alarum: excursions.

*King Henry V.* SHAKESPEARE

THE first office to which the Shaikh appointed me was that of Judge in the newly formed Bahrain court. I had had experience of court work in Egypt and Tanganyika and had passed two Colonial Service law exams. Law was a subject which interested me, perhaps because my father, who besides writing books was a barrister, used to tell me about his cases when he came back from court. I found that there was no written code in Bahrain so judgements had to depend on common sense alone. It was rough and ready justice, but it had the advantage of being speedy.

I began by spending three days a week in court, sometimes not getting home till after three o'clock, which was very trying for Marjorie, for there was little for her to do in the mornings; we had no car so she could not go out much. I sat with a minor Shaikh who was deaf, dull and averse to making decisions. When I asked his opinion he invariably replied, 'I think the same as Your Excellency; I agree with whatever you say,' which was not helpful! We used a room in the old Arab house where we first lived; it was small, dark and dusty. In spite of the punkah even I felt hot. Arab judges in hot weather wore diaphanous white robes and looked cool and comfortable, though complaining incessantly of the heat. I was glad when the first judge retired and the Shaikh appointed in his place Shaikh Sulman, the present Ruler.

There is much to be said for what has been described as 'Palm Tree

Justice'. It envisages the Shaikh seated under a palm tree settling the disputes of his tribe. According to Arab conception, the head of the tribe is solely responsible for the administration of justice, though he may delegate his authority to others. Unfortunately, however, the time for simplicity and expedition in the administration of justice has passed. As procedure became more elaborate and courts more heavily staffed the files multiplied—'files' has now become an Arabic word—and delays were frequent and lengthy. In later years there was criticism of the courts and complaints that they took too long in dealing with cases. A more valid grievance was that except in the religious courts all the judges were Sunnis, the sect to which the Khalifah family belonged. The judges were Shaikhs of the Ruling Family, without legal qualifications or degrees in law, but among them were men who had years of experience in courts and I had tried my best to show them how things should be done.

Soon I found it impossible to spend so much time in court, so I sat once a week with two of the Shaikhs. A court house was built, which is still in use. The new High Court was modern in style, with panelled walls, big windows and electric fans. I and the two Arab judges sat on red leather chairs on a platform, separated from the body of the court by a rail. On the wall behind us hung the Bahrain coat of arms adapted from the Khalifah flag. Opposite the dais were wooden benches for about thirty members of the public, who used to make a rush for the seats when the doors were opened on Monday morning when important cases were heard. Among the regular habitués were several 'old lags' who spent much of their time in jail for petty thefts, pick-pocketing and liquor offences. The court seemed to draw them like a magnet; when not in jail they never missed a chance of hearing their friends being tried.

For some years cases had been heard *in camera*, but when the new court was opened I suggested that as many of the public who could be accommodated should be admitted. It took some persuasion to induce my brother judges to agree to this; they were afraid that the spectators might interrupt the proceedings. But they behaved very well and only occasionally did the policeman on duty have to cry 'Silence in court!' There was often a good deal of chat between the parties and the judges if the people concerned were Arabs of the older generation.

The proceedings begin with coffee, which is brought in by a wizened little black dwarf who started life as one of my office boys. We all drink three cups and then have a look at the cases before us which are passed to us by the court clerk, who sits at the end of the table and records the evidence. The first case is a civil claim for about 3000 rupees (£225),

being the cost of goods supplied by a shopkeeper to a boat captain. The clerk calls out the names of the parties and the policeman at the door repeats the names.

An elderly Arab, bearded and dressed in white robes, saunters into the court, carrying a walking-stick. Rather officiously the policeman removes the stick. The old man is indignant; he protests; there is an altercation. One of the judges says: 'Haji Mohammed, you'll get your stick back when you leave; we don't allow sticks in the court. If you can't stand without it you may have a chair.'

'By Allah!' says Haji Mohammed. 'I am not so old and infirm as that!' He adds a ribald remark under his breath, which we pretend not to hear; it causes a slight titter from the public benches.

The court clerk explains, unnecessarily, 'His wife has just given birth to another son, his eighth; he is still very strong.'

The old man approaches the rail and waves his hand towards each of us in turn, saying, '*Salam alekum, kef halak?*'—'Greetings, how are you?' He then enquires after various relations of the Shaikhs, addressing them by their first names without the formality of calling them 'Shaikh'. After a conversation about mutual friends, which would have lasted longer if not cut short by one of the judges, the old man sees that his opponent, the plaintiff, has entered the court.

The plaintiff is a Manama merchant, a sour-looking individual wearing spectacles, a European-style coat over a long robe and a tightly bound yellow turban. He is accompanied by a young clerk, whose coat-pocket is bristling with fountain-pens, carrying two enormous leather-bound ledgers. The case starts.

The old man vehemently denies owing anything. Most defendants when they appear in court start off by completely denying all liability, though sometimes in a criminal case the accused tells the court that he was deceived by Satan into committing an offence, an excuse which is not regarded as adequate by the court. Both parties then start talking at once, each man shouting louder to drown what the other is saying. We command them to be quiet. As neither of the litigants pays any attention to the judges' order, the policeman, who stands between them, takes one of the men by the arm and gives him a shake. This, for the moment, halts the flow of words.

With difficulty the defendant is kept quiet while the plaintiff states his case. We study the account books. Transactions between the shopkeeper and the defendant cover several pages and extend over many years. At times payments have been made, but there is a big balance owing to the



The Adviserate in 1926

The Adviserate garden in 1956







Country lane and mosque  
Police passing Manama Fort





shopkeeper, who stands, with the expression of a martyr, gazing at the ceiling and murmuring unflattering remarks about the defendant. The old boat captain is illiterate, but in places in the ledger he has made his thumbmark, attested by a witness.

I ask him: 'Did you, on the third day of Safar, 1371 (Arabic date), take twenty maunds of firewood, sixty bags of rice, ropes and ghee, from Haji Abdulla, the shopkeeper? Are not these your thumbprints?' We go over a number of entries and eventually the old man admits them, but he claims that the payments which he made amounted to more than is shown in the account.

Then the plaintiff, shaking off the restraining hand of the policeman, comes into action. He draws out a document from under his coat—which, had he produced it at the beginning of the case, would have saved a lengthy, but to him enjoyable, argument. Very dramatically he flourishes the document and flings it on to the table under our noses. 'What do you say about this?' he shouts, triumphantly, to the defendant. 'Why, if you owe me only a few hundred rupees, did you mortgage your house for 3000 rupees, the balance of your debt? See, here is your thumbprint. Here are the witnesses, honest and respectable men, known to the honourable judges of the court—why, one of them is your maternal uncle's son! How now can you deny the debt?'

We look at the document, which shows that the defendant did mortgage his house for the balance of the debt and if the claim is not paid within a year—now long passed—the plaintiff has the right to foreclose. But the case goes on for some time. The defendant declares that he is penniless, the plaintiff points out that the defendant recently bought a shop in Muharraq, but it transpires that the shop was bought for the defendant's wife. In Moslem law a married woman's property cannot be touched by her husband or by her husband's creditors. Finally we give the old man six months in which to pay the debt, by instalments, and the plaintiff agrees, grudgingly, that if three-quarters of the amount is paid on time, he will waive the balance. He has probably done very well out of the whole transaction. At the end of the case the two men leave the court chatting amiably.

After another round of coffee we start on the next case. A father is claiming the custody of his daughter who, until now, has been living with her mother, the plaintiff's divorced wife. There is no social stigma in divorce. Divorced women, if they are young or if they are wealthy, usually marry again, but a girl who has reached the age of puberty may not live in the same house as her stepfather. The family comes from one

of the villages. The father is a decent-looking man who works for the oil company, earning about £20 a month. His ex-wife is so heavily enveloped in dark shawls that it is not possible to see what she is like. She is accompanied by her mother, a shapeless bundle of black garments, who stumbles into the court and subsides on to the floor. The policeman tells her to stand up; we tell him to let her stay where she is. The subject of the case, a little girl who looks to me not more than nine years old, clings to her mother's robes, but peeps at us curiously through a slit in the shawl which covers her head. She is a pretty child, with a pale complexion and enormous dark eyes.

The father tells us that his wife, whom he divorced some years ago, has married again and his daughter has now reached the age of puberty. Though children in the East mature early I find it difficult to believe this, but as the mother does not deny it the statement is accepted without medical evidence. The father says that he wants to take charge of the girl. When he says this the mother begins to sob and the grandmother rocks to and fro and beats her head with her hand; the child, now thoroughly frightened, adds her lamentations to the din. We lean back in our chairs until quiet has been restored.

We make some enquiries about where the girl is to live if she goes back to her father. He too has married again, but he does not suggest that his daughter should live with his new wife—perhaps she does not fancy the idea of having a small stepdaughter in the house. He proposes that the child should live with his mother. The ex-wife then becomes shrilly offensive about her former mother-in-law, who she refers to as an 'old she-devil'. I tell her to behave properly or she will be turned out of the court and the case will be dealt with without her. She repeats that she would rather die than let her daughter be looked after by that 'old she-devil'—her mother-in-law. The girl's father looks awkward and embarrassed. Though he may be a good oil worker he is no advocate; all he says is, 'I want my daughter.'

The ex-wife then asserts that the girl's father has never paid her anything towards the maintenance of the child and she enumerates all the things which she has bought for her daughter and tells us how much it has cost her to feed the child. The husband admits that he gave her nothing. The case drags on. We discuss among ourselves whether we should send the case to the religious court, but hearing this the mother makes a suggestion. If the child is allowed to live with her maternal grandmother she will waive her claim for past maintenance. The father agrees on the condition that when the girl is sought in marriage he and his ex-

wife will discuss the matter. Everybody seems satisfied with this solution and, very thankfully, we watch the family leave the court.

In the early days most of the cases concerned the diving industry. To deal with these I compiled a Diving Law, including all the old unwritten rules as well as the new, unpopular, regulations. At the risk of damaging a reputation for impartiality I must admit that I felt a strong sympathy for the divers, but it was some years before they realized that the rules which the court enforced were for their own good. Once I said to a hard old boat captain, who had been swindling his divers, 'You are more like a shark than a man.' To my surprise he took it as a compliment and told all his friends what the Adviser had called him.

We passed cases relating to marriage, divorce and inheritance to the Kadhis, who judged them according to Islamic law. In matters of local custom we consulted a long-established institution known as the 'Maglis Tajara'—mercantile committee. Often after cases had come into court they were settled out of court by arbitration or through friends of the parties. In disputes about boundaries, fish traps and water rights, which were numerous, the court used to appoint an arbitrator and each of the parties appointed a representative. By these means the cases were usually settled. Arabs enjoy acting as peace-makers, a successful arbitrator gains kudos by resolving the disputes of his friends and neighbours. Busy men used gladly to give time to help the court, though this often involved visits to distant gardens or trips to sea to examine fish traps. But nowadays they are less willing to undertake such duties.

The Shaikh himself sat, with the Political Agent, or his representative, in the 'Joint court' where cases brought by foreigners against Bahrain subjects were heard. Cases by Bahrain subjects against foreigners were heard in the Agency court. This arrangement still continues, but in recent years many more nationalities have come under the jurisdiction of the Bahrain Government though Europeans, Americans and people of the Commonwealth are still under British jurisdiction. I always regarded it as unsuitable that the Ruler of the country should sit on the court, but the practice has gone on for so long that it has become an established custom.

In July we left our temporary home, which was beginning to show signs of collapsing, and moved to the fort, the headquarters of the 'Levies', a body of armed police. They were a tough crowd, about 200 strong, recruited in Muscat. They were negroes, Baluchis and men of mixed breed; some spoke Swahili, which I had learnt in East Africa. The Bahrain Shaikhs used to have a bodyguard of Baluchis, like the Swiss Guard at the Vatican, and they were well thought of in Bahrain. There

were two ex-Indian Army Punjabi officers and several Indian N.C.O.s, who looked down on the raw material which they had to train. The British police officer was returning to his regiment, so the Shaikh decided that 'for the time being' I should take over his duties—I held the post of Commandant of the State Police till 1955!

The fort, a romantic-looking building, was behind Manama. It was built in the first half of the eighteenth century, in the reign of Nadir Shah. It consisted of four round towers joined by crenellated walls. In the middle of the north wall, facing the town, was the 'fort bungalow'. It was not, strictly speaking, a 'bungalow' as our rooms were on the first floor; they opened on to a wide veranda where we slept, but some of the rooms overlooked the barrack yard and the jail. It was luxurious when compared to our first house.

The weather was hot and sticky and we began to realize what the summer was like in the Gulf. It was so humid that it was impossible to keep dry. Sweat coursed down one's body, sometimes it felt like a creeping insect. There was a punkah in one of the rooms, operated by a prisoner outside, but at night the prisoner, and the sentry who was supposed to keep an eye on him, usually went to sleep. Added to the unpleasant weather was a feeling of tension in the town and an outburst of anonymous letters, to which Bahrain Arabs have always been addicted. They were tied round stones and thrown on to the veranda. Most of them contained attacks on local people. At night I often heard shots in the distance, which were never explained. Every morning I walked through the bazaar to the Shaikh's office on the sea front; pariah dogs lived above the matting roofs in the narrow lanes, with sometimes unpleasant results for people walking below.

On August 3rd the Chief of the Town Police, a small, locally enlisted body, was shot and wounded by an unknown assailant. Next day the shooting at the fort occurred. Marjorie was having a bath. Suddenly she heard a crackle of shots outside the bathroom window, then shouts and screams. As soon as she could she ran out on to the veranda and saw Daly, as she told me later, 'driving his car towards the town, with a red muffler round his neck'. It was not a red muffler. It was blood. But she did not realize this at the time. She sent the cook, the only servant in the house, to fetch me.

He burst into my office, incoherent with excitement. 'There is shooting at the fort,' he gasped. 'Who is shot? Who is shooting?' I asked. He did not seem to know, but he kept on repeating, 'People are being shot.' I ran most of the way to the fort. When I got near I heard women wailing;

I rushed into the house to see if Marjorie was safe, then went into the barracks.

Daly had been talking to one of the Indian officers in the Orderly Room when a Baluchi Levyman crept to the open window and shot the Indian in the back, the bullet went through him and nicked off a piece of Daly's ear. The other Indian officer ran up and he too was shot. Daly tried, very bravely, to tackle the man, but was stabbed in half a dozen places with a bayonet. Both the Indian officers died but Daly recovered. The man then surrendered and when I arrived I found him firmly pinioned in one of the cells. It has always been my belief that this was an isolated incident due to the Baluchi believing that he had been ill-treated by the Indians.

On November 22nd, 1957, thirty-one years later, a Baluchi policeman, who thought he was being oppressed by an Iraqi officer, walked into the Orderly Room at the fort and shot the Iraqi officer who was sitting at a desk. An Arab officer who was in the room advanced towards the man; he too was shot and killed. The Baluchi fired at the sentry at the gate, wounding him slightly, then gave himself up. Both he and his compatriot in 1926 were tried, found guilty of murder and sentenced to death.

The 1926 affair caused great excitement in the town. Crowds of Arabs rushed to the quay, seized boats and crossed to Muharraq, believing that the Levies had run amuck and were going to loot the bazaar. I and de Grenier, the Customs Officer, walked round the bazaars and tried to calm the people by telling them what had actually happened. Eventually the situation returned to normal. August 6th was Marjorie's birthday. I had spent all day taking down evidence and in the afternoon we took our tea and went in a sailing-boat to visit a police post in one of the islands. On our way back the wind dropped and the tide was against us. We landed far down the coast and did not get back to the fort till long after midnight, by which time the rumour started that we had been murdered.

Meanwhile the British Navy arrived in two sloops, 'longing to be at 'em'. Naval guards with rifles and machine-guns were posted at the Agency and the fort. Once or twice a naval sentry let off a rifle by mistake, which caused alarm and consternation. Suddenly it was decided that we should move immediately to the Agency, leaving our belongings at the fort bungalow, which was taken over by some young naval officers, who had no idea how to look after other people's possessions. When Marjorie went to the house to get some clothes she found indescribable chaos. There were raw potatoes on a silver salver, shoes on the sideboard,



and lying on her desk a note, which she naturally read, referring to probable attempts on my life. Although I assured her that it was absolute nonsense it was rather disquieting for her. All the time there was no trouble or signs of trouble among the men in the fort.

We spent several very uncomfortable weeks in the overcrowded Agency, which was full of naval officers, legal experts from the Residency, and finally the Resident and his staff. Marjorie was the only woman in the party as Mrs Daly had gone home for the summer. We slept in a corner of the veranda, surrounded by the beds of the male population, constantly overhearing conversations not intended for our ears. Everybody was determined to believe that the affair was a widespread anti-British plot, though there was no evidence to support this theory. The Baluchi, being a foreigner, was tried in the Agency court, but the result was a foregone conclusion. It was then suggested, and urged by the Navy, that he should be hanged, and it was assumed that I, as Commandant of the Levies, would make all arrangements, but here I went on strike. 'If there is any hanging to be done,' I told them, 'someone else can do the job.' Finally the wretched man was executed by a firing squad on a grey morning in front of the fort, in the presence of a large crowd. After that, any executions which had to be carried out were done by shooting. On an average there was one murder every two years, so these unpleasant occasions were infrequent.

The Levies were disbanded and the men were repatriated to Muscat, but in a few years many of them filtered back to Bahrain and found work there. As a temporary measure two platoons of Indian infantry were stationed in Bahrain and for a time there was a period of quiet. Daly left in September, after five years in Bahrain, a long time in those days when there were no amenities. He did more for Bahrain than any other Political Agent. The diving reforms and many other progressive measures were due to his initiative, although when they were introduced by the Shaikh they were strongly opposed, yet in later years their value was appreciated. Few Arabs came to say good-bye to Daly; gratitude is an uncommon trait among them, they are by nature unsentimental, cynical and materialistic. They are impatient of control and resent anything which restricts their individual liberty, even though the object is for their own good. Years later Daly's reputation was very much higher than when he left Bahrain, for by then people appreciated how much he had done for the country.

I used to see the Shaikh two or three times a week and he soon talked to me with complete freedom, even to the extent of discussing the attitude

of the British Government, which was often, from his point of view, quite incomprehensible. One of his difficulties was the incessant demands for money from everyone around him. In theory the Shaikh, as head of the tribe, was responsible for providing for the members of the family, who received allowances, but they and other people—merchants, heads of Arab tribes and visitors from other Shaikhdoms—expected generous help from the Shaikh whenever they were in need—and they were always in need. Their requests were difficult to deal with as the Shaikh's share in the Civil List was small. The first Budget which I produced was for about £75,000, derived almost entirely from Customs dues which were then 5 per cent *ad valorem* on imports. This sum had to provide for the administration, such as it was, the police, the Civil List and for major works such as drilling water-wells, making roads and the completion of the new palace, which had been begun before I arrived. It was a modest building, rather like an Indian railway station.

The Shaikh bought some furniture and fittings for the palace when he was in England, but for some reason there were too many baths and two had been put into each bathroom—though there was no water laid on. An old Arab Shaikh from down the Gulf visited Bahrain and was shown over the palace. Not surprisingly he said, 'Why are two baths in one room?' He had already asked several rather inconvenient questions. Shaikh Hamed looked at him for a moment, then, leading the way to another room, said, 'One for hot and one for cold, of course.' I watched the old gentleman ruminating over the reply. Apparently it satisfied him.

In October there was another dramatic incident. One night Shaikh Hamed drove out with two of his sons to his house on the coast, followed by a car containing a few servants. At a narrow place on the Budeya road, between date gardens, there is a steep, twisting bridge over a water channel. As the car mounted the bridge there was a burst of firing from behind the fence on the side of the road. Shots hit the car but missed the occupants. The cars raced on, not stopping till they reached the house; only at dawn did they send a messenger to me to say what had happened. The Shaikh was sitting in front, beside the driver, but he never did this again. I believe he owed his life to the car's powerful headlights which, as the car swung round the corner, dazzled the four would-be assassins behind the fence and put them off their aim.

It was a carefully planned ambush; we found gun-rests and peep-holes in the fence and a quantity of ammunition on the ground, but the delay enabled the men to escape. We searched neighbouring villages and houses occupied by suspicious characters and issued a proclamation offering a

large reward for information, but it was a long time before anything came to light. The police worked away at the case and in 1930, after prolonged investigation, three of the men were arrested. The fourth man was in Muscat. They had left Bahrain immediately after the attempt and then, thinking that the coast was clear, they returned. They were a gang of professional gunmen who would do any job for payment. Though they never divulged for whom they were working we knew who had employed them, but we had no proof. Two of the men were implicated in attacks on villages in the previous year. One of the three was shot while trying to escape from jail. The other two were tried, sentenced to life imprisonment and sent to the Andaman islands, as in those days long-term prisoners from Bahrain were accommodated in jails in India or elsewhere.

In November, soon after we had moved into the new house, in which we lived for the next thirty years, we went to India where, with the help of the Indian Army authorities, I recruited a body of ex-Indian-Army Punjabis for service in Bahrain. But on the day on which we left there was yet another incident. I was awakened before dawn by a crowd of villagers, to be told that a village close to the town, on the coast, had been attacked. Without breakfast, which later I much regretted, I went to the village. It was an unpleasant affair; there were three badly wounded villagers and the body of another outside his house. One of the robbers lay dead at the entrance to the village, still clasping a handful of gold ornaments which he had stolen. There were signs that several more of the raiders had been wounded. I sent out patrols and search-parties, but it seemed that the men had come by sea and they escaped again by boat. I hurried home, finished my packing, and after reporting to the Shaikh we rushed to the pier in time to catch the mail boat which was to take us to Karachi.

After the excitements of Bahrain it was pleasant to have a few restful days on the ship. But I was annoyed on arriving in Karachi when the first man I met, the Military Transport Officer, who turned out to be someone I had known in England, said eagerly, 'Now what is the true story about the shooting of the Political Agent, and the Lady in the Bath?' I introduced him to Marjorie and said, with some hauteur, 'As this is the lady in question she can tell you what happened.' He was suitably abashed and invited us to dinner.

Soon after we returned to Bahrain the first parties of Punjabis arrived and at the same time I engaged a British officer, Captain L. S. Parke, to serve as a police officer. He held the post until the Punjabis returned to India. They were a fine body of men and they gave valuable service, but

they never became acclimatized to Bahrain and, from no fault of theirs, they were unpopular among the Arabs, who regarded them as expensive foreign mercenaries. One day I suggested to the Shaikh that it would be better to have a police force of local men. He agreed, but he doubted if we would get men to join. I put up a notice calling for recruits, offering pay of about £2 a month and rations and uniform. Today the police are paid over £15 a month. There was no lack of recruits. So many applied to join that I was able to choose men of fine physique and a certain amount of intelligence; many of them were negroes, descendants of African slaves. The Shaikh encouraged recruiting by telling his retainers to send their sons and young brothers to the fort as recruits.

They were the same type of men as those who were with me in the Camel Corps on the Western Desert. They were keen to learn, they took pride in their appearance and they were always cheerful. I enjoyed watching section after section of raw recruits developing from sloppy young Arabs into smart, trained men. They showed an aptitude for drill and after some time I was able to find suitable men to promote as N.C.O.s. By 1932, when the last of the Punjabis had completed their service, the new police were ready to take over. A few of the Punjabi N.C.O.s remained as instructors.

For many years service in the Police was a popular profession, but with the development of the oil industry and the increase in the number of so-called educated young men it became difficult to obtain recruits. The Bahrainis now prefer to work for the oil company and nobody who has been to school wants to be a policeman. Today the cycle has completed its turn and more than three-quarters of the Bahrain police are foreigners from other Arab states.

As the years passed I introduced various developments in the police force. I started a camel section which was made up entirely of negroes, many of them manumitted slaves. They did useful work patrolling the coast before Jeeps and Land Rovers made their appearance in Bahrain. Later they provided hundreds of Europeans with subjects for photography. A very black policeman, with a scarlet turban, on a white camel, against a background of palm trees, made a wonderful coloured photograph. I also started a cavalry section, mounted on Arab ponies provided by the Shaikh. They are now rarely seen except on state occasions, when they provide mounted escorts, greys in front of the V.I.P.'s car and bays behind it, the scarlet turbans and the red-and-white pennants—red and white being the Bahrain colours—providing a splash of colour in official processions.

I got together a band from the sons and young brothers of policemen who, when they grew up, joined the regular force. Every morning, before breakfast, I attended the police parade, riding to the fort on my Arab mare, taking a different route through the town every day so that I could castigate the municipal authorities if the streets were dirty or the dustbins unemptied. In the beginning I taught the band myself. I whistled to them and played gramophone records and very soon they picked up the tunes. They had a natural sense of rhythm and were experts on drums, their earliest *chef-d'œuvre* being 'Marching through Georgia', which resounded through the town every Sunday morning when the police went for a route march. But this was too jejune. I took on a Sikh bandmaster, a venerable, bemedalled old soldier, and he taught the band to read music, an accomplishment which had never formed part of my education. After that they soared above me to great heights with expensive musical instruments from Boosey and Hawkes and quantities of printed music. They played marches and 'pieces', descriptive of Monastery Gardens and Persian Markets, with chimes, produced on an instrument consisting of hanging metal tubes—till one of the tubes disappeared, which was a relief to me as I got so tired of hearing 'The Bells of St Mary's'—and they played dance music, with great verve, in spite of a few wrong notes.

The advantage of a police force consisting of men who knew the country, the people and the language outweighed the disadvantages; one being that when anyone was arrested he usually turned out to be either a relation or a neighbour of some member of the force. On the whole the Bahrain police were very effective and it was mainly due to them that for so many years the state of public security in Bahrain was excellent. The number of prisoners in jail, at one time, was rarely more than forty or fifty, which is a very low average in an Eastern state with a population which by 1957 was about 125,000. Few of the police were educated, only a handful of them could read or write, but they were men on whom one could depend in a tight corner. They developed a certain *esprit de corps*, which foreign police lack, and some of them became skilful, though unorthodox, in the art of detection. I knew every man in the force, and all about his family and background. Some of the happiest times which I spent in Bahrain were when I was dealing with the police.



## Four

Of several duties assigned to the Indian Navy that of cruising the pearl banks is far the most harassing and unpleasant . . . the heat is not surpassed by any known spot in the world. The sun rises red hot. Under double awnings, their heads not unfrequently bound with wet cloths, the seamen are seen lying on the deck or stretched along the gunwale, panting for breath. . . . Her Majesty's frigate *Liverpool*, going from Muscat to Bushire, one day lost three lieutenants and thirty men from heatstroke.

*Travels in Arabia.* LIEUTENANT J. R. WELLSTED (1838)

Dear as the wet diver to the eyes  
Of his pale wife, who waits and weeps on shore,  
By sands of Bahrain, in the Persian Gulf,  
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night  
Having made up his toll of precious pearls;  
Rejoins her in his hut upon the shore.

*The Light of Asia.* SIR EDWIN ARNOLD. 1832-1904

THE picture of a Bahrain pearl diver and his 'pale' wife, by Sir Edwin Arnold, the Victorian poet, is inaccurate, even allowing for poetic licence, as I discovered when I came to Bahrain. The diving season lasts for four months and ten days, from June till early October, when the sea is hot and calm, and the diving dhows only return once or twice in the season to replenish their supplies, so visits to the family 'hut' were infrequent. The divers and their wives were definitely dusky and 'pale' is hardly the word to describe them. The lines are worth quoting, not for their poetical merit, but as the only reference to Bahrain by any known British poet.

When I first arrived, and for the following six or seven years, the prosperity, and almost the existence, of Bahrain depended on the pearl trade. If the catch was good, and pearl prices high, divers, boat-owners and pearl merchants made money, which they spent in the bazaar. The

shopkeepers imported more goods on which the Government collected Customs duty, which was its main source of income. There was no tax on pearls, the only direct revenue from the industry being a small sum collected from boat registrations. It was a flourishing industry, providing employment for about 20,000 Bahrain men during the season, but when cultured pearls began to make their appearance the real pearl industry suffered a blow from which it never recovered.

I must admit a prejudice against cultured pearls. I hope that in time it will be found that they do not have the long life of real pearls, which last for centuries. A cultured pearl contains a scrap of foreign substance artificially introduced into the oyster which covers it with skins of nacre. If one cuts through a cultured pearl it is like cutting open a hard-boiled egg; on the outside there is nacre, in the centre something resembling a scrap of cement. A real pearl appears to consist of nacre all the way through. I never knew a Bahrain pearl merchant fail to distinguish a cultured pearl on sight.

Persian Gulf pearls are the finest in the world and have been famous since ancient times. Probably the first reference to them is in a cuneiform inscription, found in Nineveh, in Iraq, which reads, 'In the Sea of Changeable Winds [the Persian Gulf] his merchants fished for pearls.' Classical authors describe Persian Gulf pearls as more perfect and exquisite than any others and from the ninth till the fourteenth century Arab geographers and travellers relate minutely how pearls were found and bought and sold. The account of Masudi, an Arab historian of the ninth century, could, with a few reservations, serve as a description of pearldiving today. The centre of this most ancient industry and the chief market in the Gulf was Bahrain.

I shall never forget the first time I saw the pearling fleet set out from Muharraq. It was evening and the tide was full. The graceful ships, like Roman galleys, with huge lateen sails, moved smoothly through the iridescent water, silhouetted against the sunset sky. The sound of the sailors singing and the throbbing of their drums was borne across the water to where I stood with the people who were watching the departure. But this splendid sight may not be seen for much longer. A year or two ago a launch was used for pearling and, as the experiment was a success, soon, probably, the fleet will discard sails in favour of petrol engines.

In my second summer in Bahrain I paid a visit to the pearl banks and afterwards I used to go out once or twice every season. It was a hot, sticky night in September, but September is the best month for these expeditions, although on shore it is the most humid and unpleasant month

in the year. The Arabs say that in September the dampness leaves the sea and comes over the land. After dinner I went to the pier to board the launch which was to take me out. The pier was almost deserted except for sleeping figures, lying stretched on the decks of the boats which were anchored alongside, and one or two little groups of Arabs sitting round a lantern and singing softly to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument. The sea, in the moonlight, looked more like oil than water. I took two or three policemen, who had been divers before they joined up, but the man who was really in charge of the expedition was the Shaikh's *nakhuda*, Sultan bin Ali, who could find his way anywhere in the seas around Bahrain without a compass. Our destination was a pearl bank about forty miles away, where most of the fleet was working, so in order not to arrive before dawn we anchored during part of the night in the lee of one of the big reefs which provide shelter for ships even in the roughest weather. It was light when we sighted the first group of dhows and we went alongside the largest one.

I clambered up the slippery side of the dhow on a loose rope and was received by the captain, who invited me to join him on a sort of shelf in the poop where he slept and kept his carved wooden sea chest, which contained his own belongings and the pearls. The crew, who numbered about sixty men, were squatting in the middle of the deck around a huge heap of shells which had been caught on the previous day. With their short knives they prised open every shell, searching each one carefully, prodding about in the flesh of the oyster. When a man found a pearl he placed it between his toes and when two or three were collected he handed them over to the captain, who watched the men from his eyrie with an eagle eye. Most of the pearls were so tiny that I could hardly see them. Large pearls were few and far between. The captain told me that thefts of pearls by divers were unheard of, nor were pearls stolen by brokers who were often entrusted, on shore, with valuable lots of pearls to sell on behalf of their owners. Later I was to discover that this statement was true. When all the shells had been opened they were thrown into the sea and the decks were swilled over. I asked one of the divers why they did not keep the shells, which might have been of commercial value. 'The oysters in the sea feed on the old opened shells,' he said. I asked him if he knew what made pearls. He replied: 'When it rains the oysters come up to the surface. They open their shells and receive drops of rain. These drops become pearls.' Several of the divers had gathered round and they all solemnly confirmed this statement. One of the 'travellers' tales' mentioned by Masudi was that the divers filled their mouths with oil,

which they released when they got to the bottom, and the oil, floating through the water, provided more light. Yet another of his stories was of divers, working below, 'howling like dogs' to communicate with the men on board the dhow. I never discovered any foundation for these tales.

The crew consisted of divers, pullers, who worked the diving ropes and manned the oars, a couple of ship's boys, a cook, the captain's mate, who was a cousin of the captain, and the captain himself. He was a lean, grizzled man, a typical Arab seaman, accustomed to a hard life, but he had an air of authority. The divers, who looked thin and weedy, told me that when diving they reduced their food to the minimum, but the pullers were stalwart specimens; many of them were negroes with tremendous chest and arm development. The divers worked stripped, except for a loincloth or a very short pair of shorts made of dark material. Any colour, they said, would attract dangerous fish. Their most dangerous enemies in the sea were poisonous jelly-fish and stinging rays. During the jelly-fish season, in June, they wore cotton garments covering the body, to avoid being stung. They rarely had trouble from sharks and barracuda, probably owing to the activity in the sea around the dhows. One of the early Arab writers said that the pearl divers used to blacken the soles of their feet, which are naturally light in colour, and sometimes the whole body, with soot, to keep off 'sea monsters', but I never heard of this being done.

After a long discussion between the captain, his mate and some of the divers, it was decided where the day's diving would begin, and the anchor was hauled up. Everything on board the dhow was done to the accompaniment of singing, stamping and hand-clapping, especially when the men were at the oars. As they heaved the heavy, square-bladed oars through the water, keeping excellent time, their voices rose and then descended in a sound like a long drawn-out groan, but many of their diving songs were lively and tuneful.

It was an exhilarating sensation to be on board the great dhow as her prow cut through the smooth water, sometimes scattering shoals of little fish as she moved. The deck was in deep shadow, shaded from the sun by canvas awnings woven in the villages of Bahrain, which made it difficult to take photographs. It was crowded with dark, glistening naked bodies, moving rhythmically to the swing of the oars; as the men heaved they shouted and stamped. There were two men to each oar and they rowed standing. Having pushed the heavy oar through the water, the rowers rapidly moved to the other side of the oar, pushed it back, more easily as

it was not in the water, then changed sides again for the next stroke. The whole action was carried out in perfect unison. Occasionally one caught a gleam from eyes or white teeth and one heard, above the singing, the voice of the mate giving orders. The water in the shadow of the ship was a vivid blue-green; beyond, the sea stretched flatly, a hot, glaring pale blue, merging, without any visible horizon, into the sky. When we reached the place where diving was to be done the anchor was lowered, the oars were lashed to the rowlocks so that they projected horizontally above the water, and diving began. I could see nothing whatever to indicate that below the surface there was a promising pearl bed.

Each diver had two ropes. One of them, on which he descended, had a stone weight on it, the other was fastened to a string bag into which he put his shells. On his nose he wore a clip, like a clothes-peg, and his fingers and big toes were provided with leather guards to protect him when he walked on the sharp coral on the sea bed and pulled the oysters off the rocks. The puller, standing on the gunwale, let down the diver on the weighted rope and then pulled it up again. The diver collected as many shells as he could, eight to twelve shells seemed to be the average number, put them in his bag and signalled to his puller, who drew him up by the rope which was fastened to the bag. From the deck I could see the divers rising rapidly through the clear water, holding the ropes which the pullers drew up. They stayed submerged for just under a minute, but when some of them saw that I was timing them with a watch, they remained below for almost two minutes. The captain told me that sometimes they worked banks which were twelve fathoms below the surface (seventy-two feet), but more often they dived in about six fathoms.

When the divers came alongside the pullers took the bags from them and the divers rested in the water, holding on to a rope. When all of them had surfaced, the pullers, chanting and stamping in unison, advanced to the heap of shells on the deck and emptied on to it the contents of the bags. Contrary to general belief it is never known which individual finds a particular pearl. After ten dives the men came on board for a rest. They drank a little coffee and huddled round the fire which burned in a fire-box on deck while another relay of divers took their places; this continued throughout the day. Though the surface temperature was extremely hot, I could see that the divers were cold after working in the sunless depths of the sea.

The captain produced the usual coffee and a tin of sliced peaches in a plate, a difficult food to eat with one's fingers. After this meal I scrambled along the slippery deck, barefooted and wearing only a pair of shorts. I



tried what it felt like to take a pull at an oar and was allowed to hoist up one of the divers, under the close supervision of his puller. When the diver surfaced he was very astonished to see me at the end of his rope, instead of his black companion.

Tied on every spar and rail were bundles done up in bright-coloured cloths containing the divers' belongings, and hanging over the stern were fish traps and fishing tackle. The traps were round baskets made of palm-sticks or wire; they were baited and let down to the sea bed and brought up by the divers, usually with half a dozen excellent fish in them. Squids, or cuttle-fish, were often caught and greatly esteemed. The divers' menu was fish, rice and dried dates; they also ate dried limes, which kept off scurvy. It was a monotonous diet. I had loaded my launch with baskets of fresh dates and I left some of these when I said good-bye to the captain and his crew. After visiting two or three more dhows we sighted a smart little motor dhow which belonged to a pearl merchant, so we decided to pay him a visit.

As we approached his 'yacht' we saw him leaving one of the diving dhows in his gaily painted gig, rowed by two servants with a man holding a large black umbrella over his master's head to keep off the sun. Upper-class Arabs in Bahrain make more fuss about the sun than any European. Once I was with the Shaikh in his country palace, on a hot summer's day, when he noticed that the sentry in the courtyard was standing in the sun. He sent a message to the sentry ordering him to confine his beat to the shady side of the building. I used to work in my garden on summer afternoons, wearing only shorts, which at first was considered very strange, even for 'mad dogs and Englishmen', but soon the Arabs became accustomed to my ways.

The pearl merchant was a portly, prosperous-looking man, in spotless white robes, the antithesis of the captain of the pearling dhow. The deck of his launch was carpeted with Persian rugs and provided with cushions. Along the side were rolls of bedding and porous earthenware jars of water hung on the rails. Coffee was served by a servant, followed by a large tray containing dishes of tinned pineapple, biscuits and a sticky yellow sweetmeat from Muscat. We were urged to stay for a meal, but we made our excuses as time did not allow us to stay. Several live chickens, tied in a bunch by their legs, suggested what the meal would have consisted of.

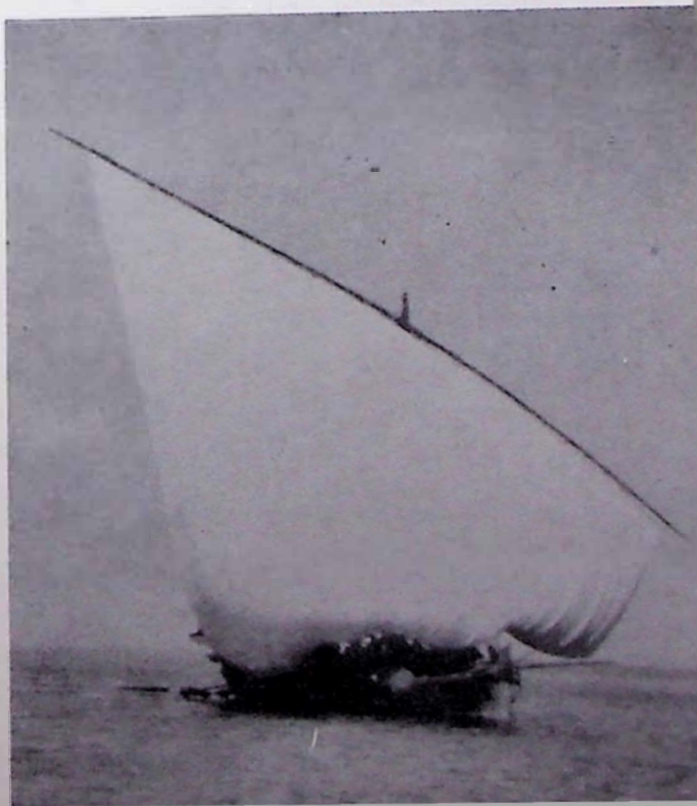
The merchant produced the pearls which he had bought, wrapped in little bundles of red twill. One or two fine large pearls were in a tin filled with minute seed pearls. These, he said, preserved the lustre of the big pearls. There were pearls of many colours: golden yellow, which



*Above:* Divers alongside  
pearling dhow



*Top right:* A diver ready  
to submerge



A dhow in full sail



A dhow being rowed



A diver wearing  
protective clothing  
against jelly-fish

were popular in South America; white; black, which is the trade name for gun-metal blue pearls; and pink, which are white with a rosy glow, these being the most sought after of all. We discussed pearls and diving. Like farmers the men in the pearl trade are never satisfied with the markets or the weather, but even this merchant was enthusiastic over a wonderful pearl which had recently been found. Later I was shown it by the man who bought it. The pearl, perfect in colour, shape and lustre, stood about an inch high and was sold to a well-known American lady in Paris, after changing hands several times, for £15,000. It was the finest pearl found in the memory of man and the price was the highest known to have been paid for one pearl.

I told the pearl merchant that in Europe people ate oysters and regarded them as a delicacy. He declared that nobody, unless starving, would eat them in the Gulf. I said I had read, in a description of pearl-diving by Captain Fryer, who wrote at the end of the seventeenth century, that 'Oysters in the Gulph are the next best to the British'. I cannot vouch for this as I only once ate an oyster and I never wish to sample one again! I learned later that oysters found near Muscat, where there are no pearl banks, are sometimes eaten by Europeans.

The merchant was very proud of his launch, it was the first season that he had used it. The year before, an enterprising buyer visited the fleet in a dhow with an engine. There was a protest from all the other buyers who claimed, rightly, that he would have an unfair advantage over them. No buyer may go on to a pearling dhow while another buyer is on board, so when there was news of a big pearl being found the buyers raced to the banks to be first on the scene. The Shaikh ordered the enterprising merchant to discontinue using his launch, at the same time announcing that next season anyone who wished to might use a launch.

We parted from the pearl merchant and set off for Bahrain, stopping on the way back at one of the shallower pearl banks where the policemen, who had brought their diving kit with them, did a little amateur diving. Not being a proficient diver myself I did not attempt to go down. They brought up quite a number of shells and found in them two or three little pearls, worth a few rupees. Anyone can dive for pearls in the Gulf, provided that he uses no mechanical apparatus and that he takes out a pearling licence. It was evening when we sighted Jebel Dukhan, the flat-topped mountain in Bahrain, and by the time we reached the pier there were lights bobbing on the masts of the dhows which were anchored off the town.

As I got to know them well I used often to visit the pearl merchants



in the bazaar. There was no 'pearl market'. Business was done in the offices or the houses of the merchants or sometimes, in a small way, over a glass of tea in a coffee shop. Recently, however, one merchant has opened a shop where pearls and necklaces can be bought over the counter, which is doubtless profitable for the merchant and convenient for the purchasers, but devoid of the interest and excitement of lengthy bargaining.

The only pearls which were sold in the open bazaar were very low-grade specimens hawked around by bazaar touts and sold to strangers, often to ships' passengers, who were foolish enough to buy them. They were not a good buy! When I had time to spare, usually on a Friday, which is a holiday, I used to sit and watch two merchants at work. Bargaining was a leisurely affair, preceded by rounds of coffee and conversation. Then, almost reluctantly, the pearls would be produced, in their little red twill bags, and spread on a piece of the same material, red being considered the best colour on which to display them. Before bargaining began the pearls were measured for size by being passed through a series of little tin sieves with holes of various dimensions and classed for colour, shape and quality. They were sold by weight and the bargaining was to decide the price per 'chow', which is the local measurement of weight. Often the transaction took place in front of people. If the two men did not want the price to be known they covered their hands with a cloth and conducted the affair by an elaborate method of talking on the fingers, which has been used in Bahrain for centuries. They tried to explain it to me. Pressure on various fingers and parts of the hand indicated numerals, but I must confess that I never quite learned how the system worked.

The older men used to get wildly excited over big pearl transactions. I have seen a merchant leap from the circle of men seated on the floor and rush to the door, exclaiming, 'By Allah! I will not offer one more pice [a small coin] for that lot,' only to be almost dragged back to the group by some of his friends, where he went on bargaining for the rest of the day. A remarkable feature was the complete trust which everyone placed in everyone else. Pearls worth thousands of pounds were handed from one man to another, and kept for several weeks, without any form of receipt, but the men in the business could recognize pearls, once they had seen them, many years later. A merchant gave two or three pearls to a broker to sell. Carrying the pearls, tied in a corner of his headcloth, he went to a shop and soon afterwards found that the headcloth had come undone and the pearls were lost. The shopkeeper denied having found



them and though a search was made they were not found. Four or five years later the owner of the pearls was in Bombay. He saw and recognized one of his lost pearls among some which were being sold by a Hindu merchant. The pearl had passed through several hands, but it was traced back to the shopkeeper, who eventually admitted that he had picked up the pearls outside his shop and sold them.

When I first arrived in Bahrain Daly warned me not to let my wife take an interest in pearls. I found it quite impossible to follow this advice and I collected a necklace of black pearls, which took me eleven years to complete. Quite a number of black pearls used to be found in the Gulf, but in recent years they are rarely found. There is no explanation for this phenomenon and I have not been able to discover whether black pearls are becoming scarce in other parts of the world where there are fisheries.

I was constantly asked whether pearls could be bought cheaply in Bahrain. If one has patience and plenty of time it is possible to acquire a necklace for a good deal less than one would pay in London or Paris by buying the pearls one by one. One more story about pearls. In later years, in the oil era, the Bahrain Petroleum Company decided to print a slogan on letters dispatched from their post office, to advertise local industries. 'Pearls, Progress and Prosperity' was, I think, the final choice, but I thought my composition was very much better. Mine was 'Drape your girls in Bahrain pearls'.

By 1932 the diving industry was in a precarious state. It was suffering from the competition from cultured pearls and, being a luxury trade, it was very hard hit by the financial depression in Europe. Many of the boat-owners and pearl merchants were finding it extremely difficult to raise funds to equip the diving fleet and the Government itself was in no position to help them with a loan. When the time came for making the advances to the divers some of the merchants and captains found that they were unable to find the money.

Divers were not paid wages but shared in the profits which were got by the sale of the pearls, and at the beginning of the season and once during the off season they were paid an advance by their captains which was debited against their earnings in the next season. This advance payment in cash always attracted men to the diving industry. They seemed to forget that it was a loan on which they had to pay interest. Having taken an advance the diver was compelled to work for the captain during the following season. The captain usually borrowed money from a merchant or shopkeeper on shore to equip and provision his dhow and to pay the advances to his divers, but the shore merchant charged interest on his

money and the captain in his turn charged interest on the advances which he made to his divers. The captain received one-fifth of the total profits, and the remainder was divided among the divers and pullers, divers getting two shares to the pullers' one share. If, however, the captain or the merchant himself financed the venture no interest was charged, but the man who put up the money was entitled to buy the pearls at 20 per cent less than market price.

In theory the system was a fair one, but so many abuses crept into it that the divers became almost slaves. Enormous rates of interest were charged on loans and advances, accounts were 'cooked', divers were made to work, without pay, for the captains and merchants during the off season. They could be transferred without their consent from one captain to another or handed over to a shopkeeper in payment for a debt, when the diver had to pay a proportion of his earnings to the shopkeeper every season. They had no means of checking their accounts. Their only resort was to a notoriously corrupt court of captains and pearl merchants who were not sympathetic towards them, and when a diver died his debt passed to his sons who, as soon as they were old enough, had to dive for the captain to whom their father owed money.

The captains, too, had a hard time, often mortgaging their houses and boats to the shore merchants, and after a bad season there were many bankruptcies which involved the captain handing over his divers, his dhow and his house to the moneylender on shore. Divers were utterly improvident, happy-go-lucky and born gamblers, every man dreaming that some day his boat would find a 'pearl of great price' which would make him a wealthy man, able to retire from the sea. Very occasionally this did happen, but more often than not the diver spent all his money on riotous living and eventually went back to diving. Young men had no objection to becoming divers, for there were few other paid occupations, and they were attracted by the substantial loan which they got. They always hoped to earn enough money in the season to enable them to live for the rest of the year without having to work, but there was no retiring age for a diver. When he became old and tired—and many of the best divers were old men—he had to go on working because he was in debt.

The new diving law, which was introduced by the Shaikh, limited the rate of interest to a reasonable figure. The maximum amount of the advances was laid down by the Government, whose policy was gradually to decrease these loans; a regular but simple system of accounts was instituted and every diver was issued with a little book, like a passport, containing his account with his captain and other details. These 'Divers'

Books' were checked by a staff of special clerks. Sales of pearls had to be witnessed by three of the divers chosen by the crew, unpaid labour in the off season was prohibited, the old diving court was abolished, every diver had the right to appear in the ordinary courts and when a diver died his debt died with him.

The new rules met with strong opposition from the merchants and captains, who saw themselves losing much of their grip on the divers. They were opposed, too, by opponents of the new regime who were for ever seeking opportunities to discredit the Government. The divers regarded the changes with sullen indifference because they had been told by their masters that they would not benefit from them. But the Government was supported by the religious leaders, who disapproved of all forms of usury, and by a group of progressive Arabs, some of them pearl brokers and merchants.

Every year, from 1926 until 1932, there was trouble at the beginning of the season when the proclamation laying down the amount of the advances was issued. Twice, unfortunately, I was unable to prevent the Shaikh's proclamation from being revoked and the amount of the advances being increased as a concession to the divers who had demonstrated against it. Having succeeded twice the divers and their supporters thought that they could force the Government, by threats of violence and disorder, to repeal the law, although its whole object was to improve their conditions and protect their interests. One year the divers went on strike and refused to man the boats. Another time they broke into the store of an unpopular merchant in Muharraq and destroyed much of his property and once, on New Year's Day, when the Political Agent was holding his usual reception at the Agency for representatives of the different communities, listening to a long speech from a leading merchant, eulogizing the happy, peaceful state of the country, a messenger rushed in with the news that the divers were looting the Muharraq bazaar. The party broke up hurriedly.

The crisis occurred in May 1932 at the time of the advances. The amount which had been decided by the Government after consultation with some of the merchants was lower than that of the previous year, but more than was being paid in other parts of the Gulf. There was discontent among the divers and several of them had been arrested for trying to provoke disorder. On May 26th I was sitting in my office with Shaikh Abdulla, the Shaikh's brother, and the Amir of Muharraq, who commanded a body of armed watchmen, when the sound of a crowd moving along the sea road at the end of the garden came through the

open windows, causing my silugi dogs to bark violently. At the same time a boatman came in with the news that crowds of divers from Muharraq had landed on the shore and had seized all the poles and oars in the boats. I got my car and turned into the sea road, but seeing in front of me a solid mass of men, waving sticks and crowbars, advancing towards the bazaar I wheeled into a side street, meaning to get ahead of them. In my excitement I entered a narrow lane and jammed my car, so I got out and ran to the police station. I arrived too late.

The mob had broken into the police station and released the men in whom they were interested, while the rest of the prisoners sat cowering in the corner of the lock-up. Three or four of the newly enlisted local police were on the roof of the building. They had recently taken over from the Punjabis. The square outside and the sea road were full of wildly excited divers, now intent on raiding the bazaar where the shopkeepers were frantically closing the light wooden shutters which protected their shops.

Facing the mob, at the entrance to the bazaar, was Shaikh Rashid bin Mohammed, the Shaikh's father-in-law, a son of the redoubtable Shaikh Mohammed bin Khalifah. He was at this time over seventy years old. He had nothing but a light cane in his hand, but he advanced on the divers and on seeing him they halted. I joined him and I shall never forget the sight of the old man, his red, dyed beard quivering with fury, laying about him with his cane and telling the mob what he thought of them and of all their female relations. Suddenly I found one of my servants, a young Arab, beside me clutching a rifle, a stout stick and one of my presentation swords from the rack in my dining-room. He said he thought I might need them; I took the stick and was glad to have it as in the mêlée which soon ensued fists were inadequate.

By this time more police had arrived, among them some of the remaining Punjabis, and fighting developed all along the sea road; later the Amir appeared with his armed guards. The police used their rifle-butts, but the Amir's men started firing wildly. Eventually the divers were dispersed, but not before several of them had lost their lives and a number of the police were injured. Next morning, by the Shaikh's orders, the ringleaders were arrested; they were brought to the market place in Muharraq and given ten strokes each in front of a large crowd, and then released and ordered to go back to their work. From that day there was no more trouble over the diving advances, the divers eventually realizing that the reforms which they had opposed were to their own advantage, and they came to believe that what the Shaikh and I were doing was intended to improve their conditions.

It was after this incident that the Shaikh instituted a Diving Council, which met two or three times in the year to discuss any amendments to the diving rules, to decide the amount of the advances and the date on which diving would begin and to hear any new suggestions, but as the members of the council were pearl merchants and captains they were apt to regard all new ideas, such as the introduction of mechanical apparatus for diving, with a good deal of suspicion and disapproval. When somebody mentioned the possibility of producing cultured pearls in Bahrain the suggestion was received with horror. Cultured pearls were forbidden in Bahrain; in one case when two men were found to have 'planted' cultured pearls among the catch from a diving dhow they were sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. In another case a man from Qatar of the Al Bakor family who mixed cultured pearls with real pearls was imprisoned and then banished from Bahrain. Hitherto Bahrain pearls had enjoyed a unique reputation throughout the world and any suggestion that they might be mixed with cultured pearls would have damaged the whole industry.

I used to preside at the meetings of the Diving Council, and towards the end of my time in Bahrain the members admitted that I knew as much as they did about the rules and customs of diving, though I never possessed any expert knowledge of pearls. The meetings were noisy and sometimes acrimonious, with everyone talking and shouting at the same time, and a stranger entering the room would have supposed that serious trouble was brewing. Most of the men were greybeards, all dressed in Arab clothes with no concession to Western ways. One or two of them were illiterate. Some had started life as divers, but usually they were men descended from generations of sea captains and there was nothing which they did not know about pearls, diving and the sea. They were rough in their speech, never hesitating to say, forcibly, what they thought of each other, or of me when I disagreed with them, which was not infrequent, but they were easier to deal with than some of the sophisticated young Arabs who are now members of many of the Government committees.



## Five

The marriage month is drawing very near.

*Indian Love Lyrics.* LAURENCE HOPE. 1865-1904

IN THE summer of 1928 we went on home leave for the first time. Subsequently I took about three months' leave every other year during the hot weather, except in the war years, when I went to India. Our son was then at the Shaikh Bagh School at Srinagar, in Kashmir; the school had been started by Eric Tindale-Biscoe, the son of a famous missionary, for English boys in India who were unable to go to school in England owing to the war. Marjorie used to hire a houseboat on the lake at Srinagar and when possible I joined her for a month or six weeks. There could not have been a greater contrast than Bahrain, with its flat landscape and humid climate, and Kashmir with its magnificent mountain scenery and bracing air.

Returning from home leave I was rather apprehensive about what might have happened during my absence as there were still some people in opposition to the Shaikh who would have liked to see the last of me. But all was well and when the ship anchored we were met by a large crowd of Shaikhs and leading merchants who came on board to greet us and seemed genuinely pleased to see us again. The topic of the moment was the replacement of both Sunni and Shia Kadhis, whose position as religious judges was far more important than it is today.

The Islamic world is divided into two main sects, Sunnis and Shias; the former are orthodox, the latter are schismatic. The split occurred in the middle of the seventh century and was caused by a dispute over the succession to the Caliphate. Before Islam some of the inhabitants of Bahrain were Christians. There were Christian settlements on the coast of the Persian Gulf and Syrian Christian records of the late seventh century mention bishops of the Nestorian sect, one of whom was bishop of Bahrain. I never found any traces of Christianity in the islands, but some years ago an Arab brought from Saudi Arabia some pieces of

carved plaster; one had a cross and another a carved head, with wings behind it. These may have come from the ruins of a Nestorian church. In early Islamic times Bahrain came under the rule of the Caliphate and soon after the Sunni-Shia schism the people of the islands adopted the Shia sect.

The Bahrain islands, fertile and well watered, off the barren coast of Arabia, have always excited the cupidity and ambition of powerful neighbours. Persians, Portuguese, Wahabis, Omanis and mainland tribes invaded Bahrain, and time and again the unfortunate Baharna were ravaged and plundered, to such an extent that many of them migrated to other parts of the Gulf. They became 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' and they developed an inferiority complex which has now made them aggressive and easy to take offence. The Khalifah, and the tribes who came with them when they conquered Bahrain in 1783, were Sunnis. By right of conquest they took over most of the gardens and property which the Baharna had owned and in the early days of the occupation the Baharna were in a state of serfdom. Today the Baharna occupy most of the villages and a section of Manama. They have a different appearance and a different accent to the Arabs and the two sects rarely intermarry. Because of the differences between the two sects it was necessary in Bahrain to have a Shia as well as a Sunni Kadhi.

Old Shaikh Jasim, the Sunni Kadhi, had become quite blind and was too old and feeble to carry on his work. The successor to Shaikh Khalaf, the Kadhi who had been banished, an up-and-coming young man, died suddenly, leaving the post vacant. In appointing Kadhis it was the Shaikh's policy to conform as much as possible to the wishes of the people. As I knew the Shias well, and was regarded by them as being impartial, the Shaikh left the matter of appointing a Shia Kadhi almost entirely in my hands. Town and village Shias were backing different candidates and each party was lobbying and intriguing to get support for its candidate. Night after night mysterious muffled figures arrived at my house to press the claims of their protégés and to decry, in most libellous terms, their opponents. It seemed to me a strange way to deal with the appointment of an important official, but it was the way things were done in those days. My task was to make both parties agree, and after many meetings and arguments I succeeded in doing so. We appointed three Sunni Kadhis, about whom there had been no difficulty, and two Shias, one for the villages and one for the town. The choice of the town Kadhi was unfortunate. After a few years he was dismissed for misappropriating the property of orphans.

The country Kadhi was a one-eyed old gentleman from Katif, a town on the Saudi Arabia coast with a predominant Shia population. He had a wrinkled, yellow face, like a gnome in an Arthur Rackham illustration, and his hand shook so much that he could hardly keep the coffee in his cup, but he had a great reputation for sanctity and learning. He was a humorous old man and his one eye used to wink merrily while he talked; I often rode along the shore on my pony to his little house close to the sea to drink coffee with him, in spite of the fact that, when I left, the cup which I had used was always broken, to ensure that no true believer drank from a cup which had been used by an infidel. However, in spite of my being an infidel, the old man consulted me about his domestic affairs and asked me to be one of the executors of his will.

It was at this time that the Government took an important step by placing the administration of Shia Waqf property, which had been dealt with by the Kadhis, in the hands of an elected council of town and village Shias. This was a popular move as in the past much of the proceeds from the property, gardens, houses, fish traps and shops, which had been bequeathed by Shias in the past for religious purposes, had not been spent on the objects for which it was dedicated. The Shia Waqf Department, as it became later, was such a success that after ten years, in response to a demand from the Sunnis, a similar council was set up to administer the Sunni Waqf property. These changes, which were at the time revolutionary, could not have been achieved without the support of the public.

One of the effects which they had was to diminish the prestige of the Kadhis, who no longer controlled a vast amount of valuable property but who now became, for the first time, salaried government officials, as they are in most of the more progressive Arab states. Afterwards I sometimes regretted having been instrumental in making these changes, for perhaps if the Kadhis had retained their authority they might have played a useful part during the troublesome times in later years. By then they had become figures of no political importance.

Soon after we got back there were a number of weddings in the Shaikh's family to which Marjorie and I were invited. The daughters of the Khalifah never married outside the family. Political alliances like those which took place in Saudi Arabia were not customary in Bahrain and when a young man of the Ruling Family took a wife he usually, but not invariably, married his first cousin. Today weddings are comparatively simple affairs. Often when the daughters of merchants marry they do so, as they say, '*en moda*', in the mode, which means a white wedding dress from Beirut or from London, a veil, orange blossom and bridesmaids, all

of which are rather wasted as only women are allowed to see the bride. But twenty-five years ago a wedding in an important and wealthy family was a very splendid affair.

The first wedding which we attended was in Muharraq, where most of the Khalifah Shaikhs had their houses. In later years many of the younger men built houses in the suburbs of Manama. We crossed to Muharraq in a launch and drove out to the plain behind the town where a crowd of people were assembled to watch the riding and dancing. The men of the family and their retainers were dressed in their most colourful robes, some wearing long undercoats of vermillion, green and scarlet with white or coloured headcloths and brown or black cloaks. They carried swords and daggers, long flintlock Arab guns and sometimes spears. The horsemen, led by one of the senior members of the family, first cantered and then galloped up and down the course, flourishing their weapons and uttering shrill shouts. Most of them rode bareback, but a few of them had heavy Arab saddles with gaily embroidered saddle-cloths decorated with coloured tassels; some of the best riders performed tricks as they rode, displaying skill and horsemanship.

We walked over to another part of the plain to watch the dancing. There were two long lines of men, every man carrying a gun or a sword; the lines of men advanced and retired with short shuffling steps, chanting as they moved, swaying and bending in time to the drums and letting off their guns into the air, which caused a great deal of noise and a strong smell of gunpowder. In another part of the field a circle of men surrounded the red-and-white Bahrain flag, which was carried on a long pole. Every now and then two men would leap into the centre of the circle and perform a mimic fight, springing and jumping like acrobats and slashing and lunging at each other, but carefully avoiding doing any damage. At sunset the dancers dispersed and assembled again in one of the houses of the family where they, and many other people, enjoyed a feast of rice and mutton.

On the final night, called by the Arabs 'the night of entering', the father of the bridegroom gave a dinner party for men, but Marjorie was invited at the same time to visit the bride. After the usual rice and mutton dinner, without any frills, we walked solemnly in procession, led by the Shaikh, through narrow lanes and streets, preceded by men carrying lanterns, to the house of the bride. The street in front of the house was packed with men dancing and inside one could hear the sound of women singing. We walked through two courtyards full of people, and climbed some steep narrow stairs to the bridal chamber, which was an island room

on the roof. In winter-time a room on the ground floor would be used. The room was quite small; as many people as could get into it sat inside, the others sat on the open roof. We drank coffee and made the usual remarks, wishing happiness to the bridegroom, who was the least conspicuous member of the party and sat silently in a corner even when one of the guests made a ribald remark to him. The atmosphere in the room was stifling. It was decorated for the occasion with vividly coloured gold-embroidered silks which covered the ceiling like a tent and hung down the walls, entirely blocking the windows. Innumerable large mirrors were suspended round the room and coloured glass balls, like those used on Christmas trees, were hung from the ceiling and around the mirrors. The lengths of silk which formed part of the bride's wedding gifts had been sent to her by the bridegroom in a wooden chest ornamented with brass-headed nails. Today a suitcase would be used. The mirrors were borrowed. Often before a wedding I met processions of black-veiled women on their way to a bride's house, singing and drumming as they walked, each one carrying a large mirror balanced on her head. The floor was thickly covered with Persian carpets, several being laid one on the top of another, and around the walls there were hard cushions in white cotton covers. The only furniture was a large double bed with carved wooden ends and a table draped with a plush cover on which there were candles, a vase of tired-looking flowers, pink oleanders, a jug of water and some glasses. The air in the room was heavy with incense and the minty scent of 'mushmoon', a plant rather like mint which I believe is 'Sweet Basil', which grows prolifically in Bahrain. The general effect was a blaze of barbaric colour and a heady atmosphere, quite a suitable background for the occasion.

In an inner courtyard negro women, wearing almost transparent garments, were dancing and singing, unseen but not unheard by the men. They sat on the ground swaying from the waist with sensuous movements while one of them performed the *danse du ventre* to the music of drums, hand-clapping and lascivious love songs. As they sung they flung back their long-plaited hair into which were braided strongly scented flowers of the double jasmine. One of them held a smouldering incense-burner and in the corner there was a fire where the drums were dried to tighten the stretched skin. The dancers were led by a wrinkled old black crone who in spite of her age was incredibly active. Most of the dancing women were the descendants of African slaves who worked as servants in the houses of the big families.

When Marjorie arrived at the house she was shown in by another



door, which led into the women's quarters, to a room crowded with women, where the bride was being exhibited. The bride was dressed in all her silks and finery, laden with jewellery, heavy gold bracelets, necklaces, turquoise rings, ear-rings shaped like a young moon with pearls pendant from them, and elaborate golden head ornaments with little gold chains set with semi-precious stones, which hung over her forehead. Her hair had been elaborately plaited and was intertwined with roses, jasmine and frangi-pani blossoms, if they are in season, her hands and feet were painted in fine patterns with henna dye, which had taken three days to apply, and her eyes were darkened with kohl. The jewels were part of the dowry, but in some cases additional jewellery was borrowed from other members of the family. She sat silent with her hands folded gazing demurely at the floor, bashfulness being particularly emphasized at weddings, while the older ladies of the family displayed her and her clothes and jewels almost as if she were a doll.

In the meantime the men guests, myself among them, drank a round of coffee in the nuptial chamber and then took our leave. After a short interval the bride was conveyed there by her women relations, who stayed with her until a frantic crescendo of ululating from the dancing women gave warning that the bridegroom was approaching; the women then retired, leaving the bride alone. On entering the room the man gives his bride a present, usually a piece of jewellery. He then unveils her and is supposed to see his bride for the first time, though nowadays it is quite possible that he may have seen her before. It used to be the custom among some people in Bahrain for the bride to be wrapped inside a rolled carpet and the carpet containing the girl was propelled into the room where the bridegroom was waiting, but this uncomfortable procedure has now gone out of fashion. The singing and the dancing continues for most of the night and there is a good deal of scurrying around, listening and whispering at the door of the nuptial chamber so that before the couple emerge the women of the house are discussing the intimate details of the wedding night. When a wedding takes place in a *barasti*, a palm-branch house, even less reticence is observed. The bridegroom is supposed to remain incarcerated with his wife for three days and nights, but more often than not he manages to slip out for a little while during this period. On the fourth day the couple move to their permanent home which, if they are lucky and comfortably off, may be their own house, though more often it is the house of one of the parents, and their normal married life then begins.

When a young man wants to marry a girl the affair is negotiated through a third person. Old women, who had the *entrée* to many houses,

used to visit families where there were girls of marriageable age and describe the looks and personal charms of the ladies—or the lack of them—to intending suitors. For this reason, in some families unmarried girls were made to veil when women from outside visited the house. Marriages between members of important families were arranged between the senior male members of the two families. Girls used very rarely to refuse to marry men who had been chosen for them. But nowadays things have changed. Young women have far more to say in the matter than they used to and it sometimes happens that a girl 'turns down' an offer of marriage, although it is approved by her family.

When Marjorie was managing the schools she was sometimes asked by parents of young men, or by the young men themselves, to recommend a bride, but she never assumed the responsibility for arranging a marriage. When foreign school-teachers from Syria, Lebanon or Jordan, for whom she was responsible, wanted to marry in Bahrain, Marjorie used to write to the girl's guardian giving details about the suitor and if the parents or guardian approved the marriage was carried out.

Girls used to be married at a very early age, sometimes when only twelve or thirteen years old. An Arab lady who was married at the age of twelve told Marjorie how on her wedding night she was so terrified that she crept under the bed to hide from her husband, who was an elderly man and had some difficulty in dragging her out. Today things are different. Most girls do not marry till they are sixteen or seventeen years old, and it is quite usual for them to defer matrimony until they have completed their education. This modern point of view surprises people of the older generation. Young men who have been to school prefer to marry educated girls, and for a girl to have passed through secondary school confers a certain matrimonial cachet.

It used to be obligatory for a girl to marry her first cousin, if he asked for her, and men were expected to do the same. But this custom is dying out and many educated young men now marry girls from abroad, from Syria and Lebanon. In some of the leading families girls are not allowed to marry outside the family, which ensures that property and money does not go to strangers. There is no Islamic law laying down that girls may not marry outside the family or tribe and there were often serious quarrels when a father or guardian of a girl arranged a match with an outsider, if a man of the tribe wanted to marry her. We frequently had cases on this subject in court and they were difficult to deal with, for they roused very violent feelings among the tribal Arabs of Bahrain. The father of the girl would ask to have the case sent to the religious court

knowing that the Kadhi would give judgement in his favour, according to Islamic law, provided that the prospective husband was a man of equal social standing as the girl. Shaikh Hamed once summoned the leading Sunni Arabs to a meeting, at which I was present, to discuss the matter. After a stormy session it was unanimously decided that tribal custom, not religious law, should be followed.

Divorces, which used to be so frequent in the past, occur less often now and a man who constantly changes wives becomes a subject for bazaar gossip. When I was first in Bahrain I had an old Shia neighbour who often came to see me after dinner. Sitting on the roof in the moonlight we used 'to talk of many things: of shoes—and ships—and sealing-wax—of cabbages—and kings . . .' My old friend was much married and had a herd of sons and daughters. Once I asked him how many times he had been married. He began laboriously counting his wives on his fingers. 'The first,' he said, 'was Miriam bint Husain. I was very young when I married her. Then Sakina bint Ali, then her sister, I forget her name, then Ayesha, and a girl from Katif, I didn't keep that one long, then there was the mother of Jaffar, then a Persian girl. . . .' When he had got to nearly twenty he gave up counting. 'I am an old man,' he said, 'and my memory is not what it was. There were others—quite a number—but I cannot remember them, or their names. I still have four wives, but they are not young.' I asked him how many children he had. With some difficulty he gave me a list of them. Considering the number of wives he did not seem to have a large family. He guessed what I was thinking and added, 'I had many more children but in the old days numbers of them died at birth or in infancy.'

It is lawful for a Moslem to have four wives, but he must treat them equally in every way, which, as some husbands said to me, was difficult as it was impossible not to prefer one to another. But today it is unusual for young men to have more than one wife. A young Bahraini, discussing the matter with me, said: 'To have more than one wife causes a great deal of domestic trouble. Besides, it is very expensive. Now that we are educated and our wives, too, are educated, we regard them as companions and we only want one wife.' Marjorie used to hear the women's views on marriage. All of them said that they would prefer to be a husband's sole wife, but rather than remain unmarried they would gladly share a husband with another wife—or even with three other wives. In Bahrain a woman who is not married, or has not been married, is a rarity. There were a few old spinsters belonging to wealthy families whose male relations were so avaricious that they never arranged marriages for them,

disliking the idea of the heiresses' money falling into the hands of even their own cousins. An unmarried woman, of whatever age, is legally regarded as a minor and the property of minors was administered by their male guardians. Fortunately there are about the same number of males and females in Bahrain.

Marriage money, like the cost of living, has increased during recent years. The dowry is paid by the husband to the wife, or rather to the wife's parents. Twenty-five years ago a working man could get a wife for £10 to £15, now he has to produce a dowry of £150 to £200, of which about half is paid in cash and the remainder is left as a debt against the husband, which he has to pay if he divorces his wife. This has caused many Bahrainis of the working classes to marry wives from Persia and Oman where small dowries are acceptable. In one or two Bahrain families there is a custom restricting the actual dowry to a fixed amount, which is a sensible arrangement. In the Khalifah family the dowry is about £30, though the value of the wedding gifts from the bridegroom may be thirty or forty times this amount, depending on the man's financial position.

The cause of most divorces was what we would describe as 'incompatibility', which was not perhaps surprising when a couple who had never met and knew nothing about each other became husband and wife. The husband could divorce his wife without going to court; by stating the fact before witnesses he could give his wife a revocable divorce or a final irrevocable divorce. In the latter case, if he changed his mind and wished to take her back, he could not do so until the wife had been through the form of marriage with another man and had been divorced by the second husband, but instances of this were rare. Women scarcely ever divorced their husbands, though it was permitted for certain causes, such as impotency. In my thirty-one years in Bahrain I only knew of two cases in which a wife divorced her husband; in one case it was because she was made to marry a leper. To us the whole question of divorce appears to be very one-sided, but in other respects the rights of women are well provided for in Islamic law. A widow automatically inherits one-eighth of her husband's estate before any deductions are made from it, though if he leaves four widows they share equally an eighth of the estate.

The purdah system is still *de rigueur* in Bahrain and strictly enforced in neighbouring Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman. But I believe that in a few years it will be a thing of the past in Bahrain. It is resented by educated young men and women; the men say that if someone would give them a lead they would let their wives appear in public, as they do when they travel abroad. But nobody dares to brave the dis-

approval of the older generation, who are shocked at any suggestion that purdah should be relaxed. Twenty years ago no respectable woman would appear in public without a heavy black cloak covering her from head to foot, and very often a black mask made of stiff dyed calico, giving the wearer a black, bird-like appearance. In hot weather the dye used to run in streaks over the wearer's face. Ladies of the upper classes had their black 'abbas'—cloaks—edged with gold thread and decorated with big gold tassels. When the abbas wore out the gold thread survived and hawkers used to go through the streets in the mornings singing '*Zerri atiq, zerri atiq*'—'Old gold thread', which they bought from the women at the house doors. They refurbished it and sold it to the makers of abbas.

In recent years the social development of women, especially in the towns, has advanced more rapidly than that of men. This is mainly due to the girls' schools. Although they have only existed for a comparatively short time they have brought about radical changes in the feminine outlook. Travel, cinemas and wireless have also contributed to this change. Girls read novels, magazines and newspapers and know what is going on elsewhere. They compare their place in society with that of women in other more advanced parts of the Moslem world. Inevitably education gives them an interest in politics. During political disturbances in Bahrain the girls from one of the schools went on strike and a young woman, who had lately left school, took part in a demonstration and led a procession round the town. Marjorie sent for the fathers of the girls who were absent, who expressed strong disapproval of their daughters' behaviour, and obtained from each of them a written assurance that they would not in future allow their daughters to take part in political demonstrations and that should they do so the girls would be expelled. There were no more incidents of that kind.

Schoolgirls now wear uniforms and teachers wear European clothes under their abbas. When young women from Bahrain go abroad, usually travelling by air, one sees them at the airport heavily shrouded in cumbersome black cloaks bidding farewell to elderly relations. Inside the aircraft, as soon as it leaves the ground, off go the black cloaks and the ladies appear in smart European dresses. Bahrain women have acquired good taste in clothes more rapidly than did the Turkish ladies when they came out of purdah. This is probably due to the influence of the Lebanese teachers whose clothes, from Beirut, are French in style.

It has often been suggested that the purdah system enables women to exert greater influence than if they appeared in public. This I have always doubted. It is true though that some of the old ladies of the Ruling



Families in the Gulf were formidable and important personages. The mother of a Shaikh on the Trucial Coast used to take an active part in politics and trade. She dealt in pearls on a large scale. When pearl merchants visited her she sat in an inner doorway in her house with a curtain suspended between her and the merchant with whom she was bargaining, and a merchant described to me how sometimes in the excitement of the transaction she would pull aside the curtain. She drove as hard a bargain as any man.

Off the Bahrain coast, sometimes in deep water, there are many fresh-water springs rising from the sea bed, a phenomenon which I have never heard of elsewhere. Before the days of artesian wells men went out in boats to the springs, dived down to the sea bed with leather water-skins, which they filled at the source and then surfaced, holding the mouth of the water-bag tightly closed. The water was sold in the bazaar. An old Arab lady, distantly connected with the Ruling Family, used constantly to visit me to discuss an elaborate scheme for harnessing the water from a submarine spring, on the shore near her property, and piping it to her garden. Eventually, with the help of the oil company's engineers, her scheme was tried out, but unfortunately when the spring had been encased the water bubbled up elsewhere. Although quite uneducated she was extremely intelligent.

I often gave interviews to ladies from important families who came chaperoned by several women servants, who sat on the floor of my small office. Sometimes they came to ask advice about their property, usually mistrusting the person who was supposed to be looking after it, or to discuss their rights in some estate, or just to complain about their husbands. There was always an old servant who took a leading part in the conversation; she would produce from the folds of her voluminous garments tin cylinders containing documents concerning the affair. These old family servants, who were usually of slave descent, were the loyal confidantes of their mistresses and were often more intelligent and possessed more knowledge than the mistresses. It was difficult to end these interviews in reasonable time, the ladies enjoyed the outing and time to them meant nothing.

Sometimes there were embarrassing incidents. One very old-fashioned lady visitor arrived in a taxi with a large goat, which she proposed to give me as a present. As usual I refused to accept a gift, but the horrible creature escaped and began to rampage over my flower beds, nibbling my All-woodii carnations which were coming into bloom, pursued with heavy steps over the flower beds by most of the office staff and by several elderly black ladies who had come to support the petitioner.

Another old lady, who was slightly mental but not mad enough to put in the asylum, which was always full, was the bane of many Political Agents. A long law case in the Agency court had affected her mind, like Miss Flyte in *Bleak House*. She got to know whenever a Political Agent visited Muharraq, where she lived. She used to lie in wait for him in some narrow lane and rush out when he appeared, flinging her arms around him and scattering her 'documents' over the road. This was before the causeway connecting the two towns had been built. Finally I had to warn the police to keep the old lady out of sight when the Political Agent visited the town, but she was wily and elusive and occasionally tracked her victim to the door of the Agency. She was known in Bahrain as 'Omm al Kooti'—'Mother of the Agency'.

My office was on the ground floor of the house with a door opening on to a wide veranda; beyond it was the garden which I could enjoy looking at from my office chair. It was accessible from the road, as in the daytime there was no sentry. Arabs used to sit at the doorway, which had swinging shutters on the upper part, or, sometimes when I was alone, they would walk into the office. This accessibility had some disadvantages, for my office seemed to become a magnet for slight mental cases—and there were quite a number of them in Bahrain—including one little old man who was also obsessed with an imaginary case in the courts. He used to creep noiselessly under my half-shuttered door and hurl on to the floor a handful of old envelopes and pieces of paper. When visitors were with me they were often quite alarmed by his performance. He then scuttled away, gibbering like a monkey, pursued by some of the small black office boys.

The office boys were sons of men in the police whom I nicknamed 'the sparrows' because they used to sit on a bench in the passage outside the office waiting for the bell, chattering and chirping like birds. They were called 'the sparrows' by everybody. Sometimes I would get a note from my head clerk such as the following: 'The head sparrow, Abood, is applying for leave, we have enough sparrows to carry on without a substitute. Will Your Excellency approve of his being given leave?' If in the dim future any of these office notes are unearthed from the files they may well cause astonishment.

Another man, tall, thin, black and silent, used to appear at my door every morning for about twenty years, raising his hands in salutation and then disappearing as quietly as he had come. He never spoke to anyone in the office and nobody knew who he was or where he lived. If I tried to speak to him he beat a retreat. After I left, however, he seems to have

broken his vow of silence, for he still occasionally visits the office and enquires when I am returning.

The doors of our house, which was above the office, with stairs leading up to it from the veranda, were never locked in the daytime and very rarely at night. Some time before the last war a German woman journalist, on the staff of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, who was highly recommended by the British authorities, visited Bahrain. She came to call on me one afternoon. I was out, the office was shut and the servants were in their quarters. Nothing daunted she climbed the stairs, walked into the drawing-room and had a good look round. Later, in what I must admit was a very complimentary article, she gave a detailed description of the room, describing the pictures and the flowers and the ornaments, and marvelled at the state of public security in Bahrain—which made possible her rather impudent adventure.

## Six

Variety's the very spice of life,  
That gives it all its flavour.

WILLIAM COWPER. 1731-1800

Oh, had I a hound for the chase! And a hunting falcon!  
And a little camel! We should place a saddle upon it—  
We should ride between the troop of the chief and the migrating  
tribe,  
We should call the hound. We would call, and the falcon would  
hunt.

Translation from an Arab song. *In the Arabian Desert.*

ALOIS MUSIL (1931)

THE official designation which I was given by the India Office when I was taken on by the Shaikh was 'Financial Adviser'. But I soon found that dealing with the finances of the State, which in the early days was a comparatively easy matter, was only one of the many duties which I had to perform. The Shaikh discussed with me and asked my advice about not only the affairs of the State but many more personal matters, such as the care of his gardens and property which for years had been mismanaged by dishonest agents, the endless requests from relations and others for grants of land and loans of money, loans which were rarely repaid, and family rows, which were frequent. The Khalifah family was not a 'family' as we know it. It was a tribe made up of some 150 households with several different branches and any trouble among the family was referred to the Shaikh.

In my first five or six years we had very little revenue and we had to practise strict economy, but every year Arabs from all parts of the Gulf made trips to Bahrain asking 'help', which meant money, from the Shaikh. After oil was found they came in greater numbers, though for some years we were only a little better off than before the discovery of

oil. This custom went back to the days when Arab tribes from outside Bahrain used to rally round the Shaikh if there was any trouble, and the Shaikhs of Bahrain used to pay subsidies to the tribal chiefs. After organizing a police force I said to the Shaikh, 'Now that we have our own police, which cost a lot of money, surely Your Highness need not pay so much to the Bedouin.' But this was an economy which he did not approve for even now the reputation of Arab rulers in the Gulf depends much on the amount of largesse which they distribute.

In some matters, which to me appeared important, the Shaikh gave me a free hand. It was only when I proposed measures which might be unpopular among the Khalifah, or among one or other of the sects or communities, that he demurred. But often after further discussions he accepted my suggestions, with reservations. It was easy to forget that in a régime like Bahrain the Shaikh himself had to bear the brunt for any action taken by his Government—and whatever action was taken there were always people who disapproved of it.

The Shaikh was very accessible. Anybody could see him in his maglis and express his feelings, very forcibly sometimes, or hand the Shaikh a written complaint. Often when I saw the Shaikh he would push some letters or petitions into the outside pocket of my coat, saying, 'Take these, read them some other time and deal with them as you think best.' I found that he developed an aptitude for saying to people who complained: 'Yes. But that of course is a matter which our Adviser is dealing with. You had better go and see him about it.' I too learnt to say: 'Yes, of course, but I can do nothing; it is His Highness's wish. I suggest that you should go and see him about it.' But later on the Shaikh and I would discuss the matter and decide what line to take. There was no council which had to be consulted. The Shaikh was an absolute Ruler with power of life and death over his own subjects, but he exercised a benevolent autocracy. He did, however, discuss many matters with his two brothers and his eldest son.

In the beginning I found it difficult to give advice about people and matters which were imperfectly known to me, but within a year or two I acquired a pretty good knowledge of the characteristics of most of the people with whom I had dealings. So often I have been asked whether I found the work in Bahrain 'interesting'. My reply has always been, 'If I had not found it interesting I could not have served there for thirty-one years!' It *was* interesting, absorbingly interesting, because the work which I did was so varied and because it consisted of dealing with human beings, not inanimate objects.



Years before oil was discovered we embarked on several big projects. In 1930 the Power House, providing Manama with electricity, began to operate; the supply was extended to Muharraq in the following year. Work was begun on the causeway between Manama and Muharraq. In years when the revenue was high we made good progress, but the swing-bridge, spanning the deep channel, was not completed until 1942. As usual there was opposition to the scheme, mainly from the boatmen who carried passengers across the one-and-a-half miles of sea which separated the two islands. I once ventured to mention the project to Shaikh Isa, who I hoped would approve of the idea, which would enable him to visit Bahrain island without the trouble of embarking in a launch. The ex-Ruler's only comment was, 'It is unnecessary—and impossible.' However, the people who lived in Muharraq were very glad when the causeway was built, and without it there would have been difficulty in running the airport which was on Muharraq island.

We installed a telephone system in Manama. The exchange was operated by two obliging young Arabs who listened-in to most of the conversations. Sometimes this was convenient, for if one wanted to speak to somebody they often knew where he was and would say: 'He is dining with Mr So-and-So. I heard him being invited.' The automatic telephone system which came later was far more efficient, but one missed the personal touch!

Every Tuesday and Saturday morning the Shaikh came to the office, and this custom was kept up by his son when he succeeded. He arrived in a large car with his younger sons and several servants and his silugi, Hosha. He took my office chair and I sat at his side. Sometimes one or both of his brothers would join us and we would discuss local affairs, enlivened with gossip. People are apt to speak contemptuously of 'bazaar gossip', but I found that what was said in the 'suq'—market—usually contained a great deal of truth, for in Bahrain it was almost impossible to keep anything secret. Then the Shaikh and I would get down to business. I put up papers for him to see and documents which required his seal.

On other days I went to see him at the Manama palace, which usually meant a long wait until the visitors had gone. If some of them tried to outstay me the Shaikh would send for incense and rose-water, which intimated that they should depart. It was a graceful way of dismissing a guest. It is a pity that we have no such custom in the West, it would avoid the difficulty which people often find of knowing when they should take their leave. Often I visited him at Sakhrir, his country house, the place he liked best to live in. Here it was more difficult to engage

his attention as there were so many distractions. In the summer we sat in the shade of the house on a bench covered with rugs. Shaikh Hamed always kept a pair of binoculars close to him and if my conversation was more than usually dull, discussing perhaps budget estimates, he would pick up his glasses and scan the horizon or send for a servant and give him long instructions about a camel or a horse. This was disconcerting at first. But I found that if I stopped speaking he would smile at me and then continue to discuss the subject.

Often, without warning, the Shaikh would arrive at the office before breakfast on his way to Muharraq, or he would come to the house in the afternoon, when the office was shut, and sit on a sofa in the drawing-room, talking business or chatting. He was very informal, but he possessed great natural dignity. He was kind and considerate and took a great interest in our personal affairs.

In April 1929 my son was born in the house. Marjorie was looked after by a woman doctor from the American Mission. We had procured a British monthly nurse from Calcutta, but a few days after she arrived she developed dysentery so she was out of action; a young Indian nurse from the Mission took her place. Conditions were still primitive; we had neither electric light nor running water. It was all very difficult. Three weeks later Marjorie took the baby, who had not been well, home to England, travelling by British India boat to Bombay and from there by P. & O., without a nurse or an ayah. I did not realize what an undertaking this was, nor, at the time, did she. They arrived safely and in the following winter she brought the baby back to Bahrain.

On the day that the boy was born I sent a message to the Shaikh to announce his arrival. A few hours later, hearing a commotion in the compound, I went down and found one of the Shaikh's lorries unloading six large fat sheep. With them was a letter of good wishes and a sword in a golden scabbard for the boy. Some more sheep and another sword arrived later, from the Shaikh's brother. We killed the sheep and according to custom distributed the meat among our friends and neighbours. It so happened that a new Political Agent, Geoffrey Prior, arrived on that day so I sent him a large leg of mutton. He was very puzzled and, until he heard the explanation, he assumed that it was an old Bahrain custom to greet His Majesty's Representative with a gift of meat.

The Shaikh took a great interest in our son, who was the first English boy to be born in Bahrain. He was very pleased when we asked him if we could call him Hamed as one of his names. But when he was christened in England, the parson was rather dubious about our choosing

a name which he had not met before. When the child developed a fever, which did not respond to any treatment, the Shaikh was very sympathetic. He knew how anxious we were and one morning, when he came to the office, he said to me, 'I know what I would do to cure your son if he was mine, but I don't think his mother would like it.' I asked what he recommended. 'The boy should be branded with a hot iron, by somebody who knows how to do it,' said the Shaikh. This was a 'cure' which the Arabs used for various ailments and I believe in some cases it was effective as a counter-irritant. I suppose I looked rather horrified. 'No, Your Highness, I don't think his mother would like the idea,' I replied. 'Then,' he said, 'I will come and see him and I will say some prayers over him.'

That evening the Shaikh came to the house. He went to the nursery, where the boy was sleeping, and we left them alone. When he came out the Shaikh said, 'He will get better now, Inshallah.' After a few days, sure enough, the baby began to recover. The story reached the ears of the American missionaries, and I heard that some of them expressed strong disapproval at our allowing Moslem prayers to be recited over our son!

There are no Europeans in Bahrain now who remember what the place was like thirty years ago. One of the greatest drawbacks was the lack of adequate medical services for dealing with European patients, especially women. There was usually at least one good American doctor in the Mission, but there was no suitable accommodation for European patients in the Mission hospital, and very often the doctor would be away visiting Saudi Arabia. Today the Government has large up-to-date hospitals for men and for women where Europeans, as well as the people of Bahrain, are looked after. They are staffed with British and Indian doctors and surgeons and nursing sisters. At Awali the Bahrain Petroleum Company has excellent hospitals for Arabs and for Europeans. Altogether the medical and hospital facilities in Bahrain are now superior to those in many European countries.

Sometimes, in the cold weather, the Shaikh invited us to join him when he was out with his hawks. Falconry in Bahrain, as in England in the olden days, was an aristocratic sport indulged in only by the Ruling Family. It is an expensive hobby owing to the high price of hawks and the cost of meat on which the birds are fed. They are snared in the Persian mountains and brought by Arabs for sale in Bahrain. An outstandingly fine bird would fetch as much as £50 or £60. When a consignment of hawks arrived they were often brought from the boat to my office, when

the Shaikh was there, to be admired, examined and probably bought by the Shaikh and his relations—which dislocated the morning's programme. Two kinds of hawks were used in Bahrain, the 'Shahin', of the peregrine type, and the 'Horr'—the latter word is said by some authorities to be derived from the Egyptian hawk-headed god Horus.

The season lasted for two or three months while the bustard were in Bahrain on their migration to the south. They are birds somewhat similar in appearance to a hen turkey with great expanse of wings. They are powerful fliers when once they get going. During the hunting season the Shaikh often spent several days in one of his little hunting lodges in the southern part of the island and we would drive out and join him there.

It is a bright sunny morning in December. The sky is blue but clouds are banking up over the western sea, presaging rain, and it is cold enough for tweed clothes. Marjorie and I set off in the car with Abdulla, my police driver. We take the Budeya road out of Manama. It is lined with groves of date-palms and gardens full of trees; in places lanes lead through the gardens to the shore, disclosing vistas of blue sea. The traffic in the road is mostly village people coming into town in garishly painted, locally built buses. They slow down, nervously, as I pass them, fearing that I may stop and count the passengers, for they are usually carrying more than they are licensed to hold. We drive on beyond the villages to the open country, which in places is quite green, passing Zelaq, a little town on a promontory, surrounded on three sides by the sea in which the white houses are reflected. Farther down the coast we see a group of flamingos which fly off, flapping their rose-coloured wings, and I sight a herd of gazelle bounding along below the escarpment which surrounds the basin in the centre of the island where the oilfield is situated. We arrive at Ma'tala, the little house where the Shaikh is staying. It is surrounded by tents and parked cars, and donkeys and camels are tethered close by.

The Shaikh meets us and we sit in his tent drinking coffee while donkeys and camels are saddled. In front of the tent a number of hooded hawks are sitting on their perches, stands about two feet high covered above with leather, stuck into the ground with iron spikes. He is in good form, laughing and joking with his falconers, who squat on the ground outside the tent. He is never more happy than when he can get away from all the worries of state affairs on a hunting trip. He is differently dressed when he is on the desert. He wears a long coffee-coloured woollen robe, rather like a man's dressing-gown, and his Kashmir headcloth is

twisted round his head. He tells us that 'habara'—bustard—have been sighted in two places a few miles away. As the country is too rough for cars the party sets off on camels and donkeys. I choose a camel and Marjorie rides a big white donkey which moves at a smooth amble. The Shaikh and some of the men carry hawks on their wrists, perched on cylindrical leather gauntlets to which the birds are attached by a light leather tie which is fastened to their legs.

We get near the quarry. Everybody dismounts and we walk on to some high ground overlooking a valley full of low-growing shrubs. Binoculars are unslung and brought into play and two bustard are sighted. The Shaikh advances a few steps with Mansoor, his best hawk. He unleashes it and slips off its hood, talking to it as he does so. The bird sits on his wrist, moving its head from side to side. Then, suddenly, it launches into the air. It has sighted the bustard, which is making off as fast as it can, but it has hardly left the ground before the hawk has pounced on it. One sees on the ground a confused mêlée of flapping wings. We all run towards the spot, even the Shaikh runs, which is an unusual sight. The first Arab who arrives at the kill throws his cloak over the two struggling birds and then disengages the hawk from its prey and with a deft movement replaces the leather hood over the hawk's head. He picks up the mangled remains of the bustard and puts it into his bag. We set off again.

The second bustard is sighted some distance away. This time two hawks are 'cast off'. But the bustard has had a fair start and is far up in the air before the hawk is level with it. This contest is more exciting. The bustard soars higher and higher and the hawk tries to get above it in order to swoop down and plunge its talons into the bird. The hawk is above the bustard. It drops down on its quarry, but misses it. Once again the two birds soar aloft and again the hawk drops, like a stone, on to the bustard. The two birds come to the ground with a thud.

Meanwhile the other hawk has gone off on a wild-goose chase. The falconer runs after it, calling it by its name with a guttural voice. He takes a live pigeon, on a string, out of his bag and throws it in the air, letting it fall, fluttering, to the ground. After doing this several times the hawk is attracted by the lure and flies down on to the pigeon, where it is captured and hooded. During the day's hunting we get six bustard, which in Bahrain is a good bag. That evening we had a brace of bustard for dinner. They are excellent eating and a change from the usual menu of mutton and beef and chicken.

Few people in Britain now keep hawks, but I happened to know one of the Malcolms of Poltalloch, in Scotland, who still practised falconry.



When I was in Bahrain he sent me a complete set of what is technically called 'furniture' for hawking, including jesses, hoods and other equipment, which I gave to the Shaikh. We found that the Scottish material was identical to that used by the Shaikh, which was made by his own falconers.

Coursing hares with silugi hounds was another form of sport which provided good exercise, as one followed the hounds on foot, which involved some hard running. Silugis are very similar to greyhounds, but their tails and ears are 'feathered'. They are beautiful, graceful creatures, possessing great speed, but they hunt by sight, not by scent. On an average about half of the hares which were put up managed to get away. For many years I had a half-bred silugi, known as a 'lugi' among the Arabs. He was a great hunter and several times when coursing hares he hunted and brought down a gazelle, which was very embarrassing, as the Shaikh did not like anyone to kill gazelle.

I found that looking for truffles was regarded by the Arabs almost as much a form of sport as coursing and hawking. The desert truffles appeared after the rains and were only visible by a slight excrescence in the sand formed by the truffle, which resembled a small potato, pushing up towards the surface. The Shaikh used to go into the desert with a number of his sons and followers and in extended order they would comb the desert for truffles, which grow very sparsely.

Indiscriminate shooting of game was forbidden by the Shaikh, unlike in Saudi Arabia where gazelle are hunted in cars and shot down, with the result that they have been almost exterminated in many parts of the desert. Before the oil company town was established at Awali, twelve miles from Manama, gazelle roamed where today there are lines of European houses and gardens and roads full of motor vehicles. The gazelle have now retired to the southern end of the island, but on the large island of Omm al Nasan, known as 'the Shaikh's island', there are big herds of gazelle and black buck; the latter were introduced from India many years ago. Very occasionally the Shaikh allows one or two of the bucks to be shot if there are too many of them in the herd.

During our early years there were about a dozen Europeans in Manama, including the missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church of America, who did useful medical and educational work but very rarely made any converts. It was a sociable community; people met together most days playing tennis or bridge or at small dinner parties. In the summer the French pearl merchants came out from Paris, which enlivened the atmosphere, bringing supplies of interesting food and wines.

Sloops of the British Navy paid frequent visits and from 1928 the R.A.F. flying boats of 303 Squadron came constantly from Basra to Bahrain. It was about this time that I started making gardens, and I persuaded the R.A.F. to bring from Basra plants and flowering shrubs, especially oleanders, which for many years were called by the Arabs 'the Adviser's flower' as they had never previously been grown in Bahrain. Now they are the commonest shrub in the place. I used also to ask people to bring me plants from the botanical gardens in Karachi, from where I got many of the trees and shrubs which now grow profusely in Bahrain. When we left there was a European population of between two and three thousand people, and the social life in the winter became a round of cocktail parties and dinners. It was not unusual to have to attend two cocktail parties in one evening followed by a dinner party, which was not conducive to early rising or efficiency. It produced, too, a spirit of social competition, as people who had no official obligations felt compelled to entertain more lavishly and expensively than their means permitted. The social life in Bahrain's early days was pleasanter than it was latterly.

Visitors from abroad were rare. At one time I had a British officer in the police who would have described his knowledge of French as 'rusty'—which usually means non-existent. One day I received a message from him, marked 'Urgent'. It read as follows: 'A man calling himself Albert London has arrived here dressed as an Arab. He says he represents *La Vie Parisienne*. He is a suspicious character. He is in the police lock-up.'

I hurried to the police station to investigate the 'suspicious character' and found a Frenchman sitting on a hard bench surveying the scene with interest; he was Albert Londres, a well-known French writer who was doing a series of articles for *Le Petit Parisien*. He had come from Jedda and had visited King Saud, who presented him with the Arab clothes. I took him to my house and fortunately found that he regarded the matter as a good joke, especially the idea of being on the staff of *La Vie*. Later, he described the incident amusingly in his book *La Pêche des Perles*.

In 1932 Bahrain was hit by 'The Depression'. The revenue, which had averaged about £82,000 during the previous seven years, slumped to about £50,000, which was insufficient to pay for the cost of the administration. I had a difficult time explaining the position to the Shaikh and the senior members of the family, but eventually they realized that the situation was critical and reluctantly agreed that the allowances to the Ruling Family should be reduced and that all salaries of government officials should be cut by 10 per cent, until the financial position improved. At the same time work on new projects was slowed down, a small sum

was withdrawn from the little Reserve Fund which I had begun to build up and steps were taken to increase the Customs duty on non-essential goods from 5 per cent to 10 per cent, and in the case of tobacco and liquor to 15 per cent. Liquor, whose use was only permitted by Europeans, had previously been imported duty free because the Shaikh disliked the idea of collecting revenue from an import of which he disapproved. It was surprising how the government officials and employees co-operated during this crisis. Nobody liked having his pay reduced but there were no complaints and no strikes, whereas today the very idea of such drastic action would start a strike. The only people who caused trouble were the divers.

In October 1932 the first Imperial Airways machine landed at Bahrain on its way to India on the so-called aerodrome which is now the Manama race-course. It was quite an event, and the Shaikh and many other people went out to see the aeroplane. All went well until it started off again, 'taxied' across the field and then, suddenly, to everybody's horror, seemed to sink into the ground. There was an old disused water channel, which nobody knew about, and the weight of the aircraft caused the topsoil to subside. Neither the passengers nor the machine were damaged, but the aeroplane was firmly bogged down. All that day I had hundreds of men tugging at ropes, which constantly snapped, trying to pull the aeroplane out of the hole, but without success. We took in as many passengers as the house would hold, including the steward, who helped my servants to improvise meals, the rest of the passengers being accommodated in other houses. I think they rather enjoyed the break which gave them time to see something of Bahrain. Next day, when we had worked on the aircraft again and finally managed to move it, the pilot, Captain Horsey, flew straight across to Muharraq and landed on the flat plain behind the town which from that day became the landing ground, the only disadvantage being that until the causeway and bridge were completed people using the aerodrome had to cross the strip of sea between the two islands in launches. The advent of aeroplanes was regarded by the Arabs with sang-froid. After a week or two they rarely bothered to glance up at them and in a very short time Arab travellers looked on aeroplanes as a normal means of getting from one place to another.

Shaikh Isa died on December 9th, 1932, my birthday. By our reckoning he was about ninety-four years old, but according to the Arabic (Hejira) calendar he was over ninety-seven years of age. The Arabic calendar is based on the lunar month and until a few years ago the Bahrain Government worked on it and salaries were paid accordingly. I was able

to change this in 1953 and the Budget and accounts have since then been made according to the Gregorian calendar, though most of the older Arabs still use the Arabic calendar. It is because the Arabic months do not adhere to the same times of the year that local gardeners do their planting according to the stars, which causes much confusion among European amateur gardeners.

After his father's death Shaikh Hamed became full ruler and was confirmed early in the following year as such by the Government of India at a ceremony at which the British Resident, on behalf of the Viceroy, delivered to the Shaikh a 'Kharita', an official letter acknowledging him as the Ruler of Bahrain. This was an Indian custom, more appropriate, I always thought, in the case of Indian princes than in the case of the Shaikh of Bahrain, who was officially described as the ruler of an 'independent Arab State in treaty relations with the Government of India'. However, the occasion provided an opportunity for celebrations and pageantry. We held what was known as a 'Durbar', another Indian term, in the large hall of a new school, and Marjorie and I spent much time planning the décor for the ceremony. From the bazaar we were able to get crimson velvet for curtains and gold braid and enormous gold tassels and yards of silks and satins. The material was Japanese but none the less effective. The Shaikh's throne was made from carved wood by local carpenters, and the final appearance of the hall, with carefully arranged indirect lighting, was very magnificent and greatly admired by the Arabs. This was before glorious Technicolor had made them blasé. The Shaikh looked very regal in a scarlet-embroidered robe with a white cloak with his gold circlet round his white headcloth, a gold dagger in his belt and a gold sword in his hand. His family and retainers were equally brilliantly dressed. The Resident and his staff wore levee dress, Royal Navy and Air Force representatives were in full uniform and I, as usual as these occasions, wore a grey morning coat. The only trouble on this occasion was that several Arabs, who had not been invited to do so, stood up and made long speeches which completely wrecked the timetable.

There was Arab dancing and free meals for many during the three days' holiday and at night the Shaikh drove through the bazaar which looked like a scene by Bakst from the Russian ballet. Every shop was decorated with Persian carpets, and yards of purple, green and orange silk cascaded down from the roofs, illuminated by coloured lights. The streets were thronged with enthusiastic spectators, all in Arab dress, and, as the long procession of cars moved slowly past, the shopkeepers

sprinkled scent and rose-water over the occupants. I was in the car with the Shaikh and we were thoroughly soused with scent; it took a long time before my clothes were free from it. Marjorie and my small son were in another car and he greatly enjoyed this novel demonstration, especially as the shopkeepers besides spraying on scent handed trays of sweets and biscuits to the people in the cars.

The bazaar was at all times a fascinating place and remarkably clean and free from smells, unless one ventured into the section where dried fish were sold. The big stores with plate-glass windows, full of European and American goods, cameras, cosmetics, electrical appliances, American ties and shirts and everything that anybody could possibly want to buy, had not yet been built, and one saw none of the unsightly advertisements which now disfigure so many of the roads and streets. The narrow lanes were roofed with matting, the interiors of the shops were like dim little caves, but shafts of sunlight pierced the matting and spot-lighted some of the gaily coloured objects which hung on the shutters of the shops. My favourite corner of the bazaar, which I tried many times to paint, was where the Persians sold spices. They spread their wares so far into the lane that only a narrow passage remained between the shops, but it was wide enough for me to ride through on my pony, as I often did before breakfast on my way back from visiting the police at the fort. The spice bazaar was a symphony in browns and yellows. On wooden stands outside the shops were ranged baskets piled high with yellow saffron, dried rosebuds, orange-coloured peas, dark-red chillies, cloves, cinnamon and pepper, mysterious coloured powders and roots, tamarinds, all kinds of spices and cones of loaf sugar wrapped in butcher-blue paper. The air was pleasantly scented with an aroma of spices and rose-water and the merchants reclined lazily on old Persian rugs in the dim recesses of their little shops, dozing or telling their prayer beads. As one passed they would call an invitation to drink a cup of tea with them. At the top of this dusky lane, framed by the shop sides and the roof, was a larger shop whose front caught the sun which lit the vivid green glass of great flagons containing rose-water, brought to Bahrain from Persia, and picked up the colours of dark red Bokhara carpets and the yellow, white and orange-coloured cloths hung on strings across the dark interior of the shop. In this quiet backwater of the bazaar business was done in a lazy sort of way. The street was too narrow for motor traffic and bales and sacks were carried to the shops on the backs of big white donkeys, for which Bahrain used to be famous, decorated with patterns of henna on their heads, with usually a few blue beads hanging from their necks, to avert the Evil Eye.





Coursing with silugi hounds



An Arab falconer



*Walter Sanders—courtesy 'Life' Magazine. © 1952 Time Inc.*

C.D.B. inspecting Camel Section

*Photo: Max Thornburg*



Young Shaikhs  
with attendants

## Seven

Oil to make him a cheerful countenance.

*The Bible*

THE history of the oil concessions in the Persian Gulf is, from a British point of view, a sad story. Towards the end of 1922 the Eastern and General Syndicate, a small, purely British concern, whose representative in the Gulf was Major Frank Holmes, commenced negotiations with King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud for an oil concession over 35,000 square miles in the province of Hasa on the eastern side of Arabia. The Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) is now producing more than sixty million tons of oil a year in this area. Between 1922 and 1926 Holmes was successful in obtaining for his Syndicate concessions in Hasa, Bahrain and the 'Neutral Zone', an area lying between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, shared between the two countries. The British Syndicate was unable itself to explore, develop and operate oil fields owing to lack of capital. It did not even own an oil derrick! The Syndicate approached the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) and also Burmah Shell, with the object of coming to an arrangement for joint working, but neither of these companies would play. It then tried to interest other concerns in the project. No one was willing to back it. After hawking the concessions around with no success the Syndicate, in 1927, with the approval of the British Government, concluded an agreement with Gulf Oil Corporation (American) whereby Gulf Oil acquired the options on Hasa, Bahrain and the Neutral Zone. Shortly afterwards Gulf Oil transferred its rights to another American company, the Standard Oil Company of California, the parent of the Bahrain Petroleum Company. This transfer was made in order to satisfy the conditions of the 'Red Line Agreement', about which one heard much at the time, which precluded Gulf Oil, or any of the other British, American or French interests in the Iraq Petroleum Company, from acquiring separate concessions in an area which included Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. This, briefly, is how it happened that more



than half of the oil in the Persian Gulf is now being produced by American oil companies, although in the past America had taken only the most cursory interest in the Persian Gulf.

I have never heard a convincing explanation as to why British oil companies were unwilling to venture when they could have acquired the concessions outright, or worked in conjunction with the Eastern General Syndicate, on extremely moderate terms. There had been a surface survey of Bahrain by oil geologists who were not over-optimistic about the possibility of finding oil, but Holmes, who was himself something of a geologist, never wavered in his belief that there was oil in Bahrain, and he was proved to be right. It is possible that the Anglo-Persian Oil Company did not believe that there was oil, or the company did not want to find oil, or possibly it was thought that to explore for oil in new areas in the Gulf would cause political difficulties with the Persian Government, especially in Bahrain, which was claimed by Persia. If Holmes had been strongly backed by the British Government and if a British oil company had ventured to take the risks which were taken by the Standard Oil Company of California how different would be the oil map of the Gulf today! Holmes was frequently treated as *persona non grata* by the British in spite of the high estimation with which he was regarded by the Arabs, especially by the Shaikh of Bahrain, who was grateful to him not only because he was responsible for finding oil but also because it was he who provided Bahrain with its artesian water supply.

There are, however, advantages in having American oil companies, with their enormous investments, in Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, working in some cases side by side with British oil companies. For material and political reasons the Americans are as anxious as we are to preserve the peace of the Gulf and to maintain the independence of the states. Although some of their methods and ideas are foreign to us, and friction and disagreements inevitably occur, yet as long as there is Anglo-American accord in world politics the presence of Americans in the Gulf is of advantage both to the Arabs and to the British. It is often suggested that American oil companies meddle in politics. In Bahrain I had every opportunity of watching the oil company's activities at close quarters. Never, during the many years that I was in Bahrain, did the Bahrain Petroleum Company interfere in local politics or in Gulf politics. From the time that the company started operating in Bahrain there was complete co-operation between the Government and the company; if any matters arose which had a political flavour, the company management invariably consulted me as to what course they should pursue.

Shaikh Isa, when he granted the original concession to the Eastern General Syndicate, stipulated that it should not be alienated to a non-British firm. When the matter came before his successor, Shaikh Hamed, Bahrain's finances were in a precarious state owing to the slump in the pearl trade; therefore, although he would have preferred to have a British company operating in his country, as no British company showed any interest in Bahrain the Shaikh agreed to the transfer of the concession to an American company. He hoped that this would speed up the production of oil—if oil was to be found. After lengthy negotiations between the Colonial Office and the oil companies it was finally agreed, in August 1930, that a new company should be formed, to be called 'The Bahrain Petroleum Company' (BAPCO), which would be incorporated in Canada, thus giving the Standard Oil Company of California, operating in Bahrain, camouflaged British nationality. The fact that the company was registered in Canada has never been of the least interest to the people of Bahrain, who regard BAPCO as an American company, which is what it is.

BAPCO started operations at the end of 1931 in the middle of the island, near Jebel Dukhan. The coming of the oil company made very little stir in Bahrain. It aroused more interest among Europeans than among Bahrainis. Neither the Shaikh, nor I, nor anyone else, realized what a far-reaching social, political and economic upheaval would take place if—and it was a very large 'if'—oil was found. Bahrain was the first oil field to be developed in the Gulf; the Iraq Petroleum Company and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company had been established for many years and nobody in Bahrain had experienced the sudden incursion of a big Western industry into a comparatively primitive Eastern state. In the beginning the company did not employ many men on their drilling operations; it was later, when the refinery was built, that BAPCO provided work for such a large proportion of the population.

The arrival of the 'oil men' was anticipated with some apprehension by the European community. People had heard stories of the 'goings on' of American drillers working for the Anglo-Persian Oil Company at Abadan and expected them to behave like cowboys in a Western film. They *were* a tough lot, but they must have been carefully picked for they behaved extremely well. It was not until later, when their numbers were greatly increased and included a large proportion of British workmen from the north of England, that occasional incidents happened.

One difficulty was the colour question. If a bunch of oil men got into the bazaar and started to get rough it was the duty of the police to deal



with them. Most of the police were Africans, and Americans, especially, resented being ordered about by them. Often at night—it usually seemed to happen when I was at a dinner party—I would get an agitated call from the police, ‘Americans are making “teshwish” [disturbance] in the bazaar, please come.’ Off I would go to sort things out and to remain on the spot till the company sent down some of its security men to remove the offenders. I always expected to get beaten up, but this never happened. Perhaps my sudden appearance, stalking into some low haunt in the bazaar, wearing a dinner jacket, had a sobering effect on the culprits. Even so, it was a relief in later years to have a few British police officers to deal with white drunks in the bazaar.

The first oil camp was a collection of Nissen huts at the base of Jebel Dukhan, but we in Manama envied the amenities which were provided for the Americans. They had hot and cold running water, modern sanitation, refrigerators and what we regarded as up-to-date cooking arrangements. The first manager was Edward Skinner. He and his wife became our closest friends. He returned later to Bahrain as Resident Director and held this post till he died, suddenly, a short time before we left Bahrain.

Soon American wives began to arrive; they added a good deal of colour to the social scene and some of them startled the staid inhabitants of Manama by their expressions. We saw a lot of them, and they came to the At Homes which we used to have every Wednesday. Once a lady who we did not know well surprised the company by saying, during a pause in the conversation, ‘Well, folks, I don’t think I’ll play tennis, I’m pregnant.’ My mother-in-law, who was staying with us, never forgot the remark. Another lady was never seen without gloves; we supposed she had something the matter with her hands till she told us, ‘I just don’t care to touch anything which natives have touched.’ But they were pleasant and friendly and I dare say that *they* thought some of us very odd.

Once an Arab friend of mine asked me why the American ladies put so much powder on their faces. I suggested that it was to keep themselves cool. ‘Their faces are already too white,’ he said, ‘they should not make them whiter.’ Few people realized that the Arabs were observant. At a dinner party all the women were wearing black or dark dresses. An Arab merchant came up to me and said, ‘Who is dead?’ ‘Why, nobody,’ I replied. ‘Why do you ask?’ ‘Then why are all the ladies in mourning?’ was his next question.

At the end of May 1932 oil was found in the first well which was drilled, but the flow was small and there was not much gas, so instead of being pleased and excited, as we were, the experts talked gloomily about

there being insufficient oil for commercial exploitation and not enough gas to push the oil out of the ground, but the great thing was that oil had been found in Bahrain. However, even this produced no excitement among the Arabs. BAPCO started to drill another well. On Christmas Day, just as we were leaving for church at the American Mission, we got a message from Major Holmes asking us to come at once to the oil field where No. 2 well had 'come in' with a rush. It was a bitterly cold day; in spite of the sun, the temperature in our house was about 50 degrees—few people realize how cold it can be in the winter in the Persian Gulf. When Marjorie and I reached the well, which was in the foothills near Jebel Dukhan, we saw great ponds of black oil and black rivulets flowing down the wadis. Oil, and what looked to us like smoke, but which was in fact gas, spouted gustily from the drilling rig and all the machinery, and the men who were working were dripping with oil. It was impossible to tell which of them were Americans and which were Arabs. It was not a pretty sight but it was an exciting moment for me. I could see, without any doubt, that there was an oil field in Bahrain. It was a great day for Major Holmes, who now saw the visible proof of what he had always believed. We could not stay long at the oil camp as we had a children's party for our small son in the afternoon and a dinner party that night for all the Europeans in Manama. Unfortunately something went wrong with the electricity, a not uncommon occurrence, so the children's party took place by candlelight, so did the preparations for the dinner. This was the kind of thing which sometimes made housekeeping difficult, but in an emergency the servants showed up at their best and were always cheerful and helpful. The lights recovered before the guests arrived, in time to illuminate a very gay celebration of Bahrain's first real oil well.

I had assumed, quite wrongly as it turned out, that our financial difficulties, which had been worrying me so much, would be solved at once, but it was two years before the export of oil began which produced an improvement in our revenue. During the first year after oil was found there were endless negotiations between the Government, which I represented on behalf of the Shaikh, and the oil company, over which the British Government held a watching brief. Long meetings and discussions seemed to occupy many hours every week and after each meeting I had to explain to the Shaikh what had taken place and ascertain his views on the matter. The negotiations were difficult. None of the parties had identical objects in view and personalities were allowed to intrude too much in the discussions. BAPCO wanted an extension of its exploration licence, which covered only 100,000 acres, and the inclusion of the rest of

the Shaikh's territories, land and sea, in the concession. We wanted the oil field to be developed as quickly as possible so as to start collecting royalties. The British Government was concerned with wider, and to us more obscure, oil policies which affected the whole area. The situation was still further complicated when the Iraq Petroleum Company, in 1934, entered the field as a competitor for the 'additional area'. However, the Shaikh finally granted the whole area to BAPCO, one of his reasons being that he thought Bahrain was too small a place to contain two rival oil companies.

The discovery of oil in Bahrain gave an impetus to the other oil companies, who hurried to obtain concessions in the Gulf States. In 1935 the Shaikh of Qatar granted a concession to the Iraq Petroleum Company whose first, successful, well was drilled in 1938. In the same year the Standard Oil Company of California obtained a concession over the eastern part of Saudi Arabia and found oil three years later. In Kuwait, after long and complicated negotiations, a concession was granted to the Kuwait Oil Company, owned, equally, by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and the (American) Gulf Oil Corporation. Oil was found in their second well, drilled in 1938. The Neutral Zone was acquired by the American Independent Oil Company, which discovered oil in commercial quantities in 1953. But Bahrain, where oil was first found, became the poor relation among the oil states; its oil field is very small and only with careful control does it produce about two and a quarter million tons a year, an insignificant output when compared with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia which each produce about sixty million tons.

The saving grace for Bahrain has been the *gradual* increase in oil revenue which allowed time to build up a competent administration capable of planning ahead. There was no sudden transformation, as in Kuwait and Qatar, from extreme poverty to unimaginable wealth. I knew every year approximately how much revenue to expect. One day I said to Shaikh Hamed, 'Your Highness, would it not be a good idea to publish the budget so that our people can know how much—and how little—we have got to spend?' He looked rather dubious for this was a very radical suggestion; in the past the financial affairs of the State had been a closely guarded secret. 'It is the custom,' I explained, 'in all advanced countries.' 'You may do so,' he said, 'if you are sure that it will not cause trouble.' But when I told my old head clerk what I proposed to do he raised his hands in horror. 'The Shaikh will never agree,' he said. I told him that the Shaikh had agreed. He shook his head mournfully, and then said, more brightly, 'The people don't want to know and they won't

understand the figures, so why should we do this?' 'In that case what harm is there in publishing them?' I replied. We sent out copies in a simple form and found that people were extremely interested. It put an end to the idea that the Government was rolling in money and could afford to do more than it did.

In later years the budget was published in full in the *Government Gazette*, but it was a long time before any of the other states in the Gulf published even a semblance of a budget. It was at this time that the arrangement was made whereby the Shaikh received one-third of the oil revenue in the Privy Purse, part of which he used for paying the allowances of his innumerable relations. One-third of the revenue was invested in the Reserve Fund and in productive schemes and one-third was spent on administration and development. It was not a popular policy. Many Arabs saw no point in putting aside money for a rainy day and they regarded the rates of interest obtained from our investments as being negligible. Many people would have liked to see all the oil extracted from the ground as fast as possible, and turned into cash. 'As for the future,' they said, 'Allah will provide.'

As time passed BAPCO extended its operations; there was always some big, new construction plan in progress—in fact the company never seemed to pause for breath. The most important development was the building of the refinery. The first stage was completed in 1937, subsequently it was enlarged and improved to cope with the oil from Saudi Arabia which was brought to the refinery through a twenty-five-mile-long submarine pipeline from Dhahran, on the Arabian coast. BAPCO built a pier, three miles long, near the refinery, which was on the coast, which enabled tankers to come alongside, and a drum plant and an asphalt plant. Awali, the oil town, was constantly extended, and more offices, clubs, cinemas, recreation facilities and houses were added, but it seemed that the number of European employees was always a step ahead of the houses which were completed. The unending activity of the company resulted in a steady increase in the number of local workers and the wages which they earned, and the large sums spent by the company on construction operations and local purchases contributed greatly to the prosperity of the State. The oil field was small, its expectation of productive life was comparatively short, so I always felt that the existence of a big refinery, depending mainly on oil from Saudi Arabia, providing employment for such a large proportion of the population, was, almost, as much value to the economy of the country as the oil field.

One of the first sections of the refinery to be installed was what is

known as a 'cracking plant'. Not being an engineer I will not attempt to explain its function. When it was completed we were invited to go and see it; we took our son with us, who was then about five years old. After looking at a mass of complicated pipes and machinery we drove home. On the way back my son said, reproachfully, 'Why didn't they show us the cracking plant?' 'Don't be silly,' I said, 'you did see it.' He still looked unbelieving, then he said, 'I never saw any plants, not even ordinary plants, there was nothing growing there, and I did so want to see a plant which crackled.'

Relations between the Government and BAPCO were good and for many years the company had very little labour trouble, though in 1938 a group of Manama Arabs, not themselves connected with BAPCO, tried, unsuccessfully, to organize a strike in sympathy with their own political aspirations. They knew that they could get support by complaining that the company employed too many Indians. The Bahrainis did not appreciate the fact that it took time to train men as skilled workers, capable of holding technical and administrative posts, and that, for some years, it was necessary to employ foreigners, Indians and Iraqis, in positions most of which are now filled by Bahrainis. The feeling against the employment of foreigners did not apply to the British and Americans, for even the most rabid anti-foreigners realized that the Europeans had qualifications which, at that time, they did not possess. Today there is a different feeling in the air; many of the young Arabs who have been educated abroad think that they are as capable, or more capable, of holding senior posts than many of the Europeans. In my opinion, some of them, but by no means all who think this way, are fully competent. But even those who obtained degrees or diplomas in Middle East universities lack something which is acquired from long years of schooling in Western countries, where attention is paid to character-forming, which is not part of the curriculum in the East.



# Eight

Travel teaches toleration.

BENJAMIN DISRAELI. 1804-1881

A little learning is a dangerous thing.

ALEXANDER POPE. 1688-1744

**I**N JANUARY 1936 the Shaikh was created an Honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire (K.C.I.E.). It was suggested that he should be invested by the Viceroy at Delhi but he said very definitely that he wished to receive the insignia from King Edward, so he was invited by the British Government to visit England. Much to our delight he said that Marjorie and I should accompany him. I made arrangements for the journey by the overland route; it was a complicated itinerary and difficult to organize because until the last minute it was not known how many people would accompany him. Eventually the party consisted of the Shaikh and two of his sons, ourselves, a secretary who spoke no English and three servants who had never before seen a train. On arriving in England Marjorie found that she had to act as Social Secretary, a duty which she carried out with great tact.

We stopped in Baghdad where the Shaikh met the King of Iraq and was entertained by the British Ambassador in the charming old Embassy on the banks of the Tigris, which was burnt down by a mob in 1958. We did the train journey across Iraq in great comfort as the Government provided us with a special coach, but at every station of any size, even in the middle of the night, there was a reception committee lined up to greet us, and usually a band. It was a courteous gesture but rather trying for the travellers. When we boarded the Taurus Express I assumed that there would be no more station receptions, but on reaching Ankara early in the morning I was roused by servants saying that people on the platform were asking for us. The Shaikh and I dressed hurriedly and found an impatient group of Foreign Office officials from the Embassy waiting

to greet us. After that we were prepared for visitors at every main station, but none appeared. Everyone in the party enjoyed the train journey, which took about a week.

The visit lasted for over a month and was an unqualified success. Shaikh Hamed was received in private audience by the King, and I, who had been created a C.B.E. in the Birthday Honours, attended an Investiture. We had a full programme of official and private functions, including a dinner given for the Shaikh by Lord Zetland, Secretary of State for India, where we met many old friends, including Sir Percy Cox and Lord Lloyd, who the Shaikh persistently addressed as 'Lloyd George', though there was no resemblance between them. We did the London season very thoroughly, going to Ascot, Trooping the Colour, Aldershot Tattoo, polo at Hurlingham, Hendon Flying Display and a visit to the *Queen Mary* at Southampton. Unfortunately the Shaikh wore a new pair of shoes and after walking for what seemed like miles up and down the decks he was reduced to lameness. An item on the Government programme was 'Ballets de Monte Carlo' where we saw *Scheherazade*. The Shaikh might well have said, like Queen Victoria, 'We are not amused.' This exotic representation of fun in the harem while the master was absent was, under the circumstances, an unfortunate choice. At Madame Tussaud's he stood for some time in contemplation of the effigies of King Henry VIII, surrounded by his wives, 'The King,' as the Shaikh said, 'who chopped off the heads of his wives when they bored him.' I hastened to assure him that this happened many, many years ago.

The Shaikh did not bet at the dog racing at Wembley, but he picked the winners with such skill that we, who backed his fancy, had a profitable evening. I took him to Lincoln College, Oxford, which was my own college. While he was being shown round by E. C. Marchant, the Sub-Rector, he said to him, 'You used to teach my Adviser, now he teaches me what you taught him.' We visited Huntley and Palmer's biscuit factory at Reading. After sampling quantities of biscuits the Shaikh was asked to choose a selection so that a crate could be sent to him at Bahrain. I, too, was invited to choose a selection. The two cases of biscuits were shipped, but I never saw mine. Both cases were delivered to the palace and by the time that I returned nothing remained of my carefully chosen samples. I have always regretted this! The Shaikh attended the sports at my son's preparatory school at Brighton, which was a great feather in the cap of a small boy of seven years old. At the Tower of London we drank coffee in the Governor's house. The Shaikh asked who was the original of a portrait in the hall. I rather enjoyed being able to tell him that it was

my great-uncle, Field Marshal Sir Richard Dacres, who was at one time Governor of the Tower.

We went to Edinburgh and then returned to London; the people of Edinburgh were less accustomed to Oriental potentates than the Londoners and every morning there were crowds waiting outside the hotel to see the Shaikh. He made a fine appearance in his vivid robes with gold sword, dagger and head circlet; sometimes he wore a scarlet under-robe and a white cloak, or dark crimson under a brown cloak embroidered in gold, and the Arab members of his suite were equally colourful. At a banquet which was given for him by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh the Shaikh was very startled when two pipers, whose entry he had not noticed, suddenly started playing behind his chair. But he liked the music and after we returned to Bahrain I made enquiries about pipes from a firm in India. The firm's reply was a typical Babu letter, part of which was as follows: 'We have to conclude that you have started Brass Band, but Bagpipes Band is cheaper and most of the British and Indian Infantries like this much. The gorgeous and sonorous tunes, declaring and petting the soldiers for Bravery produce effective and joyful feelings, and after all it is as cheap as any thing.'

We were entertained by Colonel Gordon Loch, who had been Political Agent at Bahrain, at The Binns, a fine old castle near Linlithgow. On the way there we stopped in Linlithgow to meet the Provost and other dignitaries. The schoolchildren had been given a holiday to see the Shaikh and he was immediately surrounded by hundreds of small boys and girls waving autograph books. Rather laboriously he signed one book, then another; more and more books were showered on him and if the police had not rescued him he would have spent the rest of the day signing the autograph books. He returned to Bahrain by the same route, staying a few days in Paris and in Istanbul; I travelled with him as far as Hyder Pasha, where I said good-bye to him on the Taurus Express, en route for Baghdad, then I returned to England to complete my leave.

Nineteen thirty-seven was a year of progress made possible by the certainty of revenue from oil and by the Shaikh's desire, after his visit to England, to modernize Bahrain and to improve the health of his people. Malaria was rampant, especially in the villages where the anopheles mosquito bred in choked water-channels and stagnant pools in the date-gardens and in big earthenware water-jars, which were never emptied, in every house. I obtained the services of Major Afridi, an anti-malaria expert in the service of the Indian Government. He prepared a report showing how we could reduce and finally eradicate malaria in Bahrain.

First the people had to be taught that mosquitoes caused malaria. Many of them used nets at night, because the mosquitoes irritated them, but with no thought of malaria. I painted a set of dramatically exaggerated posters showing 'wrigglers' in water-jars, and huge mosquitoes sucking the blood of debilitated Arabs which had, I think, some effect. Then we obtained films and books describing the dangers from mosquitoes. After explanations and warnings we began to break the jars in which mosquitoes were breeding; the jars cost money so this had some effect, but it was uphill work. We engaged Indian foremen, who knew the work, to take charge of gangs of men who cleared the water channels and drained off the pools. There was no co-operation from the public. Some of the landlords refused to allow access to their gardens and angry farmers would burst into my office full of complaints about our anti-malaria squads, but usually they went away promising to be helpful. As the years passed people began to appreciate the value of the work and villagers often came to me telling me of some place where mosquitoes were breeding, asking that the anti-malaria squad should be sent there.

In 1937 statistics from schools, dispensaries and the police and their families showed that 20 per cent of the population suffered from malaria. By 1956 this percentage had been reduced to 0.97 per cent. To achieve this success much money had been spent and much work had been done by Dr Snow, our Senior Medical Officer, and his staff. It was not a spectacular achievement. It could not be shown to admiring V.I.P.s, like roads, buildings and harbours, but it was one of the most successful and perhaps the most valuable project which we undertook.

Another plan which I had in my mind, which the Shaikh approved, was that we should have our own Government hospital. The American Mission Hospital did very good work and the small, badly equipped Victoria Memorial Hospital, an adjunct to the Political Agency, carried on as well as its means permitted, but the staff and facilities of these two hospitals were inadequate for the needs of Bahrain; besides, the Shaikh and I felt that medical facilities for the people of Bahrain should be provided by the State. We had a few rather primitive dispensaries in various parts of the islands, which were well patronized, and we employed several Indian trained midwives for work among the women.

Marjorie, with one of the Indian nurses, ran a clinic at the fort for the families of the policemen, which was also attended by people from outside, but most of the Arab women were afraid of being cared for by foreigners at childbirth so infant mortality was high. The dangerous and disgusting practices which were carried out by the local midwives would

have shocked Mrs Gamp. Often after childbirth the unfortunate mother was packed, internally, with salt in order to tighten up her muscles, to provide the husband with more sexual satisfaction. This usually produced severe complications when another child was born. Sometimes the mid-wife would jump on the stomach of the expectant mother in order to precipitate the birth, so it was not surprising that many babies were born dead.

Eye diseases were common, especially trachoma, and many Arabs had only one eye. Four brothers, who were important merchants, had five eyes between them. Flies abounded in the bazaar until the Medical Department started spraying the town with D.D.T. There was a great deal of venereal disease, which was talked about as lightly as we would talk of influenza. At one time the registration and compulsory inspection of prostitutes was considered, but the idea was given up mainly because it would have caused criticism from neighbouring rulers. Smallpox used to appear every year, in spite of our quarantine service, until the people realized the value of vaccination; after that they came in thousands to be vaccinated and it was made compulsory in all schools and for travellers abroad. In recent years smallpox has been rare in Bahrain and when it has occurred it has been traced to infection brought from outside. There were a few cases of leprosy, which were not segregated, but epidemics of cholera and plague, which used to be frequent, have been unknown in Bahrain since 1925 although they often occurred in India and Iraq. But in spite of this catalogue of unpleasant diseases Bahrain was not an unhealthy place for Europeans who, even in the summer-time, when the temperature at Awali sometimes reached 110 degrees and humidity often reached 98 degrees, were remarkably fit.

Before building a hospital I had to set up a Public Works Department. Formerly I myself had designed all the new buildings, but they were plain and simple; to plan and build a hospital was too complicated a matter for me to undertake. Building work in the past had been carried out under the supervision of Khan Sahib Mohammed Khalil, the Superintendent of the Land Registration Department, with two or three Indian and Arab foremen. Among the buildings which they constructed were the British Naval Base, the Bahrain Law Courts and the Customs House. I took on a retired, Indian, Public Works man who held the post until, some years later, a British Director of Works was appointed. At this time there were only two other Englishmen in the administration. One of them was Claude de Grenier, who had been Director of Customs since 1925; the other was W. B. Steele, the State Engineer, who ran the electric



supply. Today there are between sixty and seventy Europeans in Bahrain Government service.

Bahrain was in a flourishing condition in 1937; there was a good diving season and many people were earning high wages in the oil field, so a group of young Arabs decided that it would be a profitable undertaking to open a cinema. This had been mooted some years before, but it was given up owing to opposition from the older Arabs whose main argument was that children and young people would wish to go to the cinema, parents would disapprove and would not provide the money, and this would encourage the young people to gamble and steal in order to get money for cinema tickets. This seemed to me a very far-fetched argument. By 1937 the opposition had subsided and the first cinema was opened. The Bahrainis soon became 'movie fans' and there are now seven or eight commercial cinemas in Manama and Muharraq in addition to those of the R.A.F., the oil company and the Navy. I am fond of films myself, but I think an unrestricted diet of 'movies' has a bad effect on a comparatively primitive people. In Bahrain the advent of the cinema caused a deterioration in manners and morals. After a film was shown in which acid was thrown at someone two cases occurred of Arabs throwing acid, and I have always attributed to some incident in a film the terrible habit of suicide among women by pouring petrol over their clothes and setting themselves alight, which has become prevalent in recent years. Egyptian films were the most popular, because they were in Arabic, but old-fashioned 'Westerns' and 'Tarzan' films were much enjoyed by the less sophisticated villagers. When education is more advanced the influence of the cinema may be less harmful; perhaps the public will then no longer believe that the screen is a faithful picture of life in the West.

Education was one of the most difficult problems which I had to deal with and I feel that the results were not commensurable with the vast sums of money which were spent on it and the hard work of some of the teachers and directors. Since 1919, when the first school was opened at Muharraq, paid for partly by public subscription, there had been constant quarrels between the teaching staff, some of whom were foreigners, and the committee of notables, most of them illiterate, who ran the school with a subsidy from the Government. One of the first headmasters was Shaikh Hafiz Wahba, an Egyptian, who became Ambassador for Saudi Arabia at the Court of St James and, before he left London, was awarded the K.C.V.O. He fell foul of the Political Agent, before I came, and had to leave Bahrain. I knew him well in later days and I much admired

his cool common sense in a difficult post, especially during the war years.

By 1926 two schools existed; a second one had been opened in Manama, but both of them were patronized entirely by Sunnis. In 1928 I suggested to the Shaikh that we should have a school for Shias in Manama, where there was a large Shia community. 'There is a school in Manama, the Shias can go to it,' he said, when I made the suggestion. 'But, Your Highness, the Shias won't go to a school where all the teachers are Sunnis,' I said. I suggested asking the Shias to contribute something towards the cost of the building and the Shaikh agreed that if they did so a school could be built and opened. The Shia community was poor but they put up a few thousand rupees as a token contribution and the building was started. Having opened the Shia school we had to set up a Shia committee, which was difficult as the Shias were even less educated than the Sunnis—neither of them knew anything about school management. After some years of very unsatisfactory school administration we decided that the Government should take over control of the schools. One committee had given up all interest in education when the Government laid down what the pay and conditions of teachers should be, thus putting a stop to a certain amount of nepotism; the other committee, after quarrelling violently among themselves, had faded out. The Shaikh appointed his brother, Shaikh Abdulla, as 'Minister' of Education and he and I, with the help of a Lebanese Inspector of Education from Beirut, tackled the thorny problem of education. By 1937 there were three town schools and five village schools, attended by about 1000 boys. There was no difficulty in getting the boys to come to school, our difficulty was to find teachers.

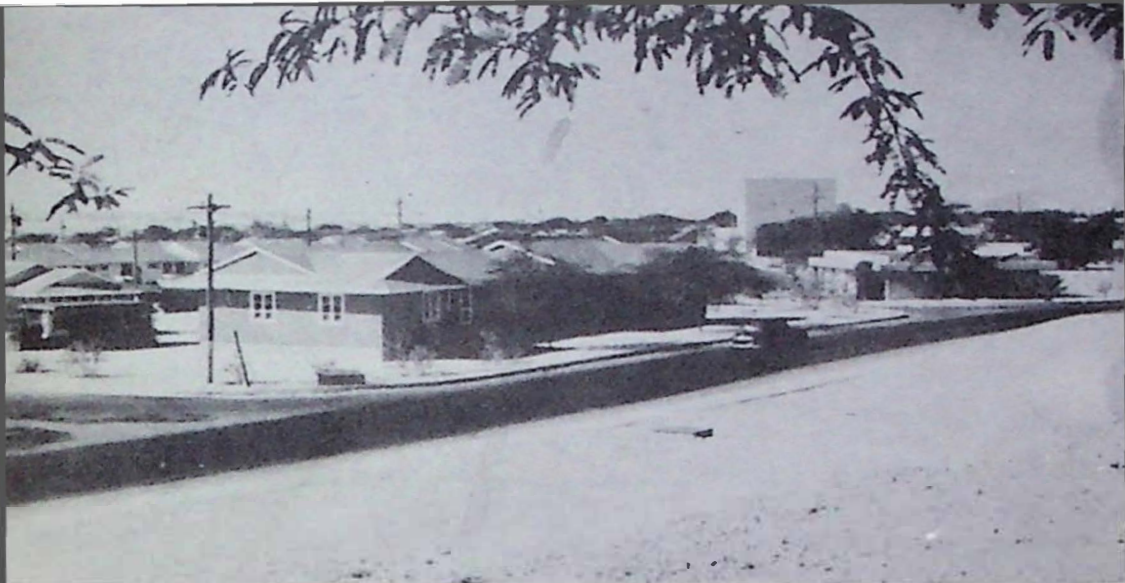
If, as Lord Brougham said, 'Education makes a people easy to lead, but difficult to drive; easy to govern, but impossible to enslave', then there must have been something radically wrong with education in Bahrain. The 'educated' young men were certainly easily led, by the wrong people, they resented any form of discipline or government and it was the schoolboys who first introduced the habit of strikes. Education was, and is still, regarded solely as the means to enable a young man to earn more money; I only knew two or three Arabs who had any genuine desire to acquire knowledge for the sake of learning, irrespective of what it would be worth to them in cash. Perhaps this is the point of view of schoolboys and students in England today, but I do know that when I was at school, and at Oxford, the thought of how much money my education might enable me to earn never entered my head. This was not

because I could afford to disregard money as from the day that I got a commission in the Army I lived on my pay, which was seven-and-six-pence a day, less than a coolie now earns in Bahrain. But this is a digression from the subject of Bahrain schools!

One day, after we had been a year or two in Bahrain, Marjorie said to the Shaikh's wife, 'What a pity it is that the girls here have no chance of being educated like the boys.' The Shaikha was immediately interested; she had been to England with Shaikh Hamed in 1925 and she knew that in other countries there were schools for girls as well as for boys. They discussed the idea and the Shaikha promised to give her support if Marjorie would organize a school for girls. A few days later I broached the subject with the Shaikh; rather to my surprise he expressed his approval. The next move was to get some outside support, for I knew that a girls' school would be regarded as a disruptive innovation.

I thought that I could count on the support of several of the more progressive merchants, so I asked them to come and see me, separately, and told them what we proposed to do. After discussion I found that the attitude of most of them was: 'It would be a good thing to have girls' schools, but I would prefer my name not to be mentioned. Of course I am not old-fashioned, but some of my friends would be upset if they knew that I was concerned in this. But I will give you all the help I can, from the background.' This was a very typical Bahrain attitude. Two or three of them, however, including Mohammed Ali Zainal al Reza, an important pearl merchant from the Hejaz, who had a lot of influence in Bahrain, openly supported the scheme. Mohammed Ali was interested in education, he had himself opened schools, for boys, in the Hejaz and in Bombay, and he approved of women being educated. With the Shaikh's approval we let it be known that the Government was opening a girls' school.

There were immediate repercussions. A public petition was organized by some of the leading Arabs and presented to the Shaikh, protesting against such a dangerous innovation. One of the Kadhis preached a sermon in the mosque, deploring the idea of girls' schools, and many of my Arab friends came to remonstrate with me at my imprudence in supporting such a dangerous scheme. An old, white-bearded pearl merchant from Muharraq became quite violent. He sat in my office and shouted, seizing my hand to emphasize his arguments. 'We don't want our daughters educated,' he stormed; 'women give us quite enough trouble as it is.' I knew that he had had a great many wives! 'What use is education to them? I never went to school. Why should my daughters go



*Photo: Bahrain Petroleum Co.*

Awali, the oil town

Manama from a minaret







Shop in Manama, old style  
Modern shops and offices

*Photo: Bahrain Petroleum Co.*





to school? If they do, they will think themselves better than their fathers.' It was difficult to get a word in, but I said, 'You don't *have* to send your daughters to school.' He ignored this and went on, 'If girls learn to read and write, what is to prevent them from getting letters from men, without their parents' knowledge?' His last words, as he sailed out of the office, muttering angrily, were: 'Ya Mustashar! We did not expect that you, of all people, would propose such a shameful and unsuitable thing.'

Marjorie found that among the Arab ladies there was very little opposition; only some of the old grandmothers expressed disapproval, the younger women were attracted by the idea. We were afraid that all the commotion would cause the Shaikh to think twice before putting the scheme into action, but he was not deterred by the opposition and the school was opened. The wife of the school inspector was the first headmistress, assisted by two or three local Arab women who had a modicum of education. In the beginning only a few girls came to school, rather surreptitiously, but soon more parents allowed their daughters to attend. Marjorie was able to get another woman teacher from Beirut and when the uproar had subsided a second girls' school was started in Muharraq; it was formally opened by the Shaikh's wife. This time there was no fuss or hullabaloo.

The girls enjoyed school and by degrees those whose fathers had not permitted them to attend worried their parents into allowing them to go to school. Mothers found it convenient to have their children out of the house, in safe hands, during part of the day; even the fathers, when they found that their daughters were not being taught anything unsuitable, began to look more kindly on education for girls. Some years later the old pearl merchant from Muharraq, who had been so vehemently opposed to girls' schools, came to see me again. This time it was to complain that his grand-daughters had not been admitted to the Muharraq school—the reason being that they had not applied for admission in the proper way but arrived at the school on the first day of the term and demanded to be allowed to enter. I told him that as there was a waiting list of almost 100 girls, all of whom had applied for admittance months before, his children would have to wait their turn. Then I could not help saying to him, 'But did you not tell me once that you were *never* going to send any of your family to a girls' school?' He roared with laughter. 'True,' he said, 'that is what I thought then. But now all my neighbours send their girls to school and the young men in my family insist on their daughters being educated.' 'Then you do not now think that education is harmful?' I asked. 'No,' he replied, 'I do not now see any harm in it,

but tell me one thing—your wife, she can read and write, did she learn here in Bahrain, or did she, too, go to a school?' I assured him that she, too, had been to a school, which seemed completely to reassure him.

The inception of girls' schools was due to Marjorie. In the early years she held no official position, although she took such an active part in school affairs, but in 1930 the Shaikh appointed her as Directress of Girls' Education. By this time she was doing a full-time job. She used to leave the house every morning after breakfast and rarely returned before luncheon-time and on some days the school work occupied her all through the afternoon. One of the subjects which interested her much was sewing and embroidery, and at this the girls were very clever. An exhibition of needlework was held every year; at one time it was held in the Manama palace, which was lent for the occasion by the Shaikh. There were separate days for men and women and thousands of people used to attend the show. Arabs and Europeans would stand in queues before the doors were open in order to get in first to buy the clothes and embroidery which were for sale. Lingerie and 'sheer' nightgowns were very popular among the young Shaikhs.

By 1956, the year before we left Bahrain, Marjorie and her excellent Lebanese Assistant, Mrs Nair, were in charge of 13 girls' schools containing over 4000 girls, with a staff of 135 women teachers, of whom 94 had themselves been educated in the Bahrain schools. On the whole, girls' education was more satisfactory and ran more smoothly than that of the boys. In 1956 boys and girls sat for the same examination; at the end of the term, out of the four top pupils, three, including the first one, were girls, which caused complete consternation in the boys' education department, for between them and the girls' schools there was strong rivalry.

## Nine

Henceforth a series of new times began.

*Absalom and Achitophel.* JOHN DRYDEN. 1631-1701

THE steady increase in revenue from oil brought an end to my worries about the financial position. It seemed that Bahrain was entering a new era of prosperity such as it had enjoyed in the earliest days of history. But the transition of Bahrain from a country depending on pearl fishing, trade and agriculture, into an oil-producing state, with a refinery which was at one time the fourth largest in the world, created difficulties and problems which I had not been faced with before. Life in the pre-oil age was pleasanter. Then I had time to deal personally with many things and I felt nearer to the people than in after-years. When there were numbers of Government departments, committees and Arab and European officials, much of my time had to be spent in smoothing out the difficulties which occurred between the staff.

Most afternoons Marjorie and I drove into the country. In the spring, after the rains, though the average rainfall was only two to three inches a year, pale-green grass covered much of the desert and parts of the island were very beautiful. At sunset the mountain and the Shaikh's white houses at Sakhir took on a warm pink glow; I tried often to paint it, but the afterglow never lasted long enough. We often drove to the old ruined Portuguese fort on the coast near Manama which, according to the Arabs, was haunted, as well it might be, for those old stone walls had witnessed many a grisly contest. I once camped out, in the summer, below the walls of the fort. My servants almost went on strike at the idea of sleeping so close to it; they swore that it was inhabited by 'jinns' which would appear in the night.

The Portuguese invaded the Gulf at the beginning of the sixteenth century; they occupied the island of Hormuz, off the Persian coast, where there was a city of fabulous wealth and luxury. To this 'jewelled signet of a golden ring' came merchants from the Orient trading in silks, precious stones, cloths of silver and gold, wines and spices and 'a great store of

Pearles' and 'the finest asses in the world'. The pearls were from Bahrain and the asses were the white donkeys for which Bahrain used to be famous. In 1521 Bahrain was taken by the Portuguese after a bloody battle. It was under the rule of an Arab chief from the mainland, who was killed in the fight. His head was cut off and taken in triumph to Hormuz and the King of Portugal granted to the Portuguese Commander the right to assume the title of 'Baharem' after his name and to add a 'King's Head' to his escutcheon in recognition of the conquest. The Portuguese held Bahrain till 1602, in spite of frequent rebellions by the Bahrainis, who on one occasion crucified the commander of the Portuguese garrison.

These were the days when the Portuguese, the English, the Dutch and the Persians fought for supremacy in the Gulf; later the Turks joined in the fray and made an unsuccessful attempt to capture Bahrain. At another time a Turkish Admiral, Pir Beg, visited Bahrain with three ships loaded with treasure from the sack of cities. One of the ships sank, somewhere in the shallow waters around the islands. No trace of it has ever been found but when I was sailing I often looked down into the clear water and wondered whether some day a pearl diver would come across the hulk of the Turkish galleon with rotting chests full of golden coins.

In later years we often visited the Danish archaeologists from the Pre-historic Museum at Aarhus, who have been working in Bahrain, in the cold weather, since 1953. Every season they made more exciting and important discoveries, establishing the fact that Bahrain was inhabited in the Palaeolithic period and that it was 'the myth-surrounded site of Dilmun', a city which is mentioned in Sumerian and Babylonian inscriptions in the third millenium B.C. Merchants from Dilmun traded between Iraq and India, carrying, among other things, 'fishes' eyes', the unattractive name which in those days was given to pearls. Around the Portuguese fort, and underneath it, the archaeologists discovered the walls of the ancient capital of Bahrain, for the Portuguese evidently chose the site of the old city on which to build their fort. At another place, off the Budeya road, they found three temples, one built above the other, the oldest from about 2500 B.C. Before long they will probably solve one of the few remaining archaeological mysteries in the world—which is the identity of the people who are buried in the vast necropolis, the largest cemetery in the world, containing some 100,000 burial tumuli, which covers over twenty square miles of the north end of Bahrain island.

Sometimes the expedition makes surprising discoveries. In 1957 they dug deep below the foundations of the Portuguese fort and found a

building which they confidently supposed was the burial place of an important person—perhaps a king. People were invited to attend the opening of the 'tomb' and there was much speculation and excitement about the treasure which might be found. The tomb was opened. To everybody's astonishment the building contained two sets of W.C.s. They were quite unmistakable, very much the style of those which are still used all over the Middle East but with a stone drain leading down from what may have been a water tank. Flippant people described them as 'Ladies' and 'Gents'; the Arabs found them more interesting than any of the ancient buildings which had been disclosed—they came out in busloads to view 'the oldest set of W.C.s in the world'.

In about 326 B.C. Alexander the Great's fleet was voyaging along the Persian coast, after his expedition to India. Two of his ships visited Tylos, as Bahrain was then called. Not long after I came to Bahrain some men digging a drain behind the house found an earthenware flask decorated with circular bands, on one of which were fragments of Greek lettering. I spent a long time trying to decipher the inscription but without success. Later I showed it to someone from the British Museum who shrugged it aside with the words, 'Yes, the Greek alphabet, a common form of decoration.' Yet I learnt Greek at school!

Sometimes we visited a police post and drank coffee with the men, who were always pleased to see us, especially if our small son was with us. He had a young friend of his own age, the son of an escaped slave who joined the police. He was called 'Johar', which means a jewel. He was very black, with shining white teeth and bright eyes; he attached himself firmly to our household and was known as 'the slave of Hamed', the Adviser's son.

On Fridays, the Moslem Sabbath, we often drove to a garden on the coast where there was good bathing. The heat of the sea in the summer sometimes reached 90 degrees, so it was refreshing afterwards to bathe in a freshwater spring on the shore, though the water in the springs and artesian wells came out of the ground at a temperature of 80-83 degrees. If we picnicked near a village the Baharna would invite us to drink coffee with them. Then we sat in a garden or in the shade of a house, on a ragged old carpet, drinking coffee and discussing the date crop or the pearl catch. One might expect to pick up more than one bargained for sitting on a dirty carpet, but all the time I was in Bahrain I never saw a flea.

There were none of the ill-mannered children and youths who now swarm around Europeans in country places demanding 'baksheesh' and often damaging cars if they are left unattended. The deterioration in manners is the fault of the Europeans. Many of them have strange ideas



as to how to behave to people of a different race. Either they adopt an arrogant manner or they are too familiar and resent familiarity being returned. The following remark, made by Lord Morley, could well apply to Americans and Europeans in Bahrain: 'While bad manners are a fault anywhere they are a crime in a native territory.'

In the years before the coming of oil there had been little perceptible change in the life of the Shia Baharna, the aboriginal inhabitants of Bahrain. They dwelt in palm-branch huts or stone-and-mud houses among the date-gardens, earning a sparse livelihood as fishermen, divers and tenants of the Arabs, who never worked as agricultural labourers. They were physically below the standard of the Arabs owing to their meagre diet and the prevalence of malaria. They differed from the Arabs in speech, physiognomy and dress; the difference was more pronounced among the women. But twenty years later the difference between young Arabs and young Baharna was less noticeable.

There had, however, been radical changes in their outlook and position. After centuries of oppression during invasions and civil wars they now found themselves on an equal footing with the Arabs, with no feudal obligations. In a court of law a Bahraini from a village had the same rights as a Shaikh. This, at first, was considered a revolutionary attitude on my part! No longer did they live in fear of attacks by armed raiders who believed that they possessed hidden wealth in their wretched houses. Their tenure of property was ensured by irrevocable title deeds issued by the Land Registration Department, signed by the Shaikh himself. The Waqf property, dedicated to pious works, was no longer in the hands of the Kadhis but was administered by an elected council of Shias. This reduced the influence of the Kadhis and enabled a group of politically ambitious Manama Shias to set themselves up as leaders. But in spite of their improved position the Shias suffered from an inferiority complex which gave them an aggressive attitude and a disposition to consider themselves ill-treated. They knew that I had no prejudice against them; I raised many of them to positions of responsibility, finding them hard workers who stuck to their jobs.

Among the town Arabs, especially in Manama, visible signs of change were more apparent. Straw huts were being replaced by stone houses and many of the big old-fashioned Arab houses were being modernized. People no longer built tall wind towers which carried the air down into the room below, which were a feature of local architecture, instead they used electric fans. The cost of living was low and the shops began to stock a greater variety of goods from abroad, many of them from Japan.

Japanese goods had the reputation of being cheap, showy and shoddy, and the term 'Japanese' came to be used to describe a lady of light morals. I often used to hear the word used with this meaning in cases in the court.

When I was first in Bahrain I rarely saw an Arab wearing any kind of European clothes. Once the son of the Sunni Kadhi returned from a visit to Egypt in a coat and trousers; his relations, who went on board the ship to meet him, refused to allow him to land until he had changed into Arab dress. But by degrees the younger men took to wearing shoes instead of sandals—at the same time many of the Europeans took to wearing sandals instead of shoes—and then coats and waistcoats, under their cloaks, but the Khalifah family and the older people were, and still are, conservative in the matter of dress. When men began working in the oil field they found that flowing robes were inconvenient and dangerous and a brisk trade developed in second-hand clothes imported from Europe. It was not unusual to see an Arab decked in an Eastern European military uniform or perhaps a British postman's coat and trousers. Soon trousers, shirt and coat became the regular wear for oil-field workers.

Education, broadcasting, facilities for easier travel and contact with foreigners in Bahrain and abroad stimulated an interest, especially among the younger men, who had been through school, in affairs outside Bahrain. They had grown up under a settled government and they accepted as a matter of course the existence of schools, law courts, municipalities and other institutions which had not existed in their fathers' time. They did not seem to realize that all this was new and they compared conditions in Bahrain not to what they were ten or twenty years ago in their own country, but to conditions in countries which they read about or heard described on the wireless sets which were now installed in some of the houses and coffee shops.

After the new régime was firmly established there was not much serious crime. Murders were rare. When they did occur the victims were often women who were put to death by their relations because they had dishonoured the family. To kill a woman for this reason was considered by many Arabs to be justified. I knew of cases when an unmarried girl was 'put away' because she became pregnant, but I never came across a case of a wife being killed because she was unfaithful.

There was a case which I always remember in the town of Hedd, on Muharraq island. The inhabitants were mostly Arabs belonging to two important tribes. Though they had been settled townsfolk for over half a century they retained many of their tribal customs and characteristics as well as a spirit of independence. They were difficult people to deal with.

A rumour reached the police that a girl had disappeared. Women who knew her noticed that she was no longer about, and when they asked her relations where she was they got evasive replies. The gossip reached the ears of the police in Hedd, who reported what they had heard. At the time I was running the police as we had no British police officer. We had to move cautiously because any questioning of women by the police was apt to lead to trouble, and as soon as it was known that enquiries were being made all mouths would shut. The girl, the daughter of poor but respectable parents, was unmarried, but there was reason to believe that she had an affair with a man.

After collecting a good deal of hearsay information, much of it was from a gossipy old woman in Hedd who was a relation of one of the policemen's wives, we sent for the father and I asked him where his daughter was. He produced a story about her having gone to Saudi Arabia to visit relations, because she was ill. This sounded to me unlikely as I knew that the family had no connection with the mainland. We decided to chance the consequences and to search the house which, as it was in Hedd, was rather like tackling a wasps' nest.

That night, without giving the girl's family any opportunity to make arrangements, I and the police officer, with half a dozen policemen, went to Hedd. We walked quietly through the dark narrow lanes, hardly seeing a person on our way. We arrived at the house. After some time we were admitted. The father and two sons and several women of the family were in the house. The men's expressions were quite impassive, they showed no excitement at our visit. The women, covered in their clothes, squealed a little. We had nobody who could identify the girl, if she had been there, but the family still said that she had left Bahrain. Certainly there were no signs of her, dead or alive.

I went into one of the small rooms on the ground floor. There was an unpleasant smell. I asked one of the men what it was. 'It's the latrine in the yard,' he said. It was not that sort of smell. The Arab police officer came in. 'The girl is buried here,' he said. There were signs that the room was inhabited; clothes were lying on the bed and there were cigarette stubs on the floor. We sent for a crowbar and a couple of spades and two of the policemen began to dig up the floor. Very soon they found what they were looking for, the body of the girl. The men of the family stood by quite calmly while the body was disinterred—but it was more than I could stand; I beat a retreat and waited outside in the yard.

During the trial it was established that the girl had been killed by some of the men of the family, because she had 'gone wrong'. The women

knew about it but we were unable to discover which of the men, her father or her brothers, had murdered her. The investigation by the police and the discovery of the crime was much resented by the people of Hedd whose sympathies were entirely with the girl's family, and even some of the 'progressive' Arabs considered that the girl's murder was justified.

Sex was usually the motive behind murders. Sometimes the victims were prostitutes who were murdered by jealous lovers. They were known as 'Daughters of the Wind'. It was too attractive a synonym for the be-draggled creatures who traded in the brothel area where male prostitutes were almost as numerous as women. On several occasions the police cleaned up the brothel area and deported all the foreign women and boys. The first time this was done a vociferous crowd of ladies of the town surrounded my office to protest against being repatriated to their homes in Persia, Iraq and Oman. Their spokesman was an elderly procuress from Persia who argued, quite sensibly, that it was a matter of supply and demand. If all the foreigners were sent away, she said, their places would be filled by local talent. However, the order had been issued and the ladies left by ship. They were escorted to the end of the pier by a large crowd of friends and patrons and there was quite a harrowing scene when they embarked in the launches which took them to the steamer. Sure enough, in a month or two the brothel area seemed to be just as full as it had been before the foreign ladies were sent away. The second time we tried to clean up the area we found that a number of quite obviously foreign women, who had entered Bahrain, had become Bahrain subjects by the simple expedient of marrying Bahrainis. One has heard of similar arrangements being made in England.

Often newly born unwanted babies were found, alive, deposited in the municipal rubbish dumps, which stood at the corners of the streets, or placed outside the hospital. The American Mission had an orphanage where some of these little foundlings were looked after. When they were old enough the boys were sent to school and later found employment. Others were cared for in the Government hospital and very often they were adopted by women who had no families. There was very little stigma in illegitimacy; I knew several young men who were proud of belonging to important families, though on the wrong side of the blanket.

When oil was discovered Bahrain acquired the reputation in the Gulf of being a place 'where all the streets are paved with gold', and Arabs from other parts of the Gulf entered the country seeking work, expecting to make their fortunes in a few months. I had introduced passports and a system of checking arrivals and departures soon after I came to Bahrain

so it was possible, to a certain extent, to curb the immigration of foreigners. But many of them entered Bahrain illegally, paying large sums of money to boat-owners who landed them at night on deserted stretches of the coast, or on sandbanks at low tide, telling them that they were on the Bahrain coast. When the tide rose and the sea covered the sandbank many of these unfortunate people were drowned, but the dhow captains, who were usually Qatar Arabs, always sailed away with their money. The influx of undesirable aliens increased the amount of crime in Bahrain, especially opium traffic and the manufacture of illicit liquor.

The use of liquor was strictly forbidden by the Shaikh on religious grounds and twenty years ago almost all his subjects approved of his attitude, but today the restrictions on liquor are most bitterly resented by the young men of Bahrain. They do not see why they should be liable to severe punishments, such as imprisonment, for being caught with a bottle of beer in a car, when in Egypt and Iraq, both Moslem countries, they can buy and drink liquor without any objection. They resent, too, the fact that Europeans and foreigners who are not Moslems can buy liquor for their own consumption, on special permits, from the one firm in Bahrain, a British firm, which is allowed to import liquor. Western people might think that a religious prohibition such as this might be left to the conscience of the individual, but Moslem Governments, unlike most Western Governments, are more severe in regulating the religious life of their people. At one time, in Saudi Arabia, men who were absent from prayers at the mosque on Friday or who did not keep the fast during the month of Ramadhan were liable to punishment by being publicly flogged.

When I was first in Bahrain it used to be whispered that two or three Arabs were in the habit of drinking. When more Europeans came to live in the place and the Arabs took to travelling abroad, drinking became more prevalent. Today there are few young men of the upper, monied class who do *not* drink, some in moderation, some immoderately and many because it has become the smart thing to flout the law. Bahrain has a flourishing Black Market in imported spirits; a certain amount is smuggled into the country but most of it comes from 'leakages' from the people who hold liquor permits.

In Saudi Arabia the position is different. Some years ago the King banned the import of all liquor; the prohibition applied to the oil company as well as to all foreign embassies.

When we entertained Arabs in our house they never drank liquor, although at cocktail parties, to which we always invited both Arabs and Europeans, both 'hard' and 'soft' drinks were handed round. But in some



European houses and in the homes of some of the British Government officials Arabs were encouraged to drink, although everybody knew the Shaikh's views on the matter. Many people thought that the liquor regulations were unnecessarily harsh and that they were an anachronism, but the ban was based on the law of Islam and it was the law of the country.

In the early days much of the liquor which was drunk was arak, distilled from dates. The police had orders to do all that was possible to prevent its manufacture and sale and for years they waged war against the 'moonshiners', who were very clever in hiding their tracks. Often I used to go out with the police on liquor raids, searching houses and gardens where, according to our information, arak was being distilled. I rather enjoyed these raids. Some of the liquor gangs chose very ingenious hiding-places. We found a still in a shed in the lunatic asylum, operated by one of the watchmen, and one notorious liquor pedlar had a cellar underneath one of the main streets, connected by an underground passage to his house, but the surface of the road caved in and exposed his hiding-place. Ruined houses in the country were favourite hiding-places and supplies of bottled arak were often kept at the bottom of wells or buried in gardens.

Opium was also prohibited. It was not used by the Bahrainis but by some of the foreigners, Persians and Baluchis. It was easier to hide and therefore more difficult to find and for this the police had to depend mainly on reports from informers. Opium, which looked like sticks of brown scaling-wax, was brought to Bahrain from Persia, and most of the dope pedlars were Persians. Once I was searching a house where we believed there was a stock of opium. We could find nothing and as it was getting late I looked at a big clock which hung on the wall. It had stopped. I made some remark to the Persian who owned the house about keeping a clock which did not work and as I did so I noticed a very curious expression come over his face, which gave me an idea. I opened the clock. The works inside had been removed and it was packed full of opium, worth several hundreds of pounds.

Hauls like this were insignificant compared to the quantities of opium which we intercepted in later years. There was a powerful dope ring with connections outside Bahrain and plenty of money to spend on bribery which trafficked in opium on a large scale. The opium was brought by sea from Persia to the Trucial Coast, a name given to the six small shaikhdoms at the south-east end of the Persian Gulf when they entered into a general treaty in 1820 with the British Government; previously the area was known as the Pirate Coast. From here it was carried in Arab dhows to Bahrain, timed to arrive when it could be smuggled on to a ship, which

would carry the opium to Europe or America or the Far East. Sometimes the plans miscarried and the opium had to be hidden in Bahrain until the ship was in port. The gang owned cars and launches and they had buildings in which the opium could be hidden, but there was always danger when they had to move it from one place to another. The police caught several consignments of opium, worth hundreds of thousands of pounds, and finally, after one successful haul, when some of the gang were caught on board a ship with the opium in a dhow alongside, the principal men who were operating the racket were arrested. They were tried and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. There was no co-operation from the public in our attempts to stop the opium trade; the Bahrainis regarded our efforts as unnecessary interference by the Government in a trade which brought much money to Bahrain. Their view was that as it was not used by Bahrainis there was no reason to bother about it. What happened eventually to the people in other countries who smoked the opium was of no interest to the Bahrain Arabs.

For some time the project of having a British Naval Base in Bahrain had been under discussion. I had to attend innumerable meetings with the Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf, known as 'Snopgie', who was at that time Captain J. V. Creagh, and with the Resident and Political Agent and with the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies Squadron, who paid visits to Bahrain. Finally, with the Shaikh's approval, it was decided that the base should be at Jufair, on the coast about three miles south of Manama. The project was to be a top secret. Some of the land on the site was privately owned, so I had to negotiate its purchase by the Government without people knowing why it was required. The transaction took some time to complete, but in April 1935 the inhabitants of Manama learned from the B.B.C. that there was to be a British Naval Base in Bahrain. Although several people besides the Shaikh and I knew about the scheme the secret had been well kept and there was some indignation, especially among the Europeans, at hearing such an important piece of news about Bahrain from outside sources.

I was asked by the British to write a note on the local reactions to the news about the base. This I found difficult as none of the Arabs showed the least interest in the matter. Almost the only comment I heard was from a man who said, 'The price of eggs will surely go up.' I asked him what eggs had to do with the Naval Base. 'When English men-of-war are here,' he said, 'they buy up all the eggs and we get a very high price for them. If there is a base and the Navy is always here they will never stop buying eggs.' It was quite true; the price of eggs did go up.

## Ten

The guests are met, the feast is set:  
May'st hear the merry din.

*The Ancient Mariner.* SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. 1772-1834

VISITS from V.I.P.s were not, perhaps fortunately, so frequent twenty years ago as they are today when Members of Parliament and journalists, after spending two days in Bahrain, return home as experts on the problems of the Persian Gulf. Until 1937 most of the people who came were high officials of the Government of India or senior officers of the Royal Navy or the Royal Air Force, with whom the Shaikh exchanged calls and usually invited to dinner. Conversations on these occasions were stilted and there was a sameness about them. The usual subjects were the climate in Europe, the guest's journey to Bahrain and sometimes a little talk about horses or hawks; if the guest introduced politics he drew a blank. Once when the Shaikh and I were discussing conversations with visitors he said to me, 'Those are suitable matters to speak of to people who we do not know well, who come to see us.' I often felt that the Shaikh did not do himself justice at these visits as he could talk interestingly and amusingly to people he knew well. But sometimes the barriers were lowered. Once I took a Roman Catholic Bishop to call on Shaikh Hamed; he was a venerable Italian with a long white beard, beautifully dressed for the occasion. He and the Shaikh got on very well together as the Bishop talked some Arabic. They discovered that they were the same age. The Shaikh asked the Bishop how many children he had and then commiserated with him on the fact that Catholic bishops were not permitted to marry; later he said to the Bishop: 'What beautiful teeth you have. Where did you get them?' I thought at once of Red Riding Hood. It was revealed that the teeth came from Milan, and the Shaikh and the Bishop had a long conversation about the price and the difficulties of 'dentures'.

When the Shaikh was in England, Lord Cadman, the head of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, paid a call on him and talked for an hour about the reasons why his company had not taken up the Bahrain oil concession, which was certainly a very difficult matter to explain. The Shaikh got more and more restive during this non-stop monologue, which I had to translate, and although there were no hawks or camels at the Hyde Park Hotel to which he could transfer his attention, as he did when he was in his country house in Bahrain when he found conversation dull, he soon gave up listening. When Lord Cadman finally took his leave the Shaikh said to him, with almost a wink at me, 'Some day you must tell me why your company did not compete for the Bahrain concession.' Lord Cadman was nonplussed and as I escorted him to the lift he suggested another talk to explain why his company had 'boobed' so badly over Bahrain—though this was not the expression which he used—but somehow the Shaikh never found time for another meeting.

At the end of 1937 the Amir Saud, who is now the King of Saudi Arabia, paid a visit to Bahrain. He came at the time of the annual celebrations, which were held on the anniversary of the Shaikh's accession, so with some adjustment it was possible to adapt the decorations and the entertainments so that they served for the Shaikh's celebrations and for the royal visit. We gave a luncheon party for the Amir to which we invited about twenty people; this was as many as the table which we used could take, but when the guests arrived we found that there were several extra people with the Amir's party. At an Arab luncheon this would not have mattered, but it necessitated frantic rearrangements of the table so that when the guests sat down there was hardly room for them to move their elbows. Early in the following year the Shaikh with many of his relations and followers went on the Pilgrimage to Mecca, leaving his two brothers and me as a Regency Council. The party travelled by sea and when the ship left Bombay it was found that the servant in charge of the impedimenta for making coffee had left all his equipment on shore, so the ship had to be stopped until the things were recovered from Bombay.

Soon after the Shaikh's return from Mecca, Princess Alice and the Earl of Athlone spent some days in Bahrain on their way back from Saudi Arabia; the visit was unofficial and the only entertainments were small luncheon and dinner parties. They stayed at the Political Agency with Hugh Weightman, who was then Political Agent, and his wife. They were very informal and spent much of their time taking photographs and shopping in the bazaar. Princess Alice was the first member of the British Royal Family to visit Bahrain and the Shaikh was disappointed that

because it was a private visit he could not hold a big public reception to do honour to the royal guests. He and the other Arabs who were present were much impressed by the fact that the Princess—a woman—inspected the Guard of Honour which paraded at the palace; such a thing had never before been seen in Bahrain.

King Ibn Saud came to Bahrain in the spring of 1939 when I met him for the first time and succumbed to the attraction of his manner, though before I knew him I had been inclined to resent his attitude towards Bahrain. He was extremely friendly and made himself particularly pleasant to me. When he returned to Arabia he sent me an Arab mare in foal; she foaled a chestnut filly, Oleander, which I rode every day for many years. In his early years, when he was in exile, the King had lived for some time in Bahrain as the guest of the Shaikh's father and he never forgot the hospitality which he had received at that time. Long before the visit most of my time with the Shaikh was spent in discussing the arrangements. The visitors were housed in Shaikh Sulman's new palace at Rafaa, which was surrounded by tents for the King's retainers. When crowned heads pay visits in Europe there is usually a programme and a time-table to which they adhere, so I suggested to the Shaikh that we should have a printed programme for King Ibn Saud's visit. He agreed to this, rather doubtfully, after I had pointed out to him that when he visited London there had been a printed programme. My suggestion was a success and the time-table worked very well.

The King came from Al Khobar, on the Arabian coast, in the Shaikh's new launch, a present from the oil company, accompanied by an armada of launches flying the green flag of Saudi Arabia, carrying the King's relations, officials and about two hundred followers. The Amir Saud arrived with a large party ahead of the King and the Amir Faisal, his brother, came by air from Egypt. The two rulers met at the end of the pier and embraced each other warmly under an enormous red umbrella, which I had brought from England as a present for the Shaikh the last time I had been on leave. As the procession of about fifty cars, with an escort of mounted police carrying lances with red-and-white pennants, preceded by police on red motor-bicycles, drove slowly through the crowds which lined the streets, many of the spectators threw their cloaks on the road to do honour to the King.

At the Manama palace the Shaikhs of the Khalifah family were assembled. This had been difficult to arrange as everybody wished to be on the pier to meet the King, but I knew that the interminable greetings would have involved a long delay in the hot sun. Lines of household



servants in orange, crimson, vermillion and green robes lined the palace stairs and stood outside the audience-room, each with a silver-mounted dagger in his belt and carrying a curved sword. Inside the palace the Khalifah Shaikhs were gathered in their robes of state, wearing richly embroidered silks, cloaks threaded with gold, Kashmir headshaws bound with gold circlets and golden, gem-encrusted, daggers and swords. The saluting guns—they were a present from Queen Victoria to the Shaikh's father—boomed at somewhat irregular intervals as the King and the Shaikh entered the building. In contrast to the resplendent Bahrain Shaikhs the King was simply dressed in a long white robe, a plain brown cloak and a red-and-white cotton headcloth with only the gold circlet denoting his rank, but his bodyguard of coal-black negro slaves, who never left him, almost outshone the Bahrain Arabs in colour. Their short coats were of every hue, decorated with gold thread, and their belts and bandoliers bristled with silver daggers and shining cartridges. Every man had a sub-machine-gun under his arm, which I am sure was loaded, and several times during the visit I felt rather nervous when I saw one of them fingering the trigger in an absentminded way.

The visit passed off well and there were some spectacular entertainments. The leading Saudi Arabian merchant gave a dinner in his country house on the top of the hill at Rafaa at which 600 guests sat down to a gargantuan feast of mutton and rice and other dishes. The moonlight was as bright as day, the great courtyard of the house was entirely carpeted with Persian rugs. It was the largest dinner party I have ever seen. The King, unlike most of the Bahrain Arabs, talked all through the meal.

On another day, when I went for a long drive with him and the Shaikh, he never stopped discussing both Gulf and European politics. After saying how much he detested the Jews he expressed his abhorrence of Hitler's method of exterminating them. It would have been better, he said, to have shorn them of their possessions and to have let them live. He had recently seen the German Ambassador from Baghdad who assured him that Germany and Italy together were invincible, a statement which the King doubted. On the subject of some recent troubles in Bahrain he displayed a stout monarchical spirit. His view was that The People should not be encouraged to acquire political power and the work of governing should be left in the hands of those who were accustomed to rule. Some of his views on food were interesting if unusual. Fresh milk, straight from the cow, was the ideal purgative, so he said, and fish should never be eaten at night, only at midday. Other Arabs told me that to eat

melon and fish at the same meal was a dangerous practice, but I have frequently done so without any ill effects!

The King was present at a Torchlight Tattoo which I had arranged. It was a novel form of entertainment in Bahrain and as few people had seen such a spectacle it made a great impression on the vast audience which witnessed it. The performers were the police, the town watchmen and several hundred schoolboys. The show was held on the open ground in front of the Manama fort and for the occasion we had raised seats two or three tiers high. The first half consisted of marching and evolutions in which the men and boys carried torches and large square lanterns of different colours on long poles. The second part was more ambitious; flood-lighting was used for the first time in Bahrain to illuminate the sets in different parts of the arena. There was an Arab village, complete with mosque and shops, a palm grove with a well where the women drew water, a strip of shore where almost life-sized sailing dhows came alongside, from which a party of pirates landed and attacked the village. Both horses and camels were used with great effect; they behaved very well except for one camel, who bolted into the audience, fortunately without injuring anybody. In the grand finale the village was sacked and burned and the women, played very realistically by schoolboys, were carried off shrieking across the saddles of the mounted men. Most Arabs have a natural aptitude for acting. Some of the plays which were put on by the boys' schools were extremely well done.

The scenery for the sets, which was quite elaborate and very effective, was designed by me and painted by myself and Max Thornburg, an American friend of ours who was then the manager of the oil company, assisted by a White Russian who had a flair for painting. The young Russian had come from Teheran and landed in Saudi Arabia without money or papers; he was promptly put into jail where he spent some miserable months. Somehow he got away and landed on the Bahrain coast where he was picked up by the police. For some time he lived in the fort, more as a guest than a prisoner, and then I found him a job as a motor driver, but he was so hopelessly absentminded that he became a menace on the roads. Finally I got in touch with his compatriots in the Lebanon, who knew him, and we succeeded in sending him to Beirut. I never heard of him again though I made enquiries about him.

Max Thornburg was a great friend of Shaikh Hamed, who gave him a little island off the town of Budeya, west of Manama. It was nothing more than a sandbank covered with masses of little shells of a kind known as 'Sabaan', hence the island's name, 'Omm as Sabaan', which means

'Mother of sabaan shells'. Thornburg sank an artesian well and put the northern part of the island under cultivation, and after the war he and his wife used to spend many months every year on their island, living in the delightful house which they built and entertaining many of the Americans and British who lived in Bahrain as well as interesting visitors from abroad—writers, travellers and diplomats. The low white house in which the Thornburgs lived, almost hidden by the branches of tropical trees, stood in a grove of date- and coconut-palms facing a long avenue where oleanders, covered with a mass of pink-, white- and red-scented blossoms, met above the path. Some of the windows faced the sea towards the rocky island of Jidda, which at sunset was sharply silhouetted against the sky. There was good bathing in the sea and in the big swimming tank on the shore, shaded by palms, close to the house, and around the island there was first-rate fishing. In 1958 the Thornburgs decided that they could no longer spend part of every year in Bahrain so they handed back the island to Shaikh Sulman. Many people will remember with pleasure the gracious hospitality which they enjoyed on the island of Omm as Sabaan.

A mile or two beyond Omm as Sabaan, westwards across the sea, was Jidda, another little island which was unlike any place in Bahrain, with high, steep cliffs and enormous yellowish-grey rocks which looked as if they had been split asunder by an earthquake. On this island stone had been quarried to build the burial chambers in the tumuli and, later, for the Bahrain fort. On the smooth face of one of the cliffs was an inscription in Arabic, dating from 1561, commemorating the cutting of the 100,000th stone for repairing the tower of the fort. When I first explored Jidda there was no fresh water on the island and only one solitary palm tree on the strip of level land below the escarpment, but I liked the place and I found it cooler and less humid than the mainland of Bahrain. I decided that, if water could be found, Jidda would be a suitable place in which to keep our long-term prisoners—in those days there were very few. We sank an artesian well. It turned out to be a gusher, with a head of water over twelve feet high of better quality than the water in Manama. Some simple buildings were put up to accommodate the few prisoners and the police guard. They were built of local stone and much of the wood which we used was driftwood from the shore; later a large jail was built against the flat side of a cliff which had been a stone quarry centuries ago.

A few years after 'Devil's Island' had been established the Shaikh wanted me to postpone my summer leave until the winter; this I agreed

to do, but at the same time I asked him for permission to build a little house at Jidda where I could retreat for week-ends and escape from telephones and callers without being quite inaccessible in case of an emergency. The house was built by prison labour with a local mason. It was perched high on the top of a cliff above the little pier with a steep path leading up to it. It had thick stone walls and looked, at a distance, like a miniature Scottish keep. It was a modest building, consisting of a sitting-room with a bedroom above, reached by an outside stair, a little dining-room and a roofed loggia. The big window in the sitting-room overlooked the sea below the cliff and from the other side of the house there was a view across the garden to the strip of deep blue water which separated the island from the mainland. At night the western sky was lit by the flares of burning gas in the oil field on the Saudi Arabian coast. Sea birds circled round the tower and in springtime in the early mornings the desert skylarks used to sing. The island was a great place for birds, and many nested there. In the winter the gales beat against the walls and we were glad to have a big fire burning in the open hearth, made of drift-wood, which sent out bright green flames.

I used to work in the garden with the prisoners; though some of them had been sentenced by the court on which I sat they seemed to bear no grudge against me nor was it thought odd that the Adviser to the Bahrain Government and Commandant of Police should work in a garden with jailbirds. As the years passed we made a very fine garden. Among the date-palms there were flowering trees and shrubs, flamboyants, coral trees, pomegranates, hibiscus, lantana, cork trees and avenues of oleanders which produced numbers of hybrids of different shades. In the garden, shaded by seven different kinds of trees, with heavily scented jasmine growing around it, I built a bathing tank. After spending half the morning in the sea I used to retire to the tank for another long bathe. There was good bathing from the pier and quantities of fish around it, which the prisoners caught on lines or in traps and which, when they had a big catch, they dried in the sun. Once I brought back a fish spear from Kashmir and had some success in spearing big fish, until the barb was broken by striking a hard coral rock. The prisoners used to wander in and out of the kitchen, bringing vegetables from the garden, or firewood or bunches of flowers—usually tightly tied bouquets—for the house. I think they looked forward to the times when I visited the island. One day when I was in the pool in the garden an old prisoner who worked there—he was ‘in’ for gun-running—spoke to me quite severely because I had left my watch and signet ring on a stone near the tank. ‘You should not

leave valuable things lying about here,' he said. 'Some of the people on the island are not very honest.'

Two or three times in the summer—it had to be a hot, calm day—I went out from Jidda on a fish-doping expedition, taking some of the police and prisoners in the launch; there was great competition to join these trips, which were a change from the prisoners' usual routine of cutting stone, weaving sailcloth and working in the garden. We usually went to Baina island, a low-lying sandbank midway between Jidda and Saudi Arabia, or sometimes to another large island off the Bahrain coast where the Shaikh had a house built on pillars above the sea. This island was full of gazelle, hares and black buck, and at one time delicious figs grew in the gardens. The first time I went on one of these 'fishing' trips I imagined that it was going to be very dull sport, but I found that it was quite the opposite. Before leaving Jidda the men prepared the bait, consisting of crabs and small fish mixed with flour and the dried seeds of the Persian Lilac (*Melia azedarach*), pounded into a sticky, rather smelly paste. When we reached the island the launch was anchored and we plunged into the sea and swam to the white sandy shore. I lay half in and half out of the water watching the proceedings. Some of the men, each with a tin of bait, waded into the sea, throwing handfuls of bait into the water over a wide area; they then joined the rest of us on the shore. After waiting for about twenty minutes I saw the silver gleam of a fish splashing in the water. We waited a little longer and by this time quite a number of fish were visible, apparently rushing round in circles or dashing to and fro, skimming the surface of the water. Soon all round the island there were fish behaving in a frenzied manner. The men then entered the sea, wading and swimming and diving, catching the fish, if they could, with their hands. But although the fish were doped it was by no means easy to catch them, as I found myself when I tried; the fish had a habit of sticking their sharp fins into one's hands and they were slippery and difficult to hold. Some of the men were in a sailing skiff which we had towed behind the launch; being higher above the water they had a better view. One of them climbed the swaying mast and shouted directions to the men in the sea, telling them where there was a big fish. After about half an hour the fish seemed to recover from the effects of the Persian Lilac seed, which is known in Bahrain as 'fish poison'.

By the time we had finished the bottom of the skiff was full of fish of every size and shape and there were more on the deck of the launch where some of the men had thrown them. We clambered back on to the launch, ready for the round of coffee which preceded the meal of fresh fish which



was already cooking, and no expensive 'sea food' at Prunier's could rival the flavour of the fish from Baina island. I used sometimes to tell people when they were dining with us that most of the fish which they bought in the bazaar was 'doped'. They would put down their knives and forks with an apprehensive expression until I assured them that I had been eating doped fish for years and it had never disagreed with me.

## Eleven

. . . let us sit upon the ground,  
And tell sad stories of the death of Kings.

*Richard II. SHAKESPEARE*

**D**URING 1939 and 1940 Bahrain was not greatly affected by the war, though there was a sharp increase in the cost of living and a shortage of some imported goods. In the 1914 war there had been a boom in pearls, people in Europe bought them because they were a good investment and could be carried easily, so the pearl merchants hoped that the same thing would occur again, but there was no revival of the pearl industry. Fortunately, when war seemed imminent, I had managed to obtain a large amount of rice from Rangoon, enough to feed Bahrain for several months, and while we still had this supply I introduced price control and rationing of essential food such as rice, flour, sugar and tea. The price control was so successful that it became a profitable enterprise to smuggle food out of Bahrain to the neighbouring states where there was no control, and prices of essential commodities rose sky-high. In Bahrain, as in other countries, some people made fortunes out of Black Market dealings in spite of the severe punishments which were given to those who were caught. Even today Arabs will point out some fine house in Manama or in one of the villages, saying, 'That house was built on Black Market profits.'

The rationing system worked surprisingly well, but it involved a great deal of organization. I set up a Food Control Department under the management of de Grenier, the Director of Customs, which continued to function for several years after the end of the war. Rationing was popular, except among a few of the merchants who watched enviously the fortunes which were being made in the states where there was no control. The ordinary people realized that they were getting exactly the same treatment as everybody else, irrespective of class, colour or wealth and they were not backward in coming forward to report cases of hoarding,

or over-charging; it was a pleasant change to inaugurate a plan which had popular support! Some of the leading merchants were co-operative, but most of them regarded the very reasonable amount of profit which we allowed as being inadequate. After some time, instead of investing our surplus revenue in the Reserve Fund, the Government began to buy, directly, all the essential food supplies which were needed for the country and to sell them in special shops to ration-card holders. My friends used to laugh when they saw me, a staunch Tory, operating a scheme which was definitely Socialistic.

At the beginning of 1941 the first Census ever held in Bahrain was successfully carried out, and this helped considerably with the ration scheme. There were some difficulties over the Census. Many people believed that it was a prelude to taxation—there is no taxation in Bahrain—others thought that all able-bodied men were going to be enlisted and sent as soldiers to Europe, and finally a rumour became current that no woman would be 'allowed' to produce a baby except in the Government Hospital, though nobody considered how such a drastic step could be enforced. After I had toured the villages and assured everybody that the object of the Census was simply to find out how many people there were in Bahrain, so that we could arrange for them to be fed, the objections were withdrawn and the counting took place throughout the night of January 21st, 1941. On that night the towns and villages of Bahrain appeared like dead cities, except for the little groups of men with lanterns, books and papers, going from house to house in every street. I spent the night on horseback riding through the streets and villages to see how the work progressed; nowhere did we meet with any difficulty or obstruction. The Arabic word which was used for 'Ration Card' was 'Bataka' and after the war Marjorie was surprised to find that many of the little black girls at school, from negro families, were named 'Bataka'—elsewhere ration cards are not things which people wish to perpetuate in their memory.

For some years Shaikh Hamed had not been in good health, and those who knew him were much concerned about him. When we were in England in 1936 I persuaded him to see a specialist, who found that he had diabetes, which is very prevalent in Bahrain, especially among the Khalifah family. The normal diet of the Bahrain Arabs, which includes a great deal of rice and dates, probably aggravated the condition and it was almost impossible to persuade Shaikh Hamed to keep to a strict diet. The doctor ordered him to take insulin injections and a young servant who was with him was trained to give the injections, but after the visit, when

we got on to the train for Istanbul, the servant developed nerves and declared that he could not stick a needle into the Shaikh's arm. The only thing to do was for me to take on the job, though I had never given anybody an injection in my life, but by the time that the Shaikh left Istanbul the servant had come to his senses and was no longer afraid of acting as a medical orderly.

In February 1940 Shaikh Hamed, after a great deal of thought and consultation with me, decided to appoint his successor by writing a secret document which was not to be made public until after his death. Personally I was in favour of his making a public declaration, but he did not wish to do this as he thought it might cause dissension in the family. Among the rulers of the Gulf succession is not necessarily by primogeniture; the successor to a Shaikhdom is the member of the family who, in the opinion of the family, is the man best fitted to rule and the decision rests with the family council. In Bahrain 'the family' was restricted to the direct descendants of Shaikh Isa and did not include the members of all the innumerable branches of the Khalifah family. In recent years, however, there have been changes in the old custom and several rulers have, during their lifetime, appointed their successors. King Abdul Aziz al Saud appointed his eldest son, the present King, as Crown Prince in 1933; Shaikh Sulman, the ruler of Bahrain, appointed his eldest son, Shaikh Isa, as Heir Apparent in 1958; and in the case of Qatar the late Shaikh Abdulla, before he abdicated, nominated his second son, Shaikh Hamed, as his successor; it was only because Shaikh Hamed died that the present ruler of Qatar, Shaikh Ali, who was the eldest son, inherited the Shaikhdom.

Only four people were aware of Shaikh Hamed's decision: myself, Hugh Weightman, the Political Agent, my Indian Secretary, K. P. Narayan, and Abdulla bin Jabr, the Shaikh's Secretary and confidential man. Narayan drew up the document, leaving space at the bottom for the signatures of the Shaikh and the witnesses so that the contents of the document could be folded over. Narayan, who worked with me in Bahrain for about thirty years, was in the Shaikh's confidence and was often entrusted by the Shaikh with delicate personal negotiations. On a Friday morning, when my office was closed for the holiday and there were no Arabs waiting about in the compound, messages were sent to Shaikh Rashid bin Mohammed, the Shaikh's father-in-law, a senior member of the Khalifah family, to the Sunni Kadhi, Shaikh Abdul Latif, and to the Shia Kadhi, Shaikh Abdul Hussein al Hilli, who was rather a particular friend of mine, asking them to come to my house on a matter of importance. The two Kadhis arrived together, by accident rather than by

arrangement. Shaikh Abdul Hussein was an Iraqi, from Hilli, an intelligent, humorous old man who always wore an enormous round, white turban and a black cloak; he had a neat, dyed black beard. Shaikh Abdul Latif was a fussy little man in white robes with glasses; when he got excited his voice rose in a crescendo. The Shaikh arrived, earlier than had been arranged, and sat in the drawing-room, looking rather gloomy, and Narayan read over to him the document which he studied attentively. Finally Shaikh Rashid made his appearance, leaning heavily on his curved stick, his old face very lined, his beard dyed bright red; he was gradually losing his sight but he obstinately refused to wear spectacles. We all adjourned to the 'Veranda Room', so called because we had constructed it by enclosing the whole of the big north veranda to make a large sitting-room with windows overlooking the garden and the sea beyond. The three old gentlemen were agog with curiosity; they were told that all that was required of them was to witness the Shaikh's signature to 'a document'. After the Shaikh had slowly signed the paper Shaikh Rashid sat down at the table and signed it, his red beard almost brushing the ink, then it was the turn of Shaikh Abdul Latif, who gazed a long time at the folded paper as if hoping that his glasses would reveal what was written on the underside; then Shaikh Abdul Hussein signed. Abdulla bin Jabr, urbane and on the spot, leant over them as they wrote, making sure that nobody turned over the document to read the contents; meanwhile the Shaikh and I sat and watched the proceedings and I took a snapshot of each person as he signed. As soon as all was done Shaikh Abdul Latif turned to the Shaikh and said, 'Now that this matter has been completed you can tell us what it is about.' Abdulla bin Jabr countered by saying, 'Oh, Kadhi, *you* tell us now what is the subject of your sermon in the Friday mosque this morning.' The Shaikh, who had recovered his spirits, laughed, and Shaikh Abdul Hussein, always glad to get an opportunity of scoring off his Sunni colleague, said, sanctimoniously, 'Evidently this is an important State document and it is not for us to enquire about the contents.' Coffee was then brought in and the Shaikh took his departure, handing to me, for safe keeping, the document appointing his eldest son, Shaikh Sulman, as his successor; later I lodged it in the bank. I never heard any mention of the document which was signed in my house that morning until the day on which Shaikh Hamed died; the three witnesses evidently kept a discreet silence.

In spite of the war Bahrain continued to develop, though progress was slow mainly because it was difficult to obtain building materials from abroad. The women's section of the hospital was opened by the Shaikh's



wife in 1940 and work was being done on the swing-bridge spanning the deep-water channel connecting the two ends of the causeway between Manama and Muharraq. This was not completed until the beginning of 1942 as twice the steel, which was being shipped from England to Bahrain, was lost owing to enemy action at sea. We engaged a British Director of Education and started what was later to develop into a Secondary School, also a British headmaster for the Technical School which had been, and continues to be, a problem, as most of the young Arabs regarded as *infra dig.* any instruction in manual work. The Women's Hospital was staffed with a Scottish woman doctor and a number of trained Indian nurses; Dr R. H. B. Snow, who is still Senior Medical Officer, came later, before the men's part of the hospital was in action. At first it was difficult to persuade Arab women to become in-patients, though they flocked to the out-patients' dispensary in thousands; the change in their point of view is shown by the fact that today 120 babies are being born every month in the fine new women's hospital which was opened by Shaikh Sulman in 1958. Even in this very up-to-date building accidents do occur. A mother from one of the villages was being taken up to the labour room in the lift, accompanied by one of the Indian nurses. The lift stuck, for over an hour. In the meantime the baby arrived, in the lift, and the birth was dealt with effectively by the nurse. The mother, who had never been in a hospital before, was not in the least surprised but assumed that the lift, which has a large compartment, was the normal place in which babies were born.

At first the Arabs were not much interested in the course of the war in Europe. Few of them realized the tremendous issues which were involved, in spite of newspapers and radio propaganda. Propaganda from Berlin had some effect, especially when it was put across by Yunis Bahri, who was known in Bahrain; his lively, rather dirty, style went down well among the Arabs, although for accurate information they listened to the much duller B.B.C. We did not allow enemy broadcasts to be relayed in coffee shops and public places, but knowing that we could not prevent it we made no attempt to stop people from listening to any broadcasts which they wished to hear in their own houses. As a result few of the villagers heard any direct propaganda, because they had no electric power, but now there is electricity in almost every village.

When the war began the Shaikh declared himself and his people wholeheartedly on the side of the Allies; he made a generous gift to war funds and, later, contributed handsomely to the fund which was started in the Gulf for buying Spitfires, and he offered facilities and help in

every possible way. For the Europeans it was a very difficult period. Many of the younger men wanted to go home and join the Forces, but they were told that they were needed in Bahrain to keep the oil industry running; there was, too, a certain amount of friction between the Americans and the British, but this did not directly concern the Government. In June 1940, when France collapsed, I cabled to Marjorie to join me, with our son, in Bahrain. They got a passage in the P. & O. *Strathnaver*. The voyage from England to Ceylon took over a month, during which they were attacked by bombers and chased by submarines. It was a horrible experience. Having got as far as Karachi my son, who had started measles during the long train journey from the south of India, was put into the municipal fever hospital in Karachi bazaar, not a salubrious place, but by pulling some strings and because I was the Commandant of Police in Bahrain, a quasi-military post, he was admitted to the Military Hospital where I found him when I went down to Karachi to meet them.

Hugh Weightman left Bahrain for Delhi in August and subsequently became Foreign Secretary to the Government of India. I and many others much regretted his departure. Both he and, later, E. B. Wakefield, who also served in Bahrain and then in Delhi, were very valuable friends at court; they did much to keep Bahrain on the map and helped us to maintain a supply of food from India. In October there was a night attack on Bahrain by Italian aircraft, which came from the Dodecanese islands. After unloading a few bombs on Bahrain and one or two in Saudi Arabia they flew on across the desert and the Red Sea to Italian East Africa. As a flight it was a fine achievement, but as a raid it was a complete failure; the bombs were intended for the refinery, which blazed with lights like a Christmas tree, but they fell on the desert some distance away. Most people in Manama knew nothing of the raid until next morning and when they heard they were more indignant than alarmed. This was the signal for all American women and children to depart, which they did with no delay. Enemy propaganda put out a story that the raid had been made by British aircraft on the American oil company in order to bring the Americans into the war; perhaps, too, this explanation was in order to cover the failure of the attack. After the war the Italian officer commanding the raid wrote a book in which he implied that he had been dispatched on what was thought to be a hopeless expedition because it was Mussolini's intention that he should never return.

After the raid we had to impose a 'Black Out', which was difficult to enforce and unpleasant to endure as living in one's house in the summer with the little amount of air kept out by curtains was almost unbearable.

But as the war continued it became more difficult to maintain the pleasant, easy relations which had existed for so long between the Agency and the Government. One or two of the 'Politicals' who served in Bahrain at this time were badly chosen and difficult to deal with and the brunt of the trouble was borne by me. Everybody was anxious and their nerves were on edge and it was a time when carefully picked men should have been sent to the Gulf, but perhaps at that time they were not available. So often the attitude was as though the Resident was the headmaster of a school, the Political Agent a form master, the Shaikh the head boy and I—well, I don't quite know what—neither fish, fowl or good red herring! Often small things served to irritate the Arabs; one Political Agent used to write notes in a little book while he was talking to Arabs; they resented this very much as they always assumed that he was writing something derogatory about them. The same man developed a belief, which became an obsession, that everyone in Bahrain was anti-British, which was not the case. The Shaikh, who was more pro-British than any of the other rulers, felt that his co-operation and help were not being appreciated, and various incidents occurred to foster this idea.

There was the affair of the Papal insignia. The Shaikh was very broad-minded in matters of religion; he often said to me that he liked everyone to practise their own religion in Bahrain provided that they did not interfere with the religion of the country. He gave permission for a Roman Catholic church to be built and presented to the Catholic community a piece of land in Manama for that purpose. When we wished to build an Anglican church Shaikh Sulman gave us a piece of land near the fort on which we built the church of St Christopher and a vicarage for the Chaplain. In appreciation of the Shaikh's attitude the Pope created him a Knight of the Grand Cross of the Order of Saint Silvester, and the Roman Catholic Bishop arrived in Bahrain to deliver the insignia to the Shaikh, but the British authorities objected and the Shaikh was compelled to accept their views. I had the embarrassing task of trying to explain to the Bishop why the Shaikh could not accept the Order; when the Bishop left I saw him off from the pier and he then said to me that he had never known of an important Papal decoration being refused in such a manner. The Shaikh and his family were extremely upset at the attitude of the British and the incident did not improve the relations between them and the Shaikh. However, after some time the objection was withdrawn and the Shaikh received the insignia. I was never able to fathom the real reason for the British attitude in this matter. It was a time when we required all the support we could get from loyal friends like

the Shaikh, yet at this critical period the British representatives frequently acted in a manner which might have been deliberately calculated to antagonize the Shaikh and his people. Fortunately after some moves and transfers new people appeared on the scene and all went smoothly as before.

The tenth anniversary of Shaikh Hamed's succession was held on February 16th, 1942; it had been postponed for a few days because heavy rain had flooded the fort parade ground and the open space in front of the palace. When the rain came it usually caused floods, as much of the town was not more than two feet above sea level and the drains which now carry away the surface water did not then exist. There was a ceremonial parade of the State Police at the palace and the Shaikh took the salute, but it was a gloomy occasion; everyone was feeling depressed and anxious over the war news. Shaikh Hamed, as I noted in my diary, looked tired and ill and the grey stormy sky with heavy black clouds banked over the town made a sombre background for the marching police, relieved only by their scarlet turbans.

Two days later I was awakened early in the morning by a messenger with the news that Shaikh Hamed had had a stroke at his little shooting lodge at Rumaitha, in the hills at the south end of the island. I dressed hurriedly and drove out to Rumaitha. I found a sad scene. Usually when I went to see the Shaikh there was bustle and chatter and noise, servants hurrying in and out of the buildings, cars coming and going and camels and donkeys grazing in the valley among the hills, but that day, though most of the family and the household servants and retainers were gathered there, there was silence, broken only by some of the men who were sobbing. I saw the Shaikh twice during the day; he was unconscious, lying in the inner room of the little bungalow with Hosha, his favourite silugi, crouching on the ground beside him. He was being looked after by Dr Snow, Dr Harrison of the American Mission, who knew him well, and Dr Holmes, who had been for many years in charge of the Victoria Memorial Hospital, who happened to be staying in Bahrain. They took turns at watching him, but there was little that they could do. In the evening I went home and Marjorie went across to Muharraq to see the Shaikh's wife, the daughter of Shaikh Rashid; she, poor lady, had been given little news. Next day there was no change. In the late afternoon Shaikh Abdulla, Shaikh Hamed's brother, came to me and asked that I should suggest to the doctors that they should use leeches. After sunset Marjorie and I went to one of the pools and with great difficulty caught a few and sent them out to Rumaitha.

The Shaikh died on the following afternoon. Narayan, my Secretary, and I were driving out to Rumaitha when we met a long procession of cars descending the steep road through the cliffs, led by a car containing Shaikh Sulman, Shaikh Mohammed and Shaikh Abdulla. I was extremely worried because I had not got the secret document which had been written by Shaikh Hamed. I had lodged it in the bank, which I thought was the safest place for it. I suppose I should have withdrawn it when the Shaikh became ill; being a Friday the bank was shut and the manager was out, I had not yet been able to get him. The cars stopped, the Shaikhs got out and led me to the side of the road. They then told me that as soon as Shaikh Hamed died the family had unanimously chosen Shaikh Sulman as his successor. This was a relief to me in more ways than one, for if the choice had been otherwise I should have been in a difficult position. I wheeled my car into the cortège and proceeded, behind the Shaikhs, to the cemetery, which was in the plain below Rafaa. The funeral was very moving and for once in a way I completely broke down, for I was very fond of Shaikh Hamed and I had lost a very dear friend. All along the cliffs above the valley there were hundreds of women, in black robes, weeping and wailing, and many of the men in the great crowd around the cemetery were indulging in unrestrained expressions of sorrow.

The Arabs stayed on to pray and I drove quickly home and, at last, obtained the document, which was now of no particular importance, then I returned with it to Shaikh Sulman's house at Rafaa. He was glad to have the information about his father's wishes, which fortunately coincided with those of the rest of the family. Some of his brothers were with him in the Maglis so he led me to another room where we had a long talk. He described exactly what had happened earlier on, how Shaikh Abdulla had come to him saying that he would support him and then all the family, without exception, had declared that they wanted him as Shaikh. He then asked me to remain with him and to work with him as I had done for his father, which I agreed to do.

After Shaikh Hamed died his silugi Hosha constantly ran away and was found in the cemetery, so Shaikh Sulman gave her to me. One day, some weeks later, we took her to a place on the coast to do some coursing; she disappeared again and once again she was found in the cemetery at Rafaa. But that was the last time that this happened. We took her home and she lived with us to a ripe old age.



## Twelve

The old order changeth, yielding place to new.

*The Passing of Arthur.* LORD TENNYSON. 1809-1892

I HAD been fifteen years in Bahrain when Shaikh Sulman, the present Ruler, succeeded his father; they had been very happy years owing to the kindness and understanding of Shaikh Hamed and because, generally, the Bahrainis appreciated what I was doing. Of course there had been difficulties. Sometimes my ideas had not met with approval, usually there had been opposition to innovations and sometimes I had to drop or postpone new projects. When I wanted to introduce something new I found that the best plan, after obtaining the Shaikh's consent, was to explain my idea to two or three leading Arabs, not always the same men, and after being taken into my confidence they often came to regard the project as their own and therefore gave it support. One thing I soon discovered: at the risk of being regarded as 'barid'—cold—an axiom to follow was never to lose my temper or show excitement, which was often a severe test of restraint as some of the people with whom I had to deal were maddeningly irritating. Often a Bahraini would say to me, of some Englishman, 'I can't talk to *him*, he is too hot, he won't listen,' or he would say of someone: 'That man! He has got too big a head!' which implied conceit. Some of the Political Officers who had served in the states of Indian Princes expected the formality of an Indian court, but the Shaikhs were very informal. Personally I was in favour of a certain amount of state and ceremony on appropriate occasions, provided that it applied to the Shaikh and not only to British officials.

One of my personal problems was how to weigh my loyalty to the Shaikh with the loyalty which I owed to the British; this was not easy, especially when the Shaikh and the British did not always see eye to eye. Often I found that I was in agreement with the Shaikh when he disagreed with the British. The British, ignoring the fact that I served the Shaikh,

always seemed to expect me to support them; nor did they easily accept any suggestion from me that their policy might sometimes be wrong. The Resident in the Persian Gulf, of course, and the Political Agent in Bahrain, ranked senior to me, even in my later years when sometimes the Political Agents were young men with little experience of the East. However, on the whole I managed to steer a straight course, doing my best to placate the Shaikh when the Politicals did something unusually tactless and persuading them to adopt a milder tone when they considered it incumbent on themselves to express official disapproval. All things considered we got on very well together, though I expect some of the Politicals thought that I was a great nuisance and I, at times, thought that some of them were very tiresome. Bahrain was a small place and the personalities of the British and the leading Arabs acquired an undue importance so that sometimes policy was affected by personal likes and dislikes. Shaikh Hamed once said to me, 'I am like a man on the top of a wall, with the British pulling me one way and my people pulling me the other way.' I was well able to appreciate his feelings.

What changes there had been in my first fifteen years! In 1926 there was only the shadow of an administration; Customs and police were the only organized Government departments. There were two schools, one Municipality and no Government hospitals. There was no budget, vague accounts, a 'court' which could hardly be described as such, with neither rules nor regulations, a bad state of public security—people went armed at night—no electricity or water supply, and roads which were almost non-existent. The mail came once a fortnight; there were about a dozen Europeans in the place and the shops sold few European goods. But the cost of living was very low, there was no unemployment and the Bahrainis seemed happy and contented, although conditions in the villages had hardly changed in the last century.

There had been social changes among the people, more in the towns than in the villages, during those fifteen years. As far back as 1926 a new element was emerging, a Middle Class, made up of merchants, shopkeepers and small landowners; some of them were Shias. As the pearl industry declined the merchant princes of the pearl trade ceased to wield influence and their place was taken by traders and shopkeepers. Many of them were self-made men. An example of this was someone to whom I will refer as 'Mohammed'.

Mohammed started life as a kitchen boy in our house; he used to sit on the table in the scullery studying a tattered English-Arabic school book, teaching himself English. He was promoted to 'second boy' and



Arab girls, 1926

Girls at school, today. Lady Belgrave with Mrs Nair on her left and two school teachers

*Walter Sanders—courtesy 'Life' Magazine. © 1952 Time Inc.*







*Left to right: King Abdul Aziz al Saud, C.D.B., Shaikh Hamed,  
Abdul Rahman Kozaihi. Inspecting Guard of Honour*

**King Saud and the Saudi princes at Manama Palace**

*Photo by K. P. Narayan*



then, after some time, he became our butler, a post which he held for several years. One day he came to Marjorie and said, 'Please, I want to leave your service.' 'Why?' she asked. 'You are doing quite well here.' He told her that he wanted to work in the bazaar, in a shop, so reluctantly we let him go. After some time he hired a tiny 'hole in the wall' shop in a side street. If he had anything suitable we used to buy from him and he often came round to tell me how he was getting on. He seemed to be prospering and he moved to a larger shop, with a boy to help him in the work. After a year or two he rented a shop in the main street, with a big showroom, plate-glass windows and a storeroom. He bought some land and built a house and he sent his eldest boy to school—at Brighton. His shop is now one of the most up-to-date shops in Manama. The year before I left we had been staying in Holland; when we returned Mohammed, as usual, came to see us. 'I saw you when you were in Holland,' he said. 'How was that?' I asked. 'I was staying with some Dutch friends,' he explained. 'I was on a golf course and saw you drive past in a car.' The only people in our household who did not altogether appreciate Mohammed's successful rise were our servants. I always felt that they resented the fact that our one-time kitchen boy used to come and see us and sit in the drawing-room, which he used to dust.

Another old man in Muharraq began life as a water-carrier. He became prosperous and his sons were wealthy men, but all through his life he kept the yoke, on which he used to carry tins of water, hung on a wall in his house, to remind his sons that they had started from humble beginnings. He died leaving a considerable fortune, buried under the floor of his room, which was the subject of a law case which went on for years. As soon as the old man was dead the sons removed and threw away the yoke. Some people said that it was because they did this that after their father's death they ceased to prosper.

Before 1926 the Arab tribes living in Bahrain, such as the Naim and the Bin Ali and, earlier on, the Dawasir, played an important part in affairs. Their allegiance to the Khalifah family had been encouraged by grants of land and they had become wealthy from the pearl trade. As the industry declined the tribes became impoverished and the young men broke away from tribal dependency. Today few of the younger generation attach importance to their tribal origin, and the fact that a man belongs to the Naim, or the Bin Ali, carries no social prestige, except in the eyes of the Ruling Family, who still remember the help that was given to them by the tribes in the past. Sometimes I used to see some dignified but shabbily dressed old Arab, followed by two or three tall sons, looking



somewhat different to the town Arabs, being received with marked respect by a Khalifah Shaikh. When I asked the Shaikh who the visitor was he would say: 'That is Shaikh Fulan, of the Jalahama tribe. His ancestors helped us to conquer Bahrain.'

Shaikh Sulman succeeded, in 1942, to an established, stable Government with various departments staffed by Bahrainis with a few British experts, doctors, nurses and engineers. The revenue was sufficient to provide social services, such as schools and hospitals, and wartime difficulties over food supplies were beginning to ease. Shaikh Sulman himself had taken an active part in building up the administration; he had been a judge in the court, he had been the President of the Manama Municipal Council and of the Minors' Department.

I started this department in 1938 and its inception and progress are fairly typical of the way in which other Government departments, in the early days, came into being. Its object was to protect the interests of widows, minors and orphans, whose property was so often either frittered away or embezzled by the so-called 'guardians' who were appointed by will or nominated by the Kadhis, to whom the guardians used to contribute substantial sums for 'religious purposes'. The department was the nearest approach which could be achieved in an Arab state to the office of the Public Trustee. My opportunity came after a *cause célèbre* in the Bahrain court. A rich Shia merchant had died some years before, leaving a large estate, but when his heirs, who were minors at the time of his death, came of age and claimed their inheritance, it was found that scarcely anything remained of the property which had belonged to their father. The case caused a great deal of public indignation, which I did not hesitate to encourage, and people began to recall many other instances in which the property of minors in the charge of guardians had mysteriously melted away.

When it was known that the Government was going to investigate the whole question of guardianships and minors' property the Kadhis became most indignant at what they regarded as the uncalled-for 'interference' of the Government in a matter which they considered should be dealt with entirely by themselves, and there was an outcry from a number of fat, unctuous merchants who were doing very well out of the property of minors which had been entrusted to their care. I called a meeting of the leading Sunnis and Shias, excluding those whom I knew to be guardians, and told them that we were thinking of setting up a department to deal with minors' estates. The Sunnis were doubtful but the Shias were wholeheartedly in favour of action by the Government. In

the meantime the Sunni and Shia Kadhis, who usually displayed only frigid politeness towards each other, joined forces in organizing opposition. After the usual lobbying and discussions I managed to win over most of the leading Sunni laymen. We obtained from Baghdad the rules of a similar institution which existed in Iraq, and a committee of Sunnis and Shias was appointed by the Shaikh, with clerical staff and an office in the Law Courts, under the name of the 'Minors' Estates Department'. When referring to it in English I was constantly asked what sort of mines existed in Bahrain!

At first it was not made compulsory that all estates should be administered by the department, but if any minor or widow or orphan, or their representatives, applied for administration then the committee came into action. In the first year forty-three small estates were dealt with whose value was about £4000, but by 1956 the department was handling property and investments to the value of about half a million pounds sterling. The department which had started from small beginnings had become an important branch of the Government and was one of the few organizations which were managed successfully by a joint committee of Sunnis and Shias who work together in harmony. The method of the department was to invest money in land or to put it out in loans, secured by mortgages on immovable property or on gold. As the interest which was charged was considerably lower than the bazaar rates, which were never less than 20 per cent, there was no difficulty in finding sound borrowers. The property owned by minors was well looked after so that when the minors came of age, having drawn suitable allowances during their minority, they received their inheritance intact and worth a great deal more than it had been when it was inherited. So popular was this department that several people who could not possibly be described as widows or orphans or minors asked that it should take charge of their estates, but this was not the 'object of the exercise' so their requests were politely refused.

The war had a bad and lasting effect on public morality. The Arab felt that it was not his war and he had no strong feelings of patriotism. Every Arab is at heart an opportunist and the war provided a Heaven-sent chance for many people to make money by legal or illegal means or by a combination of both. Rents and land prices soared, fortunes were made from smuggling gold to India and from deals in motor-cars which were exported to other countries, and pilfering and stealing on a large scale became a serious matter. People seemed to think, until they appeared in court, that to steal from military stores or from the Government or from

the oil company was not a crime, though the same people would have hesitated to steal from a house or from an individual. In Manama the war brought on to the scene a new type of young man, an Eastern form of the English 'Teddy Boy'. Instead of wearing stove-pipe trousers, a tight coat and a string tie, like his London counterpart, he wore light-coloured trousers, a violently patterned American shirt, sometimes a white linen cap, side-whiskers and several prominent gold teeth. He made his money by peddling liquor in the Black Market and running a racket in the brothel area with pornographic pictures as a sideline. Many of these youths started their career by hanging round the shops in the bazaar and carrying parcels for Europeans; strange to say, some of the British and many of the Americans encouraged them. The Americans found them 'cute' and sometimes engaged them as servants in their houses, with dire results.

During the war the British community organized various activities in aid of war charities and in 1944 they held a race-meeting, on the plain behind Muharraq, with a Tote from which a proportion of the takings was given to war funds. It was the first time that anything of this kind had been done in Bahrain, and it proved to be so popular that in after years the spring and autumn race-meetings became one of the chief events of the cold-weather season. After the war the races were held in aid of the T.B. fund which, before the Government opened the T.B. hospital in Manama, enabled poor Arab patients to go to a sanatorium in India. Although I knew nothing about racing I became the Secretary of the Bahrain Races Committee, which involved organizing the race-meetings twice or three times a year and enlisting people to work as judges, stewards, starters, members of the handicapping committee and Tote workers. Shaikh Sulman was fond of horses and had a stable of fine Arabs; in its day the Bahrain strain was famous. When Shaikh Sulman visited Lady Wentworth at Crabbet Park, in the Coronation year, she told him that her mother, Lady Anne Blunt, had bought several Arab horses from Bahrain about eighty years ago from which some of the Crabbet stud were descended. The cavalry section of the police had about thirty horses, the Bahrain Petroleum Company's riding club had a stable at Awali and there were a number of private owners, so it was possible to ring the changes, though certain horses did seem to appear rather frequently on the race-cards.

A raccourse was made on what had originally been intended as an aerodrome about a mile outside Manama with an enclosure, grandstand, Tote, paddock and a 'Royal Box'. It was pleasantly situated with a view

across the racecourse to a suburb of Manama, where white houses stood among palm trees along a curving bay of the sea. One of the difficulties was handicapping, which had to be by distance, not by weight, as most of the Shaikh's jockeys rode without saddles. The handicapping committee, of which Marjorie was a member, had to depend on the horses' previous performances, except in the case of new runners, who always started at scratch. Another matter which caused complications was the Arabs' habit of rarely giving individual names to their horses but of calling them by the strain to which they belonged, so in one race there might be two, or sometimes even more than two, horses called 'Saqlawi' or 'Kahaylan', only distinguished by their colour or by a number. But when it came to calling horses of the same name No. 3 or No. 4 I insisted on their owners giving them individual names.

On Race Day, long before the first race began, the road leading out of the town was crowded with cars, lorries full of men, buses, bicyclists and pedestrians and cars containing purdah ladies, peeping through their veils at the crowds. Some time before the first race the Shaikh arrived and drove slowly down the course with an escort of police on motor-bicycles, as the police horses who normally provided the mounted escort were among the runners. I and the other race officials met him at the entrance to the enclosure. His personal standard, a red flag with a white border, was unfurled above the Royal Box, the police band played the Bahrain National Anthem, which had been composed by the Bandmaster of the Royal Marines band from one of the flagships of the East Indies Squadron—it was rather reminiscent of 'A Life on the Ocean Wave'—cameras and cine-cameras clicked and buzzed as a crowd of European and Arab amateur photographers took pictures of the Shaikh, who was always very kind to photographers. After a short interval the horses in the first race appeared in the paddock. Besides being Secretary I was one of the paddock stewards. I spent some of my time in the paddock, then I hurried to the Shaikh's box and watched the race and then down to the horse lines to make sure that horses and riders were ready for the next race, for we liked to start exactly on time and this we usually succeeded in doing. I used to walk a great many miles on race days.

Along the rails, all down the course as far as one could see, there was a solid line of Arabs four or five deep. Among them were the cars of the purdah ladies who sent their servants to the Tote to place their bets. Barrow boys selling cigarettes, sweets, soft drinks, ice cream and Pepsi-Cola—of which 40,000 bottles a day used to be sold in Bahrain in the summer—shouted their wares between the races. Car horns blared as

latecomers arrived and the general noise almost submerged the sound of the band, who paid less attention than usual to their music as their interest was centred on the horses which they were backing. Altogether there was a real Derby Day atmosphere on Bahrain race days. Six races were run with eight horses in each race. Most of the jockeys were Arabs, but sometimes a few Europeans rode and occasionally there were one or two European women riders; I was always relieved when they reached the finish without mishap. It was clean racing. There were rarely any incidents for the stewards to deal with and I can only remember one rider being warned. The great event of the day was the Bahrain Derby, a mile race, for which, besides the money prize, an inscribed silver cigarette-box was presented to the owner of the winner. Shaikh Sulman was sometimes rather bashful about the number of inscribed silver cigarette-boxes on the tables in the palace, but then his horses were far and away the best in Bahrain and seemed to win however heavily they were handicapped.



## Thirteen

The trivial round, the common task,  
Would furnish all we ought to ask.

JOHN KEBLE. 1792-1866

LIFE under the new régime continued much as it had been before Shaikh Hamed died. On Tuesdays and Saturdays Shaikh Sulman came to the office and I usually went to see him once or twice during the week. He and I were the same age, or within a year of each other, and this made it rather awkward for ill-disposed people who, later, would have liked to suggest to him that his Adviser was getting too old for his job. Shaikh Sulman was more active than his father and had a more extensive knowledge of the organization of the Government. In appearance he resembled his father but he was not so tall. On the wall in my office I had two large photographs of Shaikh Hamed and Shaikh Sulman; people who did not know them well often mistook one for the other.

The end of the war made no appreciable difference to the people of Bahrain. Rationing and price control continued for several years, though, by degrees, certain goods were released from control. To celebrate the end of the war the Shaikh gave a dinner, Arab style, to which he invited about 400 British, American, Indian and Iraqi soldiers and sailors. Most of them seemed to enjoy the entertainment though some of the British troops found it 'a funny sort of idea to have to eat rice and mutton without a knife and fork—at a party, too!' When I explained to them that it was the Arab custom they looked disbelieving.

In the last year of the war there was a good pearl catch and the price of pearls in the Indian market was high; pearl merchants confidently prophesied a revival of the pearl trade and many men who had been divers, who were now working on shore jobs, left their employment and signed on again as divers with their boat captains. These optimistic

predictions were not fulfilled. The 1945 season was the last flicker of prosperity from pearls; in the years that followed every season fewer boats went out to the pearl banks and more men gave up diving as they were attracted by steady, better-paid employment on shore and there were no young men from Bahrain to take their places. With the increased revenue it was possible to push on with various development plans which had been held up during the war, such as providing the town of Manama with a piped water supply, building new Government offices and improving the hospital where, during the war, over 1300 serving men and officers from the Army and the Navy had been admitted as in-patients to the special ward which had been set aside for them.

My daily programme varied very little. In the summer I slept on the roof, even after air-conditioning was introduced into Bahrain, because I disliked sleeping in a room with all the windows hermetically sealed and an air-cooling machine gurgling and buzzing in the corner, though I must admit that air-conditioning made the rooms cool, but it was a clammy coolness. This idiosyncrasy of mine annoyed my European staff, who perhaps with some justification believed that because I did not like air-cooling myself I was less sympathetic than I might have been to their constant requests for more 'A.C.' units in their houses. I got up at six o'clock, after Musa, our butler, who was with us for eighteen years, brought my *chota hazri*—early morning tea. In the compound below my orderly, Bilal, a very dusky policeman from the mounted section, waited with the horses. After lighting a 'Morning Whiff', a little Indian cheroot, of which I smoked a great many every day, I mounted Olcander, my chestnut mare, and off we started to the police fort. We went by a different route every day: sometimes along the main road, passing the clock tower of the American Mission church, past a number of European houses, most of them singularly unattractive in appearance; past the Roman Catholic church and convent school which had a definitely Italian style of architecture, not perhaps surprising because it was built by an Italian priest, who afterwards became a bishop; past two Government schools where small boys with satchels of books were already beginning to hang around—they left their houses when their fathers went to work, long before school time; past the front of the fort with its high, white crenelated walls and four big round towers, one at each corner, and on to the parade ground where the police were marching and drilling.

When I was in the Army nothing bored me more than foot drill, so I tried to vary the programme of the police as much as possible, but it was difficult to make it anything but monotonous. On Sunday mornings

they went for a route march, and several times in the year they went into the country 'showing the flag', camping each day at a different place; sometimes, when my son was young, I took him out with me and we spent a night in camp with the police. They did a good deal of musketry, many of them being very good shots. When a ship was in port they had shooting matches with the Royal Navy, which the police usually won. By the time we got to the fort the road was full of traffic; cars and lorries and enormous buses were taking workers out to the refinery or to the oil field.

Often on my way back from the fort I rode through the main street of the bazaar, where the shopkeepers would be opening their shutters, for they were not early risers, through the wide archway of the Government offices called 'Bab al Bahrain', the 'Gateway of Bahrain', which I had designed in 1945, into the Customs Square, taking a look at the little garden in the middle of the square, then to the pier. The pier was a fascinating, lively, noisy place where there was always something new to look at; often there were as many as a hundred dhows anchored off the pier and tied up alongside. One saw many types of seamen from the Gulf ports and from more distant places. There were stocky, dark men from Sur, below Muscat, wearing ochre-coloured clothes, yellow headcloths or red skull caps—they made the dye in their own country; lean, long-haired Muscatis with hawklike features, often accompanied by one or two lascivious youths, more like women than men; Persians, wearing tall felt hats, loose, full-sleeved robes, with wide woollen shawls round their waists; and Indians from the Malabar coast who came ashore from their big sailing ships, which were usually the largest in the port. Their ships' sterns were elaborately carved and had rows of windows with brightly painted shutters. Often the Indians brought with them little green parrots in cages, to sell to the Arabs. In course of time many of the birds escaped and now they are breeding in Bahrain. Longboats, full of men who sang as they rowed, moved between the dhows and the pierhead and coolies shouted and sang as they shouldered heavy sacks, loading and unloading cargo of every conceivable kind. I had to dodge between herds of skinny cattle and sheep which were driven down the pier by small boys who urged on the exhausted animals, which had come all the way from Persia in dhows, with shrill staccato shouts while the owners haggled with the Bahrain butchers who were a close-knit community, notoriously difficult to deal with. All meat in Bahrain was imported 'on the hoof' because there was not sufficient grazing in the country to feed flocks. One enterprising Arab did set up a cold-storage business. It was

much patronized by the Europeans, but at first the Arabs did not buy meat from it. Subsequently others followed his example.

On the quay were enormous green glass flagons filled with rose-water, bales of fine carpets from Persia, sanitary fittings—rather rudely exposed—and heavy machinery from Britain, silks from China and Japan and enormous, large, showy American cars. Bahrain is a transit port for Saudi Arabia and its trade depends to a great extent on the traffic between the two states, so it is essential for the prosperity of Bahrain that the two countries should be on good terms with each other.

On Wednesdays I usually rode back by the open market which was held every week in Manama, where the village people brought their produce to sell. One could buy rough, unglazed pottery from the village of Aali, live chickens, rabbits and pigeons, all kinds of second-hand clothes and junk, baskets and mats made from palm fronds, incense-burners from Rafaa, hand-woven cotton material from the villages near Budeya and sometimes donkeys and cows, though these were usually sold at another open market which was held on Thursdays at Suk al Khamis, opposite the mosque with the two minarets, the oldest Moslem building in Bahrain, on the road between Manama and Awali. These weekly markets reminded me of the Caledonian Market and the market in Portobello Road, in London, but the vendors were Arabs, not Jews. Many of them were women and they all knew me well. When I stopped for a minute on my pony, wrinkled old black women would call greetings to me with many enquiries about 'Omm Hamed'—the 'Mother of Hamed'—my wife.

For many years I collected old Oriental china, which occasionally appeared in the second-hand shops in the bazaar. It could be bought at a reasonable price, after much bargaining, until the Americans began to take an interest in it and spoilt the market. It was brought to the Gulf in the days when Chinese junks made the long voyage from their country to Basra. One morning, when I was riding past the market, an old woman screamed out to me that she had got a beautiful piece of china, 'a real antique' which she knew I would like to buy. I reined my pony and stopped to see what it was. After digging about in a heap of rubbish which surrounded her, upsetting a coop of squawking, scraggy hens in the process, she produced her treasure, holding it by the handle and waving it over other people's heads. It was a late Victorian bedroom utensil, tastefully decorated in blue and white. I have heard that *pots de chambre* are now sought by collectors of Victoriana. I think they could find quite a number in the bazaars of Bahrain.

The vegetable and fruit markets were colourful and animated but the stallholders always had a grievance. The markets were the personal property of the Shaikh so when I appeared the tenants bombarded me with petitions and complaints. The market was either too hot, or too cold, or there was too much light, or they needed more light, or they tried to inveigle me into taking their side in the endless war which was waged between them and the Municipal authorities, who were supposed to keep the place clean. The Municipal people, in their turn, were full of complaints about the vegetable-sellers; certainly the markets never did look clean.

Once a week, in the summer, the police used to go out in lorries to bathe at Idari, the Virgin's pool, one of the biggest and deepest freshwater springs in Bahrain, a mile or two from Manama, and I often rode out to meet them there. Idari was a show place. All visitors were taken to see it. In 1926 it was a dirty, messy place with muddy banks where gardeners took their donkeys to be washed and much of the water escaped through the sides of the pool and ran to waste. I had the basin of the pool repaired, thus obtaining a better supply of water for irrigating the gardens, and I built steps and a cement platform on the edge of the water and rebuilt the tumbledown mosque which overlooked the pool. I put a little pavilion with steps leading up to the roof, where there was a diving board, and I had a coffee shop built, with an open roof, close by. Round the pool I planted flowering trees and shrubs and I made a garden on one side of it full of oleanders and crimson and brick-red bougainvillea—the ordinary purple bougainvillea was difficult to grow in Bahrain. Behind the garden, across a stream, there was a magnificent date-garden where the tall grey trunks of the date-palms stood like pillars against the dusky depths of the date-grove. When the sun shone the water in the pool was brilliantly blue and as clear as glass; it came up from the spring with such force that a diver could not reach the source. Large fish, which looked like carp, swam slowly round the pool. Nobody molested them because the Bahrainis did not eat freshwater fish; they preferred sea fish, and of these they had a wide choice. Many years ago a Danish scientific expedition came out to the Gulf, at the request of the Persian Government, to report on the possibilities of canning fish; they found between three and four hundred different species of fish. South of the mound on which Idari was situated there was a stretch of low marshy land which the sea, coming in through a distant creek, just covered when there was a very high tide. Often on summer mornings there was a mist and the pale landscape of still, silver water, palm trees rising out of the grey mist and a



faintly yellow sky where the sun was trying to come through, was like a delicate Japanese print.

The police enjoyed their mornings at Idari. They swam races, they tried to play water polo, although a round pool was not suited to the game, and those of them who had been divers competed to see who could stay longest under the water. I think two-and-a-quarter minutes was the record. Sometimes we had recruits who could not swim; they were taught in what seemed to me a very short time by some of the older men. It was not a safe place for bathing unless one could swim. There was a superstition that every year the pool claimed a victim and certainly while I was in Bahrain someone was drowned there almost every summer. Before Idari became a 'Lido' I used to bathe there myself, after dinner, and there were rarely any other people at the pool, but afterwards it was too crowded to be enjoyable. In the evenings and at night the pool was surrounded by parked cars with blaring radios, and rowdy parties used to stay there till dawn. I found a new bathing place, it was a garden which belonged to Shaikh Hamed, about ten minutes from my house. There was a big tank with a garden pavilion and, as it was private property, nobody except myself, and anyone I cared to take there, was permitted to use it; here I used to bathe in the summer evenings, dawdling about in the cool water and then sitting on the side of the tank eating dates and gossiping with the old Bahraini who looked after the garden.

I got back to breakfast, after my morning ride, at about eight o'clock, but one morning I did not come back till the end of the day. I was riding along the edge of the cemetery on the south side of Manama when suddenly a man seemed to appear out of the ground in front of Olcander's nose. She shied, slipped and came down with me underneath her. She then got up and walked away, and the man who was the cause of the trouble ran away. He had been digging a pit, possibly a grave. I sat up and called to Bilal, my police orderly, who had been riding behind me, telling him to follow the mare and catch her before she got into the traffic on the main road. He went after her, leading his pony, but she was evidently determined to get home first. I then tried to get up but found that I had damaged my leg. There was a side road, with traffic on it, about two hundred yards away, so sitting on the ground I waved to the cars which passed hoping that one of them would give me a lift. But all the drivers did was to wave back at me. I suppose they thought that the Adviser had developed a new form of eccentricity which consisted of sitting by the cemetery and waving to the cars which passed. After quite a long time, so it seemed to me, the driver of a lorry stopped and

came over to see if I wanted anything. Very thankfully I let him help me into the lorry and we went to the hospital where they discovered that I had a broken ankle. This kept me more or less immobile for several weeks in my house, becoming every day more and more irritated, mentally and physically, for I developed 'prickly heat' inside the plaster which was on my leg. However, some good came out of the affair. When the Shaikh heard about the 'Good Samaritan' act of the lorry driver he sent for him and rewarded him handsomely.

After breakfast I changed and went down to the office and then the work of the day began in earnest. On the mornings when the Shaikh did not come I spent most of the time seeing people. The Arabs got accustomed to coming to the point without wasting time in long conversation, although it was contrary to their normal custom, but some of the Europeans were excessively long-winded and seemed to think that I had nothing else to do than to sit chatting with them. There was no lack of variety in the subjects which I had to discuss. I tried to see everybody who had a real reason for coming but it was not always possible. I was often greeted by some Arab in the bazaar who complained reproachfully that he had called at the office to see me, without an appointment, and had been told that I was busy! The ordinary people did not ring up my secretary and ask for an appointment, they just came and sat below my window keeping up an endless monologue about the matter which they wished to discuss, and when the coast was clear they sometimes slipped into the office by the garden door. I never kept a policeman at the door to drive people away. I rarely went upstairs to luncheon before two o'clock. Afterwards I worked in the garden or, when Marjorie was in Bahrain—latterly she used to go home for a month or two every summer—we went out for a drive, usually with the object of looking at some work which was going on, or sometimes to visit people at Awali, the oil town, which was in the middle of the island about twelve miles from Manama.

I suppose Awali is typical of many oil company towns in other parts of the world but to me it always seemed an amazing place, like a city which suddenly appeared out of the desert at the wave of a magician's wand. Until the first building shot up, in the early 'thirties, I had seen gazelle among the rocks and wadis and had coursed desert hares with my silugi hounds where there are now streets of European houses, cinemas, libraries, schools and offices. 'Awali' means 'High Places'; the houses in the older part of the town, which stands on high ground, are built of local materials, stone and gypsum, and have some individuality. They are

surrounded by pleasant well-cared-for gardens full of semi-tropical trees and shrubs and bright with English annuals in the spring. The twisting roads are shaded by tall trees, casuarinas, tamarisks and the mesquite bean tree, which I introduced into Bahrain some years before when I brought a bag of seeds from India. Now there are almost too many of these trees in the country. But Awali has spread. It now has a population of over 1600 European men, women and children and the town has extended below the high ground over a vast area which is intersected by wide, straight roads lined with brightly painted prefabricated bungalows of identical size and shape. So similar are the streets that I usually got lost if I was trying to find a house in one of them, for although every street has a name the names are never used. The lives of the inmates of the new houses are very exposed to the public eye as there has not yet been time for trees to grow and gardens to be made which afford some privacy. The new part of Awali is referred to by the superior people who live up above as 'the Depressed Area'. A solid wire fence surrounds Awali with access by three gates, on which there are guards; this is necessary for various reasons but though there are no restrictions on the comings and goings of the people who live inside, or their visitors from outside, yet some of the inhabitants of Awali certainly develop a 'shut-in' feeling.

The houses are comfortable and the company provides good furniture but there is an inevitable sameness about their interiors, which I found depressing. All the houses have the same furniture, many have the same curtains, or 'drapes' as they are called at Awali, American style, and I used to notice identical pictures on the walls of different houses. They were coloured prints of 'old Spanish buildings in California'. I discovered the reason for this when a firm which made tools for the oil industry began to send me every year, at Christmas, a calendar, a little booklet containing improving sentiments and quotations from poems and a picture of an 'old Spanish building in California'. The pictures were quite attractive but by then I was somewhat sated by seeing them on so many walls so I did not put them up in my house.

Every house and office at Awali is air-cooled and the newer houses are built with low ceilings and rooms which, in comparison to the stone houses in Manama, are very small, but this is necessary to facilitate the process of air-cooling. When twenty or thirty people, smoking cigars and cigarettes, are assembled for a cocktail party in a small air-cooled house the atmosphere becomes solid. In the winter the houses are heated by the same process.

It seemed to me that some of the Awali residents hibernated throughout the hot weather. One never saw them outside as they rarely set foot beyond their air-cooled houses and offices, although the company provides facilities for most kinds of sports—tennis, football, swimming, sailing, golf and even archery. Most of the junior people at Awali keep no servants but their kitchens are very up to date, with gas cookers, electrical appliances and labour-saving gadgets. Shopping is a simple matter, the company's commissary stocks everything which is necessary; it is like a self-service store in England, with much the same type of clientele. The commissary is the daily meeting place for what are now referred to as 'housewives', and from the commissary gossip radiates to every corner of Awali and sometimes as far as Manama.

The majority of the European BAPCO employees are British with a large proportion of Scots and men from the North of England, but most of the key posts are held by Americans. After all, BAPCO is an American company, although it is registered in Canada! The style and tenor of life at Awali is completely different from that in Manama where local affairs play an important part in life and work. Many of the people who live at Awali have only the vaguest idea about how the country is run; most of them, if asked, would say that they supposed that Bahrain was some sort of British colony or protectorate. They have little contact with the local Arabs, except with the labourers with whom they work, and only a very few men can speak any Arabic. Their lives are regulated by the siren which calls them to work. Their hours are different from those of Manama; they lunch at eleven-thirty and have supper at six o'clock, after which they go to 'the pictures' or listen to the wireless or watch television—the American Air Force and Aramco television programmes from Dharan, in Saudi Arabia, are received in Bahrain—or they play darts or billiards at the club or take part in the many local activities such as the amateur dramatic society which puts on a number of plays every year. In fact life at Awali is very like life in one of the 'new towns' in Britain.

The sun sets at about five o'clock in the winter and if Marjorie and I had been for a drive we got home about then and had tea by the fire in the drawing-room. The idea of tea and hot scones in front of a fire in the Persian Gulf may sound strange to people who have never been there in the winter. I then retired to my upstairs office to work. In the summer I often rode in the afternoons, with one of my friends, sending the ponies to meet us in the country. There were good places for riding; when the tide was out one could canter along the firm wet sand on the shore as far as the old Portuguese fort or along the narrow paths, which had little

bridges across the irrigation channels which were sometimes dangerously insecure, through the date-gardens, or across open country to the Government experimental garden at Budeya, where we usually ate largely of melons before coming back.

But too often when I got home I found people waiting to see me, perhaps a police officer with a report of some trouble in the town, it might be about a European sailor off a ship who was 'beating it up' in the bazaar, or I would find a messenger from the Shaikh with an important letter which he wished me to see before he replied to it. I liked to go back to my office after dinner for night was the only time when I could work without interruption, but in the cold season this was rarely possible. Night after night we dined out or had people to dinner or we had guests staying in the house, which made it difficult for me to escape to the office. Cocktail parties were incessant during the winter months. I suppose most people enjoyed them but as I never drank more than one glass of sherry I found them a tedious form of entertainment. The fact that I never drank anything except sherry or wine was well known. Once we were calling on some Americans at Awali whom we had not met before. Their servant, who knew me, of his own accord came into the room with *one* glass of sherry on a tray which he handed to me. It was quite an embarrassing occasion. Another time, in America, we dined at a restaurant with some people who we met for the first time but who knew all about us. Before dinner our host asked everyone what they would drink. I said, 'May I please have a sherry?' The others asked for 'Scotch'. When we sat down there was a whispered conversation between our host and the waiter. A bottle of sherry appeared and a little was poured into our host's glass, which completely mystified him, and surprised me. A glass was then poured out for me and the bottle was placed at my side. When my host saw that I was not making much headway he became very insistent that I should drink more—in fact, that I should finish the bottle. I protested, but he said: 'It is sherry wine. I heard from Bahrain that you drink nothing but sherry wine. We expect you to finish the bottle. Anyone can drink a bottle of wine.' I did my best and during the long evening I drank about half.

In warm weather we had dinner on 'the shelf', which was a terrace, large enough to dance on, built out from the veranda, above the garden. At night one could see, through the trees, the moonlight gleaming like a long silver path on the smooth sea at the end of the garden. The branches of a big tree, on which jasmine grew, overhung the terrace. The tree trunk came through an opening in the floor; it was one of the first trees





A Primary School in Muharraq

C.D.B. visiting a school

*Walter Sanders—courtesy 'Life' Magazine. © 1952 Time Inc*





Shaikh Sulman with C.D.B. at  
Richmond Horse Show, 1953



Shaikh Sulman with Sir Winston  
Churchill at 10 Downing Street

In Washington. *Right to left*:, Lady Belgrave, C.D.B., Shaikh Isa bin Sulman  
(the Heir Apparent), his brother Shaikh Khalifah, Abdulla Kanoo



which I had planted in Bahrain and when we built the terrace I was determined to avoid cutting it down. In the evenings, when we sat and dined outside, the silver and glass and the big bowl of flowers on the round polished table made a very civilized picture. The pleasantest form of relaxation after a long, busy day was to have two or three of our friends to dinner on 'the shelf', then one could appreciate the words of Longfellow's poem:

The cares that infest the day  
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away.



## Fourteen

For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.

*The Merchant of Venice.* SHAKESPEARE

I WENT on leave in the autumn of 1945 and returned in the following January. It was only the second time in over thirty years that I had endured an English winter but I did not feel the cold as much as the people who lived in England. This bore out the theory that anyone who has lived long in a hot climate is not, at first, susceptible to cold. My Arab friends, who were addicted to personal remarks, greeted me with exclamations at my loss of weight but the Shaikh's comment was, 'You had too much stomach before you went on leave.'

After seeing England I realized how lightly the war had dealt with Bahrain. Partial rationing and a shortage of certain imported goods was inconvenient but the bazaar shops were crammed with things which were unobtainable in London and everybody seemed to be flourishing and prosperous. Bahrain was quiet yet I was aware of a new, indefinable feeling of an emerging political consciousness. One sign of this was the increasingly important part which the Arab clubs played in the lives of the educated young men. The Shaikh permitted the clubs and often contributed gifts of money to enable the committees to put up buildings. The clubs were supposed to be strictly non-political but as they were the meeting places of the Intelligentsia they became political centres.

Besides the Arab clubs there were, in Manama, several Indian clubs and the Gymkhana Club. From the time that it had its own premises, with gardens, tennis courts and a swimming pool, it was resented by the young Arabs because membership and entry was restricted to the British. The existence of a bar, where members could buy liquor, was the main excuse for not admitting Arabs. In many parts of the East club membership has provoked strong political feelings and in Bahrain, which is neither a British colony or protectorate, the existence of an exclusively British club invites criticism and ill-feeling. Arab members were allowed in

the BAPCO Club at Awali and there was an excellent Bahrain Motor Club, of which I am still Vice-President, which had members of all nationalities but no club-house, so the ticklish question of liquor did not arise.

Another factor which affected the outlook of the young men was the growing connection between Bahrain and Egypt. In 1945, owing to the dearth of suitable schoolteachers, for teaching was an unpopular profession, it was decided that a few Egyptian masters should be employed. Even then I had some doubts about the wisdom of this course. There was an urgent demand for better education, the number of students was increasing, and a Secondary School had been opened, but the local masters were not capable of conducting secondary education. Twelve experienced schoolteachers were seconded by the Egyptian Ministry of Education for service in Bahrain. The public welcomed their employment, for the Bahrainis are inclined to regard anything from abroad as being superior to the local article, and although some of the Arab teachers resented the introduction of foreign teachers, drawing high pay, they realized that the Egyptians were better qualified than themselves. The first group of Egyptians, men of mature age, did much to improve the standard of education and their conduct was exemplary. They were replaced, later, by men who were not so satisfactory and several of the younger masters had to be sent back to Egypt because they indulged in political propaganda. There are now more than twice the number of Egyptian teachers in Bahrain than there were in 1945 and they have unrivalled opportunities of influencing the students. Throughout the Middle East there is a shortage of teachers and only Egypt, with its long-established system of education, is willing to send its teachers to work in other Middle East countries where the teachers become fervent missionaries preaching the dangerous gospel of Nasserism.

In the same year the Government sent a number of boys to Egypt for advanced education. The experiment was short-lived and unsuccessful. Few of the boys did any work, some left their hostel and returned to Bahrain, others took part in political disturbances and demonstrations, causing uneasiness to the Government and their parents. Within a year we withdrew all the boys from Cairo. Afterwards, the only boys who went to Egypt were sent privately by their parents. This brief excursion into Egypt had subsequent consequences; some of the young men who went to Cairo became the most bitter opponents of their own Government.

In January 1947 Shaikh Sulman took me with him on a visit to King



Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, who was staying in camp at Dhahran, on the Arabian coast opposite Bahrain, where a vast concourse of Arabs had assembled to greet the King. We spent three days with the King, which is the usual period for an Arab visit. I enjoyed, for the first time, the King's lavish hospitality and saw the feudal style in which he lived. 'Feudal' is perhaps an unfortunate choice of a word for it has now become a term of abuse in the Gulf, mainly owing to its use in connection with Arab rulers by the Left Wing Press in Europe.

One evening there was to be a dinner at Dammam, a town on the coast, some distance from Dhahran. It was given by the redoubtable Saud ibn Abdulla Jiluwi, the Amir of Hasa, whose very name inspired terror in the hearts of evil-doers, and among other people as well. The Amir was a cousin of the King, and his father, in his lifetime, had been one of the King's staunchest supporters.

The Amir's appearance belied his character. He was a smallish, pale-complexioned man with a black beard, he had a quiet voice and was not much given to talking, but his silences were pregnant and the occasional flash in his eyes indicated what he could be like when he was aroused. He was probably the most feared man on the eastern side of Arabia.

Not knowing whether I had been included in the invitation to the Amir's dinner, and not wishing to appear 'pushing', I stayed in my quarters at the guest house. After all the invited guests had started off in their cars for the long drive to Dammam a messenger arrived, saying that the King wished to see me at once. I went down to the camp and found the King ready to start. He had missed me when the enormous party set off and had enquired where I was. I explained that I had not known whether I had been invited, to which the King replied, 'You are my guest, no invitations are required; come, we will go together to Dammam.' The King and I, accompanied by Abdulla Suliman, the then all-powerful Minister of Finance, drove together along the coast road escorted by military cars. Abdulla Suliman, a small unimpressive-looking man, very plainly dressed, was a native of Nejd who, at one time, had been in business in a small way in Bahrain. He had served the King for many years and eventually by sheer ability and hard work he attained the position of Minister of Finance and became the most powerful man in the Kingdom, after the King himself. His enemies, and he had many, accused him of having acquired enormous wealth and of filling many posts with his relations, but it was he who had steered the country through the difficult financial shoals in the early years of the King's reign before the revenue was counted in millions.

During the drive the King and Abdulla Suliman talked politics and discussed the American oil company, apparently not caring in the least that I heard the conversation, the gist of it being whether they could get from the company some of the new super-sized caravans which the company had recently imported. Everyone was extremely surprised when we arrived at the Amir's new palace at Dammam to see me alighting from the car behind the King. The banquet was on the usual magnificent scale; there were dozens of sheep, roasted whole, and enough other dishes to feed the entire population of the town. Already the people of Dammam were assembling with baskets and bags to carry away the food which was left over after the guests and their servants and followers had fed. This very spectacular entertainment was spoilt by the hideous fluorescent lighting which illuminated the inside of the palace, causing everybody to look slightly green.

When we left Saudi Arabia I was presented with the usual gift of a complete outfit of Arab clothes. I was amused to find that the clothes had been made for the Crown Prince, the Amir Saud; he and the King were the only two men of the party who were about my height. Visits of this kind were costly affairs; the Shaikh and the senior members of the Khalifah family were given handsome cars as parting gifts and every servant and follower was generously treated. I had taken my police orderly, Bilal, with me, in mufti, and he received £15 as a tip. It was not surprising, when Arab potentates of the Gulf paid visits to each other, that there was keen competition among relations and followers to accompany the visiting Shaikh.

Throughout 1947 there was increasing tension in the Middle East due to the bitter resentment which was felt by the Arabs, especially the Syrians and Iraqis, about the proposal to settle the Palestine Question by the partition of the country and the setting up of a Jewish state. The situation in Palestine did not materially affect Bahrain but many of the educated town Arabs felt very strongly on the subject. In Bahrain the control which the Government continued to exercise over the prices of essential goods, which was enforced by stiff sentences in the courts on shopkeepers who profiteered, resulted in the cost of living being much lower than in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait or Qatar where no attempts had been made to keep the prices down, but in those states wages were considerably higher than in Bahrain. The ordinary working man did not consider the fact that it cost him much less to live in Bahrain than it would elsewhere; all that he thought about was that labourers in neighbouring countries were receiving more rupees a day than he could earn, even after the

Government and BAPCO had raised the rates of pay. This was the principal cause of the labour unrest which occurred throughout 1947, mainly among oil company workers, and which caused many Bahrain Arabs to seek employment outside the country. The unrest was encouraged by some of the town Arabs, who had no direct connection with BAPCO; they took the opportunity to attack the company on the grounds that it was an American organization and the Americans were supporting the Jews against the Arabs in Palestine. But the uneducated Bahrain labourers took very little interest in the happenings in Palestine either at that time or later.

There was a Jewish community in Bahrain of between three and four hundred persons who lived in Manama. There were Jewish settlements in the Persian Gulf before the days of Islam and it is possible that the aboriginal inhabitants of Bahrain, the Baharna, are descended from them. The present-day Jews were families who had come mostly from Iraq, though there were among them some Persian Jews and a few Indian Jews. They were quiet, law-abiding, timorous people and in the past there had been no friction between them and the Moslems; an indication of this was the fact that for many years there was a Jewish member on the Manama Municipal Council. They owned a few shops in which they sold piece-goods, several of them were money-changers and a few of the young men were employed as clerks in offices. Many of the Jewish women worked as hawkers, taking goods for sale to the Arab ladies, who, because they were in purdah, could not visit the shops themselves. When we were first in Bahrain, before Marjorie learned to speak Arabic, she used to take a Jewish woman with her as an interpreters when she paid calls on the Arab ladies and there was never the slightest objection to this. Although two or three of the Jews were prosperous merchants they were not a rich community and some of them, especially the Persian Jews, lived a hand-to-mouth existence. They did not inhabit any particular part of the town, their houses were widely scattered in different districts.

On December 2nd, after the news of the decision of the United Nations to divide Palestine had reached Bahrain, there was a demonstration in Manama by schoolboys and youths who walked in procession through the town shouting anti-American slogans. They threw a few stones at one of the banks where some Jews were employed and shouted abuse at a well-known American Missionary doctor, who they happened to meet, calling him a Communist—an entirely unjustified accusation. They were joined by a number of Persian boatmen from the harbour,

who had no idea what the fuss was about, beating their chests and chanting the verses which they normally repeat during the Muharram procession, the Persians probably thinking that it was a Shia religious occasion. Next day an orderly procession, escorted by police, went to the Municipal Building, where the Shaikh was sitting on the veranda. They cheered the Shaikh and the British and then dispersed. On the following morning all was normal and the town appeared to be quiet but in the middle of the morning I was suddenly called out of my office to deal with a situation in the bazaar.

A mob of tough Persian boatmen, some Omanis and a crowd of bazaar scallywags, who were probably responsible for what followed because only they knew which houses were occupied by Jews, had broken into the building which the Jews used for their religious observances. By the time I got there most of the men had made off, some had been arrested and a crowd of women from the brothel area, which was close by, were removing what they could find from the building, in which there seemed to be very little. Simultaneously I had a report that other Jewish houses in different parts of the town were being attacked. The police were split up and parties of them went to different districts. I and Jim Hyde, one of the British police officers, and my police driver, ran to a house on the edge of the bazaar where we heard a din which indicated trouble.

The living quarters were above a shop, up a precipitous flight of stairs. We raced up the stairs and found the place full of Persians and Omanis who were smashing the doors and shutters and throwing the contents of the house into the street. Some terrified women and children were huddled in a corner shrieking for help. The sight of us scared the looters and some of them got away, but a crowd of men from the street were pushing their way up the stairs. The three of us stood at the top and as each man arrived we picked him up and threw him down the stairs on to the heads and shoulders of his friends till, after a while, they gave up trying to get in. The men who were in the house, finding that they could not escape, showed fight. We tackled them with our fists and soon a number of them were on the floor; there was some rope in the room so we trussed them up, to be called for later. We went on to another house where we were joined by some police; they helped us to clear the raiders, who had retired on to the roof. We had a tough scrap and I used my knuckles to such effect that they were quite raw. I was glad that I had learned to box when I was at school but it was many years since I had used my fists.

In some parts of the town the police arrived in time to prevent looting, but about a dozen houses were completely wrecked before help came. Old men, women and children were roughly treated; one old woman died later as a result of injuries, but throughout the affair there was a surprising absence of young Jewish men who might have done something to protect their families. When I enquired about this afterwards I was told that they were all out at work, but it seemed to me a poor excuse. After the riot was over, as I was walking back through the bazaar, covered in mud and blood, my clothes torn, followed by a few very bedraggled policemen, most of whom had lost their turbans, I met two spotlessly uniformed young naval officers with a couple of sailors. They gave me a look and walked straight past me. I called to them, saying that they had better not go into the bazaar. It then dawned on them that I was the Adviser and they said that they had come to find out whether we needed help. Should they send a landing-party on shore? They were very disappointed when I told them that 'the tumult and the shouting' had died and nothing was now required. We had a young American staying with us in the house; on the way home I met him and he, too, was intensely disappointed at not having been in the scrap.

The leading Arabs were genuinely shocked by the affair; most of them had behaved very well and, when possible, they had given shelter and protection to their Jewish neighbours. That night I and one of the Shaikhs visited the houses which had been looted. It was a pathetic sight. The houses had been stripped of their contents, and what could not be removed had been smashed. In some houses refrigerators and safes had been thrown down from upper floors, and one saw children's toys crushed by the feet of the raiders. I then went to the hospital to see the injured people. I was glad to find that, except for one Jewish woman who had died, there were no serious casualties; the police had more injuries than the Jewish victims. It was a most unfortunate affair but it had one surprising effect: it put an end to any active aggression by the Bahrain Arabs against the Bahrain Jews, though when only a few Jews remained in the country one or two of the Arab merchants, if they were in competition with Jews, did not hesitate to use a little sly blackmail, suggesting that if the Jews were too successful there might be trouble for them. The Arabs realized that it was not the fault of the Bahrain Jews that the Great Powers had decided to create the State of Israel. I did wonder whether the part I had played would earn for me the reputation of being pro-Jewish but not even the most rabid anti-Zionists suggested such an idea; even they disapproved of what had happened in Bahrain. It



was the last time that I was involved in a real hand-to-hand scrap, and I cannot pretend that I did not enjoy it.

When it became possible for the Jews to emigrate to Israel the Government announced that any Jew who wished to go there was free to do so, and could take his belongings and money with him, but, once having gone to Israel, he would not be allowed to return to Bahrain. By degrees most of the Jews left Bahrain and there are now no more than a dozen families living in Manama. They set off to Israel with high hopes that they were bound for a land flowing with milk and honey, but soon reports reached those who remained in Bahrain that life in Israel did not come up to their expectations, and many of the younger people greatly regretted having left their homes. Among those who left Bahrain was a young man who had worked as a clerk. After some time in Israel he managed to get out of the country, which was not an easy thing to do, and by devious ways he eventually got back to Bahrain. He was arrested and brought up before the court. We were rather at a loss to know how to deal with him, as it was the first case of the kind that had come before us. We sentenced him to a year in jail, after which, we said, he could continue to live in Bahrain, or he could return to Israel. He thanked us with a beaming smile, and as he walked out of the court he called to a group of his friends who were waiting to hear the result of the case: '*Only a year! Just one year, and after that I shall be able to go on living here!*' We felt that perhaps we had erred on the side of leniency. This youth was the only one who came back from Israel.

## Fifteen

Who set this ancient quarrel new abroad?

*Romeo and Juliet.* SHAKESPEARE

NO STORY about Bahrain would be complete without an account of 'The Zabara Affair'. It ranked higher in the eyes of the Shaikhs than any other political issue and it took up more time and presented more difficulties than any of the problems with which I had to deal. The individual attitudes towards the Zabara Question of the long string of Residents and Political Agents who came and went during my thirty-one years in Bahrain coloured the relations between the Shaikhs and the British authorities throughout the whole of my time there. To the outer world it was an affair of no importance, as someone in London said, 'Just another of those little border disputes which occur so frequently in the East', but to the Shaikhs of Bahrain it was a matter affecting their dignity, prestige and honour, and it was this which made it so difficult to arrive at any sort of agreement.

During the long reign of Shaikh Isa, throughout Shaikh Hamed's reign and during the time of Shaikh Sulman, the present Ruler, the dispute between the Khalifah and the Qatar Shaikhs about the ownership of Zabara, the ancestral home of the Khalifah, on the coast of the Qatar peninsula, which lies to the east of Bahrain, had been the cause of incessant friction which sometimes led to fighting and bloodshed. For a few years the matter would be quiescent, then some incident would stir up the quarrel between the two states. For many years the British authorities have dealt with the disputes between the Shaikhdoms in the Persian Gulf, settling many of them by arbitration, but in this case the British Government, both in the days when the India Office dealt with the affairs of the Gulf and recently when these duties were taken over by the Foreign Office, appeared to be averse to taking definite action or giving a ruling about the ownership of Zabara or the special rights of the Bah-

rain Shaikh in the Zabara enclave. Perhaps the reason for this non-committal attitude was because the British Government was reluctant to antagonize one or the other of the parties to the dispute. British representatives in Bahrain were inclined to think that the feeling about Zabara was an idiosyncrasy of a particular Ruler, not a matter about which three generations of the Khalifah had held identical views, nor did they appreciate the bitter feelings which were caused by their vague and sometimes contradictory statements.

If thirty or twenty or even ten years ago this dispute had been settled once and for all by a definite statement by the British Government, then the British representatives in Bahrain would have been spared the endless complaints and recriminations to which they were subjected by the Bahrain Shaikhs about a piece of barren, salty, waterless land containing the ruins of what had once been a little town, a few crumbling walls of an old fort and a mosque which was rapidly falling to pieces, inhabited by a handful of Arabs who owed allegiance to the Shaikhs of Bahrain. In these days boundary disputes in the Gulf are usually connected with oil, but in the case of Zabara Bahrain had declared that in the most unlikely case of oil being found there she waived all rights to it.

The roots of the matter are embedded in the history of the Khalifah family. Early in the eighteenth century they moved down the Gulf from Kuwait and settled at Zabara, opposite Bahrain, on the desolate Qatar peninsula which was then inhabited by a few wandering Arab tribes whose opposition to the Khalifah was soon suppressed. Even two years ago the population of Qatar was estimated to be not more than 25,000 persons—with an income of about sixteen million pounds a year! The Khalifah built a little town at Zabara and from Zabara, in 1783, they invaded Bahrain, drove out the Persians and made themselves masters of the islands which they have held ever since. In 1811 Zabara was attacked and destroyed by Muscat, but it was recovered by the Khalifah and rebuilt. Meanwhile a family of merchants, known latterly as Al Thani, the ancestors of the present Shaikh of Qatar, began to acquire influence and naturally resented the presence of the Khalifah at Zabara, who used it sometimes as a place of refuge when Bahrain was at war. In 1874 the Naim tribe, who were adherents of the Khalifah living partly at Bahrain and partly at Zabara, were besieged in Zabara by the Qatar Arabs but the attackers were driven off with help from Bahrain. In 1895 the Turks, supported by the Thani family and a tribe of dissident Arabs from Bahrain, occupied Zabara but were ejected by the threat of bombardment by the British Navy. From that time Zabara gradually ceased to be a

town and soon became derelict, inhabited by a few of the Naim Arabs and visited at intervals by the Khalifah Shaikhs, who regarded it as a dependency of Bahrain.

The dispute between the Naim and the Shaikh of Qatar flared up again in 1937 when the Shaikh tried to establish a Customs post at Zabara. The Naim complained to the Shaikh of Bahrain, and he protested to the British at the interference of the Qatar Shaikh with his people at Zabara. The protest, as usual, produced no result, but after some time I was able to persuade Shaikh Hamed to agree to negotiations being opened in Bahrain between the two states. Shaikh Abdulla, the Shaikh's brother, Shaikh Sulman, his eldest son, who is now the Ruler, and I represented Bahrain. The Qatar spokesmen were a respectable, but illiterate, relative of the Shaikh's, and a man of Jejdi origin who was well known to be *persona non grata* with the Bahrain Shaikhs, mainly on account of his political views. The meetings were held in my drawing-room, where we were less likely to be interrupted than if we had used my office. Fortunately Marjorie was away, for it would have been very inconvenient for her to have a secret conclave meeting once or twice a week for about a month! We did our best to arrive at an agreement. I induced the Shaikhs to make considerable concessions, but it was of no avail, the negotiations came to an end in an atmosphere of bitter animosity. It was a great disappointment to me, but sometimes during those long talks I wondered whether the Qatar people had any real desire to achieve a settlement.

Soon afterwards we tried again. Shaikh Hamed proposed, through the Political Agent, that his representatives should go to Qatar and discuss the matter with some of the senior members of the Thani family, who might be more easy to deal with than the very second-rate couple who had been sent to Bahrain. It was arranged that we should meet the Qatar people at a little fishing village called Ghariyeh on the north coast of Qatar. Shaikh Abdulla, Shaikh Sulman and I, with some of the young Shaikhs and about thirty servants, sailors and followers crossed to Qatar in two launches. We had an extremely rough passage and throughout the trip the weather was stormy. It was the month of June and the 'Barah' wind was blowing hard which made it pleasant and cool on shore but not agreeable in a small, crowded launch. The launch in which I travelled was called *Gazelle*; it had been built for a naval captain who was at one time Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf. He had intended to sail it from the Gulf to England, but the plan did not come off. It was a seaworthy craft but, like a gazelle, it was addicted to leaping and springing in windy

weather. I was not a very good sailor and the motion of the boat, combined with a strong smell of cooking mutton, produced a very queasy feeling, but fortunately I survived.

I was very thankful when we sighted the bleak coast of Qatar and I lost no time in going ashore, with my two servants, and pitching my little tent close to the sea some distance from the village. Though some of the village children were rather tiresome and hung around the tent the older people were friendly and polite, but they probably thought it very strange that I preferred the seashore to the company on the launch. The rest of the party lived on board the launches, only coming ashore for meetings. Knowing how strong was the feeling between the Bahrain Arabs and the Qatar Arabs I was relieved to see that when the Shaikhs came ashore they brought only a few people with them.

The meetings were held in a tent on the edge of the village; they were attended by Shaikh Abdulla bin Jasim, the Shaikh of Qatar, an old man of venerable appearance. I took no active part in the discussions, leaving the Shaikhs to do the talking, but after each meeting we discussed the results and decided on the line of action to be taken at the next session. There was no agenda, no minutes and nobody, except myself, made any notes; it was very much an Arab affair. The Shaikh of Qatar had with him a number of his relations and a large force of armed Bedouin who arrived in lorries. This show of force, which was intended to impress us, was regarded as unnecessary and bad form by our people.

We stayed in Qatar for three or four days and had a meeting each day. The atmosphere was frigid and unfriendly and I felt myself being regarded with unconcealed dislike by the Qatar Shaikhs and their retainers, which was a new and unpleasant experience for me. However, I was quite happy in my tent, I enjoyed taking long walks in the evening and bathing in the warm sea. The coast was different to Bahrain, there was no coral stone near the shore but white sand which extended into the water; there were low sandhills with tufts of scrub growing on them, camels grazed among the sand dunes and I saw hares, gazelle and a desert fox; once at night I heard a jackal. The air was fresher and cooler than in Bahrain and it gave me a tremendous appetite. The Shaikhs used to send me meals from the launches, stews of mutton and vegetables, which I ate with gusto, in addition to the supplies which I had brought with me. It was a pleasant change from Bahrain and if things had gone well I would have looked back on that expedition with enjoyment. We did make a little headway, but we were at a disadvantage as we could not consult Shaikh Hamed about our negotiations, so after several meetings we decided to return to



Bahrain and report the results. Once again we embarked in the two launches and set off along the coast on our way back to Bahrain in the teeth of a very strong north-west wind.

After going for some distance we anchored in the shelter of a shoal in fairly calm water so that we could have a meal. Quite a number of our people had binoculars and one or two of them were idly scanning the shore. I heard startled exclamations. More field-glasses were hurriedly taken out of their cases and passed from hand to hand. From the other launch I saw, too, that people were gazing towards the shore. Some unusual activity had been sighted on the coast. Motor lorries, loaded with men, were moving in the direction of Zabara and bodies of men were deploying. Then, as we watched, the fighting started. The Naim tribesmen who lived at Zabara were being attacked by Shaikh Abdulla bin Jasim's Bedouin, those surly looking Bedouin who had been so much in evidence at the village of Ghariyeh. There was frantic excitement on board the launches. Some of our men belonged to the Naim tribe and had families at Zabara, they wanted to go and help their kinsmen. With difficulty we restrained them from jumping overboard. Between us and the shore there were dangerous shoals, and, even if we had been able to land, our small party could have done little good. It was an infuriating and humiliating position. There we were, close enough to see our people being attacked, yet unable to do anything to help them and the gale was now blowing so strongly that we had to get out into the open sea to avoid being wrecked on the reefs. We could do nothing but return to Bahrain.

In the fighting which took place that day there were about a dozen casualties on each side, but the Naim got the worst of the engagement and were forced to surrender and to hand over most of their arms. Several of the men who were killed were personal retainers of Shaikh Hamed's; one of them was an old man whom I knew very well and was fond of. As soon as the Qatar force had withdrawn the whole of the Naim tribe with their families, their flocks and their camels left Zabara and came to Bahrain, in a flotilla of boats which we sent for them. They were generously treated by the Shaikh, and for many months one saw the unusual sight of black Bedouin tents on the high ground near Rafaa where the Naim were encamped. After some time they found that the grazing in Bahrain was insufficient for their animals and a part of them went over to Saudi Arabia. This incident exacerbated the feeling between Bahrain and Qatar and put an end to any hope of negotiating a settlement for many years to come. All intercourse with Qatar was terminated and nobody

from Qatar was allowed to land in Bahrain. When Shaikh Hamed died, in 1942, I remembered the words which were attributed to Queen Mary Tudor: 'When I am dead . . . you shall find "Calais" lying on my heart,' but in this case the word would have been 'Zabara'.

South of Bahrain, close to the Qatar coast, was a group of about a dozen islands. Some of them were very small but one of them was eleven miles long; they were known as the Hawar islands, which was the name of the largest one. Bahrain had recently established its ownership to them to the satisfaction of the British Government and we now proceeded to build a fort on the main island. It was on the high ground above the harbour, a building of the Beau Geste style with a high watchtower in which there was a room which I used when I went to Hawar, an enclosed courtyard, crenellated and loop-holed walls and a wire entanglement around it. Qatar, of course, resented our possession of these islands and for a long time we expected an attack there, but the efficiency of the fort was never put to the test.

There were two small villages on the island inhabited by fishermen and, as in the case of Bahrain, a hill in the centre. 'Hawar' means 'a young camel' and the island was given this name because it was like Bahrain in miniature, Bahrain being regarded as the mother camel. The sea around these islands was full of fish and sawfish were very numerous. The shore near the villages was littered with the beaks of the sawfish, some of them three or four feet long, with, on each side of the central bone, a row of hard, very sharp points which these fish use as a weapon. In retaliation for Bahrain having built a fort at Hawar, the Shaikh of Qatar built a fort on the edge of the Zabara enclave which became the subject of complaints, arguments and negotiations which were still going on when I left Bahrain.

Gradually, after a few years, some of the Bahrain Arabs returned to Zabara, and the situation drifted back to what it had been before the fighting. It was an uneasy *modus vivendi* and the existence of the fort which the Shaikh of Qatar had built at Zabara was a thorn in the flesh of Bahrain. Soon the Bahrain Arabs at Zabara began again to complain about the aggression of the Qatar Arabs and the Shaikh used to discuss with me, every time I saw him, for hours at a time, the question of his rights in Zabara and the unhelpful attitude of the British authorities from whom he could never get a definite statement.

In 1949 new negotiations began between Bahrain and Qatar. There were innumerable discussions and meetings in which I took part and finally, mainly owing to the efforts of the Political Agent, C. J. Pelly,

who undertook the very thankless role of Mediator between the two Shaikhs, an agreement was reached. We all hoped that this would terminate once and for all the Zabara dispute which had lasted for three generations. In February 1951 the Shaikh of Qatar, Shaikh Ali bin Abdulla, accepted an invitation to visit Bahrain.

Shaikh Ali had become Shaikh of Qatar in the previous year when his aged father abdicated. His younger brother had originally been the Heir Apparent, but the younger brother died and the choice reverted to the older brother, who had been passed over in the first place. I think the circumstances of his succession had some effect on his character. The visit went off better than I had expected though without much enthusiasm on either side. There was a certain tendency among the Bahrain Arabs to regard the visiting Qataris as 'country cousins', which even the Shaikh of Qatar must have noticed. Shaikh Ali was given a top V.I.P. reception, a mounted escort, Guards of Honour, a dinner at the palace at which there were 160 Arab guests, and visits to schools, hospitals, the Power House and the Refinery, but it was impossible to know whether any of these things interested him as he rarely spoke and his expression was entirely lacking in animation. The Shaikh did his best to keep up a conversation with his guests but it was a one-sided effort. An Englishman, ex-R.A.F., who had recently been taken on as Adviser by the Shaikh of Qatar, was staying with us during the visit, and the only times that I succeeded in drawing Shaikh Ali into what might be described as conversation was when he visited the Power House and turned the lever which started off a new engine. I tried to explain something about the engine, though I was very ignorant about such things, and the Shaikh did say, 'Tell my Adviser to buy one of these for me.' Again, when we visited the schools he said to me, 'I would like to have a dozen of your schoolteachers for Qatar.' I replied, 'I will enquire whether any of our teachers would like to be transferred to Qatar, Your Excellency.' When I asked them the reply was, as I had expected, 'No.'

One of the people who accompanied Shaikh Ali, for the Shaikh never went anywhere without him, was Abdulla Darwish, who has been aptly described elsewhere as the Shaikh of Qatar's *éminence grise*. He was a Persian, of humble origin, who became a millionaire by acquiring complete ascendancy in Qatar. Nobody could open a shop, start a business, take a contract or conduct any negotiations without the approval of 'Bin Darwish'. He was a large, blustering, vulgar man, with blue-grey eyes, a black beard and a light complexion; he was very intelligent but had all the typical characteristics of a *nouveau riche*. He boasted in-

cessantly about his enormous wealth and had a contempt for Arabs who were less slick than himself. He had a wandering eye, there was something odd about the other eye, and he complacently assumed that his wealth and his personal attractions, and the pearl necklaces which he gave as presents, made him irresistible. When he was with Shaikh Ali he used to reply to all the questions and remarks which were made to his master, who seemed to acquiesce in this odd mode of conversation. With me he adopted a hearty man-to-man style of conversation heavily interlarded with fulsome compliments which he cannot have believed that I would swallow. He wanted to buy land in Bahrain perhaps to prepare a retreat when the situation got too hot for him in Qatar, where he had many enemies, but the Bahrain Shaikhs disliked him and he was prevented from buying any property, which increased his enmity against the Khalifah.

He often stayed in Manama in a house next door to mine. I always knew when he was in town, for there would be rows of cars parked all down the street, for although he was unpopular in Bahrain there were people who paid court to him on account of his wealth and his influence in Qatar. An old Bahrain sea captain told me that he first knew 'Bin Darwish' when he was a servant on a diving dhow and used to massage men when they got cramp. Abdulla Darwish was greatly disliked by the sons of the Shaikh's younger brother whose father, had he not died, would have been the Ruler of Qatar. A year or two ago this faction of the Ruling Family showed their objection to Abdulla Darwish so unmistakably that in spite of his many vested interests in the country he retired from Qatar, leaving his two brothers to deal with his affairs. He settled in Saudi Arabia where he is said to be prospering as well as he did in Qatar. Fortunately Abdulla Darwish is not a typical product of the oil age in the Persian Gulf, although there are one or two people like him in some of the other states where riches came suddenly.

The improved relations between Bahrain and Qatar did not last. Not long after the visit of Shaikh Ali to Bahrain there was more trouble at Zabara as Qatar failed to keep to the terms of the agreement which had been made between the Shaikhs. Again there were complaints and then protests to the British Government which produced either vague replies or none at all. When I left Bahrain in the spring of 1957 'The Zabara Question' was still the subject of long and acrimonious discussions between the Shaikh and the British authorities, and any signs of a settlement seemed to be as far distant as they had ever been before.

## Sixteen

In many respects Bahrain is a miniature Welfare State; and it is the only country in the Arabian peninsula whose Government is conducted on modern principles.

*Journey into Chaos.* PAUL JOHNSON (1958)

IN FEBRUARY 1948 Mr Anthony Eden, as he was then, stayed in Bahrain with the Resident, Sir Rupert Hay, on his way to Saudi Arabia. With him were his son, Nicolas, and Colonel Palmer, who had been Shaikh Hamed's host when he visited the Huntley and Palmer factory in 1936. Shaikh Sulman had not met Mr Eden but he had a great regard for him, which was shared by the Arabs in Bahrain, who remembered and admired his attitude over Abyssinia in 1938. That a man holding such an important position should give up his career for the sake of his principles was to them almost unbelievable. Many distinguished people came to Bahrain before and after this visit, but never have I known the Shaikh give so much personal attention to the details as on this occasion.

In the morning Marjorie and I went to the palace to arrange the flowers for the luncheon party which the Shaikh was giving, and to see that all was in order. The Shaikh used to laugh at me for my fondness for flowers—and for apples, which he did not care for. When apples appeared on the table he always ordered a servant to put a dish of them in front of me. As usual all was not in order. The table in the dining-room was smothered with unappetizing little dishes such as cold tinned peas and off-white blancmange. In spite of the servants' protests we firmly banished a dozen or two of the side dishes. It was impossible to persuade Arab servants that quality, not quantity, was what mattered. I then inspected the Guard of Honour, drawn up below the palace steps, and warned the old Sikh bandmaster not to let any of the band-boys slip into the dining-room and remove some of the food, a habit to which they were prone—quite unnecessary, too, as they were always given a meal after the guests had fed.



The small luncheon party, of about thirty people, with a carefully chosen selection of leading British and Americans, was a great success. The Shaikh was delighted to find that Mr Eden, with a little prompting from Marjorie, who sat next to him, could converse in Arabic, an unusual accomplishment among visiting V.I.P.s. In the evening the Hays gave a dinner party, where what we used to call 'Musical Chairs' was played, each person being led up to sit and talk with the principal guest for a few minutes and then being removed to make room for someone else.

In other places, such as Indian states of comparable size and importance to Bahrain, a palace official would have been responsible for arranging the Ruler's entertainments. When Shaikh Hamed was alive I persuaded him to employ a Moslem Indian to deal with this and other matters. He was known as 'the Factor' and acted as a Major-Domo, but it was not a success. When he left, some months later, the duty of arranging the Shaikh's parties fell upon me. At one time invitations were sent out by the palace but often husbands were invited without their wives, or vice versa, which caused some annoyance. Once a husband whose wife had been accidentally omitted from the invitation wrote a very pained and pompous letter to me enquiring whether his wife was *persona non grata* with His Highness. The lady in question was middle-aged and most respectable, but the Shaikh did not know that she was in Bahrain. He was very amused when I read the letter to him, but I pointed out that it was I who got the blame. After this incident he agreed that I should deal with European invitations, submitting a list of 'eligibles' to him for approval, and that invitations to Arabs should be sent out, direct, from the palace as there was no question of wives being invited.

Once, before chairs and tables were used at meals, a dinner party was given at the Rafaa palace in the long, narrow dining-room which at that time was not very well lit. A table-cloth was laid on the floor, stretching the whole length of the room, covered with dishes. The guests used to sit on the carpeted ground along both sides of the cloth, sometimes supported by cushions. Somebody, I don't know who, without my knowledge, decided that the guests should have place cards with their names on them. Even at a table I always find it rather tiresome having to walk round looking for my name on a card, but on this occasion there was chaos. No table plan had been made. Many of the guests went down on their knees peering at the little, faintly written cards searching for their names. I saw that it would take at least half an hour to sort them out, so I told everybody to ignore the cards and to sit down where they liked. I never again saw name cards at an Arab dinner.

There was a great deal of competition for invitations to palace parties but it was impossible to include everybody. Often when invitations had gone out someone would ring up my secretary, Narayan, saying, 'I hear His Highness is giving a dinner next week, there must be some mistake, as my invitation has not arrived, though I know that other people have had theirs.' Narayan had to explain, tactfully, that the person in question was not on the list for that particular dinner. What we enjoyed most was to dine quietly with the Shaikh at Rafaa, when he invited myself and Marjorie and perhaps one or two other Europeans, with no officials and therefore no 'official' conversation. It was then that the Shaikh was at his best, a pleasant, cheerful host, joking with his guests and making everybody feel at ease. These were very different occasions to the formal parties.

Not long after Eden's visit my son returned to Bahrain. He had done his military service in the Palestine Police; for some time he had been in the C.I.D. in Jerusalem. He had enjoyed his time in the Police, but we were very thankful to have him back in Bahrain, safe and sound. After a week or two the Shaikh gave him a post in the Bahrain Police in which he served for about a year. During part of this time, owing to shortage of staff, he took on the rather unpleasant task of Government oil gauger, checking the oil in the tanks and on the ships, but in this way he began to know something about the oil business. Later he went to the School of African and Oriental Studies at London University, and got his degree. He then worked for some time in the Public Relations Department of the Bahrain Petroleum Company until the Shaikh gave him the appointment of Director of Public Relations in the Bahrain Government.

In May 1948 the United States recognized the State of Israel, and I expected trouble in Bahrain. I took all possible precautions and had the police ready to deal with any riots, but nothing happened. A few days later an American aircraft carrier, U.S.S. *Rendova*, called at Bahrain. There were the usual official visits and the Shaikh went to tea on board the ship, which much impressed him. There was a great deal of photography by the naval camera men. While the Shaikh was being photographed one of the officers said to me, 'Tell His Highness that Broadway Glamour Girls, when they are photographed, are told to say "Cheese!"' I did not even try to translate this remark, which would not have been appreciated. The Shaikh would have wanted to know a great deal more about 'Broadway Glamour Girls' than I could have told him, and it would have been very difficult to explain why they should say 'Cheese'. Besides, the Shaikh, as I knew, had a definite dislike for cheese, he thought it tasted like something that had gone bad.

On another day the Captain, without consulting me, sent out fifty or sixty invitations to the leading Arabs for a tea party on board the ship. Five people turned up. The others sent a letter, which they all signed, saying that in view of the American Government's attitude over Palestine they did not wish to go on board an American ship. It was quite a rude letter and caused consternation. If the Captain had asked my advice I could have told him what would happen. However, the Navy's feelings were assuaged, the Shaikh gave a big dinner party for them at Rafaa, and I was interested to find that all of the ship's officers to whom I spoke were very strongly opposed to the line which their Government had taken over Palestine.

Some time afterwards there was another naval visit. A high-ranking American admiral came out to the Gulf with a large staff, and the usual complement of cine-cameras and photographers. There was a call on the Shaikh at the palace, where the party was received in the long reception-room. They took their places on the chairs and sofas at the end of the room, the Admiral on the Shaikh's right and I on his left. At the other end of the room, near the door, there were some of the Shaikh's servants and followers, and one of his sons, who was then about fourteen or fifteen years old, a rather nervous young man, sat halfway down the room. The Shaikh beckoned to his son to come over and meet the Admiral. The boy walked down the room shyly, and put out his hand to shake hands with the Admiral. Before I had time to explain who he was the Admiral handed him his hat and two other officers, who were sitting next to him, leant over and gave him their hats as well. There was a gasp from the people at the other end of the room and the Shaikh's son stood for a moment in confusion. The only person who kept his head was the Shaikh. He gave me a look and said to his son, 'Take their hats and put them down somewhere.' He then turned to the Admiral, who was completely unaware of the *faux pas* which he had unwittingly committed, and continued the conversation.

That night the Shaikh gave a dinner for the Admiral at the palace. Marjorie and I used to arrive early, as the Shaikh liked me to be there before the guests came. Stationed on each side of the door were two of the palace servants, large black men wearing daggers and slung swords. As the Admiral and his staff arrived their hats were grabbed from their hands and placed on a chair near the door. They must have been surprised at the forcible manner in which their hats were removed from them.

It is easy enough to laugh at some of the mistakes made by Americans in the Middle East but quite often the British, who should have known

better, were involved in misunderstandings. I remember taking someone who thought he could speak Arabic to call on an Arab. After some talk the visitor said, 'You have got a great many lice.' The Arab replied, very indignantly, 'You are mistaken, I have none.' 'Yes,' said the visitor, 'I always see them when I come here.' At this point I intervened and explained that the Englishman was referring to camels. The word for camels and lice is very similar.

One of the Political Agents, in the early days, always assumed that none of the Arabs understood English. At an Arab party he said to his wife, 'Darling, be careful what you eat, I am sure the plates and things are not clean.' The host's son, a schoolboy, said to his father, in Arabic, 'He tells his wife not to eat our food, does he think that we wish to poison her?' After that, conversation languished. Then there was the young man who was acting as Political Agent who said to me, quite seriously, 'I suppose I shall take precedence over the Shaikh.' He was very surprised when I said: 'Good Heavens! Of course not!'

Visits to ships could be adventurous expeditions. The Commander-in-Chief, East Indies Squadron, used to come to Bahrain every year, usually in January, which is the roughest month of the year, and his programme always included a large cocktail party on board the flagship. In January 1950 Admiral Sir Charles Woodhouse and his wife gave a party on the ship which was anchored a mile or two off the BAPCO pier, at Sitra on the east side of the island. Marjorie and I drove down to the pier. We looked at the sea; it was calmer than I had ever known it, strangely calm in fact, which should have been a warning to me, but which relieved Marjorie as she had a particular aversion to sea trips in rough weather. We went out to the ship in the police launch, a locally built dhow, fitted with engines, serviceable but not showy. There was a gay scene on the deck. The Marine Band was playing and about a hundred guests from shore, in their party clothes, were drinking cocktails and talking to the ship's officers. The deck was closed in with canvas and decorated with flags. For some time all went well, then, without any warning, a terrific gale lashed the ship, ripping the canvas which enclosed the deck, tearing the flags into tatters and whirling the band music off the stands into the sea like a giant paper chase. Dresses were torn, women's hair stood up on end and soon the waves were splashing on the sides of the deck. A few people who had left early managed to get ashore but wireless messages from Sitra port, where the ship's boats were waiting to bring off late-comers and to take the guests away, reported that it was impossible to operate the boats. The guests had to resign themselves to spending the

night on board the ship, there was nothing else for it. Marjorie was lucky, she was given a cabin by Lady Woodhouse. The officers turned out of their quarters to provide accommodation for the women and the men slept somehow, somewhere. Some of the young people thought it great fun, it reminded them of the play *The Middle Watch*, but for the older people it was rather a trying experience.

Dr Snow, the senior Government doctor, had a bad case in the Government Hospital which he did not want to leave, and I had an important meeting next morning with BAPCO representatives from America about the revision of the oil royalty, so he and I and my son decided to brave the sea and to go ashore. We scrambled down the gangway and with difficulty managed to jump on to the deck of the police launch which was leaping up and down like a bucking pony. My Arab crew were experienced boatmen, and they took us safely through the inky darkness and the towering seas to the pier, where we arrived after a terrific battering, soaked to the skin. The storm raged all that night and it was not till the middle of the next day that the marooned cocktail party, rather bedraggled, were able to leave the ship in the tugs and heavy launches of the oil company. After this affair the annual visits of the Commander-in-Chief took place at a later, less stormy, time of the year.

I do not wish to give the impression that life in Bahrain was 'all beer and skittles', or rather all cocktail parties and dinners. I had plenty of hard work and plenty of problems to deal with, some of which caused me a great deal of worry. When I was first taken on I was designated 'Financial Adviser', but I was never known by this title in Bahrain, where I was called just 'Mustashar'—Adviser—which covered a great variety of duties. An Englishman once came to Bahrain and wanted to find me; he was an Army chaplain of very unorthodox style who had been in the Royal Flying Corps with my brother and had spent some years at Borstal—as a chaplain. He took a taxi and told the driver to drive to 'Belgrave's house'. The taxi-driver said, 'I will take you to the Mustashar.' 'No!' said the Englishman. 'I don't want Mr Shaw, I want Mr Belgrave.' The taxi-driver again said: 'Good. You want house of Mustashar.' By this time my friend was getting annoyed, as he told me later. 'Take me to Mr Belgrave, or I will complain to the police,' he said. Again the taxi-man said, 'Mustashar, he is the police, we go and find him.' He arrived at my house in a state of excitement and greeted me with the question: 'Who is this ruddy fellow Mr Shaw, who the driver keeps on jabbering about? Have you changed your name to Shaw, like Lawrence?'

Dealing with the finances of the State was one of my principal duties,



but because I kept a tight hold of the purse strings I incurred unpopularity in many quarters. It was the Shaikh's and my policy to add a certain proportion of the revenue each year to the Reserve Fund, which was invested in England in Government stock, so as to build up a fund which would supplement the revenue when the income from oil decreased. This was not a popular idea, and since I left Bahrain I see that the plan for saving money has been given up. The Bahrainis regarded the oil as being inexhaustible, and they looked on Bahrain as a Welfare State which *they* defined as a State *with no taxation*, where all public services, medical, educational and otherwise, should be provided free for rich and poor. My attempts to reduce expenditure and to encourage some of the departments to earn more money met with little co-operation. An example of this was the Manama Municipality, a lethargic institution heavily subsidized by the Government, which never seemed to have sufficient funds to carry out its obligations to the public. We used to allow the municipalities to run their own shows with occasional suggestions from the Government. The main revenue of the Municipality was from shop and house taxes. Those on leased buildings were paid by the tenants, most of whom were foreigners, and were quite reasonable; but in the case of houses occupied by the owners, which included all the houses belonging to the rich merchants and shopkeepers, the *maximum* tax was seven-and-six a month. When I suggested a reassessment of the taxes on privately occupied houses there was a squeal of indignation from the Council, and all but one or two members strongly opposed my suggestion. Several times I tried to get my proposal accepted, but without success.

Education continued to be a permanent 'pain in the neck'. I often wondered whether in the long run it did not do more harm than good to the people of Bahrain, but this nowadays is a most unacceptable belief. Every year a larger proportion of the population became literate, to the extent of being able to read and write, but I do not think they were any happier than they used to be. Although most of the education was very superficial the so-called educated young men considered that manual labour was beneath them and they expected to be provided with 'white collar' jobs which did not exist. None of the boys acquired at school any of those intangible qualities such as *esprit de corps*, pride in physical fitness, discipline, or sense of service which boys in Western schools used to possess—but perhaps in Welfare States these qualities are no longer considered necessary! I suppose I expected too much from the schools and was inclined to compare them to public schools in England, for I must confess that I found the results very disappointing. However, the public

demanding more schools, so every year more schools were built and opened.

For some time we had been sending a few boys every year for advanced education to the Junior School of the American University of Beirut, the A.U.B., which was the best educational institution in the Middle East. In 1950 the first two Bahrain boys obtained their degrees from the A.U.B. This arrangement was, on the whole, successful, although there was a tendency among the students to choose subjects in which they thought they could most easily get a degree rather than subjects in which they were really interested. There were great opportunities in Bahrain for Arab doctors, and I tried to encourage some of the young men who we sent to the A.U.B. to study medicine and eventually practise as doctors among their own people. For a long time none of them would consider this, the length of time which the training took deterred them, although they were being paid for by the Government. But eventually a number of young men did decide to study medicine, and one of them is now at a college in England.

There are snobs among the Arabs as well as among the British, and sometimes one becomes aware of a colour complex. A young man who was studying medicine in Beirut, who was dark, with some African blood, came back to Bahrain on leave. He went to call on some high-class Arabs and one of them said to him, 'What subject are you studying at Beirut?' The young man replied, 'I am learning to be a doctor,' at which the Arab muttered to one of his friends: 'Him—a doctor! He must be descended from slaves. I would never employ a doctor in my house who was dark.' I remember some of the excellent doctors whom I came across in the Sudan and in Egypt; many of them were much darker than this young man, but then I never had any feeling about colour.

## Seventeen

Which way I fly is Hell.

*Paradise Lost.* MILTON. 1608-1674

LIVING in the Persian Gulf involved much travel when going on home leave, which I took every other summer. Both Marjorie and I disliked flying, and we found the most enjoyable method of travelling was by train. It was only in recent years that we abandoned the land route to Europe, by Taurus Express to Istanbul, thence by Simplon Express to Calais, in favour of B.O.A.C. direct to London. At one time we travelled the route so often that we got to know most of the wagon-lits attendants, which we found very useful. We had a Turkish friend in Thomas Cook's office in Istanbul who, when my son was a small boy, used to carry him along the platform. Years later my son met him. By then my son was 6 ft. 5 in. and weighed nearly fifteen stone, so carrying days were passed.

The land route was sometimes adventurous. Once when travelling out to Bahrain three unpleasant incidents occurred. On the plains of Anatolia the train ran over a crowded bus at a level crossing. It was a hideous accident. I never discovered how many people were killed. The accident happened at night, the only light was from the train windows and there was no doctor on board the train—not that he would have been much use in most of the cases. I and the other passengers did what we could during the long wait before help arrived from a distant town. Police removed the engine-driver and some of the train officials and eventually we moved off with a new engine-driver.

Next morning we were high up in the Taurus mountains enjoying the spectacular scenery when suddenly the train stopped, not at a station. A bridge on the line ahead of us had subsided. After a long wait the passengers were told to get out and walk across a temporary, insecure structure spanning a gap in the bridge over a deep gorge. Our luggage

was carried across and we mounted another train in which we continued our journey.

On reaching Baghdad we left our luggage in the hotel, where we had booked rooms, and went for a walk in the bazaar to stretch our legs. It seemed strangely empty and many of the shops were shut. I noticed that people looked at us with some curiosity so we soon returned to the hotel. The manager, who knew us well, greeted us at the door in great excitement. 'Why have you been out? Where have you been?' he shouted. I replied: 'We went for a walk. Why are all the shops shut? What is going on?' 'Do you not know,' he asked, 'that we have a *coup d'état*, a real *coup d'état*? Ja'far Pasha Al Askari, Minister of Defence, has been killed. Now the army advances upon Baghdad.' We knew, of course, nothing of all this. 'Did you not see the aeroplanes flying over the city? Did you not perceive the leaflets which they drop?' continued the manager. We had heard aircraft but thought it was nothing unusual and we had seen no leaflets. However, we cut short our stay in Baghdad and were fortunate in catching the night train which took us to Basra, where there was no excitement.

In Basra we met one of our friends, a naval Captain in command of a sloop, who had often stayed with us in Bahrain. He was sailing for Bahrain in an hour or two and offered to take us there in his ship. As we cruised slowly down the Shatt al Arab, between the lush date-groves, where the palms were heavy with great bunches of dates, coloured yellow, brown and red, the Captain came to where we were sitting on deck and said: 'Something very awkward has happened. The flagship is lying off Abadan and the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies Squadron, is coming on board.' Turning to Marjorie, he said, 'You will have to disappear.' She retired, meekly, to her cabin and I stayed on deck, feeling rather foolish and annoyed because I remembered that there was some rule about ships not carrying women. The Commander-in-Chief was Admiral Sir Alexander Ramsay. He came on board and after spending some time with the Captain I was introduced to him. Almost the first thing he said was, 'I should like to meet your wife.' I thought to myself, 'Now the fat is in the fire!' But he had a twinkle in his eye, and when Marjorie came into the cabin rather nervously the Captain told us that he had got permission before we came on board to take us to Bahrain. I was extremely relieved to know that the whole thing had been a joke, and that we were not going to cause some frightful *contretemps*.

I had several mildly alarming adventures flying in the Gulf. Once on my way back from leave I was given a lift in an R.A.F. flying-boat

belonging to 203 Squadron which had its headquarters at Basra; two flying-boats were going down to Bahrain. Near Kuwait something happened to the oil supply; it was very evident when oil began to pour down from a pipe in the ceiling of the aircraft. The pilot decided to land at once on the sea. This was done successfully, but in very shallow water, and the other flying-boat came down alongside us. It was decided that I should go on in the second aircraft but with no luggage as the aircraft was fully loaded. The sea was warm and smooth, which was fortunate as the transfer had to be done by swimming and wading. I arrived in Bahrain with nothing but a sponge bag—black-and-white check—into which I had put my watch, my passport and my money, but my luggage arrived a few days later in another R.A.F. flying-boat.

The most frightening journey which I ever had was when I accepted the offer of a lift in a U.S. military aircraft from Bahrain to Karachi. I was going to Kashmir on short leave in wartime. It was a big, heavy machine and fairly steady but with it were several small aircraft of a type which were, I think, called Mosquitos. All down the Gulf they appeared to be doing stunts around the big aeroplane in which I was travelling. They came so near to it that I could almost see the time on the watches which the pilots wore on their wrists. We hugged the Persian coast, dodging in and out among the high cliffs and mountains, and to make matters worse the Captain constantly told me that he had never been in the Gulf before and hoped that he was on the right course. However, we reached Karachi without mishap and the Captain very kindly offered to take me on to 'Del Hi', which was his pronunciation of Delhi, but I thanked him warmly and said that I had business in Karachi. That night I took the train to Lahore, on my way to Kashmir.

Usually the Gulf was smooth and the sight of it from the air was very beautiful, though the land over which one flew was desolate and ugly. Nothing could be more depressingly monotonous than the appearance of the Qatar peninsula or the mountains of Oman. They reminded me of a contour map made of brown plasticine with no relieving colour. But the colour of the water in the Gulf was more brilliant than any sea which I have seen. Much of the Gulf was shallow and the sea bed was visible below the transparent water which from above gave the impression of being only a few feet deep. One saw circular depressions in the sea bed where the water took on a darker shade, there were patches of golden yellow where there was sand, and a wonderful range of colour varying from palest blue to aquamarine and through every shade of green. But the Gulf was not always calm and clear. At times there were sandstorms in the



Arabian desert, and the wind carried the brown sand across the water, causing visibility to be almost nil.

On June 12th, 1950, we were dining with friends in Manama and we played Bridge until a late hour. The 'Bara' was blowing so we sat inside the house instead of on the veranda. I wrote in my diary that it was 'a very wild night and sand blowing'. Shortly before we left I heard the sound of an aircraft circling overhead, but this was not an unusual sound in Bahrain. That night I slept indoors, although it was June, because there was so much sand in the air. Very early next morning, before I left the house to ride up to the fort, there was a telephone call from the aerodrome at Muharraq. I was told that an Air France Skymaster had come down in the sea off Sitra. The news had apparently come from a man, who had been seen by some of the crew of an anchored ship, swimming in the sea. He had been brought ashore at Sitra. I jumped into my car and drove to the fort.

As quickly as possible I got the police together, told them what had happened and sent them off in the police launches, and on camels and horses and in cars to patrol the coast, then, with Jim Hyde, one of the British police officers, and a young Arab officer, I raced to Sitra, which is about fourteen miles from Manama. The BAPCO launches and boats from the ships in the harbour were already searching the sea in that area, but it was dark and rough. We went out to sea in one of the launches for some time, but we found nobody. Later on five more survivors were picked up in the sea; these and the first man were the only people who were saved out of fifty-one passengers and crew. I spent all that day at Sitra, and going up and down the coast to see that the police were patrolling properly. A number of bodies were recovered but they had been too long in the sea for first aid to be of any use. The six survivors were taken to the BAPCO hospital; I went to see them, hoping to hear something about how the crash had happened, but they were in no state to give any coherent description.

Everybody in Bahrain was horrified by the disaster. The Skymaster had come from Indo-China, where the French were fighting against the Communists, and there were suggestions in Bahrain that it was a case of sabotage. Next day several Air France officials arrived from Paris and from Cairo to enquire into the matter. It was a day of macabre muddle. I was asked to help in making the arrangements for the burial of the bodies which had been recovered from the sea in the little Christian cemetery, which was looked after by the American Mission. The Mission clergyman offered to take part in the funeral service as well as the Catholic priest, as

it was not known which of the people were Catholics and which were Protestants. Three times the hour for the burial was announced, and a number of people went to the cemetery, but each time it was cancelled because the question of taking the bodies to France was still under consideration. Finally the matter was postponed until the following day. The burials did take place in Manama, and after some months the coffins were taken to France.

That night the weather changed. The sky was clear and there was no sand in the air and the wind dropped. After a long and very trying day I went to sleep on my bed on the roof, where I used to sleep in the hot weather. I am a sound sleeper and it takes a good deal to wake me up, especially after a long hard day.

In what seemed to be the middle of the night, though in fact it was about three o'clock in the morning, something disturbed me. I seemed to hear a voice speaking about the Air France crash. When I went to sleep my mind had been full of the disaster and the sights which I had seen, and I thought that I was dreaming. I roused myself and then I saw a young British police officer standing by my bed. I was very drowsy. 'An Air France aircraft has come down in the sea,' I heard him say. 'Yes,' I muttered, 'of course, I know all about it. Why have you come to talk about it now?' I then realized that he was very excited and upset. 'Another Air France aircraft has come down in the same place,' he said urgently. 'It's impossible,' I replied. 'It couldn't happen again.' By this time I was wide awake. 'Sir,' said the young officer, 'it's true, there *has* been another crash, at exactly the same time and in the same place as the one the day before yesterday.' I realized then that what he was telling me must be true. In a minute I was out of bed. I ran downstairs and hurled on some clothes and told Marjorie, who was sleeping inside the house, what had happened. She was awake and knew that something was amiss as the police officer had burst into her room looking for me before he came on to the roof. As fast as I could I drove through the empty streets to the fort. Again I told the police that a second crash had occurred, but it was hard to make them believe this, especially as they were tired and drowsy, most of them having been up all through the night and the day before. Again I issued orders for the launches to go out, and for patrols up and down the coast and then, with Jim Hyde and another police officer, I drove, hell for leather, to Sitra pier. I still could hardly believe that there had been a second crash. I said to myself, 'There must be some mistake, perhaps some other aircraft sighted the first one submerged in the sea and reported a fresh accident.'

There were only a few people on the wharf, the news of the accident had not yet become generally known. It was still dark and there was a swell on the sea, other launches from the port were already searching the sea around Sitra. We got hold of a small launch which, as we soon discovered, had a very inadequate engine, and went out to sea. After some time we saw a man swimming. We got alongside of him and tried to lift him on to the boat. It was extremely difficult to get him on board because he was almost at the end of his tether, but after a struggle we managed to pull him into the launch. We went on for a while, roughly in the direction where we knew the first aircraft had crashed. Soon we saw a second man swimming; he was young and evidently a strong swimmer. We picked him up without much difficulty. What surprised me so much, when we got the second man into the boat, was that the first thing he said was, 'My watch, my watch, it is spoilt from the immersion in the sea.' The first man who we had rescued was in a poor state, so we decided to take him back to the shore, and on the way we found several bodies floating in the water.

By the time we reached the pier a number of boats had come into action and aircraft were searching overhead. We took our two men into a little room on the pier, where other people who had been rescued were waiting for ambulances to take them to hospital. One of the men—he was lying on a seat—was either a pilot or one of the ship's crew; he said several times that a moment before the aircraft touched the water the instruments had shown considerable height.

Soon after we reached the pier a girl was brought ashore in a boat, she had been picked up out at sea. She was very small and slight and did not look as if she had the stamina to have swum far. As soon as she got into the room she asked for a cigarette, then someone gave her an old pair of shorts, and in a very few minutes she was carrying cups of tea to the other passengers and doing all that she could to comfort them. She was the air hostess. I have rarely seen a more plucky performance. Later, when we got her to the Government Hospital, in spite of shock and exhaustion she refused to be attended to until she had seen that the other survivors were being looked after. I heard later that she married an Englishman in the Colonial Service in West Africa. In the second aircraft thirteen people were saved, and thirty-eight people lost their lives. Altogether in the two crashes eighty-three men, women and children perished; out of eleven children only one survived.

Most of the people from the two aircraft, except one or two who were too ill to move, who remained at Awali, were taken into the

Government Hospital, where they were tended with kindness and sympathy. An enquiry was held in Bahrain by M. Maurice Bellonte, a senior French aviation official, who arrived shortly before the second crash, and the Political Agent and officials of the British Ministry of Civil Aviation held an investigation. For some days Bahrain was crowded with journalists, and aviation officials and representatives of the Embassy of France in Iraq. Rumours of sabotage were very strong and the Press in Europe, especially the French newspapers, made various suggestions about possible reasons for sabotage. The two aircraft had come from Indo-China, where the French were fighting. It appeared that one of the passengers carried a full report of a vast underground racket of gold-smuggling and dope-peddling which involved a number of highly placed persons in Indo-China. It was suggested that the people concerned would take any measures to prevent their racket being disclosed. Another suggested reason for sabotage was the presence on one of the aircraft of a senior French Government official carrying important documents for a conference between Viet-Nam, Cambodia and Laos which was to be held in France. Certainly the conference did not take place. The results of the enquiries and of a later enquiry which was held in Paris were not published, but I doubt whether the cause of the two disasters was ever discovered. The theory which most people in Bahrain held was that the first aircraft came down as a result of bad weather, and that the second aircraft flew low over the place of the first crash in order to see it and in doing so flew too low. Bahrain has had its full share of air tragedies, for when the second B.O.A.C. Comet was lost off Italy, on its way to England, there were eleven passengers from Bahrain on board.

It was in the spring of 1950 that the Gulf Aviation Company was formed in Bahrain; it was a project which owed its inception to an ex-R.A.F. officer, Frederick Bosworth, who brought his aircraft to Bahrain from Iraq where he had been unsuccessful in forming a charter company. Bosworth was a man of energy and enterprise and not easily disheartened, as well as being an experienced pilot, but he had only a small amount of capital. He discussed with me the project of forming an aviation company in Bahrain to carry passengers and freight to and from places in the Gulf which were not served by British Overseas Airways, and to undertake charter flights when there was demand for them. I am by nature inclined to be cautious, especially when, as in this case, Government funds were concerned, but I was attracted by Bosworth's scheme. I talked to the Shaikh about it, and I obtained his approval to back him.

In the beginning it was a hard struggle. Money was short, and it was

difficult to get suitable pilots and engineers to join a small, new venture in the Persian Gulf, which nobody knew much about. Bosworth was managing director and chief pilot, and for some time his wife kept the accounts. Then the Government granted a loan to the company and the Shaikh and some of his family invested money in it. Following their example a number of merchants bought shares in Gulf Aviation, and with the support of B.O.A.C., without which the company could not have existed, its prospects began to improve.

The attitude of the Arabs towards forming local companies was very curious. They used constantly to tell me that one thing or the other was badly run, and that 'something ought to be done about it'. For example, they complained about the bus services and the launches which plied between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, which were run by a number of independent, private individuals, with no method and no time-tables. When the merchants complained to me about these and other things, I often said to them, 'Why don't you get together and form a local company to run efficient services?' Their reply was, 'The Government should do it.' My answer was, 'The Government has more than enough to deal with already without running transport companies, but if you formed a company then I dare say the Government would take shares in it.' But this did not appeal to them. Several people admitted to me afterwards that the trouble was that nobody cared to trust anyone else, so it was impossible to work together. At the same time, if any foreigners talked about starting a company in Bahrain the Bahrainis complained that they were being shut out of a profitable enterprise. It was a 'dog in the manger' attitude. But Gulf Aviation was a different matter; the technical management was in the hands of Europeans, a considerable proportion of the capital was from Bahrain, and about half of the directors were Arabs. I myself was the first chairman of the company on an honorary basis.

After some time it became easier to get pilots from England, though not all of them were satisfactory. One pilot provided a great deal of undesirable publicity for Gulf Aviation. He was flying an Anson aircraft from England to Bahrain. On the way he stopped in France. He was engaged to a young woman who had been an air hostess in an airline in South Africa. One day the couple went up in the Anson and flew out over the English Channel, taking with them a charter company 'captain'. In mid-air the 'captain' conducted a marriage between them. They returned to France and announced that they were now man and wife. The papers in France and England got hold of the story, which made big headlines—the couple were described as '*Les Mariés de l'air*'—and there was dis-



cussion as to whether or not the marriage was legal; the headlines in one paper summed up the situation with, 'Their wedding is still in the air.' After a visit to Corsica the couple eventually arrived with the Anson in Bahrain, but the pilot and his wife did not stay long in the employment of Gulf Aviation.

By the summer of 1951 the company was beginning to make progress. An agreement for mutual assistance between Gulf Aviation and British Overseas Airways had been completed and the future prospects seemed to be good. Then a tragedy occurred. Bosworth had gone to England on the company's business. On June 10th, the day before I left Bahrain on leave, I got news that Bosworth had been killed in a flying accident in England. His death was a grievous blow for Gulf Aviation. Before I left I appointed another Government official, G. B. Thompson, to act for him and for me, and while I was in London I spent a great deal of time dealing with the affairs of the company. Finally Bosworth's and his wife's shares were acquired by B.O.A.C. In spite of the loss Gulf Aviation continued to prosper, and it has now developed into quite an important little company which serves a very useful purpose in the Gulf.

There is a novel by Nevil Shute called *Round the Bend*. The author spent a few days in Bahrain and was for some time in the Gulf, mostly on board one of the sloops. The principal character in the novel, as described in the early part of the book, bears a very close resemblance to Freddie Bosworth.

# Eighteen

I've been up to London, to look at the Queen.

*Nursery Rhyme*

**I**N FEBRUARY 1951 we celebrated our silver wedding by giving a dinner party for twenty-five of our most intimate friends, the main course being a gazelle which the Shaikh had sent to us. A few weeks later came the twenty-fifth anniversary of our arrival in Bahrain. Unbeknown to us some of the Arab officials organized a presentation to mark the occasion. Anybody in the service of the Government was told that he might subscribe, and everybody who gave anything, irrespective of his rank or position, was invited to a tea party in the Water Garden on March 31st. This used to be an unhealthy swamp on the outskirts of Manama. I had recently made it into a public garden with lakes, paths, bridges and pavilions, and I planted it with flowering shrubs and trees.

Several hundred people were assembled in the garden. The Shaikh was there with many of his relations and the Kadhis, in white robes, who rarely appeared at public functions. There were senior Government officials, clerks and police officers, but what gave me much pleasure was to see so many humble people, office servants, syces, gardeners and labourers, all wearing their best clothes. I don't think I have ever felt so nervous as I did on that afternoon. I knew that I could not escape having to make a speech, which I usually managed to avoid. When I was young I stammered quite badly, and on occasions such as this I was always afraid that I would do so again.

After some speeches the Shaikh presented me with an Arab sword in a gold-mounted scabbard. Then someone advanced towards us carrying very carefully an object covered with a square of crimson silk. It looked like a covered-over birdcage. It was placed on the table before Marjorie and me. We had not the slightest idea what it was. I lifted off the silk. Underneath it was a golden palm tree, about twelve inches high, ex-

quisitely made by an Indian goldsmith, with little bunches of pearls representing dates, on a round silver base. It was an unusual and beautiful ornament. I made a stumbling speech of thanks. I spoke so badly that most of the audience thought that I was overcome with emotion; this was partly true.

We had other presents that day. The girls' schools gave Marjorie a fine Persian carpet and the Halaqa, a group of young Arabs who had studied at the American University of Beirut, gave me a cigar-box with a map of Bahrain, in silver, on the lid, encircled by a chain. 'Halaqa' means a link, hence the design. The judges in the court gave me a picture of the court house in an inscribed silver frame. To conclude the celebrations we had a cocktail party for about 200 people on the lawn in the garden.

On New Year's Day 1952 Shaikh Sulman was created a K.C.M.G.; he had been made a K.C.I.E. in 1943. To his, and other people's, surprise this was not mentioned in the English papers. When I enquired about this omission I was told that honours granted to foreigners were not published for fear of repercussions from abroad. This was a difficult explanation to make to the Shaikh. I felt that it was ignominious that an honour such as this conferred by Her Majesty on a friendly, though foreign, ruler should, to a certain extent, be kept secret.

In June of the same year I was promoted from a Commander to a Knight of the Order of the British Empire, and in July the Shaikh allowed me to go home for ten days to attend an investiture at Buckingham Palace. I had not expected to get a 'K', and when I was told about it by Sir Rupert Hay, the Resident, it was one of the pleasantest surprises in my life. I am not one of those people who talk in a blasé way about titles. I enjoyed immensely becoming 'Sir Charles' instead of being plain 'Mr Belgrave'. It was a long time since there had been a Belgrave with a 'handle to his name' in the family. The last one was my ancestor Sir George Belgrave, of Belgrave, in Leicestershire, who got into trouble with the Earl of Huntingdon and was arraigned before the Star Chamber in 1601.

In December Marjorie was invited by the Bahrain Petroleum Company to launch the *Caltex Bahrain*, one of their new tankers. The Shaikh, knowing that it was cold in England, sent her some warm clothes on the day before she left and two roughly cured fox skins, which was a very kind thought. The launching took place in a snowstorm. She gave the ship, as a memento, one of my water colours of Manama sea front and an Arab silver coffee-pot.

Life in Bahrain continued to be interesting and varied. A typical day from my diary contains the following entries:

Out with the Police before breakfast. Not enough recruits. Non-stop office morning. G from the Residency about arrangements for the show next week when Shaikh Sulman gets his K.C.M.G. Ahmed [a leading merchant] about trade difficulties in Saudi Arabia. Director of Education on school affairs—an hour. Shaikh A about some land which his retainer wants to buy. Shaikh M complaining that he owns no property so deserves larger allowance. Muharrag Municipal Secretary discussing operating new system of elections. Also came, couldn't see him, R.C. priest announcing Bishop's arrival. Invited Bishop to lunch. An R.A.F. man about housing. Shaikh Hafiz Wahba arrived from London. Invited him to stay. Gardened after lunch. Dahlias from seed coming on well. Dinner at palace for visiting F.O. people. Had some of them to the house afterwards.

At the end of 1951 and during part of 1952 much of my time was occupied in negotiations with BAPCO for a new fifty-fifty profit-sharing oil agreement. The negotiations were long and wearisome and I was thankful when they were successfully concluded. It was difficult explaining to Shaikh Sulman the ramifications of American Income Tax Law which affected the discussions. He was present at many of them, and he displayed an aptitude for argument and bargaining which, after many hours of talk, often left the American representatives completely exhausted. Our income in 1951 was almost two-and-half million pounds, a far cry from the days when my budget was for £100,000.

At this time Bahrain began to figure in the American and European Press and in books dealing with the Middle East. Many journalists visited Bahrain and gave it a good 'write up'. It was only some of the Arab papers which were critical of the régime and the papers which abused it were those which were politically Left.

With a larger income it was possible to develop social services. A hostel for schoolboys was opened in 1951. It was designed by Major Stanley Hills, who was for some years Director of Public Works. The architecture followed local style but the building, on four sides of a quadrangle, with arched cloisters, had a definitely collegiate appearance. Several Englishmen, when they went over it, said how much better the accommodation was than at the public schools where they had been educated. At the opening ceremony Marjorie, amongst other people, made a speech from the platform in her capacity of Directress of Girls' Schools, thus making history by being the first woman to take an official part on a public occasion in Bahrain.

Hills was also the architect of the new palace which was built a few years later on the shore near Manama. It was not used by the Shaikh as a residence but as a place in which to entertain guests. I had planned the

décor and lighting myself with glass chandeliers from Venice in the audience-room and gilt candelabra from Florence in the dining-room. A member of the peerage came out to Bahrain soon after the palace was completed. I was told, afterwards, that she had hoped to be invited to design the interior decoration. She was entertained by the Shaikh. After returning to England she wrote a very ill-natured article in a 'glossy', making fun of the dinner party which the Shaikh gave for her, describing him as looking like an American woman columnist.

The health and education of his people were two matters in which the Shaikh took a great interest and on which a large proportion of the revenue was spent. Personally I regarded health as being more important than education. The development of medical services, which made rapid strides, was not without difficulties. As we employed more doctors and nurses and opened more clinics and hospitals, I noticed a tendency among upper-class young men to develop into hypochondriacs. They took an unnaturally keen interest in their health, enjoying discussing symptoms, cures and medicines. Such medical details as blood pressure was a subject for normal conversation. Two young Arabs were talking about this. One of them said to me, 'And what does your blood pressure register?' When I said 'I have no idea. It is years since I had it tested,' they were quite shocked and told me that they had their blood pressure checked every fortnight. There seemed to be no reason for this.

Shops selling patent medicines did a roaring trade and private medical practitioners flourished by giving injections. Patients attending clinics and hospitals had an almost superstitious belief in the efficacy of injections, which they regarded as a cure for all maladies. Patients who were given pills or medicine usually threw them away and then went the round of the doctors until they found one who would give them a 'needle', as they called it. Ideas of medical etiquette were non-existent. Patients would go from one doctor to another, not telling them that they had been treated before. The more educated people had a similar belief in X-rays. They demanded an X-ray examination for every kind of complaint, and if it was not forthcoming they went away saying, 'He is no good as a doctor.' Accommodation in the hospitals was limited and there were very few private wards, but important Arabs considered that they should be given private rooms for themselves or their families whenever they demanded them, usually without any notice. If patients occupied the rooms they expected the doctors to turn the patients out. In these matters the Arabs showed an entirely undemocratic attitude. In 1952 I obtained the Shaikh's approval to provide in the Budget for the building



of a large new women's hospital and also for a T.B. hospital so that tubercular cases could be treated in Bahrain instead of being sent to a sanatorium in India. This disease was very prevalent in Bahrain. The T.B. hospital was opened at the beginning of 1956 and the women's hospital was not fully completed until some time after I left Bahrain.

I launched two other schemes for improving living conditions. One was the building of numbers of small stone houses for working people, provided with water and electricity, which were let at low rents; the other was a system of loans for Government employees for buying land and building houses. The housing plan was a success. There was keen competition to rent the houses which were allotted to labourers with small incomes and large families who lived in barastis, palm-branch huts. The loan scheme was not such a success, for I discovered that most of the people who took loans built nice little modern houses, but instead of living in them they let them, very profitably, usually to foreigners, and continued to occupy their own insanitary homes.

Another more personal project, in which Marjorie and I were greatly interested, was that we should have an Anglican church and a resident priest in Bahrain. This became possible when, with the coming of the oil company, the European population increased. We formed a Church Committee of which I was for many years the chairman. There was a licensed lay reader at Awali and the company allowed a building to be used as a church, but services there were not always Anglican. The success of our project was greatly due to Henry Weston Stewart, who came as a priest to St George's Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem in the same year as we came to Bahrain; later he became the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, and one of our closest friends.

The Committee set out to collect money to build a church. BAPCO, British firms in Bahrain and private individuals helped us generously. I asked the Shaikh for a piece of ground and he gave us a site near the fort. Sir Geoffrey Prior, who had been Political Agent in Bahrain and then Resident in the Gulf, presented a set of beautiful coloured-glass windows, which are such a striking feature of the church. They were made by the Rev R. N. Sharp, a missionary in Persia, who collected old pieces of Persian glass and created from them exquisite windows. St Christopher's Church was built and dedicated by the Bishop on March 13th, 1953. What few people realized was that the money for building the church and, later, a vicarage and a church hall and for providing the chaplain's stipend, had to be found from local sources. There was no grant from Government or ecclesiastical authorities in England to pay for a church in Bahrain.

One of the ways by which we obtained money for the church was by holding a garden fête every year. I associated garden fêtes with vicarage lawns, or Lady Somebody's garden, kindly lent for the occasion, with doubts about the weather, the smell of damp tents, hot tea and overheated schoolchildren, but in Bahrain the annual garden fête, by most people pronounced 'feet', was a very different affair. It was held on a Friday, the Moslem holiday, in the early spring. It had to be fitted in so as not to coincide with Easter week or the Spring Race Meeting. One did not have to worry about the weather, rain was almost out of the question, it was sure to be sunny but it might be rather hot.

It took place in the garden of Al Bustan, the house of Edward Skinner and his wife. He was Resident Director of BAPCO and his wife, Irene Skinner, had been one of the earliest members of the Church Committee. Both of them were keen gardeners and their garden was the largest and pleasantest one in Manama. Their house, too, was one of the few houses in Bahrain which, although they were American, had the atmosphere of an English country house. The smooth green lawns were surrounded by hedges of pink, white and red oleanders, beyond them were glimpses of the blue sea. The beds were full of English annuals, stocks, carnations, tobacco plant and larkspur, backed by tropical shrubs and trees. The long, low house was covered with jasmine and different kinds of bougainvillea; beyond the flower garden was a grove of trees and date-palms which gave shade to the stalls and booths and tea tables and to the band of the State Police, resplendent in their scarlet turbans playing Strauss waltzes and Sousa marches.

All kinds of people came to the show. There were Europeans and Americans, the men in open-necked shirts and their wives in summer dresses and some of the small children in almost nothing at all. Indian women made a splash of colour, wearing beautiful saris. White-robed Arabs, some of them wearing golden head circlets which denoted that they were members of the Ruling Family, brought their little boys and girls, claspng a few sticky rupees which they had been given to spend, and many little Arab girls from the schools arrived in their neat uniforms with some of the foreign teachers. The fact that the fête was in aid of a Christian church did not deter anybody from supporting it: local shopkeepers, Arabs and Indians, gave generous help by sending things to sell in the stalls and by themselves running some of the sideshows.

The stalls and sideshows were much the same as one would see at a bazaar or fête in England. People sold home-made sweets and cakes, flowers and fresh vegetables, embroidery and needlework, and at the

'Bring and Buy' stall, where Marjorie and a band of helpers worked, were every conceivable sort of thing, ranging from books, china and gramophone records to, one year, a suit of armour, which I found very difficult to sell. Gambling was not allowed—if it had been permitted we could have made vast sums of money—but young women wandered round inviting people to judge the weight of a cake or how many peas they had in a bottle.

I and my son, when he was in Bahrain, and a few young men helpers, ran donkey rides for children round a circular 'sweep' in front of the house. We charged two annas, about twopence-farthing, for a ride twice round the circle, and although Bahrain was full of donkeys the children queued up in scores for rides. I borrowed the donkeys from the Manama Municipality; normally they pulled rubbish carts. Sometimes a donkey would break away and race down the drive in the direction of his stables. When this happened I always hoped that the rider's parents were not in sight; however, we never had any casualties.

One year we had a baby show. The children were judged by Dr Snow of the Government Hospital and the Matron, Miss Maguire. When judging began the atmosphere became tense. Mothers of babies who were not successful began arguing with the judges and the competition ended in chaos. We gave up this form of competition because afterwards nobody could be found to undertake the invidious duty of judging.

Dancing on the lawn by the girls of the BAPCO school ended the entertainment. Though the children looked attractive, especially in the beautiful surroundings, they did not dance well; the presence of parents and young friends sitting on the grass around the lawn, making audible remarks about the performers, had a disturbing effect on them. But one year there was a new feature. A little Persian girl, who had been trained by an Indian, performed a solo dance which was a pleasure to watch; it was sensuous and Oriental, not at all the sort of dance which was taught to American and English schoolgirls.

In the summer of 1953 the Shaikh was invited to attend the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth as the guest of the British Government. There was great competition to accompany him, but the party eventually consisted of the Shaikh, his youngest son Shaikh Mohammed, who was then aged about fifteen, Husain Yateem, a Bahrain Arab who had been at school in England and had travelled much in Europe and America, two Arab servants and myself and Marjorie. We went by sea from Beirut and across Europe by train, breaking the journey at Venice, Montreux and in

Paris. It was Shaikh Sulman's first visit to Europe, previously he had never travelled farther west than Cairo.

The Shaikh arrived at Beirut on the evening of May 13th; there was the usual official reception, Guards of Honour and escorts of police in cars and on motor-bicycles with screaming syrens, which swung round the sharp corners of the crowded streets with alarming speed. In Bahrain official progresses were slow affairs, but in other Middle East countries speed and noise are characteristic of such processions. Next day the Shaikh called on the British Ambassador, visited the American University and met the Bahrain students who were there and attended a luncheon party which was given by President Shamoon. It was an excellent luncheon with many kinds of local dishes and quantities of fruit which in Bahrain was difficult to obtain. The President was a handsome man and a courteous host, but some of his colleagues who were at the party seemed to be distraught because, as usual, there was a political crisis in the Lebanon. In the afternoon we went on board the S.S. *Esperia*, an Italian ship, which was to take us to Venice. One of my cousins, who was with the Iraq Petroleum Company, lived in Beirut and his brother, in the Foreign Service, who had been stationed in Baghdad with his wife and three small daughters, was travelling home on leave in the same ship. At one time, before we sailed, there were nine Belgraves on board the ship—quite a family party!

One of the main complications of the journey was that Shaikh Ahmed bin Ali, the eldest son of the Shaikh of Qatar, accompanied by the ubiquitous Abdulla Darwish, was also on the ship on his way to England to represent his father at the Coronation. Qatar and Bahrain were not on good terms, though this perhaps is a mild description of the situation, and we did not wish to make the journey through Europe *en famille* with the large Qatar party which included several children and a number of very uncivilized negro 'slaves'. I found that they proposed to stay at the same places en route as we did. I had to ensure that we stayed at different hotels at Venice and at Montreux—perhaps they too were trying to do the same thing, for several times I had to send cables cancelling hotel reservations and reserving rooms in other hotels.

We had a pleasant, calm voyage to Venice which was a restful change after the very busy time which I had been having before I left Bahrain, and good preparation for the strenuous time which lay ahead. The two parties mixed to a certain extent on board, but at meals we sat on one side of the saloon and the Qatar party sat on the other side. A young Englishman belonging to the Iraq Petroleum Company was acting as 'bear

leader' to the Qatar Shaikh. I did not envy him his job as Abdulla Darwish's grating voice constantly echoed through the ship, shouting for the Englishman as if he were one of the servants. The Qatar party had brought on board a number of live sheep, and one night they gave an Arab dinner to which they invited us and some of the ship's officers and passengers. The ship's food was so good that personally I regretted having to eat mutton and rice instead of an excellent European dinner. Our people considered it most unfortunate that we could not reciprocate with another dinner, but *we* did not travel with a flock of sheep.

The Shaikh did not go ashore at Alexandria. The political atmosphere was chilly and already Egypt was beginning to broadcast abusive remarks about Bahrain. But some of the Qatar party landed and came back laden with purchases, scent, watches and shoes—Shaikh Ahmed's small boy, quite a nice child, bought six pairs. This same child, when he was about six years old, was given a miniature motor-car, with an engine. It cost about £400 and was sent out by air to the tune of another £150. Within two months it was smashed and discarded, but as the little boy had £100 a month for pocket money he was able to buy another 'toy'.

As usual, on the last day of the voyage, there was a 'gala' dinner and dance to which the second-class passengers were invited. Knowing what these entertainments were like I wondered beforehand what the Arabs would make of it. There was a profusion of things to throw and to make noises with, and after a slight hesitation the Arabs entered into the fun with great zest. Two elderly English ladies were obviously very gratified at having a paper streamer thrown at them by the Shaikh of Bahrain, who sat in a chair in the centre of the saloon and became a most popular target.

At Venice we stayed at the Gritti Palace Hotel on the Grand Canal; it was luxurious and there were some very fine pictures in some of the rooms. When I told the Shaikh that the pictures probably added to the cost of the rooms he said, 'Why don't they take them away?' Our party did not show much enthusiasm for Venice; they insisted that it must be unhealthy owing to the water and regretted that the canals had not been filled in to make roads so that cars could drive up to the doors of the hotels. The day which the Shaikh most enjoyed was when he and his son and ourselves drove to Asolo, a lovely little hill town on the foothills of the Dolomites, about forty miles inland, to have luncheon with Freya Stark. Her house was delightful; we lunched in a flower-filled garden, and afterwards the Shaikh took a siesta and in the afternoon she took us to tea at a magnificent Palladian villa belonging to the Volpi family.

Our next stop was Montreux, my 'home town'. It was beautiful



weather and the lake and the mountains were looking their best. The Shaikh liked Switzerland and remarked on the cleanliness and orderliness of the place; he liked the water too, which he said was the best he had ever drunk. If one only drinks water one becomes a connoisseur of water. We spent a day at Geneva and listened to a debate in the United Nations building; the local authorities of Montreux entertained the Shaikh in the castle of Chillon, which I had known since I was a small boy, and my Swiss cousins gave a reception for him in their house at Territet. Among the guests were two or three old ladies who had known my family and my grandmother. One of them, pointing to me, said to the Shaikh, 'I remember him when he was so high.' She indicated a very diminutive height with her hand. 'Indeed,' said the Shaikh, 'the climate here is evidently very healthy and people live to great ages.'

On Sunday morning the Shaikh said that he would like to go in a tram. Under the disapproving eyes of the Head Porter of the Palace Hotel, where we were staying, who seemed to think that a car was more suitable, we boarded a tram outside the hotel and went to Vevey, where I had once been at school. Having arrived there I suggested that we should walk down to the lake. The manners of the Swiss were admirable. We were rather an unusual party, the Shaikh and the other Arabs were, as always, wearing Arab dress, but though people looked interested nobody followed us or crowded round us as they had done at times in Venice. In the market place a fair was going on; there were roundabouts, sideshows and shooting booths. Here we stopped and for some time while everyone in the party shot at the moving targets, with considerable success. Among other odd things which we won was a teddy bear. Considering the amount which they spent on shots it must have cost quite a lot. I suggested getting cars to take us back to Montreux, but the Shaikh said he wished to go back by tram.

A Swiss woman and her small boy, he was about five years old, got into the tram. Soon I heard, in French, an argument going on between them. 'They are Indians,' said the mother. 'No,' said the little boy, 'they are Arabs, Indians don't wear things on their heads like that.' The mother, a stupid-looking woman, was getting impatient. 'Be quiet,' she said. 'I know they are Indians.' However, the small boy was not to be beaten and continued to argue. The Shaikh saw that they were talking about him. He took the teddy bear from one of the servants, beckoned to the little boy, who walked down the tram to where the Shaikh sat, and solemnly presented him with the teddy bear. It was an enormous success. Both the boy and his mother were delighted, but when they got out I whispered

to the boy as he passed me, 'You are right, they *are* Arabs; he is an Arab Shaikh.' As they left the tram I heard the small boy telling his mother, triumphantly, that she was wrong.

In Paris we went to see the de Boussac stables at Chantilly and the Bahrain Petroleum Company gave a dinner party for the Shaikh at Maxims, after which we went to a revue at Bal Tabarin. The Shaikh left before the entertainment was over; I stayed till the end, and I think it was perhaps fortunate that he left when he did. Most Arabs have a preconceived idea that Paris is the wickedest city in the world, though nowadays those in the know are beginning to go more to Hamburg in order to see night life at its sheerest. We were met at Victoria Station by the Duke of Edinburgh. We had not been warned that he would be there. A delegation from one of the South American countries was in the same train, there was slight confusion on the platform and I found myself some distance from the Shaikh when he alighted so had no opportunity to tell him who was meeting us. In the car on the way to the Mayfair Hotel, he said to me, 'Who was that young man at the station who was so polite?'

A very full programme had been arranged, which might have exhausted a man more accustomed to non-stop social activities and late nights than the Shaikh, but he stood up to it very well. On the night before the Coronation we attended an Ice Review at Hammersmith, a type of entertainment which was new to me, so I did not think of warning the others to wear thick clothes; we sat in the front row almost on the ice and felt colder and colder till eventually we decided to leave; both the Shaikh and I started heavy colds after this entertainment. Arriving at the door we found that the drivers of our official cars had disappeared. The Shaikh suggested taking a bus, but buses at Hammersmith were not the same as trams in Montreux so we returned to the hotel in a taxi. It was pouring with rain and quite cold, yet in the West End thousands of people were camping out all night on the pavements waiting to see the Queen next day. This impressed the Shaikh almost more than anything else during his visit.

During the drive to the Abbey for the Coronation, the car in which the Shaikh and I were in was at one time alongside the Persian Ambassador's car and we eyed each other with curiosity. Doubtless the Ambassador was thinking of his country's claim to Bahrain. The Shaikh had a seat in the inner part of the Abbey and I had one in the nave. He was immensely impressed by the religious part of the service, which he understood although he spoke no English, and by the magnificence and smooth organization of the ceremony. We left the hotel at 8 a.m. and did not

get back till after 4 p.m., but when someone asked the Shaikh if he was not tired after so many hours in the Abbey he replied that he had found it so interesting that the time in the Abbey had seemed not more than a quarter of an hour.

Out of a full and varied programme of official and private functions, it is difficult to describe any particular incident as having made most impression on the Shaikh, but apart from the Coronation and his meeting with the Queen perhaps his visit to Sir Winston Churchill at 10 Downing Street came next, for he had a great admiration for 'Shirshill'. He saw many of the great houses of England—Hatfield, Lambeth Palace and Blenheim—he attended State banquets and receptions, he went to the Derby, to dog racing and to Richmond Horse Show, where he lunched in a caravan with Captain C. E. Kendall, who was the Government Purchasing Agent in London. When, later in the summer, the Shaikh's two older sons came to London they bought two caravans to take back to Bahrain for use on hunting trips. He saw a boxing match which he thought rather barbarous, but which I enjoyed. He was present at the Naval Review and went down the Thames to the docks in the yacht of the Port of London Authority. He was at the Trooping the Colour, he visited the Lord Mayor and the Bank of England and saw a parade of Lady Wentworth's Arab horses at Crabbet Park. He lunched one day at Oxford, at Lincoln College, and spent a day at Brighton and he attended innumerable luncheon and dinner parties in London.

An amusing incident occurred at an enormous Garden Party which was given at Blenheim by the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough. As we were leaving, walking through the hall, I noticed that young Shaikh Mohammed was not with us. I looked back and saw him standing in front of an old-fashioned porter's chair with a hooded top, made of leather. I went back to see what was attracting him. Curled up in the chair, with an enormous cigar, sat Sir Winston Churchill, and the sight of the Prime Minister sitting in this peculiar chair seemed to fascinate the young Shaikh.

## Nineteen

If the success of a drama is to be measured by the effects which it produces upon the people for whom it is composed, or upon the audience before whom it is represented, no play has ever surpassed the tragedy known in the Mussulman World as that of Hasan and Husain.

*The Miracle Play of Hasan and Husain.*

COLONEL SIR LEWIS PELLY (1879)

It was the great Mahommedan festival which is sacred to the memory of Husain, the son of Ali. The history of Islam contains nothing more touching than the event which gave rise to that solemnity.

*Lord Clive. Critical and Historical Essays.*

LORD MACAULAY. 1800-1859

WE RETURNED to Bahrain in September. Outwardly everything seemed as before, but I soon found that below the surface there was a strong undercurrent of political unrest. It manifested itself by floods of anonymous notices and letters and by violent articles in the local Press. Anonymous letters never worried me, I had a drawer full of them, but the Arabs regarded them seriously. The local newspapers were edited by irresponsible young men who found that the more violently they wrote the better sales they had. The papers were constantly suppressed by order of the Shaikh then, after an interval, they were allowed to appear again. Freedom of the Press in a country where editors have some regard for the truth and where a law of libel exists is an admirable thing, but in Bahrain there was no law of libel.

There was trouble too between Sunnis and Shias. Sunnis are orthodox Moslems. Shias believe that after the death of the Prophet Mohammed his nephew and son-in-law, Ali, should have become the first Caliph, to be succeeded by his heirs. The dissension between the two sects in Bahrain

had been intensified by a dispute among the members of the Manama Municipal Council as a result of which all the Shia members, who were a minority on the Council, had resigned. One of my first jobs on returning was to try to persuade the recalcitrant Shias to return to the Council.

I had endless interviews with the three Shia leaders, two of whom were good friends of mine. The third man was a tricky character, bitter and hard with no sense of humour. When he laughed, which was rarely, it was to express contempt. He used to shout at me, 'The Baharna [Shias] are oppressed and down-trodden, nobody employs them, nobody considers them.' I interrupted him: 'What about all the Shias who hold important Government posts? Are not some of them Heads of Departments? You forget that the secretary who does my confidential work is a Shia.' He would brush off my remarks, becoming quite hysterical about the imagined wrongs of his co-religionists.

Mansoor Araydh was a different type, he belonged to a well-known family which produced useful citizens and a poet of some fame. He was a pearl merchant and landowner and had been much in India. He was large and stout. In the summer he wore an almost transparent white garment, and when calling on me he used to push off his headshawl and sit bare-headed—a most unorthodox habit. He had a wide knowledge of social and political problems abroad, and often surprised me with apt quotations from the Bible or from Shakespeare, though he spoke no English. Much to my sorrow before I left Bahrain he became blind, which ended his career as a pearl merchant.

The third 'leader', also a pearl merchant, was amiable and rotund, dressed in a symphony of browns and yellows. He used to walk out to his pleasant garden beyond the town every evening, where he sometimes gave tea parties, which was unusual as few people ever walked a step in Bahrain if they could afford to go by bus or car. At our meetings he was inclined to echo the sentiments of the last person who spoke. These were the three men with whom for days and weeks I discussed the impasse on the Municipal Council, but to no avail.

During the first ten days of the month of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic year, Shias in Bahrain, and elsewhere, commemorate the martyrdom of Hasan and Husain, the sons of Ali, the only surviving grandsons of the Prophet Mohammed. The bitter feeling between the two sects is fanned to fever heat by recitals and representations of incidents which happened in Iraq over a thousand years ago. Some Governments forbid any public demonstrations, but because the population of Bahrain is partly Sunni and partly Shia the Shaikh allowed the Shias to carry out





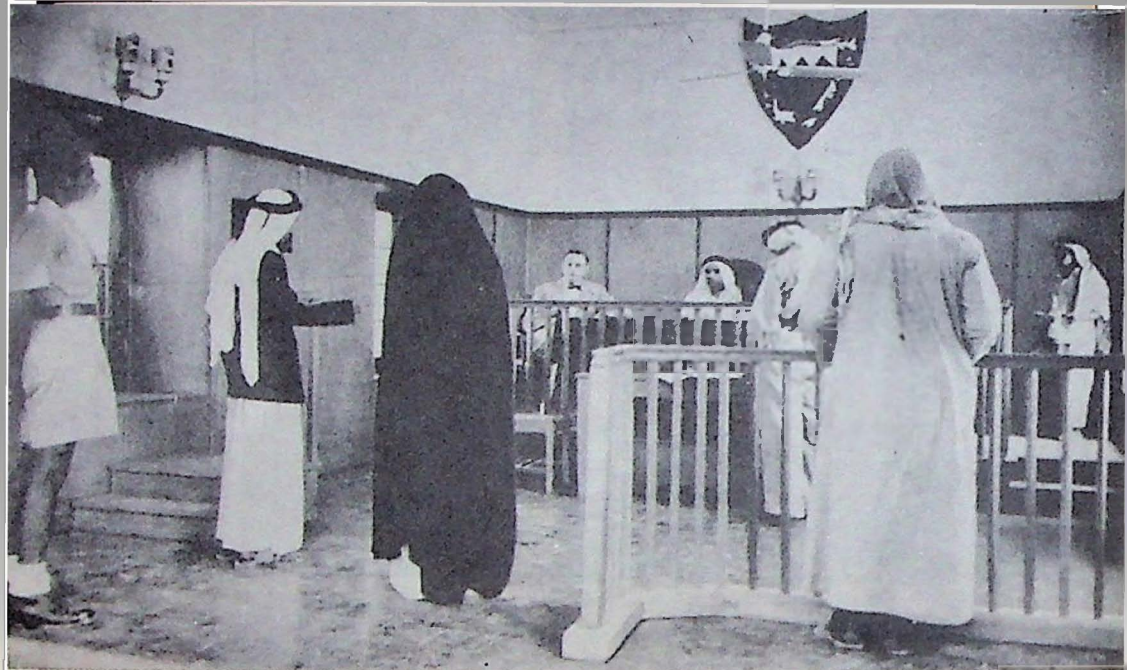
The Muharram Procession.  
Chest beaters



The Muharram Procession.  
Head cutters

An Arab war-dance





*Walter Sanders—courtesy 'Life' Magazine. © 1952 Time Inc.*

**In Court. On the bench, C.D.B. and Shaikh Daij bin Hamed**

**A Palace dinner party. *Left to right:* H.R.H. the late Amir Abd-al-Ilah of Iraq, Shaikh Mohammed bin Isa, Lady Belgrave. On the dish a young roasted camel**

*Photo: Bahrain Petroleum Co.*





their traditional observances, though the motif was an attack on the early orthodox Caliphs of the sect to which the Shaikh belonged.

Ali was assassinated in A.D. 660. Hasan, his eldest son, was reputed to have been poisoned in A.D. 668. Husain, his infant son, his young nephew and some of his relations and followers were killed in battle on the plain of Kerbala, south of Baghdad, on October 9th, A.D. 680.

From the first day of Muharram the Bahrain Shias assemble after sunset in the matems in Manama and in the villages. Matems resemble church halls in England; they are supported by religious endowments and are used for religious and other meetings, for accommodating travellers and for the preliminaries of funerals. Some of them are ancient and picturesque buildings. People may eat and smoke in them, but this is permissible in some of the mosques. Once when looking at some gardens in connection with a case the villagers invited me to have luncheon with them. To my astonishment they led me to a mosque where the meal was spread. I protested and asked whether it was right that I should eat a meal in a mosque. My host, a fat jovial man, reputed to be able to eat ten chickens at a sitting, assured me that it was permissible. We all sat down and enjoyed a merry meal together.

Some preachers who speak in the matems at Muharram are local mullahs, but wealthy matems hire 'readers', as they are called, from Iraq, Persia and Katif, paying them four or five hundred pounds for the ten days of Muharram. On the tenth day, 'Ashur', the Shias take part in a great religious procession through the streets of Manama enacting what has been described as 'The Miracle Play of Hasan and Husain'. In recent years less emphasis has been given to the dramatic side of the procession and the organizers, who are the heads of the matems, have concentrated on producing larger numbers of flagellants, chest-beaters and head-cutters. I used to spend one or two nights during Muharram visiting the matems and listening to the preachers. If I failed to put in an appearance at the principal matems I got messages enquiring why I had not been to them. Apart from myself very few, if any, Europeans entered the matems, and if they had wished to do so I am not sure that they would have been welcomed. We had to restrain Europeans from watching the procession in the daytime because they used to laugh at what was to the participants a religious demonstration; they ran along the side of the procession sticking cameras into people's faces. The Shias regarded this as ill-mannered as we would regard photographers taking snapshots and movie pictures of the mourners at a funeral. After we had been in Bahrain for some years Marjorie was invited to attend a women's matem; these were similar

to the men's matems but exclusively for women. She is probably the only European woman who has been in a matem during Muharram.

I left the house on foot, alone, and walked through the dark passage-like lanes to the Shia quarter. Lights shone in many of the little windows of the tall houses which edged the streets, I met parties of black-robed women hurrying along towards their matems; as they passed me they hid their faces in their cloaks, but often I heard them giggling to each other and murmuring '*al Mustashar*'—'the Adviser'. They all knew me by sight. Even the most strictly purdah women were allowed to leave their homes to attend the matems on the nights of Muharram. I usually went to three or four matems each night; my favourite was a very old one, so old that the floor was several feet below the level of the road, hidden away among the lanes of the Shia quarter. Though I knew the town inside out I sometimes found it difficult to locate it at night even with a ten-days-old moon.

Stooping under an arched doorway I entered the building and received a full blast of the atmosphere from inside, a combination of pungent tobacco, coffee fumes and humanity. I found myself in a big hall. The high roof was supported by stone pillars, which were draped with black material in the same way as the minarets of the Shia mosques were draped in black as a sign of mourning. Around the four sides of the matem were arched aisles carrying a lower roof. The place reminded me of a Saxon church. It was lit by oil lamps which gave a yellowish light; later, the matems took to using electricity and fluorescent lighting which seemed out of keeping with the proceedings. Against one of the pillars was a rough dais with two steps and a chair on the top, covered with Persian carpets. Behind the chair were two banners; one was a vivid green, the other was black with gold lettering. On the stone floor, which was covered with reed mats, sat a solid mass of men, most of them in white robes, but here and there young fellows wore coloured shirts or pullovers. Every minute more people came in and somehow managed to find places.

I had arrived before the preacher had begun; people were still smoking and drinking coffee. The chief men came forward and welcomed me and then started the usual argument. 'I will get you a chair,' said one of them. 'No, thank you,' I replied. 'I much prefer sitting on the floor.' The old Haji seemed quite distressed. 'We can borrow a chair from the house next door; you will be more comfortable on a chair,' he said. But eventually I persuaded them to let me sit on the ground, on a very old carpet which somebody produced. I would have felt awkward and conspicuous

sitting up on a chair above all the other people. Just after I had finished my coffee the mullah arrived. There was a stir among the people, who left off smoking as he made his entrance from a distant corner of the hall.

He was a tall, sallow man with a saturnine expression. His beard was dyed black, he had a prominent nose and large, expressive eyes. He wore a black, round turban, a black cloak and a green scarf round his neck, which he used with dramatic effect while he was preaching. His voice was rather hoarse, he had been preaching for several hours each day for the last eight days, but it carried all through the hall and the people who thronged outside the barred windows could hear what he said; he possessed the histrionic skill of a Victorian tragedian, but the story which he proceeded to tell needed little dramatization to wring the hearts of his audience.

At first he spoke quietly and softly and the audience listened, silent, with rapt attention. His voice increased in volume and intensity as he began to tell the piteous story of Husain; there were occasional groans and choked sobs from one or two of the older men. Then he became more dramatic, describing the scene on the plain of Kerbala, pausing every few minutes to wipe the tears from his eyes; sometimes the story became a chant in what sounded like blank verse. Now men in the audience were weeping without restraint, swaying to and fro. With his voice breaking with sobs the preacher began to tell of Husain's last moments; how, when he was wounded and exhausted, with the dead body of his little son in his arms, he sank down outside his tent, overcome by thirst, and drank some water, and as he drank an arrow, shot by one of the enemy, pierced his mouth. The preacher buried his face in his scarf and his body shook with sobs. Not a man in the audience was dry-eyed, and even the 'modern' youths were swaying and crying. Then came the climax. The preacher, half rising from his chair, leaning forward above the hundreds of swaying, weeping men, described the death of Husain, and how the horsemen of the enemy rode over and trampled on his body. Now everyone in the audience was in a frenzy of emotional excitement; men beat their chests and foreheads and the hall resounded with moans and cries. Nobody, not even I, could feel unmoved at this harrowing story of over a thousand years ago. For a minute the preacher sat silent while the mass of men swayed and moaned, some of them bursting into paroxysms of hysterical sobbing.

Then, suddenly, without a sign or a signal, every man was on his feet. The old men moved out of the way into the aisles of the building. The younger men, stripping off most of their clothes, which they wrapped



into bundles, twisting white or coloured cloths round their waists, leaving chests and arms bare, formed a circle in the centre of the hall; then another and yet another circle. The circles of men revolved slowly round, each man with one arm clasping the waist of his neighbour while with his other arm he beat his own chest, chanting the words, 'Ya Hasan, Ya Husain,' stamping violently in rhythm to the tune of the chant. I stood by the door watching this savage scene. What a subject it would make for an artist! Many times I had tried to paint it but it needed someone with the skill of Gustave Doré to do justice to the mass of glistening, naked bodies, the yellow lamplight, the dim arches in the background and the sombre figure of the mullah on his seat above the crowd, absorbed by the sight of the men whom he had roused to such a pitch of excitement.

For some minutes the matem was full of the sound of hoarse chanting, stamping feet and the pistol-like smack of hundreds of open palms on bare chests, which has a curiously sensual effect. Then the leader of one of the circles edged towards the door and in a moment the crowd of men, four or five hundred of them, poured out into the street where they formed into a procession to join the other bands of men from other matems. All that remained were a few old men, too old to take part in the procession, who began slowly to collect the coffee cups and pipes and, one by one, to put out the lights.

I walked to the Persian matem. It was the largest one in the town but an unattractive building. The streets were full of people hurrying to places where they could best see the procession and crowds of women, looking like black crows, perched along the edges of the roofs of the houses which lined the route. I was led up a flight of stairs on to a flat roof where one could look down, through windows, into the matem where the Persian mullah was ending his recital, and from where I overlooked the street where the procession passed. There were chairs on the roof and people brought glasses of sweet Persian tea. Soon the men surged into the street; it was quite a wide road, packed on each side by spectators who were kept away from the centre by the police. It was a difficult time for the police, they had been on duty during the previous eight nights, keeping an eye on the matems and escorting the night processions. Trouble invariably occurred if parties of men from two matems met in a narrow road because neither would give way. We used to arrange a timetable with the Shia leaders in order to avoid any clashes, but it did not always work. When everyone was tense and excited anything might happen and sometimes things did happen.

Soon I heard a thudding of drums in the distance and the shrill

ululating of women and I saw, reflected on the walls of houses, yellow, moving lights. The noise became louder as the head of the procession came slowly into the road below, and the women on the houses opposite added their shrill cries to the sound of the music. First came a few policemen carrying 'lathis'—staves, making sure that the way was clear, then a group of men and boys carrying flags and banners on tall poles with the symbol of a hand on the point of the poles; they chanted and threw dust on their heads. Musicians followed them playing different types of drums and flutes; the tune was sad and dirge-like. Then came the 'tabuts', each carried by four men. They were models of the mosques in the Holy Cities with gleaming gilt domes and tall minarets, illuminated inside by candles; the whole procession was lit by men carrying torches. Men led horses, their caparisons smeared with red paint representing blood, and some had arrows sticking into the trappings. The horses were usually lent by the Shaikh and as they were not trained to crowds they occasionally bolted among the spectators.

One of the horses carried a man with a sword splitting his skull, a realistic piece of stagecraft, so were the corpses borne along on biers; one of them had two live pigeons fastened to it, apparently pecking the body, which symbolized birds of prey. Every figure and every animal, and everything which appeared in the procession, represented something connected with the story of Ali, Hasan and Husain. A crowd of small children in black, tied by ropes, were beaten, with palm branches, by 'soldiers' in red coats; another corpse was carried past, being devoured by a man dressed as a leopard. Husain, in a green turban and a black cloak, riding a white horse, was one of the principal figures. The only character who was allowed some licence for buffoonery was the 'Christian General' who according to legend was present at Kerbala. His part was taken by a man sitting at a table, wearing a sun helmet, with a telescope in one hand and a bottle of whisky in the other. As each feature of the procession passed the women on the roofs either shrieked and sobbed and beat their breasts or yelled imprecations at the actors who took the villains' parts.

Next came the swordsmen, marching to a slow tune, in two lines facing each other. They looked like surgeons ready for an operation as they wore white overalls. The fronts of their heads were shaved and each man carried a sharp Arab sword. The actual blood-letting only took place during the daytime procession, it could not be done twice.

The most spectacular part of the procession were the flagellants, consisting of several hundred active young men dressed in black caps, shorts

and tunics. The tunics were open at the back across the shoulders exposing bare flesh. Each man had a 'cat-o'-nine-tails' with a short wooden handle, to which were attached a number of thin metal chains. With this instrument they beat their backs at the same time performing what was almost a dance, two long steps sideways; then the whips swung in the air and were brought down on the bare backs, then two more sideways steps, all carried out in time to the tune which the chain-swingers sang. Their leader, with frantic energy, ran up and down the long double line of men, sometimes leaping in the air, clashing cymbals to keep them in time. The black figures as they raised their steel whips made monstrous shadows on the smooth, flat walls along the side of the street.

Hundreds of chest-beaters brought up the rear in rings of twenty or thirty men and boys, their naked bodies shining with sweat, their chests raw and bleeding; they ran for a little distance, then paused and formed a circle, linked together, bending inwards, belabouring their chests, with short guttural shouts. They made a splash of colour in the light of the torches, for their waist-cloths were brilliantly coloured.

I walked home to my house and went to bed on the roof, but it was some time before I could sleep. From all over the town came the sound of clashing cymbals, chanting, and the wailing of women. I have always thought that this savage saturnalia below the deep blue Eastern sky, the strange, haunting music, the wild, torch-lit figures, the colour and the atmosphere, not only of religious fanaticism but of something erotic as well, would make a magnificent motif for a ballet.

In 1953 Muharram was in September. I watched the daytime procession from a police lorry in an open square in Manama. By light of day the procession was less impressive than at night, but the swordsmen always provided a thrill of excitement as they moved round the square with blood pouring from their foreheads over their faces and clothes. Men ran along beside them dabbing them with cotton wool soaked in disinfectant and sometimes, when the weather was hot, two or three of the head-cutters had to be carried off to hospital. It was a genuine blood-letting, though some of the Europeans did not believe this. I knew all about it, having been behind the scenes in the yard where they assembled before and after the show. Admittedly some of the men first cut their foreheads with razor blades to cause the blood to flow more rapidly. While part of the procession was still in the square a police officer came running to the lorry with the news that there was fighting about half a mile away at another part of the route.

In the lorry, with a dozen policemen, I drove to the scene of the

trouble. We had to make a wide *détour* because the streets were blocked by crowds waiting to see the return of the procession. There was a nasty scrap going on. Arab spectators and Shias from the procession were fighting, using sticks and stones and broken bottles, while the women on the roofs threw things indiscriminately on to the people in the street. When I appeared, riding on a lorry, many of the people cheered and some of the men who were fighting took to their heels, but there had been a good many casualties, though none of them were fatal. The police guard at the Agency, seeing an excited crowd running towards the building, not realizing that they were seeking refuge, fired in the air from the roof thinking that they were being attacked, which added to the confusion. The Shias accused the Sunni spectators of deliberately provoking a disturbance, and the Sunnis declared that they were attacked by the Shias. In the enquiry which was held later it was found that there had been a quarrel between two men in the procession in which the spectators had joined.

There was tense excitement throughout the town. Crowds of Shias who had taken part in the procession rushed to their matems where people made fiery speeches. For a while it seemed likely that there would be a general Sunni-Shia conflict. I went to some of the matems and tried to calm the people, who were almost frantic with the excitement of the Muharram atmosphere and the incident during the procession. Wild rumours spread to all the villages and towns and in Muharraq, on the other island, the Sunnis heard that the Arabs in Manama were being attacked by the Shias, so when a party of Shias crossed the causeway, on their way back to their villages in Muharraq island, they were roughly handled by a Sunni crowd. At nightfall we imposed a curfew and the police patrolled the streets. Outwardly everything was quiet but both factions were in a state of nervousness, fearing that they would be attacked by the others.

Next day only a few of the Shias employed by BAPCO turned up for work and the Sunnis, thinking that the Shias might be contemplating an attack on their homes, began to leave their work and return to their houses in the towns. Meanwhile the company carried on with half its workers absent. The Shaikh was away in the country—he usually went out during the Ashur celebrations—so I drove out to see him at the little house in a garden by the sea on the west coast. I gave him a full account of all that had happened and told him what steps I had taken. On my way back I stopped at a police post which I had set up on the main road. While I was there several lorries and buses, full of Arabs returning from

the oil fields, were halted by the police. We made the men get out and found that every one of them was armed with an iron bar or a hammer or some sort of instrument, with which, they said, they would defend themselves against the Shias. We removed their 'arms' and let the buses go on at ten-minute intervals to prevent a large number of men arriving together.

My next port of call was Muharraq, where I found crowds of Sunnis in the streets waiting for any Shias who might appear. While I was dispersing the crowd with a few policemen I got a message that there was trouble in Arad, an isolated little Shia village on Muharraq island. I arrived to find that my two brother judges, Shaikh Daij and Shaikh Ali bin Ahmed, with some police, had got there first. A mob of young Arabs had attacked the village, beaten and stoned many of the people and injured two or three men with a shotgun. A number of men had been arrested, though most of them got away into the date-gardens when they sighted the police in the distance. The sun had set by the time I got back to Manama, but I sent for some of the leading Sunnis and Shias and arranged with them that they should go out in pairs, one Sunni and one Shia, to the villages to calm the people. This plan worked well and within a day or two conditions had returned more or less to normal.

During the rest of the year there was an uneasy truce between Shias and Sunnis. The situation was not improved by the happenings in Saudi Arabia. The old King, Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, was dying and the Amir of Hasa, Saud ibn Jiluwi, was ill in hospital so the Aramco workers took this opportunity to go on strike. Large numbers of Bahrain Arabs who worked in Saudi Arabia came back to Bahrain full of talk of strikes and labour demands. However, when the strike leaders were arrested and taken to Riyadh, the capital; the strike collapsed and the Bahrain Arabs went back to their jobs on the mainland.

The remaining days of Muharram and the month of Safar, which follows Muharram, passed off quietly. During Safar some of the Shia Baharna perform a play in secret, which no Sunnis are allowed to witness. It is a lewd affair but rather amusing and once or twice I managed to see it. At the end of Safar I saw the usual picturesque ceremony in the Shia villages, when bands of women and children go from house to house with blazing torches, going in and out of each room, 'burning out the month of Safar'. On another evening the children in the towns and villages near the sea come down to the shore at sunset carrying tins and dishes on which they have grown corn, which is several inches high. They place the tins carefully in the sea and they stand on the shore singing and clapping their hands as the little green islands float slowly away over the water.



## Twenty

The practice of politics in the East may be defined by one word—dissimulation.

BENJAMIN DISRAELI. 1804-1881

THE telephone rang stridently. I picked it up. A voice said, in Arabic, 'Take care, Belgrave, they are planning to shoot you.' 'Nonsense,' I said, 'don't be silly. Who are you?' The man at the other end rang off.

It was 1954, a year of continual political unrest, strikes, demonstrations and disturbances starting with sectarian quarrels which gave place to agitation directed against the Government. Bahrain had become a very different place to what it was when I had first known it. I was working at night, in my upstairs office, as anyone who passed the house could see, for the lighted windows were visible from the main road beyond the garden. It was not possible to trace the call, the telephones were now automatic, so I never discovered whether the warning was genuine or intended to alarm me. It succeeded in annoying me for I disliked being disturbed when I was working late in my office.

During the spring the feeling between Sunnis and Shias was intensified. Every case in court in which people of the two sects were involved became a test case and the party who lost asserted that the court favoured his opponent's sect. The fact that both sides complained indicated that the court was impartial. A Sunni had an argument with a Shia in the market. The Shia hit the Sunni, who subsequently died. Medical evidence showed that the Sunni suffered from a disease which contributed to his death, but there was great indignation among the Sunnis, because the Shia was let off with what they considered a light sentence. Three Arabs who were involved in an attack on a Shia village were deported for a year. This punishment was considered inadequate by the Shias. The tense situation made my work in the court very difficult.

In January I had a pleasant change when I accompanied Shaikh Sulman

on a visit to King Saud of Arabia. The King met us at Dhahran with a number of his relations and court officials. Among them were Yusuf Yasin, a Syrian, who was a powerful influence in foreign affairs, Jamal al Huseini, a relation of the ex-Mufti of Jerusalem, and Rashid Ali, who led the unsuccessful revolt against the British in Iraq in 1941, now a political exile at the court of King Saud. Contrary to my expectations all three seemed very friendly disposed towards me.

We drove to Dammam and were lodged in the house of the Amir, Saud ibn Jiluwi. My driver was a wild young Bedouin, with long ringlets. He drove like a madman, cutting in and trying to get ahead of the other cars in the procession, singing to the tunes which blared forth from the car's radio, turning round to talk to me, ignoring the road ahead of him. I was given a room to myself in the Amir's palace; it contained a bed, nine enormous chairs and two sofas, but no table or mirror or place to hang clothes. The sanitary arrangements were primitive. The 'Royal Guards' were much in evidence; some of them were stationed outside my door. Their bright-blue tunics and blue trousers with a scarlet stripe were quite smart, but the effect was marred by untidy Arab headcloths. My police orderly was very critical of their drill and discipline. In Bahrain it was I who made arrangements for visits such as ours, so I took a professional interest in the way that things were done in Saudi Arabia. Nobody ever knew what was going to happen next, or when or where! I congratulated myself that our hosts could have learned a lot from us.

On the day before we left, after I had gone to bed, the Shaikh sent for me. Putting a dressing-gown over my pyjamas I went to his room, where I found him with some of the family in solemn conclave, discussing how to distribute the lavish largesse which had been given by the King. I was told that I was to have a Pontiac car, the one in which I had carcered across the desert. When I protested and said that I could not accept it I was told, firmly, that it would be the height of bad manners to refuse the King's gift. Breakfast next morning consisted of several sheep and a few dozen chickens, imported from America—rather overwhelming in my case, as I normally ate a very light breakfast. We left for Bahrain by air, taking ten minutes, with a favourable wind, from Dhahran to Muharraq aerodrome.

In March young King Faisal of Iraq and his uncle, Amir Abd-al-Ilah, visited Bahrain. Marjorie and I had often met the Amir but it was the first time that we had met and entertained the King. We found him extremely pleasant and easy, he seemed to enjoy wandering round our house and looking at the books and pictures. He and his uncle were keen gardeners,

and they found plants in my garden which they had not got in Baghdad, so I gave them an assortment to take to Iraq. We were horrified and grieved when they and many others, including ladies of the Royal Family, were brutally murdered in July 1958.

At the end of June there was a fracas between Sunnis and Shias at the gates of the refinery at Sitra. Trouble started with a squabble about a bicycle among some boys who worked in the refinery. Arabs from a neighbouring Sunni village came to see what was going on and the Sitra villagers turned out in force and attacked the Arabs. In the *mêlée* one Arab was killed and several people were wounded. The police made a number of arrests. The culprits were tried in a barrack room at the fort because the court-room could not hold the number of people who were involved. About a dozen men, most of them Shias, were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment which caused an intensification of Sunni-Shia feeling. When the sentences were announced there was an uproar among the Shias and next day they held a mass meeting in a mosque opposite the fort.

I was in my office waiting for a report about the meeting when the telephone rang. It was Shaikh Khalifah, who had recently been promoted to Director of Public Security, speaking from the fort. 'Come quickly,' he said, 'the fort is being attacked.' There were about 300 men in the police; a large proportion were on outpost duty, and there were always some away on leave so there were only about sixty or seventy men in the fort. As I raced up to the fort I said to myself, 'More trouble,' and indeed when I got there I found trouble enough.

As I turned in by the eastern gate I saw a great crowd milling around on the west side of the fort and I heard several shots. The big doors of the fort were shut. I shouted and beat on them, but there was such a din from outside and from the married lines, where the wives and children of the police were shrieking and screaming, that it was some time before they were opened. When I got in I ran up the steps to the battlements to see from above what was happening outside. It was too late to do anything. Crowds of men were moving away across the open space in front of the fort towards the town, leaving on the ground two or three bodies. My first feeling was of fury that the police should have fired, but later, when I knew what had happened, I realized that they had some excuse for their action.

The crowd at the mosque had been stirred up by the speakers who told them that the Sitra prisoners were in the fort. Somebody must have suggested attacking the fort and freeing them—I was never able to

discover whether this was premeditated or not. There was a dump of scrap iron near the mosque where the crowd picked up iron bars and metal pipes, and one or two of them had revolvers. They closed in on the western side of the fort, around the main entrance, and broke into the garden of the 'bungalow', which was accessible from outside. A senior N.C.O. went out and ordered them to disperse. They ignored him and he only just managed to get back into the fort. It was a plucky action, especially as he was a Sunni. Then the crowd began to move towards the married lines behind the fort, and seeing this some of the police on the tower fired in the air, without orders, and the shots hit several men on the outskirts of the crowd.

Next day there was a strike of Shia workers and over 2000 men were absent from the oil field and refinery; a group of young Shias had told people that it would be dangerous to go back to work. The young Arabs, on their part, appeared with guns and revolvers at the offices where they worked, until I put a stop to this. Crowds of Arab tribesmen, hereditary retainers of the Ruling Family, flocked out to the Rafaa palace where the Shaikh was living to offer their services. Though most of them had been living in towns and villages for generations they were still referred to as 'the Bedouin' and many people, especially the Shia villagers, were afraid of them. When I went to see the Shaikh I found the Bedouin performing war dances in the courtyard of the palace while merchants came out in cars to call on the Shaikh and assure him of their loyalty.

I had several meetings with the Shia leaders, who were sensible and helpful, but I felt that they were losing their grip over the younger men. An enquiry was held to investigate the fort affair, but the general public showed little interest, and people were reluctant to come forward to give an account of what had happened. The court found that the Shias had attempted to liberate their imprisoned friends. It condemned the use of firearms by the police without orders and criticized the lack of action by the police officers who were in the fort. After a day or two labourers in the oil field began to go back to work and the strike ended.

After this strike an important political development took place. Some of the Shias made an alliance with a group of young Sunnis, most of whom were 'Holis' belonging to families who had lived in Bahrain for a few generations. Holis are descended from Arabs who migrated from the Arab coast to Persia many centuries ago and later returned to the Arab side of the Gulf. They are Sunnis of the Shafi sub-sect whereas the Khalifah family and the tribal Arabs belong to the Malaki sub-sect. Most of the leading merchants in Bahrain are Holis. The Sunni-Shia combina-

tion formed a committee which held meetings in mosques, ostensibly on religious occasions but actually to provide a platform for political speakers. They put forward a number of demands, some of which were reasonable and some which were manifestly unreasonable. They asked for an elected council, of which they, presumably, would be the members, which would rule the country. They demanded reforms in the courts, where they objected to all the judges except the Shia Kadhis, being Sunnis, and they asked for a code of law. Before these demands were made the Shaikh had appointed a British Judicial Adviser, Geoffrey Peace, who had legal experience and knowledge of the Middle East. He held the post, doing a great deal of valuable work, until 1958, when he was succeeded by Mr David Humphreys.

I sympathized with the demand for a law code; from my experience of court work I knew how much it was needed. I had tried in the past to adapt the Sudan Code to the requirements of Bahrain, but it had not been officially adopted. Eventually the legal experts of the Foreign Office produced a Criminal Code for use in their courts in the Gulf which, after a number of amendments, was accepted by the Government for use in the Bahrain courts. It was to be brought into use by the Bahrain Government before it was introduced in the British Agency courts. Unfortunately I was on leave when the matter was dealt with. There was immediate opposition to the new code—every innovation in Bahrain met with opposition. The Sunni-Shia committee objected to certain clauses. Their ostensible objections could have been overcome by redrafting or leaving out one or two sections, but their real objection to it was that it had been drafted in London and was therefore suspect. The promulgation of the new law was indefinitely postponed.

The next strike was not for political reasons, though it was backed by the new political party. For some time I had been working on a scheme for compulsory third-party insurance. Every year the number of vehicles on the roads increased and the accident rate was extremely high. In most cases the drivers who were responsible for accidents had no means of paying compensation, and the fact that they were sent to jail was small consolation to their victims or the families of the people who were killed. An Ordinance was drafted, approved by the Shaikh and published. It caused little comment until a few months later when car-owners were reminded that they had to take out an insurance policy before a certain date. Then the trouble began. Bus- and taxi-drivers went on strike.

They copied the technique of the Beirut taxi-drivers who constantly went on strike. They caused an almost total dislocation of traffic by



organizing bands of small boys—and sometimes girls—who strewed the roads with nails, stuck through Coca-Cola bottle tops, which punctured the tyres of hundreds of cars. The boys used to dash out from narrow lanes, lay a few nails and watch the result from dark alleys where they could easily retreat. It may sound absurd that the activity of lads and children caused such serious trouble, but it was very difficult for the police to catch them, and although a number of boys who were caught were suitably dealt with they were not deterred. The strike was to some extent due to the high premiums which were demanded by British and other insurance companies. When the Government gave permission to a local company to compete with the foreign companies most of the opposition died away and the strike ended. However, having once learned 'the nail game' small boys found it such a fascinating occupation that they engaged in it whenever there was any trouble in Bahrain, and sometimes they played it for their own amusement.

Another matter with which I was dealing at this time was house and shop rents. They were fantastically high, and the landlords sometimes doubled or trebled them in a few years, causing great hardship to the small shopkeepers who presented a petition on the subject to the Government. Land prices were high too; building sites in Manama were sold at £1 10s. for one square foot, a price comparable with good sites in London. I set up a committee of landlords and tenants and tried to persuade them to come to an agreement about controlling rents. It was like trying to mix oil and water. The landlords were obstinately avaricious and the tenants were unreasonably demanding; we got nowhere. Finally the Shaikh approved of a law controlling rents which restricted increases to not more than 10 per cent of the original rent each year. Nobody was satisfied. The landlords regarded the increase as inadequate and the tenants considered it excessive, although they were much better off than they had been.

At the end of 1954 the committee of eight, four Sunnis and four Shias, came into being. It called itself 'The Higher Executive Committee'. People asked, 'Higher than what?' The Committee members claimed that they represented the people of Bahrain, which was certainly not the case. The Committee was never recognized by the Shaikh and it was regarded dubiously by responsible Arabs, but it was, in fact, the nucleus of a political party, the first of its kind in the Gulf. It became generally known as 'The Committee'. The Committee was enthusiastically supported by young town Intellectuals whose claim to be 'Intellectuals' rested on their thin veneer of education in local primary and secondary schools and on their ability to repeat, often inaccurately, sentiments and slogans which

they heard on their radios or read in their papers, mostly emanating from Egypt and Syria. The Committee presented a petition to the Shaikh making certain demands.

In December the Shaikh published a proclamation announcing that the Government had taken measures covering many of the matters which had been mentioned in The Committee's petition, but in the meantime The Committee organized a strike. All essential services were maintained and the oil company, which was the principal organization to be affected, carried on with a skeleton staff. This time the strike lasted for about a week as the Government refused to discuss matters until the strikers returned to work. I went out several times to the villages during the strike to see for myself what was happening. Labourers were anxious to go back to work but they were intimidated by men from Manama who told them to stay out. In one village I asked the men why they were on strike. 'We don't know,' they replied, 'but we were told that if we stay away we should get more pay.' Pay was not a question that entered into the matter. One young man, better educated than the rest—he had three Parker pens displayed in his pocket—said, 'We are demanding our rights.' I asked him, 'What rights?' He looked rather sheepish for a minute and then, with a grin, he said, 'I don't know what they are but perhaps you can tell us what we are supposed to be demanding.' I told him about the various changes which the Shaikh was making but neither he nor his friends were interested.

At the end of the year the Shaikh set up a committee of leading Arabs and Baharna to examine popular views on Education and Public Health services, but the Shia members resigned after the first meeting and The Committee tried to boycott the enquiry. However, some good came of this experiment, for in the following year the Shaikh appointed two permanent committees to deal with Education and Public Health affairs. The members were leading Bahrainis with a chairman from the Ruling Family.

In the meantime my own position was beginning to be difficult. I sympathized with some—but by no means all—of the aspirations of the Intelligentsia, but I mistrusted the men who led them, for I knew that they were not actuated by altruistic motives. They were not going the right way to obtain concessions from the Government and their threats and abuse and inflammatory speeches were calculated to provoke unrest and disorder among people who were easily swayed by rhetoric. The more violent they became the less chance they had of obtaining satisfaction, for their attitude caused anger and resentment among the Ruling Family and

alarmed the responsible Bahrainis. Some of their supporters were reputable men but these concealed their political sympathies, being afraid to incur the displeasure of the Shaikh. When they came to see me they expressed strong disapproval of The Committee, but it seemed to me that they 'did protest too much'.

The Committee was afraid of openly attacking the Shaikh but had no scruples over attacking me. I became the subject of scurrilous libels in the Press of the Middle East and in anonymous letters and notices. My friends and my family were more upset by this than I was. It was a very difficult time for Marjorie. People used to come to her with news of what was being said about me and sometimes what was said was very violent. However, she used to pretend not to be worried and she went on with her work at the girls' schools, where she was loyally supported by the staff. I was disappointed to realize that so many of the things which I had worked hard to achieve, such as Education, Security and Public Health, were now the objects of bitter attack by the people who benefited from them. So ended 1954. It had been a troublous, difficult year, both for the Shaikh and for the people who worked for him.



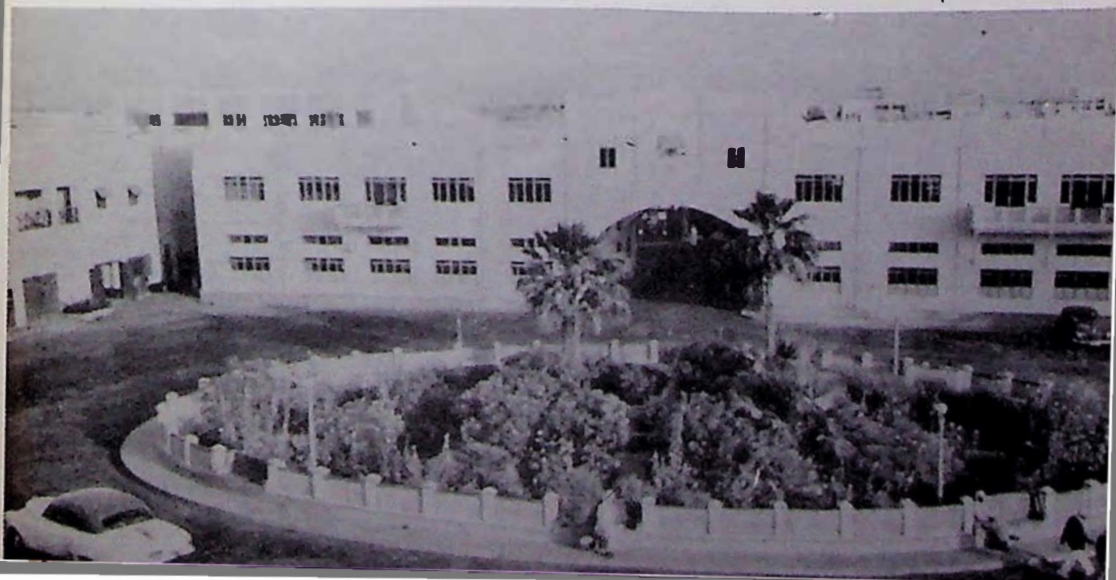
In Manama bazaar, as it was



On the road to Awali

### Bab al Bahrain. Government offices

*Walter Sanders—courtesy 'Life' Magazine. © 1952 Time Inc.*







Shore near Manama, where the ancient capital of Bahrain,  
2000 B.C., is being excavated

My house on Jidda Island





## Twenty-one

At Christmas play and make good cheer,  
For Christmas comes but once a year.

THOMAS TUSSER. 1524-1580

CHRISTMAS and New Year were great occasions in Bahrain. The Arabs regarded these days as being almost as important as their own holidays. There was some reason for this in the case of Christmas for Moslems venerate Jesus Christ as a prophet, but the official celebrations which were held by the British authorities on January 1st commemorated the day on which Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India in 1877, an event in which the people of the Middle East are not now interested.

On Christmas morning, after going to early church, we had a hurried breakfast and usually before we had finished the first guests arrived. We received them in the Veranda Room, where chairs, close together, were ranged along the sides of the big room. The household servants and the 'sparrows' from the office hovered in the background with coffee, sweets and biscuits. From about 8.30 a.m. until 1 p.m. visitors poured in. They greeted us, drank a round of coffee and then departed. Marjorie and I sat at opposite ends of the room talking to the people who were near us; one could discuss the same subjects, as the people to whom one spoke changed every few minutes. It was a democratic gathering; senior Shaikhs would find themselves next to gardeners and policemen, merchants would be alongside town watchmen, and sometimes men who had been in jail visited us, looking only slightly awkward. Moslems, Jews, Christians and Hindus came together and even some of the young men who professed to disapprove of me called on us on Christmas Day. One year we counted the callers; there were between four and five hundred.

When the last visitors had left our servants transformed the room back to its normal state and the luncheon guests arrived. They were Government officials, leavened with a few outsiders. We and some of the senior,

married British officials made sure that all the British who were in the Shaikh's service were invited to luncheon by someone on Christmas Day. We usually had between twenty and thirty people. In the evening we dined out, so it was a non-stop social day.

On New Year's Eve we had a party. The first year there were a dozen people—the entire British and American community in Bahrain—latterly, for many years, we had eighty-four of our friends, in fancy dress, to a sit-down dinner at one long table, followed by a pantomime and then a dance which went on till the early hours of the morning. Eighty-four was the maximum that we could seat at the table. Even in Bahrain, where entertaining was easy, a dinner party of such size required a great deal of organization. We had a four-course dinner—soup, fish, turkey, sometimes gazelle, plum pudding and mince-pies. Marjorie borrowed servants and cooks from some of our friends. The servants were glad to come, for to be asked to help at our New Year party gave them a certain cachet. They worked under our excellent butler, Musa, who after eighteen years' service with us was so proficient that the dinner was always piping hot and there were no pauses between courses.

We dined in the long veranda, which was closed in for the occasion. The band outside on the terrace played old-fashioned popular songs. The guests, mellowed by before-dinner drinks, having shed their inhibitions when they put on fancy dress, sang lustily during the meal with more enthusiasm, perhaps, than musical ability. Fancy dress was absolutely *de rigueur*. Only once did a couple come in evening dress. 'We *never* dress up,' they said. They looked as much out of place as if they had appeared in fancy dress at a formal dinner.

The pantomime was played on a stage at the end of the Veranda Room, the audience sat on rugs and cushions on the floor. It was in three acts, produced and written by myself. It was very topical and rather rude but nobody minded being burlesqued. We put on all the old favourites, *Aladdin*, *The Forty Thieves*, *The Babes in the Wood* and many others. Marjorie and I and about a dozen of our friends took part in it, and I painted the scenery. Nothing was too elaborate or ambitious to attempt. I remember a very successful scene in an aeroplane, and another on board a ship, in which a mermaid emerged from the sea singing a comic song. What I most enjoyed painting was Oriental bazaars, in Bahrain, Baghdad or Peking. Double doors behind the stage made it possible to get some depth in street scenes and interiors. The costumes were excellent, the bazaar provided a wide choice of gay materials which were ideal for theatrical costumes. All the bazaar knew about our party, which they

referred to as 'Belgrave's "fancy"', and when people went to the bazaar to buy materials some old Arab in a hole-in-the-wall shop would call out to them telling them what Mrs So-and-So had bought. The final chorus of the pantomime was always the same, with different topical verses each year; sung to the tune of 'Much Binding in the Marsh', a wartime B.B.C. favourite; it went as follows;

On Bahrain Island in the Gulf  
On every New Year's Eve there is a party.  
On Bahrain Island in the Gulf  
The food is grand, the guests all gay and hearty.  
And after dinner all the folks are seated, line on line,  
To watch and be amused by this delightful pantomime,  
The acting in it's awful, but the scenery's divine,  
In Bahrain Island in the Gulf.

On New Year's morning there were more callers but this was an official affair and I received them on the veranda, feeling rather tight—sartorially, not alcoholically—wearing my grey morning coat, made in 1932 which I still wore in 1957. Some of the Arabs who knew us well went into the house to 'wish' Marjorie, who did not appear on this occasion. With the Shaikh and his relations I then proceeded to the Political Agency, next door, to pay an official call, then I drove with the Shaikh to a Reception at the Residency at Jufair, three miles beyond the town, going slowly to enable the mounted escort to keep up. Everybody who had called on the Resident was invited to the annual Reception so there were usually about 600 people. Many of them showed signs of its being 'the morning after the night before'. It was strange to see so many people wearing dark glasses—irrespective of whether the sun was shining or not!

On New Year's Day there was another celebration. The manumitted slaves and their descendants demonstrated their gratitude for their freedom. They collected in front of the Political Agency and in my compound and sang and danced. Some of them were old men and women who had escaped from slavery many years ago, others had been manumitted more recently, for until a few years ago slavery existed in Qatar and in parts of the Trucial Coast. Their dances and music were typically African, and as I watched them I could imagine myself back in Tanganyika or the Sudan. They danced to the sound of drums, cymbals and horns. One man wore a leather kilt on which were hung hundreds of

dried goats' hooves; as he danced the musical kilt rattled to the time of the tune—it would be an effective innovation in a jazz band.

The women dancers used to appear at weddings; some of them had the reputation of being skilled in Black Magic. They could cast out devils from human beings into goats, and they practised strange rites in their village near the racecourse. I always wanted to see some of their performances, but as they were illegal and not approved of by good Moslems it was difficult for me to be present. By January 2nd our house was once again normal, the 'holiday', which was not much of a 'holiday' for us, was over and I got down to my work.

During 1955 the political situation worsened. The Committee, meeting with no opposition, became more violent and aggressive. Merchants and shopkeepers were alarmed by threats and anonymous letters. They were less interested in political reforms than in the possibility of suffering damage to their property or trade through strikes, sabotage or disturbances so they tried to steer a neutral course, assuring the Shaikh of their loyalty, but at the same time inclining towards The Committee as they saw it becoming stronger. They even gave money to Committee members who demanded donations for 'charitable purposes'. There was no legislation in Bahrain to ensure that the accounts of so-called charities were made public. There was little real patriotism among most of the merchants for the country or the dynasty; many of them had only been in Bahrain for a few generations and their interests were entirely centred in making money.

At the same time Egypt began once again to take an active part in Bahrain affairs. The Saut al Arab broadcasting station in Cairo made violent attacks on me and on 'British Imperialism' in the Gulf, but Cairo had to exercise care. It was not stirring up trouble in a British colony or protectorate but in an Arab state ruled by an Arab Shaikh, and however much Cairo disliked the Shaikh's friendship with Britain it was not its policy to antagonize the Arab rulers of the Gulf. However, this did not deter the Syrian and Egyptian newspapers from attacking me and supporting The Committee. The support from Egypt, whose leader, Nasser, was admired more than any other man in the Arab world by the Intelligentsia, was a great encouragement to The Committee. They now began to think that they were capable of taking over the Government, and they talked of universal franchise and did, in fact, prepare lists of people who were to hold the principal posts in the Government. They did not realize that in the West democratic forms of government had taken many centuries to come into being nor did they appreciate that a constitutional

revolution in a little State where education was only now beginning to show results would lead to confusion and chaos. They regarded the councils and committees which were being set up by the Government, which were a step towards more democratic rule, as being unworthy of their notice. They wanted to run before they had learned to walk.

Without Egyptian encouragement, and without the support which the public believed was being given to them by the British authorities in Bahrain, The Committee would not have gained much ground. Most of the reforms which they demanded would have materialized in due course. A code of law, labour legislation, a judicial expert for the courts and other innovations had been suggested by me to the Shaikh, and approved by him, before The Committee existed. When the Shaikh announced some reform The Committee immediately dropped the subject and hurriedly produced new demands which, as time went on, became more and more unreasonable.

The foreign Press described the eight members of The Committee as responsible, leading members of society. I knew more about their antecedents than did most of their own supporters. Considering their characters and reputations it never ceased to astonish me that they gained such an enthusiastic following. This was greatly due to the demagogic skill which one or two of them possessed, for the Bahrainis are easily moved by words and the Government could not compete with them in this field. I believe that certainly one and possibly two of the eight men were genuinely seeking reforms; the rest had nothing to lose and were out for what they could gain.

The leading personalities were `Abd al Aziz Shemlan and Abd al Rahman Bakr. The former was half negro and half Indian. His father, who was of slave origin—not that I have any prejudice against negroes—a difficult, cantankerous man, was a court wakil and was sent to prison and banished for sedition in the reign of Shaikh Hamed. The son was embittered against the régime which had punished his father. Shemlan had been sent, by the Government, to the Junior School of the Beirut University, where he spent a year. He was employed as confidential clerk by the Air Liaison Officer, R.A.F., and was later a clerk in the Bank of the Middle East where he became the bank's senior Arab employee. He was a dark, ugly man, with a truculent manner and a large moustache, which he cultivated in the R.A.F. style. He was an accomplished tub-thumper and could sway a crowd,

Abd al Rahman Bakr came to Bahrain as a political refugee from Qatar, where he had fallen foul of the Shaikh. Two of his uncles had been



pearl brokers in Bahrain; one of them was concerned in mixing cultured pearls with real pearls which, when Bahrain depended on the pearl trade, was a serious matter. He and his brother finally left Bahrain and returned to Qatar. Bakr was a fat, unhealthy, light-complexioned man, unreliable and excitable. He never made a success of any business and he lived a hand-to-mouth existence. He too was a most persuasive speaker.

Abd Ali Alewat, the third member of the hierarchy, was a small shopkeeper in Manama, a Shia with little or no education. He was involved in transactions in scrap metal, which once was a profitable form of business, but for him it was disastrous and he lost what little capital he possessed. He was bitterly opposed to the Ruling Family, especially to the judges in the courts who had spent much time in trying to disentangle his complicated financial activities.

Another member of The Committee was a mullah of Iraqi origin, who had been disappointed at not having been chosen as a Shia Kadhi, owing to his unsuitability. He was a useful figurehead at meetings; he sat on the platform wearing an enormous black turban and a black robe, looking the part of a learned divine, but he never spoke and never seemed to understand what was being said. The rest of The Committee were stooges. One of them, a little old man who kept a tobacco shop in Manama, who could not sign his own name, told me that he stayed on The Committee because he was afraid of the consequences if he resigned. Below The Committee there was a second group of 100 members consisting of young clerks, schoolteachers and men who travelled frequently between Bahrain and Egypt. It was said that if anything happened to The Committee a hundred young men would leap into the fray, but when five of the eight leaders were finally arrested not a single man came forward.

In the spring of 1955 discussions began about introducing a Labour Law, which I had advocated some time before, though the final law went beyond my original suggestions. I had thought that the time was not yet ripe for trades unions, and that they should be introduced at a later stage. We had no expert to tackle the matter, so when the British Government offered to lend a senior labour expert the offer was accepted. A Labour Advisory Committee was set up to prepare a draft law. It consisted of three Government nominees, three representatives chosen by employers and three men elected by the workers. A second, less senior, labour expert replaced the first one, and it was mainly owing to his patience and hard work that the committee, which began its sittings in April 1955, was

able by October 1956 to submit a draft Labour Law to the Government which, after some amendments, was accepted. It was a considerable achievement. One might have supposed that The Committee, which claimed to be concerned with the rights of workers, would have welcomed it. They displayed small interest in it except by advocating one single trades union for all workers in Bahrain which would have placed great power in the hands of a few men who controlled it who, The Committee assumed, would be themselves.

At about the same time Bakr and Shemlan began to pay frequent visits to the houses of some of the British Residency staff at Jufair, and they told their supporters about the conversations which they had with the British officials. Their versions of these talks may or may not have been true, but it was believed by all the Bahrainis that the British were supporting The Committee against the Shaikh. Some of the young men on the Residency staff doubtless found it interesting to take a hand in local politics, though they knew little about the political situation. Their action, however, did not tend to improve the relations between the Shaikh and the British, nor did it make my own position easier, for The Committee began to intensify its campaign against me.

When I went on leave, in June, I felt very anxious about what might happen while I was away; the day before I left I wrote in my diary: 'I am apprehensive at leaving just now. There are so many sparks that might light up trouble and cause a conflagration.' No major political crisis did occur that summer. The cold season was the time for trouble. In the hot weather, when the climate was damp and, to most people, enervating, there was less crime and less political activity.

Marjorie had gone ahead of me, and after a few weeks in London we sailed in the *Queen Elizabeth* on our first visit to America as the guests of the Standard Oil Company of California. The restful days at sea were a pleasant change after the worries of Bahrain and good preparation for our non-stop tour through the States. In a little over a month we travelled by air, by train and by car, north as far as Buffalo, south as far as New Orleans and across the continent to the West Coast, rarely spending more than one or two nights in the same place. It was a strenuous trip, but we met with so much kindness and hospitality from our American friends that we enjoyed every minute of it. The Shaikh's two elder sons were visiting America and we were with them for some time, but they sailed for Europe before we left. Their visit was a great success and they made a good impression on the people whom they met.

We were tremendously impressed by America. The rushing, vigorous

crowds in the streets of the great cities were such a contrast to the leisurely life in the Bahrain bazaars. I admired the magnificent museums and picture galleries and some of the houses which we visited. We had been told that we would probably dislike New York but, on the contrary, we liked it very much. We had no complaints about the manners of the taxi-drivers, about whom I had heard many stories, or the rather free and easy manners of people in the shops and the hotel servants. At the St Regis Hotel, where we stayed in New York, I ordered onion soup for luncheon. When the waiter brought it he said to me, 'Have you a hang-over?' I am sure I did not look as if I had. 'Certainly not,' I replied. 'Why do you ask?' 'Because,' he said, 'that's what folks take to cure a hangover.' I cannot imagine such a conversation taking place at Claridges or the Ritz, but the waiter had no intention of being impudent.

On the whole we preferred California to the East Coast. Being a keen gardener I was full of admiration for the marvellous gardens in California; gardens in New England seemed to consist mainly of neat lawns and very few flowers.

A visit which we much enjoyed was to Boston. My family had what might be described as an historical connection with Boston. My great-grandfather, Admiral James Richard Dacres, then a captain, commanded H.M.S. *Guerrière*, a British frigate, which on August 30th, 1812, fought an engagement with the American frigate *Constitution*. The *Guerrière* was sunk and Dacres with his surviving officers and men became prisoners of war and were held at Boston. According to his account they were extremely well treated, for many of the people of Boston were at that time opposed to the war with the British. After some time Dacres was exchanged, and when he left, as a mark of esteem, his captors returned his sword to him. Years later, when Dacres was an admiral, he met Admiral Hull, who as a captain had commanded the *Constitution*, in the Mediterranean, and the two former enemies visited each other on board their flagships. The *Constitution*, known in America as 'Old Ironsides', is moored in Boston harbour in the same manner as H.M.S. *Victory* is moored alongside the quay at Portsmouth.

Many years ago I was at a dinner party at the Shaikh's palace at Rafaa which was given for a visiting U.S. ship. I sat next to a young naval officer who came from Boston. In the course of conversation I told him about my great-grandfather's connection with Boston. He then told me that there was some sort of club in Boston connected with Admiral Dacres. I pursued the matter for years, writing to various people in America who might have some information on the subject, and

eventually, through Captain William Royall, of the United States Navy, I got in touch with the Secretary of 'The *Guerrière* Dinners Club' of Boston, an institution which had existed since August 1813, which was the date on which the first dinner was held. Membership of the club was restricted to nine, all of whom were life members, most of them being direct descendants of people who were originally connected with the *Constitution*.

It was so that I could attend a luncheon party which was given for me by the club that we went to Boston, where I had the greatest pleasure in meeting seven of the members of the *Guerrière* Club. I gave to the club a reproduction of a portrait, by Richmond, of Admiral Dacres, which I possessed, and I was presented with a model 24-pounder cannon made from the wood of the *Constitution*, but what pleased me exceedingly was the honour which was conferred on me by being elected as the ninth member of the *Guerrière* Club. After luncheon, with Captain Martin of the United States Navy, Marjorie and I visited the *Constitution* and I trod the decks as an honoured guest, which 143 years before my great-grandfather had trod as a prisoner of war.

I told some of my friends in other parts of the States that I was a member of the most exclusive club in America, which started in 1813 and had only nine members. Naturally they asked for details. When I told them about the club their comment was: 'Boston! Well! Of course they would have a club like that in Boston—that's Boston all over.'

## Twenty-two

Confusion now has made its masterpiece.

*Macbeth.* SHAKESPEARE

WE RETURNED at the end of September refreshed after three months' leave, but I soon found that I would need all the energy which I had accumulated to deal with the situation in Bahrain. Outwardly everything seemed quiet; various projects were progressing, the scheme for generating electricity from natural gas, piped from the oil field, and for providing the villages with electricity, was nearing completion. The new T.B. hospital, with fifty beds, and the chest clinic were ready for use and the deep-water pier was getting on well. The women's hospital, which was still under construction, looked alarmingly large when I considered the cost of the staff which would be needed to run it; but financially we were in good shape, it was still possible to invest a third of the oil revenue in productive schemes and British Government stock.

But the political situation was grim. There was far more tension and anxiety than when I left. A British contracting company, working in conjunction with an Arab firm, had run into difficulties. There had been disputes and even fights between the European and Arab employes, followed by strikes. Evidently an Anglo-Arab undertaking was no guarantee against labour trouble. The Committee had taken an active part in stirring up this trouble and had then offered to mediate, a game which was often played in Bahrain.

The Committee was still not recognized by the Shaikh, though he had met one or two of the members privately, which incensed the party which advocated a strong line of action. The Committee was trying by all means to acquire influence, the members persuaded villagers to bring their disputes to them, arguing that it was the duty of good Moslems to settle the disputes of their neighbours, but when the villagers found that



The Committee had no means of enforcing decisions they soon left off appealing to them. The Shaikh had approved of Public Health and Education councils being set up, but their form and functions had not been decided. He wished to nominate the members himself, but The Committee wanted them to be elected; a compromise was reached by which half the members were to be elected and half to be nominated, with a chairman from the Ruling Family. This was according to the practice on the Municipal Councils.

Cloak and dagger meetings between The Committee and the Residency staff continued. Though supposedly secret they were freely discussed in the bazaar. Even if the object was to find a way out of the political impasse it was an unwise manner in which to go about it, and it caused astonishment among the leading Arabs and indignation among the Shaikhs. The Committee spread wild stories about their conversations, saying that the British supported all their aims, one of which was to get rid of me.

Before I went on leave the Shaikh had appointed my son, who had been in the Public Relations Department of BAPCO for two years, as Public Relations Officer to the Government, a post which included organizing the Bahrain Broadcasting Station, 'B.B.S.', which came on the air in August 1955. It was not an easy undertaking because everyone had a different idea about the functions of the B.B.S. The views of the British about what should be relayed did not always coincide with the views of the Government, the British were apt to forget that B.B.S. was not B.B.C. During the difficult period which followed the B.B.S. was of great value to the Bahrain Government, and it is now a most popular institution.

On Christmas Eve Anwar Saadat, who was mainly responsible for Egyptian propaganda, came to Bahrain on his way to Kuwait. The Committee, with a crowd of excited, enthusiastic supporters, assembled at the airport to meet him. There had been rain and the ground was covered with puddles of oil and water. The aeroplane arrived. The Committee and their supporters rushed forward and lifted Anwar shoulder high, carrying him in triumph towards the airport building. But somebody slipped. The next thing that one saw was a very angry Anwar Saadat sprawling in the oily mud.

He was to have luncheon with the Shaikh at Rafaa and the Shaikh's car was at the airport to meet him. Still covered with mud he was politely ushered into the car and driven briskly out to Rafaa. On arrival, angry and apologetic, he asked for hot water and soap. A servant took him to a

room and he then asked for a clothes brush. But in households where people wear Arab robes clothes brushes are not available, all that could be produced was a broom. After luncheon Anwar was driven back to the airport, in time to catch his aeroplane but not in time to address any meetings, which was what The Committee had planned for him to do. From his and from The Committee's point of view the visit was a 'flop' in more ways than one, but on this occasion the blame could not be laid on the Imperialistic Colonizers or on the wicked Adviser—the subject of Anwar's endless vituperations.

Elections for the Health and Education councils were held in February. The Committee supported a number of candidates; they were not impressive individuals, but no independent Arabs could be found to oppose them. Men who normally sat on councils and committees declared that nothing would induce them to become embroiled in an election which would involve them in reprisals from The Committee. After some time three very mediocre persons were persuaded to stand against The Committee's candidates. The result was a foregone conclusion. The Committee turned the election into a propaganda drive, romping round the country in trucks, haranguing the public through loud speakers, while the men who contested them sat nervously at home, not attempting to canvass. The Committee's candidates were returned with an enormous majority so The Committee claimed that they had the support of the whole country. It would have been better if this farcical election had not taken place and The Committee had been allowed to nominate members for the two councils.

On Friday, March 2nd, an unlucky day for Bahrain, the Bahrainis heard on the wireless that General Glubb had been suddenly dismissed by King Hussein of Jordan. The news was widely discussed in the bazaars which, being Friday, were crowded with people. The Committee and their adherents were triumphant at what they regarded as a slap in the face for the British. I am sure that the Glubb affair was partly responsible for what took place later on that day. That afternoon Mr Selwyn Lloyd, who was on his way from London to Pakistan, was to stop in Bahrain and to attend a dinner party which the Shaikh was giving for him in the Manama palace.

The British Foreign Secretary's visit was an important event. The Shaikh, with many of his relations, the Resident, Sir Bernard Burrows, and his staff, and many others, drove to the aerodrome to meet him. I went to Muharraq ahead of the party, stopping for a few minutes to watch a big football match on the ground between the town and the

airport. Passing the Arab club I saw a group of young men in a huddle on the steps, among them some of The Committee's chief supporters, but there were no signs of anything unusual. The Foreign Secretary and his party were welcomed at the airport and distributed into cars, and the long procession set off. The Shaikh and the Resident, who had Mr Selwyn Lloyd with him as they were going direct to the Residency, led the procession, preceded by police on motor-cycles and in jeeps. I was, as usual, driving my own car, some way back in the procession.

There is a sharp corner at the end of the Muharraq sea road where the road joins the causeway which spans the sea between the two islands; it subsequently became known as Selwyn Lloyd Corner. As we approached it I saw big crowds on each side of the road, which was usual, for when there were processions the people of Muharraq assembled here to watch them pass; but I noticed that the Arabs were waving their head-cloths in the air, and I heard shouting as the police vehicles turned the corner. When I got nearer I heard the Arabs shouting a slogan, something about the British, Selwyn Lloyd and myself, but I could not hear the words clearly. I wanted to go ahead to see what was happening, but I was hemmed in by a mass of men on each side of the road, and all I could do was to move on in the procession at a snail's pace. My car, No. 6, was so well known that if I wanted to go anywhere privately I used a different car, and the men who lined the street saw me sitting at the steering wheel; but all that happened was that some of them banged on the door with their hands. Later, when I heard what had happened to other cars in the procession, I realized that I had been lucky. There were a few uninterested spectators on the causeway, and in Manama everything was quiet. I turned off and went to my house to change before taking Marjorie to dinner at the palace.

It was then that reports came in about the organized demonstration at Muharraq. When the leading cars reached the corner the crowd beat and kicked the cars and threw sand at the occupants. Cars in the rear of the procession had their windows and lamps smashed and many of them were damaged. A B.O.A.C. bus, behind the procession, was stopped by a gang of roughs who tried to set it on fire. I sent police reinforcements to Muharraq, and after some time they cleared the corner, but for many hours it was dangerous for cars to use the sea road as gangs of youths sallied out from the lanes and stoned all vehicles. A significant fact was that earlier on two members of The Committee were in the crowd at the corner and one of them made a violent speech.

I shall never forget that ghastly dinner party at the palace. It was the

most trying social function that I have ever attended. On the surface everything was as usual: the band in the gallery played old musical comedy tunes, servants in scarlet coats moved among the guests, the illuminated fountains sparkled in the courtyard and the big reception-rooms looked very impressive. The Shaikh was deeply concerned over the Muharraq incident, never before had he and an honoured guest been insulted by a crowd of his own people, yet he preserved his dignity and played the part of a perfect host. The Foreign Office party too, although shocked at the news of Glubb's sudden dismissal, about which they heard during their flight, and by their hostile reception at Muharraq, tried to appear as if nothing unusual had happened. But the guests, who knew nothing of the affair until they arrived at the palace, were buzzing with excitement.

We used one of the anterooms as headquarters, and I spent my time there listening to reports and giving orders to the police, returning every few minutes to give the latest news to the Shaikh. During a quiet interval I sat down to dinner next to Lord Lambton, whose conversation distracted me for a while from my anxiety about how to convey, in safety, the Foreign Secretary through the maelstrom of Muharraq to the aerodrome. I soon left the table and returned to the telephone. The situation was still so uncertain that we could not risk allowing the party to run the gauntlet of Muharraq, so it was decided that the Foreign Secretary would await events at the Residency. The party broke up and the Shaikh joined us in the anteroom, but after an hour or two I persuaded him to go back to the palace at Rafaa. In the early morning the police reported that all was quiet. The visitors, with a strong police escort, drove rapidly through Manama, across the causeway to the aerodrome. The streets were deserted apart from a few coolies waiting for buses to take them to the oil field. The Committee and their supporters had long ago got tired of waiting and had gone home to bed.

I spent most of the week which followed between the Residency and the Rafaa palace, taking part in endless discussions. I had no time to deal with my normal work and often there was no time for meals. The Committee published notices in English and Arabic apologizing for the Selwyn Lloyd affair, which they ascribed to the natural feelings of the public. At the same time they demanded my dismissal, but neither then, nor at any other time, did they produce any real reason for this demand. Meanwhile the Residency was negotiating with Abd al Rahman Bakr, the Shaikh's *bête noire*, who offered to leave Bahrain for five months if the Residency would persuade the Shaikh to recognize The Committee. At

the palace there were stormy meetings of the Khalifah Shaikhs, who advocated a show-down. The Committee members and the public expected that the ringleaders who had instigated the demonstration would be arrested, but no arrests were made. Conciliatory counsels prevailed; it was decided that no strong action should be taken and that I, the main object of The Committee's attack, should have a talk with four of the members of The Committee to see what I could do to improve the situation. The position was in some ways quite ludicrous.

At first the four members were unwilling to come to my office, not wishing it to be known that they were meeting me, but I refused to see them anywhere else as I disliked so-called secret meetings, so eventually they capitulated and I had quite an amiable talk with them. I did not believe them when they told me that it was not they but their followers who wished to get rid of me. I showed them a notice which the Shaikh was issuing, which permitted the formation of committees 'to work for the benefit of the people of Bahrain', and they said that they would change the name of their organization and start afresh. As there had never been any objection to people forming committees, although normally the approval of the Shaikh was first obtained, the exercise seemed to be a face-saving expedient.

I also discussed the Education Council, which had been summoned to meet, but only the nominated members had appeared. The elected members refused to attend because they did not like the men who the Shaikh had appointed. There was little to choose between the two groups; none of them were men of standing and most of them knew nothing about Education, not having been educated themselves. Leading citizens, who normally sat on such councils, declined to do so because they were not prepared to associate with some of the characters, such as a dismissed schoolteacher, who were nominees of The Committee. However, after a discussion about this and other matters I began to feel that there was some slight hope of being able to achieve a *modus vivendi*, but my hopes of a peaceful settlement were shattered by an incident which occurred on March 11th.

There was bad feeling between the Manama Municipal authorities and the fruit- and vegetable-sellers, who occupied a new market built by the Shaikh opposite the Town Hall. The market people were Shias, and the Municipal officers were Sunnis. The fruit-sellers really preferred the dirty old market which they had previously occupied, and they spread themselves and their wares over the street. A policeman was called by a market inspector to move a man who was selling in an unauthorized place. There



was an argument. A crowd collected. A fracas ensued and the crowd joined in. The policeman and the inspector sought refuge in the Town Hall. They got inside, the doors were shut and the Municipal staff was besieged by an angry crowd. A small party of police arrived and managed to get into the building, but by now the crowd had become an angry mob, out for the blood of the policeman and the inspector. Another party of police arrived under an Arab officer; they found the road leading to the building blocked by a solid mass of men. For several hours the police were assailed by abuse and stones and at intervals the crowd tried to rush the doors. Then someone in the crowd fired a shot at which the police on the veranda fired into the air, while the officer who was in charge of them was inside the building, telephoning for reinforcements. The crowd dispersed, but several people on the edge of the crowd were hit by bullets. As it happened, most of the police were newly enlisted men from the Gulf Coast.

For about a week there was a partial strike and The Committee made the fullest use of it. One of their big meetings was addressed by an Egyptian from Kuwait, who left Bahrain as soon as the meeting was over. He made a violent speech, but when he described Bahrain as 'a little piece of Egypt' even The Committee's supporters did not approve. At the same time Anwar Saadat sent a message saying that he was dispatching a special messenger, an Army officer, to Bahrain, but he got no encouragement and the 'messenger' did not arrive.

The strike was accompanied by disorder and the capacity of the small police force was strained to the utmost. With the Shaikh's approval the British brought in some troops, but they did not operate inside Manama, where the trouble was. In the daytime the town was quiet and our car patrols were able to keep order. At night there was a curfew, which was difficult to enforce in the narrow, dark lanes of the bazaar and gangs of youths roamed the streets, strewing nails and erecting road blocks; as soon as the police removed one they found another somewhere else. Transport was at a standstill and several cars, left outside Europeans' houses, were set on fire. Most of the damage was done by hooligans who found it an exciting and amusing occupation. When the police made a number of arrests they found that the men at the road blocks were armed with daggers and revolvers.

The Shaikh was at Rafaa where the armed Bedouin had assembled. They could easily have cleared the streets but they might very likely have indulged in a little looting themselves so they were used in posts on the country roads. The telephone line, which ran through miles of palm-

groves, was constantly cut, severing communication between Manama, Awali and Rafaa, so when I wanted to talk to the Shaikh—which was very often—I had to drive out to Rafaa. This I did constantly, often several times in a day, without any adventures, nor did I meet with any violence when I went down to the bazaar and tried to persuade people to open their shops.

By this time the Residency was involved up to the neck in the political quagmire, and there were many rather unhappy interviews between the Shaikh and the British representatives, in which I took part. But it seemed that whenever a line of policy had been discussed and agreed upon by the Shaikh, it was almost always reversed a few hours later, presumably as a result of instructions from London. I then had to explain to the Shaikh that what had been agreed upon was now, for some unknown reason, changed. It was usually assumed at the palace that the reason for these volte-face was that The Committee did not approve of what had been decided. The Committee made four demands, through the Residency, which were that I should go, that no foreign recruits should be enlisted in the police, that The Committee should be recognized and that there should be an enquiry about the affair at the Town Hall. The Residency, at the Shaikh's request, agreed to issue a firm statement saying that the first two demands were unacceptable but the Shaikh, as he had already announced, agreed to the second two demands. As usual they changed their views and sent an entirely different, non-committal statement to be published on the B.B.S. which satisfied nobody. A leading Arab said to me, 'The English are now interfering even more in Bahrain affairs than they did thirty years ago, in Daly's time, but they are not clever like he was.'

When the Gulf was controlled by the India Office, when in the Residencies and Political Agencies there were only a handful of British officials of the Indian Political Department, and a staff of excellent hard-working Indians, the affairs of the Gulf were better managed than they are now, though admittedly the problems which had to be dealt with were simpler than they are today. The British officials who were in the Gulf in those days, and in some cases their fathers before them, had spent all their working years in Eastern countries, in India, Persia and the Gulf. They knew the people and understood how to deal with them, and they were not distracted by wondering whether after a year or two they would be sent to Paris, Prague or Nicaragua. The opinions of the men on the spot carried weight, and their decisions were not constantly countermanded from London. But this is a digression!

When the strike began we had a house party of six people. One of them was Sir Stewart Duke Elder, who had come to present the Shaikh with the insignia of a Knight of the Order of St John. Owing to the situation this had to be postponed, and after a day or two Sir Stewart left our house, in an R.N. lorry, to drive through Muharraq, which was still very lively, to the aerodrome. We had also Captain C. E. Kendall, the Government's agent in London, and his wife, and Highwood of the British Council. Various other people who were concerned with the crisis seemed to have their meals with us. The shops were shut, and although many of our Arab friends served us 'under the counter' it was impossible to get any fresh meat. When the position was becoming desperate I sent an S O S to the Shaikh describing the domestic situation. At once he dispatched a lorry, manned by armed Bedouin, containing a sheep, on which we fed the house party until the strike was over.

Outside the town everything was quiet and the Residency and naval people at Jufair were living normal lives. One evening we were invited to go to Jufair for a drink. It was impossible for me to leave Manama, but as I saw that the members of the house party were beginning to feel like caged animals I agreed that my police driver should take Marjorie and four of the party to Jufair. Besides, we had run out of paraffin, with which we cooked and heated the water, and the Navy had offered to give us some. They reached Jufair without any difficulty and after some time they returned. Suddenly, on a road near the fort, they ran into a road block manned by some tough hooligans who were out for mischief. With great presence of mind my driver, Abdulla Mubarak, switched into reverse and speeded, at about fifty miles an hour, back along the road which led to the fort. Fortunately there was no traffic on the road. Having arrived at the fort the party was sent back to the Adviserate—as my house and office was called—escorted by two jeeps full of police. This was the only unpleasant incident which occurred to us during the strike.

## Twenty-three

His rash fierce blaze of riot cannot last,  
For violent fires soon burn out themselves;  
Small showers last long, but sudden storms are short;  
He tires betimes that spurs too fast betimes.

*Richard II. SHAKESPEARE*

There is, however, a limit at which forbearance ceases to be a virtue.

*EDMUND BURKE. 1728-1797*

**B**AHRAIN was full of journalists who swooped down like vultures on a battlefield, quarrelling and arguing among themselves, and the envelopes from the agency which supplied us with Press cuttings became fat and bloated. Some papers, the *Daily Mail* for one, were reasonably accurate, but many reporters tried to sustain the tension for the sake of news interest after conditions were normal. I took a newspaper man for a drive round the villages after the strike. The people were friendly and the drive was quite uneventful, but from his description of it, which I read later, it might have been a highly dangerous adventure.

A month before the strike the Shaikh had set up an Administrative Council consisting of Khalifah Shaikhs who held important posts in the Government and some heads of departments. He invited one of his uncles to be President of the new council. The uncle replied, 'I am seventy-five years old, but I will do what you wish.' The Shaikh answered, 'Churchill is eighty-two.' 'Yes,' said the uncle, 'but I am not a Churchill.' However, he accepted the post. At first the council was boycotted by The Committee, but it now plays a useful, though restricted, role, dealing with matters which are referred to it by the Shaikh.

In April The Higher Executive Committee ceased to exist, but phoenix-like was born again with the name 'Committee of National Union', with seven instead of eight members. One Shia fell out. The

Shias objected to the anti-British attitude of the Sunnis, realizing that the British had done much to help them. Bakr had gone to Cairo, where he was fêted by the Egyptians, and he made violently anti-British speeches. The Shaikh agreed to see four members of the 'new' Committee and meetings began at the Rafaa palace, which lasted through the next two months.

I and four members of the Administrative Council were present with the Shaikh at the meetings. At first The Committee members objected to my being there but the Shaikh told them, forcibly, that he wished me to be present and would listen to no demands that I should leave his service. The talks covered many subjects, but The Committee members seemed to have lost interest in matters which had figured prominently in their manifestoes such as the law code, labour legislation, education and public health. They did, however, object very strongly to a Press law which would restrict the contents of their pamphlets and notices, and their anger was roused by an order forbidding 'private armies'. They had recently begun to enlist and drill uniformed men who they described as 'Scouts'. When this was forbidden they threatened to complain to the Boy Scouts organization—to which they did not belong—which would not have recognized these full-grown men as 'Boy Scouts'.

The negotiations dragged on. Agreements recorded at one meeting were repudiated by The Committee members at the next meeting; when an agenda was approved they refused to discuss the subjects on it, producing new matters, and they frequently had arguments among themselves. The way in which the negotiations were conducted would be the nightmare of some staid official in Whitehall. The British urged the Shaikh to adopt a policy of appeasement, but soon even they realized that, although the Shaikh did his best to reach an agreement, no progress was being made. Finally, without giving any reason, The Committee suddenly broke off negotiations.

The publicity which was given to the meetings did The Committee no good; people realized that its object was not to benefit the public but to increase its own power. Notices, pamphlets and anonymous letters became wilder. Arabs who opposed The Committee were threatened, and there were cases of incendiarism in their shops. The Committee issued ultimatums, which fizzled out like damp squibs; they threatened a general strike if I did not go, but when the Shaikh refused to accede to this demand the strike did not come off, though his reply did not please the British authorities.

I was now sixty-one years old and had served the Shaikh and his



father for thirty years, and Marjorie and I had been considering for some time when we should leave Bahrain. I had told the Shaikh that it was about time that I retired, but he urged me to stay on for a while, so I suggested to him that I should leave in the autumn of 1957. He knew that the British authorities would like me to leave as soon as possible, fearing that my presence might provoke more active aggression from The Committee. He deeply resented having his hand forced, but the pressure from the British was strong, and in August he was obliged to make public the fact that I was retiring, though no definite date was mentioned. This news was greeted by The Committee as a major success, but many of the Arabs regarded it as a mere sop by the British to The Committee and a weakening of the Shaikh's own position. For me it was all most disagreeable. Again my name was in every newspaper under such captions as ' "Strong man" Briton sacked by F.O.', and 'Sir Charles of the Gulf is sacked', which, had it been true, would have been an ignominious finale.

During these trying months my family was in England, and I missed very much not being able to discuss the position with them. Now, more than ever before, I appreciated being able to get away for week-ends to Jidda island where there were no telephones, newspaper men or other tiresomeness. Often I went on Thursday evening, returning at dawn on Saturday. It was then that the Budeya road looked its best, the thin rays of early sun lighting the vivid green patches of lucerne growing under the date-palms, and the bunches of red, gold and purple dates suspended round the tops of the trees like ballet skirts of dancing girls. I felt refreshed after these lazy simple-life week-ends in the open air.

The prospect of my departure did not strengthen The Committee's position, which was contrary to what I had expected. Possibly in order to camouflage their declining influence they let it be known that they had agreed with the Resident not to make any trouble while he was on leave provided that I was got rid of. The fact that this story gained credence was an indication of how much British prestige had declined. At this time two leading Arabs, a Sunni and a Shia, came to see me. They had been trying, independently, to negotiate a settlement between the Shaikh and The Committee but had given up the attempt. They now solemnly warned me that The Committee was determined, if they did not get all that they asked for, to overthrow the Government and remove the Shaikh. They begged me to keep this to myself, which I did. It was disturbing news but not altogether a surprise.

Bakr returned at the end of September, full of new ideas which he had acquired in Cairo. Again the public sat back waiting to see what

would happen when he was arrested for the anti-Bahrain Government speeches which he made while he was away, but no arrest was made. He did find, however, that he was no longer on the Residency's visiting list. Many people were disappointed that he was not arrested, including some of The Committee's Shia supporters, who were embarrassed by the speeches which he had made abroad. They asked how The Committee's funds were being spent and why Bakr travelled so often. During this wrangle over financial affairs there were questions about a large sum of money donated by the Shaikh of Qatar for sending T.B. patients to India and about money which had been obtained from local merchants, ostensibly for sending boys to be educated in Egypt. A few boys were sent, but they and their parents complained to me that all that they received from The Committee was their fares and, although education was free, as the parents said, 'boys cannot live on air', but unfortunately I was unable to give them any help.

The Suez affair, occurring when The Committee's prestige was at its lowest and its ranks divided, was providential. Here was a new war-cry of 'hands off Egypt' and a new object for attacks. Local politics were abandoned and The Committee proclaimed itself the protagonist of Nasser. Though in the past it had counted on British support the members had no scruples over organizing a large-scale anti-British demonstration, which caused great material damage to British property, for which no compensation was paid. The Arab view on this point was that the British had only themselves to blame for the damage caused by the 'demonstration'. Perhaps when Bakr and Shemlan found themselves no longer *persona grata* with the Residency they decided that they had sucked the lemon dry.

Encouraged by Cairo's frenzied abuse of the British, which was vomited from every radio in Bahrain, and counting on local support, The Committee announced a strike and a demonstration on November 1st. We could have forbidden the demonstration but many Arabs who disapproved of The Committee were opposed to the British action at Suez so it would have been unwise to force a showdown. Besides, the force at the Government's disposal was small, though the police had been strengthened by recruits from Oman and Aden, and by a number of new British police officers. There were British troops in Bahrain, some were at Jufair and some were at the airport, but they would only be used in the gravest emergency to protect British lives. As soon as the trouble began European residents who lived inside Manama were removed from their houses, which were left empty, and lodged in the

homes of people who lived at Awali or at Jufair or in the roads outside the town.

There was no time for discussions. I decided that the best course was to allow the procession and to deal with it in the same manner as we did the Muharram processions. I sent for Bakr and had a long interview with him in my house. He gave me a solemn undertaking, on behalf of The Committee, that the procession would be quiet and orderly and would follow a route which I had carefully planned, avoiding danger spots such as the Political Agency, where disorder might occur. But the disorders began on the day before the demonstration. They were started by boys from the schools, led by the Secondary School boys, whose teachers were Egyptians. They walked out of the schools at a given time and started a procession, but this was promptly dealt with and for the rest of that day Manama was comparatively quiet. In Muharraq the situation was more serious; a mob attacked a block of flats occupied by the British families of the B.O.A.C. and Gulf Aviation staff. The women and children were rescued by some of the troops from the airport before the police succeeded in reaching the building, for the culverts under the Muharraq sea road had been cut, which prevented access through Muharraq to the airport. Fortunately, after the last strike, we had made an air strip in the middle of the island near Awali, for use in case of an emergency, and while the strike lasted an air ferry service between Awali and the Muharraq airport was operated, very successfully, by Gulf Aviation.

At noon on Friday, November 2nd, the procession formed up at a mosque not far from my house. A large contingent came from Muharraq, where there had already been trouble and a number of men, including one of The Committee members, had been arrested, but the Shias from the villages were conspicuous by their absence. The arrangements to which The Committee had agreed were ignored. After listening to some inflammatory speeches from the leaders the crowd surged out of the mosque. We had staying with us the wife of one of the Government officials, whose husband was away, and her daughter. Hearing shouting and chanting we went on to the veranda in time to see a rabble of several thousand men in the open space in front of the Political Agency, where they shouted and booed but did no damage as the building was guarded by police. I ran downstairs to the office and found my Arab secretary armed with a formidable revolver, telephoning for a police guard as we had only two policemen in the compound. They arrived after the procession had passed. Back on the veranda I watched the crowd go by.

Afterwards they commented on the fact that there was I, standing on my veranda in a blue shirt—it was rather a bright blue—smoking a cigar, which they thought very funny.

They made no attempt to enter the Adviserate, perhaps they thought there were police inside the building. They moved along the sea road towards the bazaar. It was when they got inside the bazaar that things started to happen. At first they contented themselves with smashing the windows of buildings occupied by British companies, then they attacked the offices of the African and Eastern Company and set it on fire; they tried, unsuccessfully, to set light to the tanks at two petrol-filling stations and simultaneously fires started in several houses in different parts of the town whose European owners had left them empty. At Muharraq the B.O.A.C. flats were set on fire, after being looted, and during the following day the mob burned down the office of a new British-owned newspaper, smashing the printing presses. They set fire to boats on the slipway belonging to Gray Mackenzie and fired the Public Works office, on the causeway, which was the only Government office to be damaged. During these days of riot and turmoil the police did a magnificent job, but they were very hard pressed. Rifles were not used, but at night several Arabs who disobeyed the curfew order were peppered with small shot, which had a salutary effect. The British troops took no part inside the town, but their car patrols kept clear the road between Manama and Jufair and the ring road round Manama.

On the third day of the strike an attempt was made to burn down the Catholic church. That the attempt was only partially successful was due to a local Persian, whose young son heard some men talking about setting fire to the church. He told his father, who telephoned to me, and I got a party of police to the church before the mob had done much damage. I then arranged with the Goanese community that they should take turns to guard it, with a few armed watchmen. The priests and the nuns had gone to Awali.

By November 4th the town was comparatively quiet, though the strike continued and the shops were shut. This was partly because the BAPCO bus-drivers who carried the workers were afraid to return to work. When I drove round the town I was horrified to see the damage and the burnt-out buildings. The mob had used what were known during the war as 'Molotov Cocktails', bottles of petrol wrapped in straw or some inflammable substance, which were set alight and hurled into buildings, where they exploded into flames. Such things had never been seen in Bahrain, and we never discovered who had introduced them.

On November 5th the Shaikh decided that four of the leading members of The Committee should be arrested. This time the Shaikh's decision had the backing of the British Government. The four men were Shemlan, Bakr, Alewat and Ibrahim bin Musa of Hedd; the fifth man, Ibrahim Fakhro, of Persian origin, was already in custody. Three of the men were arrested in their houses that night, the other man was picked up next morning. They were sent by launch to Jidda island. Later a number of other men were detained, but subsequently most of them were released.

We expected repercussions but nothing happened. The Committee's so-called second line of defence made no move, except that a number of them left Bahrain, very hurriedly, for Qatar, Kuwait and the Lebanon and several other people, who had been rather heavily involved, sought my advice and when I suggested that a temporary change of air would be beneficial for them they expressed their gratitude, and in a few hours they were outside Bahrain. Some of them had been useful in the past, and I thought that once the political atmosphere had cleared they might again be of use.

I believe that if the Shaikh had not been dissuaded from showing firmness in the beginning, it might have been possible to conclude the negotiations successfully, but as long as The Committee believed that they were supported by the British Government they felt that they were leading from strength and could trump every card which the Shaikh played.

It was some days before conditions returned to normal. I had difficulty in persuading the timorous shopkeepers and merchants, especially those who had plate-glass windows, to open up again. The villagers were running short of food as the shops in the bazaar were shut, so I arranged for sales of rice and flour at cost price in several village centres, which delighted the villagers but upset the merchants; when this happened they soon opened their shops. Twice, when most of the shops had opened, they shut again hurriedly because a band of youths ran down the main street calling out: 'Shut your shops! There is going to be another disturbance.' We caught some of these lads and they did not play this game again. Throughout the disturbances there had been no breakdown in essential services in Manama, such as electricity, water and telephones, and the oil company had been able to keep the refinery working.

The trial of the five Committee members took place on December 21st and 22nd. The Shaikh appointed a special tribunal consisting of his uncle, Shaikh Abdulla, who was a judge on the Appeal Court, and Shaikh Daij bin Hamed and Shaikh Ali bin Ahmed, the two judges on the



Bahrain High Court. Normally the trial would have been in the Manama Law Courts, but the police advocated very strongly that for security reasons the case should not be heard in Manama, because to bring the prisoners through the town might provoke more demonstrations. The Shaikh ordered the court to sit at Budeya, a little town on the coast opposite Jidda island where the men were being held. The only large room which we could find was above the police station. There was not much space in it, the judges sat at a table closely pressed against the wall; the five men were provided with benches, and the members of the public, most of whom came from Budeya, sat on the floor so that at times it was very difficult to get in and out of the door.

One of the police officers conducted the prosecution. The men were charged with planning to assassinate the Shaikh, some of his relations and myself, to destroy the palace and the airport, to overthrow the Government and to depose the Ruler and with organizing a general strike and a demonstration, which had been allowed by the Government on certain conditions, which were not kept, which led to violence and the destruction of property. The accused men, after hearing the charges, refused to accept the authority of the court, because it was not sitting in Manama. They said that if the case was heard at Budeya none of them would speak or answer any questions. They were given every opportunity of questioning the witnesses and the documents during the two days' hearing, but they firmly persisted in keeping their mouths shut. They seemed to take little interest in the proceedings; one of them, as I noticed when I was giving evidence, actually went to sleep and was roused by a nudge in the ribs by his neighbour. I appeared as a witness, giving evidence about certain documents and letters which had passed between the Government and The Committee, and I described my interview with Bakr and the arrangements about the procession. Much of the evidence was documentary, consisting of papers and letters found in the possession of the men and in The Committee's headquarters. There were letters to Egyptian officials and notes regarding conversations in Cairo; from one of them it appeared that an Egyptian newspaper owner was offered the exclusive opportunity of being in Bahrain at the time of the final *coup d'état* by The Committee, provided that his paper gave them support in the meantime. Another document listed the aims of The Committee, which included doing away with the Shaikh and myself. Even at the end of the second day, when the judges found the five men guilty on all charges and sentenced the three ringleaders, Shemlan, Bakr and Alewat, to fourteen years' imprisonment, and the other two men to ten years, they seemed

quite unmoved. They probably assumed, as was usually the case, that after some time their sentences would be considerably reduced.

In the past, when men were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, they had served their time in India or in the Andaman islands. In this case it was thought desirable by the Shaikh that the three ringleaders should not be imprisoned in Bahrain, so he requested the British Government, through the Resident, to arrange for his prisoners to serve their sentences elsewhere. St Helena was chosen as the place for their confinement, and two days after their trial they were taken on board a naval frigate which called at St Helena on its way to the United Kingdom. It was agreed that the costs of transport and of looking after the prisoners should be paid by the Bahrain Government. When the three members of The Committee of National Union left Bahrain, there was an almost audible sigh of relief from most of the Bahrainis, who now felt that they could get back to their lawful occupations without fear of constant strikes and disturbances. Very little sympathy was felt for the St Helena prisoners, 'eating the bitter bread of banishment' on Napoleon's island, or for the two men on Jidda island. Most of their compatriots considered that they had only themselves to blame.

Soon after these events questions were asked in the House of Commons by Mr W. N. Warbey, M.P., a Left-wing Labour Member, about the legality of the procedure by which the three Arabs, subjects of the Shaikh of Bahrain, were removed to and imprisoned in St Helena, a British colony. Details were given about the statutory orders which sanctioned the deportation and detention of the prisoners. A group of persons in London then got together with the object of interesting themselves in the case. They employed the firm of Bernard Sheridan and Co., solicitors, and engaged Mr Walter Raeburn, Q.C., who founded the Society of Labour Lawyers, and a young barrister, Mr Roland Brown, whose connection with Bahrain was through a Bahrain student who was reading Law at Cambridge.

On March 21st, 1959, Mr Roland Brown appeared before a court at St Helena, applying for a writ of habeas corpus for the release of Abd al Rahman Bakr. The application was opposed by Mr B. J. M. Mackenna, Q.C. After a hearing which lasted for four days the court dismissed the application.

The case then went before the Privy Council and as this book goes to press I have heard that the final appeal has been rejected.

## Twenty-four

All things come to an end.

*The Psalms*

AFTER the tempestuous times which we had passed through in 1956 the political barometer showed 'set fair', and the spring of 1957 was calm and uneventful. Several administrative developments were carried out successfully; the Shaikh's council came into action, and the Health and Education councils were reorganized with new and efficient members and soon began to play a useful role. My own position was a great deal easier. There were no longer demands from the Arabs that I should go, but I had made up my mind to retire, and we planned to leave Bahrain at the end of the year, although the Shaikh urged me to defer my departure. He did not want anyone else as his Adviser and rejected all suggestions that he should appoint a successor to myself, so it seemed that I would be the first and the last to occupy the post. He approved of some departmental changes such as promoting the Director of Customs, G. W. R. Smith, to the new post of Secretary. Perhaps without realizing how much work was involved he decided that he and his two sons would deal with many of the matters which I had undertaken. Assuming that there was nearly a year in which to arrange the new order of things, neither the Shaikh nor I made any hurried changes.

Then once again the Shaikh's hand was forced, but this time it was not by political pressure. On April 11th, after a day in hospital, I was told by the surgeon that it was absolutely essential that I should go home immediately for examination in a London hospital, with the possibility of having to undergo a major operation. This entirely unexpected news was a great shock to me and my family, but there was nothing for it but to obey the doctor's orders. The week which followed was the most trying period which I have ever endured. In the few days which remained I tried to deal with outstanding matters, which was, of course, impossible,

for from the moment that the news was known our house was thronged with Arab friends who came to see me. I had to sort all my papers and we had to decide which of our many belongings, an accumulation of thirty-one years, we wished to take home. There were farewells to be said. This was not so difficult in the case of the Europeans, for I hoped to see them again, but with my Arab friends it was a distressing and melancholy leave-taking. When Shaikh Sulman and I parted I don't know which of us was most overcome. I was grateful to him for so many things, we knew each other so well and we had worked together for so long, trying to do what we thought best for Bahrain. It was very hard to say good-bye. Everybody, even the Arabs who had been opposed to me, were more kind than I could possibly have imagined; I believe they were speaking the truth when they said, when it came to the point of my leaving, that they did not want me to go.

To dismantle and pack the contents of a large house, full of pictures, books and china and the innumerable things which one accumulates in half a lifetime, was a formidable undertaking which would normally take several weeks, but it had to be done in a few days, at a time when Marjorie and I had so many other things to deal with. Three or four of our friends came to the rescue and spent the days before we left packing our possessions. They packed so well that when our cases reached London, many months later, we found that only one piece of china was broken.

Marjorie and I and our daughter-in-law left Bahrain early in the morning on April 18th. In spite of the early hour a great many people, Arabs and Europeans, came to see us off. It was a sad occasion for us. As we circled over Bahrain I looked out of the window of the aircraft, wondering whether I would ever again see the islands where we had spent so many happy years. Dawn was breaking and I saw, dimly, far down below, the causeway between Manama and Muharraq, which had taken me eleven years to build, the straight wide roads, the new piers, the schools, which had sometimes been such a source of trouble, the hospitals, and the lights in the towns and villages, supplied by the new Power House. I saw our home, surrounded by tall trees which I had planted, and, in the distance, the Shaikh's white palace, and I felt a deep sadness at leaving him, and Bahrain.

We arrived in London on the same night and thanks to B.O.A.C. we were hurried through the Customs in time for a late dinner in London. Next morning I went to the London Clinic. I was given one day of freedom which enabled us to see for the first time the house in Kensington which we had bought in December, more or less by telephone

from Bahrain, which fully came up to our expectations. I then went back to the Clinic from which I did not emerge until almost two months later, having had a very serious operation which, fortunately, was successful. This was the first time that I had been in a hospital since I had typhoid fever in Egypt when I was in the Army in 1917.

In hospital I had ample opportunity to look back on my time in Bahrain. Except towards the end it had been a happy life, and it was hard to realize that I was not returning to my work there. It did not seem like thirty-one years since Marjorie and I, still on our honeymoon, first landed at Manama on a morning in March 1926. The memory of our early days was still fresh in my memory. What changes I had seen since then!

The term 'The Unchanging East' is now a misnomer, for in no part of the world are changes taking place more rapidly than in the East. I had watched, and tried to guide, the development of Bahrain from an obscure little Arab state into a place of commercial and political importance. I had seen the transition of the Bahrainis from a simple agricultural and sea-faring community into a community mainly dependent on a great modern industry, the production and refining of oil. During my time the revenue had gradually increased from an annual income of about £100,000 to about £5½ million a year, and I had witnessed the emergence of a political consciousness among the people and the growing pains of democracy.

Thirty years ago, when only a handful of the inhabitants had any education and few of them travelled abroad, the Bahrainis concerned themselves exclusively with local affairs. Such politics as existed centred around the personalities in the islands, and people were not susceptible to influence from abroad. The British, who controlled the Gulf, were respected, not owing to 'gunboat policy', for that had already become an outmoded method of 'persuasion', but because they were represented in the Gulf by men who understood the Arabs and who adhered to a clear-cut policy. The people were happy, the only thing which roused them were sectarian differences. Living was cheap and their tastes were simple, their way of life had changed very little in the last century, and Western fashions and habits were unknown to them. Their commercial connections were with India, where they sold their pearls and whence they imported their food supplies. They were not interested in the affairs of the Levant.

Today Bahrain is unevenly coated with a Western veneer. In the towns radios blare from every house and coffee shop. The six cinemas in Manama are crowded every night, people watch 'canned' American



programmes from the TV stations in Saudi Arabia on their television sets, the shops are full of American clothes and expensive electric gadgets, over 7000 motor vehicles crowd the roads, groups of hideous European-style bungalows spring up like mushrooms and posters advertising 'soft' drinks disfigure the streets. Arab dress has become old-fashioned among the younger men, and the women and girls wear European clothes under their black cloaks. In the summer there is an exodus to Europe and the Lebanon by those who can afford to travel, who have discovered that their health will not permit them to spend the hot season in Bahrain, where they were born and bred. In the villages, however, life goes on much as it did thirty years ago. But the people are healthier, no longer ridden with malaria, they live in better houses, they have a far higher standard of living than they had, most of their children go to school and they are well provided with hospitals. They have electricity and water supplies, they travel in buses, or on bicycles, instead of on donkeys. There is no taxation and no unemployment, and there are opportunities both in Government service and in the oil company for intelligent young men to rise to responsible posts, but still, I doubt if the people are any happier than they used to be.

Education, travel and, most of all, the propaganda power of the radio have exposed the Gulf Arabs to outside influences and have filled the minds of the Intelligentsia with political ideas which appeal to their emotions, but which they understand imperfectly. As the most effective part of this propaganda is directed against the British, the feeling of the Arabs towards the British has changed for the worse. The Intelligentsia in the Gulf are a very small proportion of the population, but they are now the people who matter; they come from the 'white collar' class of young townsmen, the rest are inarticulate and not interested in politics. The Intelligentsia are mentally confused, they are dissatisfied with the British and with their own Governments, but I have heard them argue that if the Gulf states were a British colony, at least they would enjoy certain advantages, such as a proper legal system and a stricter control of the activities of the police. As it is they have the British on top of them, interfering in internal affairs only when it suits them, without giving the people of the Gulf any of the real advantages of British rule. Arab Nationalism has a strong appeal to them, it satisfies their desire to be a part of one great body, not small isolated units. At the same time I do not believe that many of them would welcome the prospect of being directly controlled by Cairo.

In Bahrain the young men who have been at school and those who

have had higher education abroad, all of which has been provided for them freely by their Government, consider themselves, on account of their superior education, more capable than those who are now in control. They want more say in the affairs of state. They do not appreciate that, in spite of what has been said and written to the detriment of Bahrain, there are more democratic institutions and more popular representation in Bahrain than in any other state in the Gulf. When I used to remind my Arab friends of this they said that we should not compare Bahrain's political development with the Gulf states, we should compare it to European countries, such as England! This, I thought, was a somewhat ambitious point of view.

For years there have been elections for many public bodies; in some cases half and in other cases all of the members have been elected by the votes of the public, though when elections were held the voters were usually indolent and uninterested. In Manama women householders are entitled to vote in municipal elections, which is in advance of many more progressive Eastern countries. The councils and committees which the Government set up to deal with Education, Health, Rural Affairs, Waqfs, Minors' Estates, town and village Municipalities and other matters include members from a wide cross-section of the population with representatives from the villages, who used to play no part in public affairs. But the young men are impatient. They regard the councils and committees, which are doing valuable work, as dull and uninteresting, because the work which they perform is unspectacular. They want a definitely political organization in which they can air their views and make political speeches. If one or two members from each of the councils and committees which already exist could sit as members of a general council, it would be a step towards a more democratic form of government which would, to a certain extent, satisfy the aspirations of the young would-be politicians. It is on lines such as these, not by violent political upheavals, that Bahrain should acquire a more liberal form of government.

The men who led the popular movement which disturbed Bahrain for two years and which culminated in the disorders of 1956 were a very amateur and uneducated group of Nationalists. They depended mainly on emotional appeal which they used with a reckless disregard for truth, logic or consequences. They knew that they were dissatisfied with the existing state of things, but they did not know what they wished to achieve. They were devoid of constructive ideas and contented themselves with attacking the administration. They were confused and uncertain, and having no definite policy they switched from one thing to

another, producing no sound arguments on which to base their demands. In two years they published seventy-eight manifestoes, many of them entirely contradictory. They make strange reading! They declared that there were no longer any differences between Sunnis and Shias, and that all the people in Bahrain were merged in the popular movement, yet they took the greatest care to appoint an equal number of Sunnis and Shias on all their committees, even in the case of the representatives who were sent to discuss matters with the Shaikh. They were subject to pressure groups inside their organization, and as these represented the views of Sunnis and Shias separately The Committee had constantly to change its ideas to satisfy first one sect, then the other. After The Committee was dissolved, in 1956, one of the members, the Shia mullah, wrote to me saying that he had not agreed with many of The Committee's actions. I would have taken this as merely a culpatory letter had I not known that he had threatened to resign several times, because The Committee was acting in a manner contrary to the interests of the Shias.

In Cairo members and supporters of The Committee, who went there frequently, described themselves as a 'Resistance Movement', but when asked what they were resisting they found it difficult to reply. There was wild talk about blowing up the refinery, which provides work for most of the Bahrain people, but when asked whether they had the means to carry out this project the answer was in the negative. The Committee's attacks on the Shaikh's Government were not strongly supported in Cairo, which was concentrating on attacking the British; this put The Committee in an awkward predicament, because in Bahrain they worked on the assumption that they were being backed by the British. During a visit by Nasser to King Saud a party from The Committee went over to see him. I was the subject of some of their discussions. When they came back I was told that, much to their astonishment and greatly to my surprise, when they launched into a tirade about me, Nasser, instead of agreeing with them, told them that they might have been much worse off if I had not been working for the Shaikh. This may have been partly due to the King who, I heard, thought that I should not leave Bahrain. I had met Nasser once when he stopped in Bahrain for an hour on his way to India; his visit was unexpected and unannounced, and as the Shaikh had received no official intimation they did not meet.

I am constantly asked what I think is the solution for the future of the Gulf states. Various opinions have been expressed. Some people advocate a rapid withdrawal by the British from all the states, leaving them to stew in their own juice, and a severing of our treaties and obligations, save that

of defending them from external aggression. To run away from our responsibilities and to desert the Arab rulers who have been, and still are, supporters of the British would do enormous damage to what remains of British prestige in the Middle East. Furthermore it would very soon involve us in more serious difficulties than those which now face us. If we left the states to themselves their powerful neighbours, Iraq, Persia, Saudi Arabia and perhaps Egypt would take the opportunity to gobble them up by stirring up popular and irredentist movements against the rulers or by a show of force, and we would soon find ourselves involved in hostilities.

Many people say that the British should 'force' the Gulf rulers to adopt more progressive and democratic forms of government, which means that the rulers should relinquish some of their individual authority. Most of them are not young men. They have been accustomed to the same form of government for centuries and they cling to it with tenacity. Having seen at close quarters British efforts in this direction I know, better than most people, how difficult it is to persuade Arab rulers to change their ways and to launch 'the political experiment of democracy'. Democracy is a tender growth which develops slowly. Already in Bahrain it was beginning to sprout, but the political squalls which raged during 1955 and 1956, instead of hastening its growth have retarded it. The Gulf rulers accept advice from the British in many matters—when things go wrong, as they often do, it is convenient to be able to put the blame on the British—but the cause of the failure in Bahrain was that the British, while giving advice to the Shaikh, were at the same time acting in a way that gave encouragement to the political party which, as the Shaikh saw it, was aimed at destroying his authority. This shook public confidence in British policy. I believe that more liberal forms of government will be introduced gradually but any effort to rush the process, either by local factions or by external political pressure, will be disastrous but, unfortunately, the situation in the Middle East is shifting so rapidly that the Arab saying, 'Haste is from the Devil', is now becoming a fallacy.

Another school of thought believes that the British should support the Ruling Families, with whom we have treaties, regardless of the form of government in their states. People of this opinion are apt to assume that opposition to the rulers and to the British comes from Communism. I am absolutely certain that the people of Bahrain have no sympathy for Communism, and the same can be said for the other Gulf states, although in Kuwait Communism exists among the vast horde of foreigners who flocked in from all the neighbouring countries, including Iraq, when

Kuwait became the El Dorado of the East. The growth of a Middle Class, the increased prosperity, which extends to all levels, and the noticeable improvement in the standard of living are some of the reasons why I believe that Communism is unlikely to gain a footing among the Gulf Arabs. The Nationalist movement in Bahrain was not inspired by Communism. It was an expression of resentment by the Intelligentsia against the existing régime, which they considered was outdated. It was similar to an abortive movement which took place in 1938, but on that occasion the Shias did not take part in it.

There is no easy answer to the question as to what is to happen to the Gulf states. One possible solution is that they should form a loose federation with agreements between the states covering matters such as trade, immigration, currency, etc., with a pool of experts who would be available to give technical advice to each state on how best to develop their natural resources such as agriculture, fishing and light industries, who could also advise on large engineering, electrical and building projects. The federation would be on somewhat similar lines to that which has recently come into being in the Aden Protectorate. It would, in part, satisfy the desire of the people of the Gulf to belong to some larger organization, and they might realize that if they were combined they could present more resolute opposition to dangers from without. This combination of states would have a council consisting of the rulers or their representatives.

Years ago the idea of federation was mooted and in Bahrain it was not unfavourably received. The plan might have been carried through at that time without much difficulty, but today there is less possibility of agreement between the states. The main stumbling-block is the existence of two enormously rich states, Kuwait and Qatar, one state, Bahrain, which might be described as comfortably off and, on the Trucial Coast, a number of small, poor states. Any idea of pooling resources is out of the question. Neither Kuwait, with over £100 million a year and a population of about 200,000, or Qatar with about £16 million and some 30,000 inhabitants, or even Bahrain with an income of £5½ million and a population of about 145,000 would be willing to guarantee substantial financial help to poorer states, although the rulers of the rich oil states are not lacking in generosity to the other Shaikhs, if they are on good terms with them. When the Shaikh of Bahrain first considered the suggestion of a federation his comment was that before it could be discussed all outstanding boundary disputes, such as Bahrain's claims in Zabara, would have to be settled. He then asked which of the states, if there was a council of states,



would take precedence. However, in spite of the difficulties, and although it would still entail British protection against external attack, if such a federation existed it might solve the future of the Gulf states for some time to come.

It is over two years since I retired, leaving my son still working for the Shaikh in Bahrain. Marjorie and I are busily occupied with various forms of voluntary work, but my affection for Bahrain and my interest in its progress increases rather than diminishes. Nothing gives us more pleasure than entertaining in our London home the many Bahrain Arabs who visit us. Some are friends who worked with me loyally for thirty years, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude, some are the sons of men with whom I served. The first thing that anyone sees on entering our house is a picture of the Shaikh. Never will Marjorie and I forget the unfailing kindness, the consideration and the generosity of my friend and master, Shaikh Sulman, and of his father before him.

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ISBN 9953-1-0182-5



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